Embodying Enfranchisement: The Affective Politics of Urban Social Movements

Callum O'Neil Ingram
Putney, Vermont

Master of Arts, University of Virginia, 2011
Bachelor of Arts, Oberlin College, 2007

A Dissertation presented to the Graduate Faculty of the University of Virginia in Candidacy for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Department of Politics

University of Virginia
August, 2015

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

I'm extremely lucky to have too many people to thank for their help through the years. I'll do my (brief) best.

It is no exaggeration to say that I have received generous and generative feedback from everyone I've worked with at the University of Virginia Department of Politics, though I would particularly like to thank my committee for their support and patience through the years. Jen Rubenstein pushed me hard to make my claims with clarity and precision. Lawrie Balfour urged me to focus on the visceral politics that needed to be the beating heart of the project. Stephen White provided fabulous mentorship and guidance from my first day in Charlottesville. Among my graduate student contingent, I'd particularly like to thank Molly Scudder, Evan Farr, Claire Timperley, Colin Kielty, William Sbach, and Charlee Tidrick for their time, thought, and support through the years. While I haven't yet made good on all the advice I received from these fabulous dialog partners, I know I'll continue benefitting from their feedback as I move into the next iteration of this project.

Over the past six years, I received generous support from the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences, Institute of the Humanities and Global Cultures, Program in Politics, Philosophy and Law, and Clay Endowment for the Humanities, among others. I also want to thank Jeffery Jenkins for making sure I had support during what were tumultuous years for graduate student funding at the University. Without these sources of support, I could not have completed my dissertation in good time or conducted archival research for my chapters on the Paris Commune and French Third Republic.

Outside UVA, my immediate family – Steve, Kathy, and Luke – have been rocks through the years, both urging me on in my work and pulling me out of the dissertation bubble with loving distraction. My grandparents provided inspiring models of care and contentment. Many past teachers have prodded me to closely, critically, and lovingly engage the world. I would particularly like to thank Connie Bresnahan and Harlan Wilson in this regard. In the nonhuman world, Tuesday Night World Championships humbled me and renewed my sanity every week, while Rex Grossman has made the last year a lot more joyful than it would otherwise have been.

Finally, back in the human world, Erica Tempesta has provided loving support and guidance for the last nine years, helping me find possibilities and strengths in myself and my work that I didn't know were there. Her voice is there in all of the strongest parts of my dissertation. For that reason, I dedicate the project to her and my family.

Abstract

My dissertation examines the affective politics of urban social movements to develop a theory of embodied democratic enfranchisement. Social movements like the Paris Commune, Black Panthers, Arab Spring, and Occupy Wall Street often fail to achieve their goals, and are thus dismissed as ineffective, frivolous, and destructive. Drawing from political theory, architectural and urban theory, geography, and primary source materials, I develop an alternative framework that helps theorists and practitioners learn from the way these movements construct the affective – felt, sensed, emplaced, embodied – foundations of democratic citizenship. Even when apparently destructive or irrational, urban social movements can unite the built environment, normative claims, and bodily practice in ways that bring democratic equality and empowerment into alienating and violent modes of social and spatial organization. I call the affective politics of these urban social movements "embodied enfranchisement."

While liberal democratic principles have the normative high ground, many living in purportedly democratic cities remain a long way from *feeling* included, equal, and empowered. This marks an important gap between the the formal and affective conditions of democratic citizenship. Building on recent efforts to better account for the politics of embodiment and materiality, my reading of urban social movements focuses on the roles of the body and architecture in popular claims to power and inclusion. From the Paris Commune's understanding of the barricades as manifestations of popular power, to the Black Panthers' breakfast programs, Situationist International's artistic interventions in French universities, and Sustainable Seattle's connection of local animal-life to global ecological changes, urban social movements unite the experience of the city with questions and realities of self-government. My affective reading of

these movements shows how they build embodied enfranchisement, democratizing cities by taking hostile, alienating, and oppressive spaces and shifting them into sites where citizens can build democracy in concrete forms and real time.

My dissertation proceeds in two parts. In part one, I examine the emergence of contemporary urbanism and its discontents through a study of nineteenth century Paris. My first chapter places the Paris Commune in the context of this redevelopment, considering it as the first example of a movement seeking to build embodied enfranchisement in the modern city. My second chapter then considers the French state's response to the Commune as exemplifying the urban forms and norms that counter a joyful urban affect. Part two of my dissertation shifts to consider how exemplary urban social movements reorient citizen affect in contemporary cities: the creation of heterotopias by the Situationist International and Black Panther Party (chapter three), and the crafting of a new civic imagination through community-lead ecological indexing projects by Sustainable Seattle (chapter four). While these exemplary studies do not exhaust the tactical repertoire of urban social movements, each provides a perspective on how they can successfully politicize space and empower citizens. I conclude by briefly considering joy as a criterion for evaluating the democratic successes and failures of urban space and architecture.

Introduction: Urbanism and Embodying Citizenship

My dissertation examines the affective politics of urban social movements to develop a theory of embodied democratic enfranchisement. Social movements like the Paris Commune, Black Panthers, Arab Spring, and Occupy Wall Street often fail to achieve their goals, and are thus dismissed as ineffective, frivolous, and destructive. Drawing from political theory, architectural and urban theory, geography, and primary source materials, I develop an alternative framework that helps theorists and practitioners learn from the way these movements construct the affective – felt, sensed, emplaced, embodied – foundations of democratic citizenship. Even when apparently destructive or irrational, urban social movements can unite the built environment, normative claims, and bodily practice in ways that bring democratic equality and empowerment into alienating and violent modes of social and spatial organization. I call the affective politics of these urban social movements "embodied enfranchisement."

There have been many studies of urban social movements. Considering movements from the Paris Commune through the Occupy and Arab Spring protests, many such studies focus on the instrumental claims, ideological underpinnings, and structural constraints that motivate, inform, and delimit these movements.[1] Working in this tradition, social movement scholar Sidney Tarrow defines movements as "collective action…used by people who lack regular access to institutions" who "act in the name of new or unaccepted claims and behave in ways

---

[1] See: William Kornhauser. *The Politics of Mass Society*. Glencoe, Ill: The Free Press (1959); Mancur Olson. *The Logic of Collective Action: Public Goods and the Theory of Groups*. Cambridge: Harvard University Press (1965); Karl-Dieter Opp. *Theories of Political Protest and Social Movements.* New York: Routledge (2009).

that fundamentally challenge others."[2] This focus on the instrumental qualities of movements is taken to be definitive of what makes for a social movement. Even work on "New Social Movements" – or, movements making claims for human rights and recognition rather than material wellbeing– often focuses primarily on instrumental claims.[3]

These instrumental, ideological, and structural analyses then generate a set of yardsticks that are use to evaluate the success of these movements: Did they achieve their aims? Did they realize their ideas in practice? Did they even have a chance to? While these approaches contribute significantly to our understanding of these movements' goals, tactics, accomplishments, and failures, this is only one way of understanding the important empirical and normative features of these movements. Because urban social movements tend to fail to achieve their ends (facing institutions that can overpower, co-opt, or ignore them[4]), often compromise their ideals in practice (building a movement by negotiating between multiple ends[5]), and struggle to act against distant and dispersed institutions (national governments and global

---

[2] Sidney G. Tarrow, *Power In Movement: Social Movements and Contentious Politics,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (1998), 2.

[3] Nelson A. Pichardo, "New Social Movements: A Critical Review," *Annual Review of Sociology* 23 (1997), 411-430; Michael Temelini, "Dialogical Approaches to Struggles Over Recognition and Distribution," *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy* 17 (2014), 423-47.

[4] Herbert G. Blumer. "Collective Behavior." In: Alfred McClung Lee, ed., *Principles of Sociology*. New York: Barnes & Noble Books (1969), 65-121; Charles Tilly. *From Mobilization to Revolution*. Reading: Addison-Wesley (1978).

[5] Suzanne Staggenborg, "Research on Social Movement Coalitions," in: ed. Nella Van Dyke and Hlly J McCammon, *Strategic Alliances: Coalition Building and Social Movements*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (2010), 316-330.

economic structures can be hard to challenge through localized protest movements[6]), an instrumental reading of social movements mirrors popular discourse in interpreting them as failed, compromised, or utopian. The interpretation of social movements from a narrowly instrumental perspective therefore provides little sense of why people would continue to engage in urban social movements or what their value is (if any).

Building on recent efforts to better account for the politics of embodiment and materiality, I develop an affective reading of urban social movements. By focusing on the roles of the body and architecture as they figure into popular claims to power and inclusion, a new account of the endurance and democratic value of urban social movements emerges: social movements democratize urban space through the affective reconciliation of the body and the built environment – taking hostile, alienating, or oppressive spaces and shifting them into sites from embodied practice can build democratic norms in concrete forms and real time. This affective reading of urban social movements shows them to be models of 'embodied enfranchisement' – a feeling of empowerment that makes democratic citizenship visceral and transforms urban space into a place that promotes popular power.

I develop this account by exploring two connected observations. First, modern urban space and architecture are formed by, and largely understood in urban and political theory in

---

[6] Neal Caren, "Political Process Theory," in ed. George Ritzer *Blackwell Encyclopedia of Sociology*, available at: http://www.blackwellreference.com/subscriber/tocnode?id=g9781405124331_chunk_g978140512433122_ss1-41 (accessed 6 June 2015).

terms of, state and economic imperatives.[7] Urban development is driven largely by administrative dictates and global capital, while the interpretations of the built environment that are publicly acceptable, and the understandings of the populations and bodies that may make legitimate claims on it, are often shaped by forces that are minimally responsive to the claims made by citizens.[8] Contemporary discourses on popular place-making practices notwithstanding, much of modern urban space stands in tension with democratic norms of popular empowerment, institutional accountability, and social equality.[9]

Accounts of the embodied, environmental, and affective roots of subjectivity in phenomenology, feminism, and social psychology suggest that state- and economy-driven urban development is democratically problematic. When the built environment reflects state and economic imperatives, and when embodied and sensual life is cut off from democratic procedures and norms, citizenship comes to be characterized by a twofold alienation: citizens are face significant challenges in generating meaning through their built environments, while the material forms of contemporary cities do not invite citizens to take action on the forces that shape their lives.

---

[7] This proposition can be read as a development of "social control theory," a reading of urban politics as primarily concerned with maintaining the conditions for effective state administration and economic efficiency (see: Harvey Boulay, "Social Control Theories of Urban Politics," *Social Science Quarterly* 59 (1979), 605-621).

[8] Neil Brenner & Nik Theodore, "Cities and the Geographies of 'Actually Existing Neoliberalism,'" *Antipode* 34 (2002), 349-379.

[9] Yi-fu Tuan, *Space and Place: the Perspective of Experience,* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (2011); Project for Public Spaces, "What is Placemaking?" available at: http://www.pps.org/reference/what_is_placemaking/ (accessed 6 June, 2015).

A second observation follows from this. In the face of cities that reflect state and economic imperatives in a way that alienates their residents, social movements can democratize urban experience by generating new meaning and agency through the occupation and reconstruction of the built environment. In occupying urban space, creating public art, challenging common spatial practices and intuitions, or destroying the monuments of the state and capital, these movements build an experience of democratic normative ideals in real time. The democratic values practiced by these movements are very much centered on the individual sensations of empowerment and equality in cities and among other citizens. While there are separate questions of endurance and values of the institutions and policies that emerged from these movements, my focus is on how the movements themselves perform the foundational tasks of empowering citizens to understand and intervene in the forces that shape their lives. I take this embodied and emplaced experience of empowerment to be a key (if ambiguous) foundation of democracy.

To develop these observations and explore the disruptive joy that movement participants experience in their acts of celebration and violence, my dissertation couples analyses of exemplary social movements with the accounts of joyful affect offered by Baruch Spinoza, Iris Marion Young, and Henri Lefebvre. Each of these theorists argues that an empowering joy follows from the reconciliation of the sensual body and material world. Spinoza's joy, Young's *eros*, and Lefebvre's *jouissance* all suggest that a particular way of experiencing the unity of the city and subjectivity fosters individual empowerment. This is a source not just of individual agency, but also equality, that emerges from a particular collective experience of the city.

However, these accounts are thin on important details: what is the relationship of this joy to politics? If alienation, naturalization, and fragmentation characterize the affective life of contemporary cities, then what practices can address these realities and build a joyful city? What about this joyful city would be specifically democratic? And how does an democratic joy relate to the very undemocratic joy of other forms of mass politics?[10] To address these questions and thicken these accounts of joy as the affective foundation of power, I document first-hand experiences of enchantment and emotional excess that participants in urban social movements derive from spatial practice.

My dissertation proceeds in two parts. First, I examine the emergence of contemporary urbanism and its discontents through a study of nineteenth century Paris. The redevelopment of Paris during the French Second Empire was the first example of a city recreated to reflect modern state and economic imperatives. My first chapter places the Paris Commune in the context of this redevelopment, considering it as the first example of a movement seeking to build embodied enfranchisement in the modern city. Considering the anti-democratic characteristics of modern Paris and the Communards' joyful politics, I build from the theory and practice contemporary to the Commune to provide an account of embodied enfranchisement in the modern city. My second chapter then considers the French state's response to the Commune as exemplifying the urban forms and norms that counter a joyful urban affect.

The second part of my dissertation shifts to consider how exemplary urban social movements reorient citizen affect in contemporary cities: the creation of heterotopias by the

---

[10] Think, for example, of the public happiness of the Third Reich depicted in *Triumph of the Will* or of Ku Klux Klan rallies in *Birth of a Nation.*

Situationist International (a French Marxist group) and the Black Panther Party (operating in Oakland), and the crafting of a new civic imagination by Sustainable Seattle (an urban environmental movement). While these exemplary studies do not exhaust the tactical repertoire of urban social movements, each provides a new perspective on how the affective life of social movements politicizes urban space and architecture to empower citizens. I then conclude my dissertation by briefly considering the possibilities of joyful affect as a criterion for evaluating the democratic successes and failures of urban space and architecture.

The Paris Commune, Black Panther Party, Situationist International, and Sustainable Seattle may seem geographically, politically, and historically far-flung but their resonances with recent movements are clear and clearly inform my work. The questions posed in 1871's Paris or 1968's Oakland were in many ways present in Zuccotti Park in 2011, Tahrir Square in 2012, and Baltimore in 2015: how can the disempowered and excluded reorganize city life? Can the same urban spaces that supports state and economic hierarchy be mobilized by social movements for popular power and equality? How can a community build political power in a world where governing and economic institutions alienate large populations and do violence to many citizens? How can a popular movement begin to dream of a new shape of material and moral life? In turning to past movements, I hope that my project can make a historical leap into the present and future, building new resonances with the questions and struggles of contemporary urban social movements.

Before proceeding with the body of my project, however, the following five sections of this introduction will consider some key premises of my project: (1) that the built environment is political, (2) that urban society (as a development of the historical city) is a new and

democratically challenging form of social organization and imagination, (3) that a turn to affect helps connect democratic theory to the realities of contemporary urbanism, (4) that social movements transform affective life, and (5) that the affective experience of joy is a democratic resource, building what I call "embodied enfranchisement." Each of these five sections concludes with a core premise that emerges from both the literature and spatial practice to inform the theory-building project that makes up the body of my dissertation. I then conclude this introduction with a look ahead to the body of the dissertation.

1. Space, Politics, and the City

At one of my first conferences, I presented a paper that made some too-bold claims about cities doing political work. Cavalierly, I claimed that cities "remember," can be "violent," and exercise "agency." In response, a member of the audience brought up a question that he said he often posed to his "Introduction to Urban Politics" undergraduates: what makes for a democratic city? When his students offered a number of responses, he corrected them: the question is nonsense. A city cannot be more or less democratic on its own – this is a characteristic of people and institutions, not cities, which are too flatly material to be simply democratic or not. Cities can be neither democratic nor undemocratic – they are, instead, ademocratic.

To a degree, the point is well taken. The built environment cannot do democratic work on its own. Space and architecture have to be made political through the collective work of people institutions, norms, and practices. Without this collective work, the built form of the city is inert and meaningless – something like the tree that falls in the woods with no one around to hear it.

But this is still a problematic place for normative and social theory to be. Where are we if we cannot talk about cities as democratic or undemocratic? With over half of the world's population living in cities (and that proportion only increasing[11]), and with democratic norms of equality and empowerment accepted as central tenets of justice and human rights, it is important to provide an account of, if not how the city itself can be democratic, then how the city can help constitute democratic citizens, institutions, norms, and practices.

The need for such an account of urban democracy is intuitively sympathetic and many political theorists have attempted provide one. Since Plato and Aristotle, theorists have understood the city as a site where individuals are made into citizens and where our highest moral aspirations can be realized.[12] The diverse populations and cultural vitality of the city – "the jungle of the city," in the words of Richard Sennett – unlocks political possibilities that are impossible in rural areas.[13] Still others see the city's material and spatial forms as necessary resources for creating positive political changes.[14] The material form of the city further serves the pragmatic functions of organizing and stabilizing collective life, allowing large populations to live together peacefully, facilitate the distribution of resources, concentrate economic functions, and reduce negative environmental impacts, for example.[15]

---

[11] "World Urbanization Prospects (2014 Revision)," United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs, Population Division, New York: United Nations (2014).

[12] For an expansion on this, see Chapter 1, Section 2.

[13] Richard Sennett, *The Uses of Disorder: Personal Identity and City Life*, New York: WW Norton & Company (1992), xvii.

[14] John Parkinson. *Democracy and Public Space*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2012).

[15] Manuel De Landa, *A New Philosophy of Society: Assemblage Theory and Social Complexity*, London: Continuum (2009), 940140; Robert E. Park, Ernest Burgess, Roderick McKenzie, *The City*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1925).

Cities also serve a discursive function. As Margaret Kohn explains, "Buildings, architectural plans, sacred space, boundaries, public/private domains, and ruins can be read as texts that communicate important elements of culture and patterns of power."[16] Urban spaces make the political order legible to citizens in a way that helps simplify and coordinate social life.[17] Cities further perform the political work of memorializing (preserving marks of past events in a way that fosters collective memory and political identification[18]), stabilizing global capitalism (serving as repositories of surplus value or a place for coordinating access to material resources and workers[19]), developing sensory and cultural sensibilities (concentrating spectacles, ideas, and diverse populations[20]), and facilitating social discipline (bringing state and economic power to bear in ways that constitute and control citizens).

The list could go on but the point is made: urban space performs a range of roles and promises unique political possibility. To be in a city is to participate in intersecting pragmatic, symbolic, historical, economic, sensual, cultural, and disciplinary mechanisms that provide mixed (even conflicting) messages about how one should act and what kind of space one is in. In

---

[16] Margaret Kohn, *Radical Space*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press (2003), 3.

[17] This legibility vocabulary is drawn from James C. Scott. *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition Have Failed.* New Haven: Yale University Press (1998).

[18] Maurice Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, trans. Lewis A. Coser, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1992); M. Christine Boyer, *The City of Collective Memory: Its Historical Imagery and Architectural Entertainments*, Cambridge: MIT Press (1994), 1-30

[19] David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City*, Athens: University of Georgia Press (2009).

[20] Georg Simmel, "The Metropolis and Mental Life," Ed. Gary Bridge and Sophie Watson. *The Blackwell City Reader*, Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell (2002), 103-10.; Iris Marion Young, *Justice and the Politics of Difference,* Princeton: Princeton University Press (1990), 226-56.

this complexity, the city appears as a site where theorists and practitioners can -work to address intransigent political questions and realize their social and political aspirations.

Today, many of these arguments seem utopian. The contemporary city is characterized by a decreasing political vitality as public spaces are privatized,[21] physical, financial, and social barriers separate groups along race and class lines,[22] and economic imperatives increasingly drive urban development.[23] Manuel Castells' description of the modern city as the site of "collective alienation and individual violence" captures the ways the political promise of the city is matched by equally powerful policing practices and policy prescriptions that keep populations apart, apathetic, and maintain racial, economic, and gender hierarchies.[24] Simultaneously, the contemporary citizen is tied to networks of unbounded economic and political institutions, sprawling environmental effects and affects, and global cultural flows extending far beyond the limits of the city, region, or state. Work on the "boundary problem" in democratic theory highlights the ongoing question of how geographically and governmentally bounded polities can effectively address problems that cross cultures, institutions, and populations.[25]

In short, cities are frequently alienating and disempowering, while political issues are less and less concentrated, imaginable, and addressable on the local level. While it may be hard to say

---

[21] Margaret Kohn, *Brave New Neighborhoods: The Privatization of Public Space*, New York: Routledge Press (2004).

[22] Teresa P. R. Caldeira, "Fortified Enclaves: The New Urban Segregation," in *Cities and Citizenship*, ed. James Holston, Durham: Duke University Press, 114-38.

[23] Dennis A Rondinelli, et. al. "The Changing Forces of Urban Economic Development: Globalization and City Competitiveness in the 21st Century," *Cityscape* 3 (1998), 71-105.

[24] Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots*, Berkeley: University of California Press (1983), 314.

[25] Robert Dahl, *Democracy and its Critics*, New Haven: Yale University Press (1989), 146-7; Mark Purcell, "Urban Democracy and the Local Trap," *Urban Studies* 43 (2006), 1922-41.

what makes a city democratic, we can see much in our world that makes them undemocratic. How can the city be a democratic resource if its material forms are politically ambivalent and its populations seem to have little control over their political circumstances?

With cities helping constitute political institutions and individual experience, it is an important challenge to channel their subtle and multivalent power toward ends of citizen equality and empowerment. For this reason, it has long been a task of theorists and scholars to develop ways to simply and clearly describe how the city serves and undercuts democracy. A number of distinctions have been developed to assess how spaces help or hinder democratic politics: public v. private, accessible v. exclusive, place v. space, public v. counter-public, safe v. risky, disciplinary v. free, beautiful v. ugly, pedestrian v. vehicular, institutional v. informal, inclusive v. segregated, humanized v. mechanized, single- v. open-minded, (again, the list could go on). Depending on one's normative commitments, one side of these distinctions stands in for a quality of the built environment that supports democracy, the other represents a challenge to it.

The problem with any such distinction between democratic and undemocratic space is that the exceptions quickly grow to outnumber those conforming to the rule. The lunch-counter protests during the American Civil Rights movement took place in private restaurants; the Indian independence movement and Stonewall riots gained their power by exposing themselves to state violence; the placeless spaces of financial districts granted the Occupy movement its global resonance; exposure to risk was part of the SlutWalk movement's power; the segregated space of the ghetto was a mobilizing site of the Black Panthers; taking up vehicular space is the core of Critical Mass' strategy; the mechanized space of the modern factory inspired the French wildcat strikes in May 1968. The list of democratic movements that defy spatial expectations is long

enough to place any theoretical account of democratic space on its back foot. An account of democratic urban space cannot exclusively draw from the formal properties of the built environment to connect particular spaces and political norms.

If the formal characteristics of the built environment are not adequate to provide an account of democratic urbanism, then two options remain: either the built environment is irrelevant to democratic politics (with variation across cities and spaces explained instead by cultural, institutional, procedural, economic, and other considerations), or we must look beyond the material environment to provide an account of democratic urbanism. Each of the examples listed above, even as they defy expectations about democratic spatial politics, help show the first possibility is untenable. The Woolworth's lunch counter in Greensboro, the public yarn spinning during the Indian independence movement, and the Occupy movement's encampments testify to the inextricability of material and normative claims by these democratic movements. Space clearly matters to democracy. Somehow.

This leaves us with the second hypothesis: that we have to look beyond the material forms and functions of the city to provide an account of democratic urbanism suited to contemporary political realities. Spaces are not democratic or undemocratic by virtue of their formal qualities, nor are they irrelevant or trivial, but are instead made political through a complex interaction of citizens, norms, social understandings, and the material world. It is only through the analysis of this collective as a whole – of individuals, materials, and norms – that we can identify the democratic life of urban space.

The first premise that serves as a foundation for my dissertation's theory-building project builds off this claim:

Premise 1: Democratic space is not a property of the built environment itself, or of individuals independent of their material circumstances, but is a property of the interaction of individuals, space, matter, and democratic norms.

Accepting this premise, how can we connect an experiential account of democratic spatial politics to the material life of contemporary cities? The following two sections take up two of the key terms in this question and, in doing so, frame two more key premises that inform this account. First, I consider the historical specificity of contemporary urbanism and its democratic implications. Second, I consider the benefits of an affective account of embodied enfranchisement for addressing the democratic challenges of contemporary cities.

2: Urbanism's Political Life

If cities are capable of serving or undercutting democratic norms in the complex and ongoing interaction of individuals, the built environment, and norms, a question that follows concerns how the modern organization of cities shapes this experience. What are the political implications of the dominant spatial and material modes of collective life? This question guides us into a second term of the inquiry and a second premise of the dissertation as a whole: urbanism.

Urbanism, as a concept distinct from the city, emerged gradually over the course of the past thousand years.[26] Iris Marion Young describes urbanity as "the horizon of the modern, not to mention the postmodern, condition." She goes on to claim that, "Contemporary political theory

---

[26] P. M. Hohenberg & L. Hollen Lees, *The Making of Urban Europe, 1000-1994.* Cambridge: Harvard University Press (1995).

must accept urbanity as a material given for those who live in advanced industrial societies."[27] Where the Greek model of the *polis* was figured largely on the independence of city-states, functioning independently among and against other city-states, urbanism is defined instead by a new web of connections bridging and organizing cities.[28] The growth in global trade, cultural diffusion, and the expansion of the nation to encompass many cities and ecologies has lead to new relationships and interdependence among cities.

For the purposes of my analysis, four characteristics of urbanism must be considered to develop an account of democratic spatial politics suited to contemporary realities: urbanism is socially constitutive, globalized, mediating, and ideological. I will briefly summarize each of these traits before sketching how I understand the challenges that urbanism presents to democracy.

Socially constitutive: As democratic theorist Diana Saco notes, most sociological approaches to space treat it as either materially constitutive of social life or as irrelevant in the face of discursive and cultural understandings. "Critics maintain that social theorists tended [before the recent spatial turn] to treat spatiality in terms of either physical space (and therefore given) or mental space (and therefore shaped by something else, e.g., language)."[29] Yet, as I have argued above, neither spatial determinism nor agnosticism captures the rich and often counter-intuitive political life of cities. A more nuanced account of the political role of space and matter is therefore required.

---

[27] Young. *Justice and the Politics of Difference.* 237.

[28] Lewis Mumford, *The City in History: Its Origins, Its Transformations, and Its Prospects.* New York: Harcourt, Brace & World (1969).

[29] Diana Saco, *Cybering Democracy*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (2002), 2

Geographer Edward Soja refers to this as a "socio-spatial dialectic" that accounts for the ways that "two sets of structured relations (the social and the spatial) are not only homologous, in that they arise from the same origins in the mode of production, but are also dialectically inseparable."[30] On this model, we recognize that "spatial structures are also implicated in social structures and that each has to be theorized with the other."[31] This understanding revitalizes political accounts of space, shifting them away from the deadening paths of determinism or dismissal and reads them instead as the dynamic meeting point of material, bodily, and discursive practices. Henri Lefebvre similarly holds that we must speak of a social space which "is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies."[32] Space should be understood neither as a superstructural consequence of social and historical forces; nor as a taken-for-granted physical context that structures all social relations – "Space and the political organization of space express social relationships but also react back upon them."[33]

Focusing Soja and Lefebvre's accounts of spatial politics in the context of contemporary urbanism, sociologist Manuel Castells claims,

> To consider the city as the projection of society on space is both an indispensable starting point and too elementary an approach. For, although one must go beyond the empiricism

---

[30] Edward Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Social Theory,* London: Verso Press (1989), 76-78.

[31] Derek Gregory, *Ideology, Science and Human Geography*, New York: St. Martin's Press (1978), 112.

[32] Henri Lefebvre, "Reflections on the Politics of Space," trans. Michael J. Enders, in *Radical Geography: Alternative Viewpoints on Contemporary Social Issues*, ed. Richard Peet, Chicago: Maroufa Press (1977), 31.

[33] David Harvey, *Social Justice and the City*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (1973), 306.

> of geographical description, one runs the very great risk of imagining space as a white page on which the actions of graphs and institutions are inscribed, without encountering any other obstacle than the trace of past generations.[34]

Castells argues that there is a complex and evolving homology of city and society. Acting and reacting upon society, the city is full of the social forms that is concretizes and constitutes.

Accounting for the complex life of democratic norms under contemporary urbanism requires avoiding problematic spatial reductivism that overdetermines, or displaces and disembodies, the social order. Instead, space should be approached as socially determining and determinative. By considering the socio-spatial dialectic whereby cities, subjects, and society are continually acting into, and being acted upon by, one-another, we can provide a thicker account of the ways the cites can be mobilized for and against democratic politics.

Globalism: the political life of cities is continuous with the global scale in modernity. Contrary to the image of the city as an independent community relying on a small and controlled local area, these cities are formed by constant flows of people, goods, and information, making them dependent on distant ecologies and economies.

As one urban historian puts it, this marks a change from an older organizational system wherein cities lay at the center of large terrains that they controlled. Now, "the key systemic property of a city is nodality rather than centrality…The spatial features of the Network System are largely invisible on a conventional map: trade routes, junctions, gateways, outposts."[35] Rather

---

[34] Manuel Castells, *The Urban Question: A Marxist Approach*, London: Edward Arnold Press (1977), 115.

[35] Paul M. Hohenberg and Lynn Hollen Lees, *The Making of Urban Europe*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press (1995), 86 & 97.

than having economic, political, cultural, and environmental autonomy, cities are increasingly built into a complex global network of goods, people, and ecologies.

I follow a number of thinkers in understanding this shift as the emergence of a worldwide "urban society,"[36] defined a globalized interaction of political and economic imperatives that exceeds vocabularies that describe cities as privileged epistemic and ontological sites.[37] Lefebvre observes that with modernity,

> Urban reality simultaneously amplified and exploded, thus loses the features it inherited from the previous period: organic totality, belonging, an uplifting image, a sense of space that was measured and dominated by monumental splendor. It was populated with signs of the urban within the dissolution of urbanity; it became stipulative, repressive, marked by signals, summary codes for circulation (routes), and signage.[38]

The implications of a global urban society are both the absorption of cities into global flows of goods, cultures, and administrative imperatives, and a shift in the practice and imagination of the state. This networked city, and the changing location and structure of the forces that shape the lives of city-dwellers, marks a fundamental shift in the social constitution, field of political possibility, and material life of the city. In all cases, these changes conspire to challenge key democratic intuitions about the relationship of the city to its citizens.

Mediation: As Young observed of contemporary urbanism, "Our social life is structured by vast networks of temporal and spatial mediation among persons." In this context, "nearly

---

[36] Lefebvre. *The Urban Revolution.* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (2003).

[37] Ibid. 52.

[38] Ibid. 13.

everyone depends on the activities of seen and unseen strangers who mediate between oneself and one's associations, between oneself and one's objects of desires."[39] Opposed to the communitarian ideal of city life as a "copresence of subjects"[40] where the material and spatial contexts of social experience draw citizens closer and more immediately together and to the state, urban society must be understood as a force that gathers, separates, and transforms citizens in a way that must be accounted for in detailed, dialectical, and attentive analysis.[41]

Urbanism is the medium that democracy must traverse if it is to function on the material, normative, and embodied registers. To approach urban society as a mediator means that elements of the built environment become "actors endowed with the capacity to translate what they transport, to redefine it, redeploy it, and also to betray it."[42] Bruno Latour argues that mediators "cannot be encountered as just one; they might count for one, for nothing, for several, or for infinity. Their input is never a good predictor of their output; their specificity has to be taken into account every time."[43] Mediators play an active role in modifying the information that passes through them. There is no such thing as immediate contact and thus, as Graham Harman puts it,

---

[39] Young. *Justice and the Politics of Difference.* 237.

[40] Ibid. 230.

[41] The language of gathering and separating is drawn from Hannah Arendt ("Introduction *Into* Politics," in *The Promise of Politics*, ed. Jerome Kohn, New York: Schocken Books (2005), 106.

[42] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, trans. Catherine Porter, Cambridge: Harvard University Press (1993), 81.

[43] Bruno Latour. *Reassembling the Social: An Introduction to Actor-Network Theory*, Oxford, Oxford University Press (2005), 39.

"Every medium must be negotiated, just as air and water strike back at the vehicles that traverse them."[44]

An account of urban democratic experience thus should seek to increase the number and specificity of the mediators that are taken into account as we analyze the forces that shape relationships between citizens.[45] Opposed to the depoliticizing drive to immediacy (that was better suited to the days of the isolated city and firmly bounded political community), an account of democratic experience that takes the modern condition of urbanism seriously traces the myriad social, cultural, economic, and administrative mediations that shape collective life.

Ideological: While the built environment forms and reforms its occupants in a complex socio-spatial dialectic, this continuous reworking is less recognizable the more familiar a space is. The material forms that work to bind a city or social group together (the familiar façade of Paris' six-story buildings or the University of Virginia's repeating Jeffersonian and Vetruvian brick, marble, and column design vocabulary) and the spaces that bind cities together in a global urban society (the 'placeless' places of airports, chain restaurants, and interstates) do a great deal of work in naturalizing a given social order. These spaces, in their familiarity and socially-constitutive power, affect a certain neutrality, granting the spatial-political order a sense of givenness and apolitical necessity.

---

[44] Graham Harman, *Prince of Networks: Bruno Latour and Metaphysics*, Melbourne: Re.press (2009), 18.

[45] Latour, *Reassembling the Social,* 61.

While intuitive design cannot neutralize all political conflict, the built environment's ability to help stabilize the social order is an often unacknowledged feature of contemporary cities. As Henri Lefebvre puts it in his "Reflections on the Politics of Space,"

> If space has an air of neutrality and indifference with regard to its contents and thus seems to be 'purely' formal, the epitome of rational abstraction, it is precisely because it has been occupied and used, and has already been the focus of past processes whose traces are not always evident on the landscape. Space has been shaped and molded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies.[46]

Space has an air of neutrality and passivity about it that comes because it has been thoroughly "filled" by familiar political and economic ideology. The more we are shaped by the spatial and material patterns of interaction, the less capable we are of understanding and critiquing the political work they perform.

Spaces perform unseen political work both on the level of architecture and on the level of the urban plan. On the level of architecture, grocery stores convert circuitous supply chains and foreign cultures into easily consumable commodities, highways keep populations separate and invisible to one-another, public parks are as conspicuous for who is absent from them as for who is present, and domestic spaces have long been integral to maintaining gendered labor practices and racial segregation. On the level of the plan, James Scott's and James Holston's work has noted how norms in urban planning and administration have developed according to the modern

---

[46] Henri Lefebvre, "Reflections on the Politics of Space," trans. M. Enders, *Antipode* 8, 31.

state's need to increase the spatial and social "legibility" of urban spaces and populations.[47] Urbanism is a tool used by the modern nation-state to render governance and economic life more visible and controllable by fragmenting the city into functional districts, breaking up radical communities, and splitting the life of residents into a series of clearly spatially-delineated functions.[48] These forces make urban society a difficult context for thinking through the question of democratic spatial politics: the features common to the built environment can naturalize problematic political realities while embedding a statist ideology that secures political hierarchy through the structure of everyday experience.

While this ideological function can be politically problematic, thinking urban democracy also requires understanding that one's social competence and private sanity depend in large part on taking the built environment for granted. Constantly being made to deconstruct the ideologies embedded in the forms and uses of grocery stores, public parks, and homes would be exhausting. The built environment functions precisely because it embeds a particular vision of the social and political world we inhabit. In "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," Walter Benjamin argued that "Architecture has always represented the prototype of a work of art the reception of which is consumed by a collectivity in a state of distraction."[49] The city requires a

---

[47] James Scott, *Seeing Like a State*; James Holston, *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasilia*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1989).

[48] In this sense, it echoes Henri Lefebvre's account of everyday life: "It is a life split into contradictory or separate poles: work and rest, public life and personal life, public occasions and intimate situations, chance and inner secrets, luck and fate, ideal and reality, the marvelous and the everyday" (Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life: Volume 1*, trans. John Moore, London: Verso (1991), 149.

[49] Walter Benjamin, "The Work of Art in the Age of Mechanical Reproduction," *Illuminations*, trans. Harry Zohn, New York: Schocken Books (239).

certain kind of practical givenness – holding at arms length the world that forms and reforms social and subjective life in order to not be overwhelmed.

A critical engagement with urban spatial politics therefore requires asking what this naturalization and practical distraction pushes into the experiential background and how the necessity of common and naturalized spatial practice shapes democratic possibility. On one hand, the city must be able to be questioned for democratic vitality to thrive. On the other, the city cannot be open-ended anarchy.

Any account of democratic spatial politics that seeks to address the realities of contemporary urbanism must engage the ways its socially constitutive, globalized, mediating, and ideologically naturalizing features exist in tension with democratic norms. The material and discursive formation of the urban environment serve a particular social constitution that is, at best, a challenging social and spatial ecology for democratic norms to grow in. To think and build democracy means to think within the framework of a global urban society whose material form constitutes, and is constituted by, a global society that it draws together and transforms in line with a statist ideology. These features make urbanism a difficult terrain for democratic theory and practice to navigate: it is simultaneously material and social, politically constitutive and constituted, global and local, binding and separating. At the same time, urbanism alienates individuals from their built environments and one-another, naturalizes a socio-spatial order, and fragments bodies and spatial imaginations. In these senses, urbanism presents a direct challenge to democratic norms in theory and practice. Thus, a second premise of my project:

Premise 2: Urbanism is a recent development and lies at the core of the contemporary socio-spatial order, with historically contingent features and social consequences that are inherently democratically problematic.

While I am foregrounding the challenges of contemporary urbanism, if the socio-spatial order was a helpless cause then this project would be in vain. The developing, common, and politically-formative features of the city may be challenging to norms of equality and empowerment, but the goal of the remainder of this project is to explore how they can be repurposed as sources of democratic possibility.

3: The Empowering Possibilities of Joyful Affect

Under conditions of contemporary urban fragmentation, alienation, and naturalization, what resources are best suited for democratizing the city? Because my premises regarding both democratic spatial politics and contemporary urbanism understand both as reforming the corporeal and sensual life of residents of cities, my dissertation project places affect at the center of its analysis.

While there has been a general "affective turn" in the humanities and social sciences over the past two decades, the word itself remains notoriously difficult to pin down.[50] Often, arguments that make use of the term define it more by what it is not than what it is. Thus, when William Connolly criticizes the "insufficiency of what might be called intellectualist or deliberationst models of thinking," or Brian Massumi claims that Ronald Reagan's success came from his ability to produce "ideological effects by nonideological means," affect appears as a

[50] For a review of the developments in this literature see: Patricia Ticineto Clough and Jean Halley (eds.), *The Affective Turn: Theorizing the Social*, Durham: Duke University Press (2007).

sort of "+" sign: it is the totality of the unspoken and precognitive features of thought, speech, and decision-making.[51] Affect is the stuff that figures into human life that goes beyond consciousness, recollection, reason, and language, combining the ways the visceral material world, internal biological mechanisms, and broad emotional and sensual states figure into our lives.

As much of a challenge as this language can present, it is crucial to integrate the spatial and material "process of breaking bodily boundaries" into democratic theory.[52] Cities are "roiling maelstroms of affect" in the words of Nigel Thrift, forming us through our capacities for sensuality and feeling. Whatever affect's + is, it suggests that the democratic promise of cities and pitfalls of urbanism go beyond simple reason and discourse. Thus, the affective life of contemporary cities is crucial to democratic public life even as it has gone largely unacknowledged in the literature.[53]

To understand the relationship between urban space, matter, and democracy, I follow Baruch Spinoza in posing a broad question about the role of affect. Just as he stated in the *Ethics* that "we do not know what the body can do," my theory-building project explores the relatively

---

[51] William E. Connolly, *Neuropolitics: Thinking, Culture, Speed*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (2002), 10; Brian Massumi, *Parables of the Virtual: Movement, Affect, Sensation*, Durham: Duke University Press (2002), 39.

[52] Jack Katz, *How Emotions Work*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1999), 322.

[53] Nigel Thrift's speculative responses to the question "Why this neglect of the affective register in cities?" are cultural Cartesianism, Platonic logocentrism, division of academic labor, and the difficulty of capturing sensual experience in print, though he also notes Walter Benjamin and Richard Sennett as two exceptions to this trend (*Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect*, London: Routledge [2008], 171).

unknown territory of what embodiment can do for democracy.[54] Following Gilles Deleuze's reading of Spinoza, I consider affective life as bifurcated between experiences of joyful empowerment and sad disempowerment. While there are a number of ways to taxonomize affective experience, this dichotomy between joy and sadness provides an excellent foundational framework for developing an affective account of democratic spatial politics.[55]

As I will use the term, joy is the bodily experience of empowerment that emerges from the way the material world forms our imagination and agency. Joy is not simply an experience of pleasure, but instead a deeper sense of being in a space that is meaningful and empowering. This is the sense in which the term was used by Spinoza. As Deleuze writes of Spinoza:

> When a body 'encounters' another body, or an idea another idea, it happens that the two relations sometimes combine to form a more powerful whole, and sometimes one decomposes the other… [We] experience joy when a body encounters ours and enters into composition with it, and sadness when, on the contrary, a body or an idea threaten [sic] our own coherence.

On Spinoza's account, embodied life is contingent on the continual process of encountering a world where certain materials and ideas contribute to our ability to imagine, will, and act, while others detract from them. This furthering of one's strivings for self-realization in thought and

---

[54] Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy*, San Francisco: City Light Publishers (2001), 17.

[55] For an excellent summary and critical engagement with this taxonomic drive see: Ruth Leys, "The Turn to Affect: A Critique," *Critical Inquiry* 37, 434-472.

action (one's *conatus* in Spinoza's vocabulary[56]) is experienced as a joyful unity of oneself, one's ideas and imagination, and the material world while experiences of the self, ideas, and world as fragmented, alienated, or incompatible leads to sadness.

In considering urbanism as the spatial and social horizon of modernity, there are a number of ways that the contemporary city fails to promote joyful empowerment. I have already claimed that the city can be alienating (taking its form and function from state and economic imperatives rather than citizen needs and experiences), naturalizing (stabilizing the social order, with the built environment's neutrality discouraging urban residents from taking action through the material forms and forces that shape their lives) and fragmenting (dividing lived experience into separate material forms and social functions, splitting material contexts and self-understanding against each-other). If the Spinozan "true city offers citizens the love of freedom," then the sad passions that dominate contemporary urban spaces are fundamental challenges to the free life of their occupants.[57]

While this vocabulary of joy and sadness may seem narrow, a similar vocabulary has informed other work on urban spatial politics. In *Justice and the Politics of Difference*, Young offers, "an ideal of city life as eroticized public vitality where differences are affirmed in openness."[58] City life, Young argues, is a form of "social relations [defined as] the being together of strangers. In the city persons and groups interact within space and institutions they all experience themselves as belonging to, but without those interactions dissolving into unity or

---

[56] Benedict de Spinoza*, The Ethics*, The Project Gutenberg eBook, Part 3, Proposition VI, available at: http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3800/3800-h/3800-h.htm (accessed 6 June, 2015).

[57] Deleuze. *Spinoza: The Practical Philosophy*. 26.

[58] Young. *Justice and the Politics of Difference*. 241.

commonness."[59] Young sees the city as a site where individuals are drawn out of their routines and habits, guided by eros toward others as unique, unassimilable others in a socially and spatially inexhaustible environment.[60]

Through her account, Young draws attention to the promise of urban eros in two ways. First, the erotic draw of urban life indicates the potential of the flow of people, the spectacle of urban space, and the internal navigation of difference to foster an experience of enchantment. The spaces and materials of the city have the potential bring individuals together in a world that is deeply alive. This public eros grows in the material experience of a city alongside other members of the collective:

> The city's eroticism…derives from the aesthetics of its material being: the bright and colored lights, the grandeur of its buildings, the juxtaposition of architecture of different times, styles, and purposes. City space offers delights and surprises. Walk around the corner, or over a few blocks, and you encounter a different spatial mood, a new play of sight and sound, and new interactive movement…A place of many places, the city folds over on itself in so many layers and relationships that it is incomprehensible.[61]

The work that cities do to generate pleasure is through mood and movement – an excitement arising from the affective and bodily experience of the city as a site of possibility and creativity.[62]

---

[59] Ibid. 237.

[60] Ibid. 240.

[61] Ibid. 240.

[62] For a consideration of the erotic draw of the nineteenth century American city, see: Jason Frank, "Promiscuous Citizenship," in *A Political Companion to Walt Whitman,* ed. John E. Seery, Lexington: University of Kentucky Press (2011), 155-84.

Second, Young echoes similar arguments made by Richard Sennett, Hannah Arendt, and Michael Walzer in affirming what can be called "interactionism" – the belief that spaces of diversity and bodily performance have the ability to build new sources of individual and popular power; in the words of Susan Bickford, that "the creative disclosure of a public self through speaking and acting with nonintimate others" can "vitalize a sense of public identity."[63] Admitting that her account "might seem laughably utopian," Young argues that the combined experiences of difference, varied uses of space, diverse and surprising places and people, and the publicity of daily practice give city life the potential to foster democratic empowerment (a term I follow her in defining as the participation of an agent in decision-making through voice, vote, and, in my addition, bodily practice[64]).[65]

Of course, she acknowledges that the city fails to live up to its potential as a democratic site: inequalities can be read in the spaces and buildings; there are too many places where no one should have to live; corporate and bureaucratic interests dominate decision-making; distribution mechanisms are hidden from view; populations remain segregated; and many are excluded from the spaces where difference can be experienced and affirmed.[66] Yet, where urban society can often depoliticize and naturalize contingent political realities, Young shows the (perhaps romantic, but still promising) possibilities of an eros of city life that cuts through the practical

---

[63] Susan Bickford, "Constructing Inequality: City Spaces and the Architecture of Citizenship," *Political Theory* 28, 357.

[64] Ibid. 251.

[65] Ibid. 238-40.

[66] Ibid. 242.

distraction, neutralization, fragmentation, and bewilderment that characterize urban life. This pleasure draws people out of themselves and into each other and their city.

Another account of empowerment as affective joy can be found in Henri Lefebvre's *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*. Sharing a sexual undertone with Young's eros, *jouissance* (translated as joy or bliss) "is merely a flash, a form of energy that is expended, wasted, destroying itself in the process."[67] While this joy only exists in isolated moments, Lefebvre's interest is in the way experiences of embodiment situated in a particular built environment can persevere in generating new life and power.

Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment is a search for the spaces that build this joy:

> Since there were architectural works devoted to death, to violence, to the celestial beyond or terrestrial power, do we find among such works a counterpart, an architecture devoted to life, to happiness, to voluptuousness, to joy? In a word, to enjoyment, understood in the broad sense, the way we are said to 'enjoy life'?[68]

Echoing Spinoza's account of the true city or Young's eros, Lefebvre searches for spaces where material and bodily experience commingle to promote a sense of life. He argues that this can be found in architecture, which is above all a "mode of imagination" capable of recrafting our understanding of the relationship between our bodies, spaces, and ideals.

Architectural theorist Lukasz Stanek notes that Lefebvre's understands joyfulness as a breakdown of conventions and social codes.[69] Cities have a syntax defined by the flow of the

---

[67] Henri Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*, ed. Lucasz Stanek, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (2014), 172.

[68] Ibid. 16.

[69] Ibid., liv.

built environment as a set of structural, aesthetic, social, and functional relations. Architecture often works to build a stable, defined meaning – a particular (often statist and capitalist) legibility – into the urban fabric. In the midst of this syntactical function, the democratic failure of the modern city is "able to conceal itself behind the façade of democratism and liberalism – the right to housing, access to property, increased construction (by and for speculation), even the 'participation' of users in these programs."[70] While the city serves its residents, and even involves them to a degree in shaping government, joy plays an important additional role in provoking the generation of new meanings and orientations in the city.

Jouissance is the momentary flash that generates a new urban legibility, reflecting the embodied, material, and meaningful experiences of individuals and collectives. In this sense, in seeking an 'architecture devoted to life,' Lefebvre wants to explore the material life of a particular kind of joy: the reconstruction of a popular happiness through spaces and situations that disrupt urban meaning. Even when this moment of rupture and excess exhausts itself in the process (he cites the May '68 occupation of the Sorbonne as an example), it creates an opening for new readings of the built environment and new possibilities for urban residents to make claims on the spaces, discourses, and institutions that shape their lives.[71]

In each of these accounts, the body of the city and the body of the citizen combine in a way that generates a new sense of power.[72] Joy, *eros*, and *jouissance* are senses of the affective

---

[70] Ibid. 30.

[71] In this sense, it provides a generative possibility for exploring the tension noted earlier between democracy's simultaneous needs for stability and disruption.

[72] Clare Hemmings, "Invoking Affect: Cultural Theory and the Ontological Turn," *Cultural Studies* 19, 552.

atmosphere – experiences of embodied and emplaced unity that build power through reimagining of the world.

Of course, not all facets of affective life are empowering. In the Spinozan vocabulary, the forces that affect us can be sad as well joyful: "sometimes they weaken us in so far as they diminish our power to act and decompose our relationships (sadness), sometimes they make us stronger in so far as they increase our power and make us enter into a vast or superior individual (joy)."[73] Sadness "represent[s] the lowest degree of our power, the moment when we are most separated from our power of acting, when we are most alienated, delivered over to the phantoms of superstitution, to the mystifications of the tyrant."[74] Blissful agency is counter-balanced by sadness, fear, uncertainty, and vulnerability. As Thrift puts it:

> Not everything is focused intensity. Embodiment includes tripping, falling over, and a whole host of other such mistakes. It includes vulnerability, passivity, suffering, even simple hunger. It includes episodes of insomnia, weariness and exhaustion, a sense of insignificance and even sheer indifference to the world. In other words, bodies can and do become overwhelmed.[75]

Action, as we have all felt, is not always stopped by apathy, but instead by an all-too-visceral reluctance to act into a world with a vulnerable body and with an uncertain relationship between ideals and their realization in the world.

---

[73] Gilles Deleuze and Claire Parnet, *Dialogues II*, New York: Columbia University Press (2007), 45

[74] Deleuze. *Spinoza: The Practical Philosophy*, 28.

[75] Thrift, *Non-representational Theory*, 10.

How then do we distinguish between those spaces, practices, and imaginations that prompt joy and empower action and those that do not? My affective account of democratic citizenship considers the spatial politics of joy as a resource for confronting the challenges posed by modern urbanism. I consider how urban social movements can work to imagine the world in a way that prompts an empowering unity of ideals, bodies, and the built environment under the conditions of contemporary urbanism. Thus, two of the central questions of this project are: what are ways cities contribute to the formation of joyful and sad affects? How does an account of the material, embodied, and normative unity that generates the "bliss of action" fit into contemporary democratic theory?[76]

In sum, the promise of joyful affect is located in what Brian Massumi refers to as its "synaesthetic" quality.[77] Massumi (like Spinoza, Young, and Lefebvre) suggests that an affective focus sheds light on the mutual imbrication of embodied, social, and imagined experience, helping us recognize the porousness of the the human and nonhuman world. For Spinoza, the experience of joy is an indication of an empowering relationship between the material world and subjective agency. For Young, the city's spectacle and inexhaustible diversity can cut through the deadening ideologies that can disempower many urban residents. For Lefebvre, even momentary eruptions of joy, like the "explosion" of May '68, have the potential to change the affective live of the city for a long time to come. This potential of joyful affect thus generates a third premise of my project:

---

[76] Deleuze, *Spinoza: The Practical Philosophy*, 22.

[77] Brian Massumi, "Sensing the Virtual, Building the Insensible," *Architectural Design* 68, 23.

Premise 3: In the face of the challenges posed by contemporary urbanism, joyful affect can be a resource in building democratic empowerment in contemporary cities.

It is worth noting that one potential difficulty accompanying the effort to build affect into political theory is the fetishization or ontological prioritization of the body and physicality over language, reason, or ideology. As Ruth Leys observes, the turn to affect too often opens the way to "a relative indifference to the role of ideas and beliefs in politics in favour of an 'ontological' concern with people's corporeal-affective experiences of the political images and representations that surround them."[78] The turn to bodies often leads to a material-cognitive determinism – a step back to a Hobbesian account of sense stimuli that cut out much of the space of volition, ideas, and reason.[79] Matter and the body can come to do all the work from the perspective of affect theory, leaving little room for the ways that reason, ideas, and self-conscious reflection seem to also drive subjective experience and action. An ontological prioritization of matter and bodies can quickly grow to occlude more than it reveals.

My account of embodied enfranchisement and affective joy is not meant to offer an either/or contrast with Habermas' deliberative democracy, Rawls' liberal democracy, or any other procedural or rationalist democratic theory. Instead, my intention is to offer a both/and account, using both affect and democratic theory to build a robust account of embodied enfranchisement capable of addressing questions of democracy in contemporary cities. My goal

---

[78] Leys, "The Turn to Affect," 668

[79] See: Samantha Frost, *Lessons from a Materialist Thinker: Hobbesian Reflections on Ethics and Politics*, Stanford: Stanford University Press, 86.

is to provide an empowering ally for existing democratic theory that can generate exciting connections and conversations while bridging the gap between normative ideals and reality.

4: Social Movements and the Architecture of Joy

I have claimed that joy can serve as an affective resource for building popular power under the challenging conditions of contemporary urbanism. In the context of this claim, and of my broader aim to build an account of democratic spatial politics, I pose two questions. First, if alienation, naturalization, and fragmentation characterize the affective life of contemporary cities, then what practices can address these realities and build a joyful city? And, second, what about this joyful city would be specifically democratic? To address these questions, this and the following section explain my decision to draw on urban social movements as exemplars of a spatial politics of joy that democratically reconstructs the experience of the city.

The position my project grants to urban social movements is worth situating relative to a number of their weaknesses. In a number of senses, the movements I am interested in cannot win. From their beginnings, they make claims on political and economic institutions that stretch far beyond the city, while the tools of state violence easily outmatch them and their desires are frequently inchoate or hopelessly utopian. In the event that their proposals find a foothold in popular discourse, movements' claims are often co-opted by entrenched interests, or their organizational hierarchies prove too fragile to survive the anger and resistance provoked in rival interests. In the rare occasions when their claims resonate across municipal and institutional borders, when they are neither repressed nor co-opted, when their structure endures through and responds to challenges, and when they find their city and co-citizens to be willing and open-

minded hosts — even then, the excitement, optimism, and populism that defined the movements inevitably fades with time.

Yet, while these movement may inspire pessimism when evaluated as instrumental claim-makers, they look quite different when we foreground their affective politics. Viewed through the embodied and emplaced accounts of their participants, these movements can be seen performing the (non-instrumental) work of transforming the experience of the city for their participants, turning the built environment into an empowering resource for individual and collective action.

Kristen Ross suggests that the "pleasure of the climate" of urban social movements emerges, "in simply overcoming social boundaries in a deeply compartmentalized society."[80] Building there unities, she claims, generates a "public happiness" by way of the "joyous expenditure of self through the transformation of relationships with others, through unprogrammed synchronicities, and through the destruction of things."[81] As one participant in the May '68 uprisings in Paris put it, "each person was living beyond their intellectual, emotional, and sensorial limits: each person existed above and beyond himself."[82] This affective excess synaestheticizes political claims, bodies, and spaces through the built form of the city.

Similarly, Henri Lefebvre notes a unique unity of experience is present in social movements as they break down "the dichotomies between activity and passivity, between private life and social life, between the demands of daily life and those of political life, between leisure and work and the place associated with them, between spoken and written language, between

---

[80] Ibid. 103.

[81] Ibid. 102.

[82] Kristen Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 100-101.

action and knowledge." Where the everyday life of contemporary urbanism maintains these separations between experience and thought, these dichotomies melt in the "streets, amphitheatres, and factories" as they are occupied and appropriated during social movements.[83]

This unifying vitality has been described as the "phenomenology of movement" – a phrase that captures both the unique way the city is present to political movements and the way the practical reconstruction of public life works on all levels of experience.[84] Channeling Maurice Merleau-Ponty's *Phenomenology of Experience*, we can read movement through the world as constitutive of subjective experience.[85] The body in movement is a site of unity: unifying the self as an actor, the world as an intentional object, and the self to the world as a contiguous site of action. Thus, the phenomenological claim that "the movement proves itself by moving" can be read as positing that a social movement's politics emerge in action. The fact that they have to express, build, and practice their politics in real time and on the level of individual experience points to their popular phenomenology.[86]

This embodied, material, and normative unity of practice during urban social movements presents a methodological challenge. As Ross notes, "The experience of equality, as it was lived by many in the course of the movement – neither as a goal nor a future agenda but as something occurring in the present and verified as such – constitutes an enormous challenge for subsequent

---

[83] Henri Lefebvre, *The Explosion: Marxism and the French Revolution*, New York: Monthly Review Press (1969), 52.

[84] Paul Lawrence Haber, *Power From Experience*, State College: Penn State University Press (2006), 8.

[85] Maurice Merleau-Ponty, *Phenomenology of Experience,* trans. Donald Landes, New York: Routledge (2013).

[86] Ibid. 60

representation."[87] The phenomenology of movements is much harder to represent in its full affective complexity than the story of their tactics, discourses, personalities, social contexts, and claims.

By developing an affective reading of these movements, I aim to demonstrate their underappreciated democratic value, while also provoking democratic theorists into a closer engagement with the challenges of contemporary urbanism. Textured accounts of social movements have had a way of doing this in the past. Looking back at 19th and 20th century movements, Hannah Arendt notes in *On Revolution*, "revolution broke out and liberated, as it were, the professional revolutionists from wherever they happened to be – from jail, or from the coffee house, or from the library."[88] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri similarly note in *Empire*, "At a certain point in his thinking Marx needed the Paris Commune in order to make the leap and conceive communism in concrete terms as an effective alternative to capitalist society."[89] Radical practice has a way of carrying scholars across the abyss that separates theory from material practice, directing them to those moments of real possibility of political change.

A catalyst of this sort can help scholars support democratization under the conditions of contemporary urbanism. If movements' "enjoyment tends toward the concrete," then attending to their affective politics has the potential to provide an affective bridge between the specific conditions of urban life and normative democratic theory.[90] By looking to the embodied experience of social movements as they play out in particular places and spaces, I hope to help

---

[87] Ross, *May '68 and Its Afterlives,* 11.

[88] Hannah Arendt, *On Revolution*, New York: Penguin Press (2006), 259.

[89] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, Cambridge: Harvard University Press (2001), 206.

[90] Lefebvre. *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment.* 100.

democratic theorists in moving from the office and library to conceiving of their task in practical and exciting terms.

To recap, I have claimed that the affective politics of urban social movements can be a guide for understanding how the disrupt the enervating politics of contemporary cities. Thus, my fourth premise:

> *Premise 4*: The architecture of urban social movements builds joy and political possibility by connecting their political aims to their participants' lived experience and practice.

5: Citizenship and Embodied Enfranchisement

I have suggested that the practices, experiences, and theories of urban social movements generate an experience of joy that grows out of the embodied practice of their participants. The final (and maybe most uncertain) premise underlying my dissertation research connects this joy and democracy. What is it about joy – and particularly the joy of urban social movements – that leads to a specifically democratic form of empowerment? If there is a relationship between joy and power, what is to say that this power will be used for a recognizably democratic good?

As stated earlier, the cases I consider were politically ambivalent in their actions and outcomes. Their actions were often violent, alienating to vast portions of the population, and aimed toward outcomes that were ambiguously democratic at best. Yet, to end the narrative here seems to miss something essential to these movements' democratic politics. As Alberto Melucci noted in his study of contemporary social movements, *Nomads of the Present*, "The organizational forms of movement are not just instrumental for their goals, they are a goal in

themselves."[91] Another social movement scholar notes "the importance of not losing the magic in the telling of the story by overemphasizing classic social (why and so what) to the exclusion of the experience."[92] Accepting that the end results of urban social movements are often ambiguous, I believe an affective reading of their politics can unlock their under-recognized democratic potential. The complex social-spatial dialectics of contemporary urbanism and the affective politics of empowerment suggest that the embodied unification of the built environment, practice, and normative claims that is lived by movements' participants is an important political feature in itself.

The democratic core of joyful urban social movements is not found in their transformation of institutions (a goal that is almost never achieved) but their support of citizens' claims to meaningful participation in the construction of public life. These movements show that the built environment can meaningfully reflect, amplify, educate, and empower its occupants. Put another way, while Benjamin may be right that the power of architecture is derived from its reception in a state of distraction, these movements show how space can be used to empower when approached in a state of engagement.

The story of democracy cannot only be told as an unfolding causal chain of events progressing "like the beads of a rosary."[93] Democracy is also crucially about the opening of possibilities or, in the words of a participant in the May '68 protests in France, working to "think

---

[91] Alberto Melucci, *Nomads of the Present: Social Movements and Individual Needs in Contemporary Society*, ed. John Keane and Paul Mier, Philadephia: Temple University Press (1989), 60.

[92] Haber, *Power from Experience*, 17.

[93] Benjamin. *Illuminations*, 263.

the past politically in order to think the present historically."[94] Without this feeling of potency, democracy loses its affective core and becomes merely formal and procedural. Rather than approaching democratic politics as a practice of instrumental claim- and policy-making, I approach movements as materializations of democracy as present practice. These movements unlock something like what Hannah Arendt once described as the "lost treasure of the revolutionary tradition" – an experience of rootedness and empowerment, tied to the vitality of political change.[95] In short, revolutionary change is not only about institutional reform, but overcoming alienating and disempowering habits of citizenship.

The radical disruption of urban social movements generates an empowerment sense of new possibilities, while the emplaced character of these movements prompts a cultivation and love of the community. Spinoza equated love with the imaginative recognition of an external object that is a source of joy. In their mobilization of the built environment and normative claims through bodily practice, urban social movements build love into their politics by recognizing and reimagining the city as the source of their empowerment. At the same time, this recognition of the city as the source of joy is contingent on empowerment, or the will to realize one's will by recreating the world. In this way, the relationship between joy and empowerment draws from an

---

[94] Jean Chesnaux, cited in Kristen Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2002), 120.

[95] Arendt, *On Revolution,* 215.

apparent tension between the love of the world (the city, community, and their norms) and the desire to transform it.[96]

Following the Spinozan account that this joyful affect is contingent on imagining the world as empowering, my focus on urban social movements will concentrate as much on their imaginary as much as their material practices. In particular, the imaginary politics of urban social movements create a living experience of love of the world, without which urban democracy lacks an empowering foothold. As Henri Lefebvre put it, this imagination is of great "practical use:"

> Without an (illusory) representation or a (true) knowledge of social totality, without a participation in the social totality (either an illusory or true participation—but the latter is preferable to the former!), no specific group has any status or certainty. It feels it has no place. It lacks self-confidence in its own vitality. Its everyday experience breaks down into interindividual, socially contingent forms.[97]

In the context of a theory of urban democracy, Lefebvre brings out the latent democratic content of a Spinoza account of joy. If joy grows through an empowering affective unity of the material, corporeal, and normative, and if an image of the social totality is necessary for anchoring this

---

[96] The joy that I am describing echoes Ernst Bloch's description of "concrete utopianism" as a hopeful feeling that "the essence of the world is cheerful spirit and the urge to creative shaping" (Ernst Bloch, *The Politics of Hope*, Oxford: Blackwell Publishers (1998), 16). The democratic core of joy is similarly, "a kind of thirst or hunger for the future, a venturing beyond, a forward dreaming which mixes informed discontent with an ineluctable forward tendency… found particularly amongst youth, in times on the point of changing, in moments of creative expression" (Nigel Thrift, *Non-representational Theory*, 214-5). This concrete utopianism is premised on both love (repair and maintenance of the world) and the urge to reshape (the transformation of the objects loved).

[97] Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life: Volume 2*, 181.

affective unity, then the feeling of joy seems to have an inherent democratic content. In urban spaces in which everyday life is fragmented and the forces that shape the polity defy the imagination, then the experience of joy catalyzes both a love of the world and a will to creative transformation.[98] Without an anchor in the social-spatial order to catalyze action, urban residents cannot be meaningfully described as democratic citizens.

This premise therefore builds on the belief that the body can serve as the site where the tension between radical disruption and community care meet in practice. While the distinction between radical democracy and republican or communitarian democracy is stark in theory (Samuel Chambers describes radical democracy as running perpendicular to other normative and descriptive theories of democracy[99]), urban social movements unite the impulses to articulate something new and to care for the community.

---

[98] At the same time, I will explore how an empowering image of the totality can be constructed through localized political practice. As Latour notes, attempting to reform a totalizing political structure can be stultifying:

> It does not require enormous skill or political acumen to realize that if you have to fight against a force that is invisible, untraceable, ubiquitous, and total, you will be powerless and roundly defeated. It's only if forces are made of smaller ties, whose resistance can be tested one by one, that you might have a chance to modify a given state of affairs" (Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 250.)

In tracking the politics of urban social movements, I will therefore also consider how they turn to the concrete forms of the city as a way to counteract the bewilderment and inevitability of many socio-spatial forms.

[99] Samuel Chambers, *The Lessons of Ranciere*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2013).

Thus, I will explore what I call "embodied enfranchisement" as a term for the experience of unity with one's community, city, and moral commitments, while simultaneously feeling it possible and desirable to interfere in them to effect change[100]

Premise 5: Joy has the potential democratic value to empower citizens to effect political change and care for their world, even in conditions that undercut popular knowledge and agency.

6: Summary of Premises, Methods, and Limitations

To summarize, my dissertation aims to build a theoretical account of democratic joy through an affective reading of urban social movements. This project proceeds from five premises:

Premise 1: Democratic space is not a property of the built environment itself, or of individuals independent of their material circumstances, but is a property of a complex collective composed of individuals, space, matter, and democratic norms.

---

[100] Of course, the status of this enfranchisement is uncertain, as popular empowerment rarely leads to a coherent progress toward a sustained moral good. Yet, as I will return to in my conclusion, I believe that care and rupture can be experienced as bodily comportments and that this can serve to anchor democratic empowerment under contemporary urbanism.

Connected with this is a further uncertainty: if an actual transformation in institutional conditions does not occur, how do we recognize that some change in consciousness has really occurred? How then do we make sense of the aspiration to untether our evaluation of democratic social movements from their narrowly instrumental accomplishments? I argue that there is something in their capacity to shift citizens' experience of their built environment that is of inherent democracy value. As Allen, Young, and Parkinson have helped demonstrate, there is a way that democratic citizenship is rooted in a particular mode of experience of the built environment.

Premise 2: Urbanism is a recent development and lies at the core of modern politics, with historically contingent features and social consequences that are inherently democratically problematic.

Premise 3: In the face of the challenges posed by contemporary urbanism, joyful affect can be a resource in building democratic empowerment in contemporary cities.

Premise 4: The architecture of urban social movements builds joy and political possibility by connecting their political aims to their participants' lived experience and practice.

Premise 5: Joy has the potential democratic value to empower citizens to effect political change and care for their world, even in conditions that undercut popular knowledge and agency.

These premises provide the foundation of my reading of democratic spatial politics. They suggest not only a promising new route for considering the democratic implications of contemporary urbanism and urban social movements, but also a methodological approach that will guide my theory-building project.

I proceed through a combined attention to the textured accounts of social movements provided their participants and observers, and the theoretical works that emerged to articulate the politics of these movements. Because I am tracking the way social movements change the experience of the city, the narrative accounts and conceptual developments that emerge from the movements themselves are central to my project.

My goal is not just to offer social critique, but also to sift through the movements I consider for a positive political program. This is a method that Henri Lefebvre referred to as

"transduction." Parallel to induction and deduction, transduction "builds a virtual object using information." Neither building a theory that directly corresponds to a given set of cases, nor showing how a general rule is reflected in particular cases, "transduction goes from the (given) real to the possible."[101]

This method of inquiry "entails detecting and transforming the possible within the real, the symbolic forms and fragments of an alternative future within everyday life."[102] In his own work, Lefebvre tracked the gestural and inchoate historical trends and social movements of his time to unlock the broad "social pedagogy" within them. Even if the utopias and ideals of a movement were not realized in practice (as in the wave of dissent during and after 1968 in France), Lefebvre argued that, "In political thought and political theory, the category (or concept) of the 'real' should not be permitted to obscure that of the possible. Rather, it is the possible that should serve as the theoretical instrument for exploring the real."[103] Failure to explore the unrealized possibilities of movements viewed as failures, or whose ideals eventually became compromised, is to fall into a conservative presentism, prematurely dismissing the ways things could be other than they are.

Democratic social movements, as the many examples listed above testify, always seem to fall short of the political transformation they aim for but these cases also show that there are democratic possibilities latent in social movement practice. My dissertation will work transductively to locate the inchoate, unrealized, and forgotten promise of these movements. I

---

[101] Henri Lefebvre, *Critique of Everyday Life: Volume Two,* New York: Verso (2002)*,* 117-8.

[102] Lefebvre, *The Explosion*, 57-63.

[103] Henri Lefebvre. "Comments on a New State Form," in *State, Space, World: Selected Essays*, ed. Neil Brenner and Stuart Elden, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (2009), 125.

follow in the path of critical theory in telling "a history of the present that recovers subaltern practices in order to break the 'discursive lock' of the dominant paradigms in political theory."[104] The goal of the project is thus not just to tear down the present by revealing "traces of an underlying emancipatory possibility" that lurks in the actual practices of the defeated and forgotten. This emancipatory possibility – this excess – is found in the material, embodied, and normative claims made by these movements. Against the shared background of a constitutive, globalized, and mediating urban society, the ideals and practices of these movements resonate with each other and with our own time.

Several qualifications of my project are worth noting. First, while my dissertation is meant to suggest a new way of researching democratic spatial politics in theory and practice, my project is primarily concerned with building a theory and method for studying democratic affect in the city. My aim is to suggest possible ways that cities and social movements can be read as democratic resources. However, I do not claim to offer a robust test of this theory. My engagement with the Paris Commune, Black Panthers, Situationists, and Sustainable Seattle is as exemplary theory-building resources. The depth of analysis that would go into tracking the myriad ways these movements transformed the affective life of their participants, and the nature of the enduring social change that followed these movements, is a task that lies beyond this dissertation. The primary goal of the project is thus to present a compelling theory of democratic spatial politics that I (and others, hopefully) could fruitfully bring to bear in deep studies of particular social movements and their afterlives.

---

[104] Margaret Kohn, *Radical Space*, 11.

Second, I do not offer an account of how democratic urban experience and empower will lead to particular political outcomes. While certain institutions, policies, and norms are considered the desirable end points of democratic politics (social safety nets, a functional public infrastructure, promoting the voice and vote of marginalized populations), there is no guarantee that urban democracy will lead to these outcomes. The theory of embodied enfranchisement I develop is less concerned with the outcomes of democratic processes than with the constitution of citizens that can imagine and understand the forces that shape their lives. Following in the tradition of Hannah Arendt and Sheldon Wolin, I do not offer a normative account of democracy that promises institutional and policy changes that we would recognize as desirable from the perspective of a theory of justice.

The cases that I draw from a are each problematic for democrats looking for sustained desirable outcomes. These successes were short-lived, exclusionary of other citizens, destructive, or simple failures at affecting substantive social and institutional change. The Communards of Paris, the Black Panthers, and the Situationist International all advocated violence and failed to achieve long-lasting reform of political institutions, while the Sustainable Seattle index failed to build a coalition that was inclusive across class and race lines and only achieved minimal institutional reform. Yet, as I have noted above, to stop here is to miss the promise of these practices. What I am tracking, I argue, is part of the fundament of democratic citizenship: the belief that one can understand the world and work with others to transform it. Without this

ambivalent combination of popular knowledge and power, democratic normative goals will remain out of reach in contemporary cities.[105]

A third qualification grows out of another point made above: the built environment has limitations as a site for addressing many of today's most pressing political problems. Phenomena such as large-scale environmental and economic changes are difficult to meaningfully capture in defined spaces and materials. I take this fact to be an opportunity rather than a limitation. In chapter four, I consider how community developed statistical measures can motivate what I call the "large-scale civic imagination" in a way that supports democratic engagement with complex global phenomena on the level of the individual city. By focusing on how the history, development, and implementation of urban sustainability metrics connect cities to broad ecological phenomena, I claim that urban democracy can face broad and diffuse problems by imagining material life in new ways.

7: Chapter Outline

The research questions that guide my project are split into two parts. In the Part One, I attempt to address the question posed by my conference presentation audience member: what makes for a democratic city? Accepting that my discussant's point that the built form of the city cannot be democratic in-itself, the question in my first two chapters is not how the city is

---

[105] This disconnect between empowerment and the positive transformation of political institutions is one of the core challenges facing this project (and democratic theory generally). If the conditions for empowered citizenship and justice seem like they are not necessarily consistent with one-another, how do we construct cities that can channel the good of each? This is not a new question for democratic theory and practice and it is one that I will return to throughout this project.

democratic on its own, but how the built environment figures into the political constellation of individuals, movements, institutions, and democratic norms. I therefore develop an answer to this question through an affective analysis of modern urban planning and social movement practice.

Chapter one maps the emergence of democratic empowerment against and through modern urbanism. Through a study of the Paris Commune of 1871, I sketch an account of embodied enfranchisement as it is crafted through the joyful appropriation of the built environment. Where state and economic imperatives in the mid-19th century sought to craft an urban space that transformed the city into a site that naturalized French state authority, the Commune marked an effort to regain a popular foothold in molding and occupying the city. I situate this relative to a tradition in political theory that reconciles the material and social experiences of the city and state, to show the need for democratic theory to engage with the historically and materially contingent politics of modern urbanism.

Chapter two then considers how material and discursive shifts in Parisian planning practice disempowered urban residents. While the planning practice preceding the Commune failed to repress urban social movements, the much subtler spatial and discursive reforms under the French Third Republic profoundly undercut the affective resources of social and revolutionary movements. Through studies of the construction of the Paris public rail system and Basilica of the Sacred Heart, I claim that we find a new form of anti-democratic urbanism in late-nineteenth century Paris (what I call the "city of sad passions"): an affective structure of urbanism that inhibits individual capacity to imagine and act into the material world. By considering the shifts in planning and discourse in the years after the Paris Commune, I track the emergence of an urban practice premised on what I follow Hannah Arendt in calling a "twofold

flight" from worldliness. During the French Third Republic, individual moral life increasingly disconnected from the material world, while administrative decisions developed into questions of transcendental, rather than immanent and democratic, imperatives.

These chapters serve as Part I of my dissertation, framing both the value of an account of democratic joy situated in the bodies of citizens, as well as the particular challenges that contemporary cities present to this value. Part II of my dissertation then considers strategies for redemocratizing the city in the face of modern urbanism. I consider several material and bodily practices that meaningfully connect local sites to global urban society and craft joyful affect under the challenging spatial and political conditions.

Chapter three considers the strategies available to social movements as they connect local sites and practices of resistance to the structural alienation and systemic violence built into urban form and discourse. The spaces that do this work are taken as neutral, natural, or prepolitical – as givens, rather than contingent practices that can be reformed. By considering the theory and practice of the Situationist International (a French radical group with ties to the May '68 student protests and wildcat strikes) and Black Panther Party (in the practice of the Survival Programs and Huey Newton's theory of intercommunalism), I argue that modern urban social movements have developed creative ways to confront the difficulties of confronting national and global political phenomena through localized resistance. I analyze the work of the Situationist International and Black Panther through the concept of the "heterotopia" – spaces that are outside the structure of society that serve to foreground its contingency. While the concept of heterotopia, as developed in the work of Michel Foucault, has significant theoretical problems, I

argue that the untenable structuralism of the concept proves to be its great strength as a motivator of city-level empowerment.

Chapter four instead considers the development and practice of statistical quality of life and sustainability indicators. Where the prior chapter considered the city as a site of resistance that explicitly articulated its politics against state and economic institutions, I consider statistical indicators instead as a resource for navigating global democratic geographies. By tracking the development and implementation of the Sustainable Seattle Index, we can see how new connections are built between citizen experience and global political problems. These indicators have the capacity to affect a new link between materiality, bodily practice, and politics by bringing the project of the composition of knowledge and action to the foreground. By connecting large-scale ecological and economic questions with personal experience, these indicators can localize global question in a way that builds knowledge and provokes action.

I then conclude by briefly considering the role of policing strategies – violent, discursive, and material – in containing the democratic possibilities inherent in urban social movements. Surveying a number of problematic responses to the protests in Baltimore following Freddie Gray's death while in police custody, I claim that an increased attention to the affective life of urban social movements can help us appreciate the key democratic values in popular actions that are often seen as illiberal, undemocratic, violent, or irrational.

Chapter 1: Embodied Enfranchisement and the Paris Commune of 1871

"The Commune is still alive fulfilling the wish cried by the communards at the time of their execution. It lives on as a message that the city exists against the state."

Manuel Castells[106]

"Urban revolution and concrete (developed) democracy coincide."

Henri Lefebvre[107]

It is a tough world for urban social movements. They make claims on political and economic institutions whose boundaries stretch beyond the city, often beyond the nation. They are easily outmatched by the tools of state violence, which can displace them with only bad public relations as a consequence. They offer near-utopian proposals for sweeping changes in the organization of moral, urban, economic, and political life, running counter to entrenched interests and institutions. Even in the event that their proposals do find an audience in the power structure, these movements' claims are more often co-opted than they are adopted. These movements often arise from the grassroots, resulting in organizational hierarchies that are fragile and conflicted. Their occupation of urban space provokes more anger than sympathy from their inconvenienced and offended fellow citizens. They bring new identities and marginalized bodies into the public eye in a way that provokes anger and fear. And, on the rare occasions when their claims resonate across urban and institutional borders, when they are not repressed or co-opted, when their

---

[106] Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots*, Berkeley: University of California Press (1983), 26.

[107] Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution,* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (2003), 137.

structure endures through and responds to challenges, and when they find their city and co-citizens to be willing and open-minded hosts — even then, the excitement, optimism, and populism that catalyzes the movements inevitably fades with time.

The state of urban social movements provokes two questions. First, from the empirical perspective: why, in the face of institutional, cultural, and material resistance, do we continue to see citizens appropriating urban space to make far-reaching political claims? Second, from the normative perspective: what, if any, is the democratic value of these movements? I propose one response to these two questions in this chapter, claiming that the enduring empirical and normative value of many urban social movements is located in their quality as affective catalysts of democratic citizenship.

I make this claim through a study of modern urbanism and its discontents during the Paris Commune of 1871. Building off Historian Graham Robb's description of the Commune as "two months of psychopathic democracy" in which "nothing extraordinary appeared to be happening,"[108] I suggest that what appears "psychopathic" is a disruptive joy (celebratory and violent) that is an inherently democratic intervention into alienating built environments whose forms and meanings are dictated by the state and economy; what appears as "nothing extraordinary" is a popular occupation and appropriation of inherited institutions as a means to care for the self and the city. This combination of rupture and care is the hallmark of an embodied enfranchisement.

---

[108] Graham Robb, *Parisians: An Adventure History of Paris*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co., (2011), 165.

Affects of excess and care are fundamental resources that I will argue are at the heart of democratic revolutionary and urban movements. The qualities that Robb dismisses are the core of the Commune's democratic value: a joyful turn to the quotidian that catalyzes popular efforts to build immanent meaning in the heart of the built environment. I claim that attending to the affective life of urban social movements like the Commune provokes us to reform a number of fundamental assumptions about the the relationships of democratic norms, urban forms, and embodied practices.

1: The Affective Politics of Democratic Urbanism

Political theorists have often treated the city as a mediator between citizens and their state. From Aristotle and Hobbes to contemporary democratic theory, the political logic of the city conforms roughly to that of the ancient Greek polis. On this model, cities are the locations where individuals learn to be citizens and to participate in state institutions. Yet, the relationship between cities and states has changed dramatically since the time of the polis: cities are more diverse in their populations and dispersed in their economic, environmental, and cultural effects; states are increasingly bureaucratically administered, unbound in their actions, and tied to global institutions. Where the city once was the material and spatial instrument by which citizens and states could make claims on one another, it now exists as an ambiguous (even antagonistic) mediator between the two.

To put this emergent conflict between the city and state in concrete terms, consider the Paris Commune of 1871. The Commune was a citywide uprising that came in the wake of two decades of dramatic urban reforms planned and implemented by the French Second Empire.

These reforms saw new roads, fortifications, marketplaces, and nationalist monuments built throughout the city, recreating Paris to better serve the French state's economic and security interests. In the process, the state uprooted communities, tore apart the rhythms of daily life, and transformed the city into the first modern metropolis.[109]

Following these changes, the citizens of Paris revolted against their national government on March 18, 1871 and established an independent municipal Commune. The Communards expelled the French army in a nearly bloodless coup, occupied Paris' city hall, and administered a functional municipal government before being invaded and bloodily repressed by the army in June.

While the Commune failed to make a sustained impact on the institutions of the French state, it lives on as an important and much-discussed example of social, revolutionary, urban, and democratic politics. As the largest municipal uprising in the modern West, and coming on the heels of the most dramatic urban renewal project of its time, the Commune is a "coveted prize" for theorists of social change and spatial politics.[110] Standing on the cusp of recognizably modern social movements, urban politics, and state administration, the Commune provides a jumping-off point for a broader understanding of how urban democracy now undercuts, rather than supports, the state.

I will claim that the Commune exemplifies a form of urban social movement that draws from the materials of the city to make claims for democratic empowerment against the modern

---

[109] David Harvey, *Paris, Capital of Modernity,* New York: Routledge, (2003); T.J. Clark, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris In the Art of Manet and His Followers,* Princeton: Princeton University Press (1999).

[110] Roger V. Gould. *Insurgent Identities : Class, Community, and Protest In Paris From 1848 to the Commune.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1995). 12.

state. Four examples of the Communards' spatial politics will help me illuminate this claim: walking tours, barricade construction, administration at the city hall, and political clubs.

Walking tours: In his *History of the Commune of 1871*, Prosper Olivier Lissagaray wrote in 1873 to eulogize the Commune by leading his reader on a walking tour of Paris during the uprising's last days. Aiming to dispel rumors of violence and moral degeneration in the revolutionary city, he guides his readers past "street-arabs" selling pamphlets, caricaturists working from kiosks at the Place de la Bastille, and catafalques processing down the street during a Communard funeral. We then take in a ginger-bread fair and a public speech before proceeding to the Place de la Concorde to observe "an enormous ditch, laying bare all the arteries of subterranean life."[111] Lissagaray completes the tour by entreating his visitor to remember and share these images of city life: "Woe to France if she does not comprehend! Leave at once; recount what Paris is. If she dies, what life remains to you?"[112] For the Communards, to understand the politics of their movement meant getting into the smells, sights, and everyday goings-on of revolutionary Paris. The vitality of these spaces and moments was the life of the Commune and the Communards.

Barricades: Ubiquitous through modern French revolutions, one contemporary newspaper account of the Commune refers to barricades as the "natural instinct of the Parisian."[113] The Commune's first Minister of War Louis Rossel described the barricade of 1871 as "a rather meager fortification" that, once taken, works "to the disadvantage of its defenders,

---

[111] Prosper-Louis Lissagaray, *History of the Paris Commune of 1871*, trans. Eleanor Marx, Paris: New Park Publications (1976), 297

[112] Ibid., 297.

[113] Stewart Edwards, *The Paris Commune 1871,* London: Eyre and Spottiswoode (1971), 60.

since its structure is similar on both sides."[114] In spite of their defensive shortcomings, the barricades remained of central importance. Rossel noted that, "In barricade fighting the Parisian finds an energy that he does not possess when defending fortifications or fighting ordinary campaigns."[115] Beyond this, Communard Francois Jourde explained that the barricades were reflective of the non-hierarchical repossession of the city: "we did not want to take possession of the Hôtel de Ville, we wanted to build barricades…We were very embarrassed by our authority."[116] To take the most solid elements of the old city and repurpose them was more than just a military tactic; it was to democratize urban practice.[117] Thus, Virginie Lenordez called on all passersby to contribute to barricade construction: "Your pavingstone, citizen."[118] Alphonsine Blanchard similarly asked pedestrians to lay stones on her barricade.[119] Communard Louise Michel described the effect of these popular constructions as a kind of magic: "the marble seemed to come alive" when seen from behind the barricades.[120]

---

[114] Stewart Edwards, *The Communards of Paris, 1871,* Ithaca: Cornell University Press (1973), 162.

[115] Ibid., 162.

[116] Ibid., 151.

[117] Historian Stewart Edwards notes how one woman in the political club at Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs "proposed using the bodies of the 60,000 priests in Paris, by her count, instead of sacks of earth for constructing barricades" (*The Paris Commune*, 286). That bodies representative of the old order were being imagined as elements of the revolutionary urban infrastructure suggests an intriguing blurring of the live between the body and the city in moments of revolutionary democratic political upheaval.

[118] Joseph Bergier, *Le Journal d'un Dourgeois de Lyon,* ed. Justin Godart, Paris: Presses Universitaires de France (1924), 120.

[119] Edith Thomas, *The Women Incendiaries: English Translation From the French,* London: Secker & Warburg (1967), 129.

[120] Stewart Edwards, *The Communards*, 126.

Hôtel de Ville (City Hall): In Marx's words: "The great social measure of the Commune was its own working existence."[121] While the inauguration of the Commune's elected members on March 28, 1871 drew from the history of the Hôtel de Ville as the symbolic center of Parisian politics, festivities segued into what one journalist referred to as the "prose of work."[122] While the Commune's detractors told stories of orgies and drunken parties at the Hôtel de Ville, first-hand accounts give a very different impression. Historian Stewart Edwards notes, "the atmosphere was more one of puritan application to duty, people taking their meals while still working and grabbing a few hours of sleep on sofas."[123] Public administrators saw to it that the post, sewers, gas, and municipal transport continued smoothly under the new government. Even when under siege in its last days, the city ran "just like clockwork."[124] The anti-Commune paper *Gaulois* grudgingly complimented the administrators at the Hôtel de Ville, noting that "the well-being, the health and safety of a large city such as Paris, its existence even, depends on the regular carrying our of a large number of services that cannot be left unattended to."[125] The Communards could not just resist the existing social order, they had to continually attend to the concrete needs of the Parisian citizenry.[126]

---

[121] Karl Marx, *The First International and After: Political Writings*, *Vol. 3*, New York: Penguin (1974), 217.

[122] Stewart Edwards, *The Communards of Paris,* 186.

[123] Ibid. 208.

[124] Stewart Edwards, *The Paris Commune,* 308.

[125] Edith Thomas, *The Women Incendiaries,* 189.

[126] Terry Eagleton, "Foreword," in Kristen Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune,* London: Verso (2008). vii.

Political clubs: The two months of the Commune saw political clubs spread into nearly every Parisian neighborhood. A meeting at the Club Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs reached unanimity among the 5,000 in attendance, "[requesting] that the Commune make the churches of every arrondissement available in the evenings for public meetings and club sessions."[127] The *Union des Femmes*, a citywide women's group, further requested that the Commune "establish centres permanently open to the public" in every administrative district.[128] Conversations and proclamations in these clubs covered topics ranging from providing food, putting people to work, and organizing the defense of the city, to distributing flowers left on the altars at occupied churches to schoolchildren and the poor.[129] Louise Michel described these meetings as uniquely enlivening: "One was a little more fully alive there, with the joy of feeling oneself in one's element, in the midst of the intense struggle for liberty."[130] Like the barricades, political clubs generated a broadened sense of empowerment by distributing spaces of popular rule around the city.

While the importance of place and space has been repeatedly and convincingly asserted by political theorists, practices like ginger bread fairs, barricade construction, the administration of sewers, or the public redistribution of flowers are not often considered central to democratic

---

[127] Stewart Edwards, *The Communards of Paris*, 100.

[128] Edith Thomas, *The Women Incendiaries*, 57.

[129] Edith Thomas notes that this incident suggests the unique attentiveness that was at the core of the Commune's politics: "The proposition was unanimously adopted. Perhaps I am wrong in lingering over the detail, unworthy of a 'serious' historian. But I find it admirable that in the midst of the fighting, in the midst of poverty, in the feverish atmosphere of the Clubs, a woman should think of giving flowers to children. This seems to me quite indicative of a deep sensibility which rarely appears in revolutionary movements, which, because they must confront the most urgent situations, have to be schematic" (*The Women Incendiaries*, 84).

[130] Ibid., 36.

norms or social movements. Existing accounts of democratic spatial politics instead concentrate on the formal and instrumental use of the built environment as a means for developing community feeling, identifying common interests, holding institutions accountable, and mobilizing populations against disempowering and unequal political orders.[131]

This focus on spatial politics as a means to communicate individual and collective interests reflects the broad assumption in democratic theory that social movements are instrumentally focused on reaching and reforming state institutions. A statist bias places urban movements in the conceptual framework of governing institutions, stacking the interpretive deck against their normative and political significance.

Pressing against this conceptual framework, the actions undertaken by the Communards are minimally oriented toward reforming the state. During the Commune, Parisians retook and repurposed their city to construct democratic norms and institutions into the built environment itself: the walking tours show the Commune reaching into everyday life across revolutionary Paris; the barricades were a material resource that allowed the Communards to repossess their city and materialize practices of democratic leadership; the *Hôtel de Ville* provided the built core of both the ceremonial and administrative politics of the Commune; the political clubs distributed direct democratic control across a vast network of public spaces. What explains the difference between the Communards' description of these events as central to their politics and existing democratic theory's silence with regard to them? Is this a justified omission from

---

[131] For reviews of the role of space and the built environment in the contemporary democratic theory, see: Marcel Hénaff and Tracy B Strong, *Public Space and Democracy*; Margaret Kohn, *Radical Space: Building the House of the People*; John Parkinson, *Democracy and Public Space: the Physical Sites of Democratic Performance.*

democratic theory? Or does this silence mark a problematic divide between the spatial politics of democratic theory and practice in the modern city?

I claim that this gap between the Communards and the theorists is explained by the shifting affective politics of the city under the modern state. Understanding and closing this gap is therefore crucial to the project of building democratic citizenship in contemporary cities. Where democratic theory continues to treat the city as a medium that citizens use to make instrumental claims on the state, the Communards suggest something new: that, as Manuel Castells describes it in the above epigraph, "the city exists against the state." Urban social movements give the people a foothold in alienating urban spaces by challenging built forms and norms dictated by the state.

Through the Commune, I will provide an affective reading of urban social movements and democratic spatial politics, arguing that practices of political opposition reconstruct the uses and understandings of the built environment to empower citizens. By using space and matter to explore and express political claims in concrete form, these movements orient citizens in their material world and build an affective unity of the city, body, and normative claims. The occupation of urban space sees citizens drawing from the built environment to both make practical claims and also to express needs and desires that have no corresponding venue in existing urban space. This combination of the banal and the joyful, the administrative and excessive, the drives to care and transformation, is the core of urban social movements' affective politics and democratic value.

To make this claim, I proceed as follows. Section two surveys historical understandings of the role of the city in negotiating the relationship between citizens, cities, and states.

Reviewing the work of Aristotle, Thomas Hobbes, Alexis de Tocqueville and several contemporary theorists, I argue accounts of urban democracy are often premised on a normatively and descriptively problematic assumption of an affective unity of citizens, cities, and states. Section three reviews the history of Haussmannization – the urban reforms that changed both the physical and political environment of Paris. This section translates the broad theoretical tension outlined in section two into the material and affective terms that guide my project. My fourth section turns to the literature on identity formation, drawing from the work of Charles Taylor to build an account of subjectivity and citizen mobilization through the built environment. The fifth section offers an interpretation of the events of the Paris Commune as practical efforts to address the role of affect in empowering citizens to act through their built environment. Section six then summarizes the democratic challenges and conflicts of the split between cities and states as sites of democratic politics.

2: Citizen–City–State

Political theorists (particularly democratic theorists) have long suffered from nostalgia for the Greek *polis* (sometimes problematically referred to as "polis envy"[132]): longing for a conceptual and practical unity between citizens, cities, and states. Aiming to rehabilitate the ancient Greek city-state, those experiencing this nostalgia seek a politics wherein the city is coextensive with the territory and institutions of the state and the experience of the city is integral to the formation of citizens' identities. In this way, citizens, cities, and states become fundamentally compatible.

Michel Foucault refers to extreme forms of this nostalgia as a "Rousseauist dream":

---

[132] Mary Dietz, "Feminist Receptions of Hannah Arendt," *Feminist Interpretations of Hannah Arendt,*. ed. Bonnie Honig, University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press (1995), 26.

> A transparent society, visible and legible in each of its parts, the dream of there no longer existing any zones of darkness, zones established by the privileges of royal power or the prerogative of some corporation, zones of disorder. It was the dream that each individual, whatever position he occupied, might be able to see the whole of society, that men's hearts should communicate, their vision be unobstructed by obstacles, and that the opinion of all reigns over each.[133]

This social unity solves the problems of legitimating government action and navigating interpersonal differences by figuring the material and communal life of the citizen, city, and state as continuous, compatible, and coterminous (thus, "citizen-city-state" may be a better translation of *polis* than just "city-state"). While not every account goes so far as this Rousseauism, our political imagination continues to center the city as the site where the individual rubber hits the institutional and collective road.

One of the clearest and earliest formulations of this ideal can be found in Aristotle's *Politics*. The *Politics* claims that "man is by nature a political animal."[134] Read in combination with a second claim that the "the city is…prior by nature of the household and to each of us" Aristotle's argument holds that citizens and community emerge and articulate each other through the shared space of the *polis*.[135] Within the *polis,* community interactions are concentrated in a small area, undergirded by stable sites and practices in a way that both constitutes and accustoms citizens to the state. It is only within the city that the individual gains senses of what it means to

---

[133] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge,* New York: Pantheon (1980), 152.

[134] Aristotle, *Aristotle's Politics,* trans. Carnes Lord, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2013), 4.

[135] Ibid., 4.

be human and what it is to be part of a political community (an example of this is Aristotle's considerable attention to the layout and design of shared tables and dining halls for community meals[136]). Anticipating the Rousseauist dream, Aristotle posits a fluid unity between citizen and state, as developed in the material form of the city. For Aristotle, "one ought not even consider that a citizen belongs to himself, but rather that all belong to the city; for each individual is a part of the city."[137] The citizen is their city, all the way down; the experience of the self is inextricable from the space of the city-state.

In the years after Aristotle wrote, however, the political life of the *polis* shifted dramatically. The age of the city-state came to an end and politics came to be defined by a small number of empires overseeing a large number of cities. Under empire, the premises of the Aristotelian *polis* no longer held: populations of citizens were more diverse and less tethered to their home cities, and the city and state were no longer territorially or institutionally coextensive. Where previously the citizen-city-state only existed as a *polis* against and among *poleis*, this new mode of government introduced a foundational disconnect between citizenship, cities, and states. The political ideal of the fluid unity of citizen-city-state, however, survived this historical shift.

Thomas Hobbes' *De Cive* offers an exemplary reading of the early modern city's role in bridging citizens and the state. For Hobbes, the ideal city performs the tasks of controlling subjects in order to serve the state's good. Where Aristotle argued that the city, citizen, and state came to be organically and simultaneously, the Hobbesian city is instead the site where consenting subjects and political institutions meet:

---

[136] Ibid., 25-61.

[137] Ibid., 223.

> He who submits his will to the will of an other, conveighs to that other the *Right* of his *strength,* and *faculties*; insomuch as when the rest have done the same, he to whom they have submitted hath so much power as by the terror of it he can conform the will of particular men unto unity, and concord. Now union thus made is called a City.[138]

The city, like the Leviathan, is an artificial unity of individual strengths and wills that cannot be divided against itself.[139] The chief deviation from the Aristotelian model of the *polis* is that the City is no longer the material expression of the demos and state, but instead is the product of the state's work to unify and synthesize a consenting people.[140] The city remains a fluid mediator between the citizen and state, albeit an increasingly complex and strained one.

Embracing more democratic norms, Alexis de Tocqueville offers another image of the town's role in bringing together the citizen and the state.[141] In *Democracy in America*, Tocqueville presents the local community as the dynamic laboratory that anchors individuals to a place, fosters social unity, and develops the sense that private will and the public good align. Noting that American democracy was characterized by both a "pathos of movement"[142] wherein

---

[138] Thomas Hobbes, *De Cive*, Oxford: Clarendon Press (1983), 89.

[139] Ibid., 91.

[140] Ibid., 100.

[141] While he had much to say about American towns, Tocqueville offers very little on cities in *Democracy in America*. His most sustained engagement with the city is found in his notebooks when he visits the "odd spectacle" of Cincinnati, which he described as, "a town which seems to want to get built too quickly to have things done in order. Large buildings, huts, streets blocked by rubble, houses under construction; no names to the streets, no numbers on the houses, no external luxury, but a picture of industry and work that strikes one at every step" (Alexis de Tocqueville, quoted in Witold Rybczynski, *City Life*, New York: Touchstone [1995], 94). In his fleeting remarks on the architecture and public life in Paris and New York, Tocqueville expresses similar misgivings about the material and social forms of large cities.

[142] Alexis de Tocqueville, *Democracy in America,* trans. Harvey Mansfield and Delba Winthrop, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2000), 49, 269.

financial incentives detach citizens from local communities and a "soft despotism" that lead to the ceaseless pursuit of private comfort, Tocqueville argued that local communities were a necessary political anchor.[143] Where the liberal state "would be a world of small men, revolving around itself without repose,"[144] the town provides a foundation on which citizens can stabilize themselves to pursue public ends.

In this sense, the city gives form to a social whole bound together by a shared horizon of mores, "habits of the heart," and "habits of the mind,"[145] providing a site for both individuation and aggregation that binds citizens together under the democratic state.[146] Prefiguring John Dewey, Tocqueville's town is a democratic pedagogy where the associations of the local community create the tools necessary for a functional national political system with democratic vitality.[147]

Even under changing political and spatial conditions, Aristotle, Hobbes, and Tocqueville retain the city as the site where the citizen and state come together. Where the citizen-city-state triad was inextricable in Aristotle, Hobbes premises his *De Cive* on the city-sovereign containing and channeling citizens, and Tocqueville figures the town as the site where the competing imperatives of the state and individual form a tense practical unity. Yet, as Tocqueville shows, the

---

[143] Ibid., 622.

[144] Ibid., 662.

[145] Ibid., 275. Tocqueville later explains this socialization as a unification that happens through opinion formation in public space: "there is a society only where men consider a great number of objects under the same aspect; when on a great number of subjects they have the same opinions; when, finally, the same facts give rise to the same impressions and the same thoughts" (Ibid., 358).

[146] Ibid., 300.

[147] John Dewey, *The Public and its Problems*, New York: Holt (1927), 142.

city mediates a complex relation between modern citizens and the state. Democratic states must govern diverse populations with competing interests and complex histories, while cities are divided by the competing imperatives of economic actors and collective institutions.

This question of the city's relationship to modern citizens and states has been a topic of some debate in contemporary democratic theory, though even the most sophisticated accounts of democratic spatial politics exhibit nostalgia for the city-citizen-state. Briefly consider four democratic theorists' recent accounts of the role of the city.

Most clearly exemplary of nostalgia of the *polis*, Danielle Allen's *Talking to Strangers* responds to the economic and racialized injustice in and around Chicago's South Side by sketching out a "Chicago-polis" in which city government, neighborhood associations, and the University of Chicago break the stranglehold of interracial antagonism and distrust.[148] Similarly, Clarissa Hayward's *How Americans Make Race* considers the complex interaction of economics, laws, narratives, and spaces in sustaining racial hierarchy in St. Louis Missouri and Lima, Ohio. Though she stops short of offering a utopian redesign of a St. Louis- or Lima-polis, but she does offer suggestions for combating racism on the municipal level including "the recentralization of authority over collective decisions to the metropolitan, or even to the regional level," reorganization of voting rights so that all affected by municipal decisions can vote, and the destruction of physical and social barriers to the open use of public spaces.[149] In both of these

---

[148] Danielle Allen, *Talking to Strangers: Anxieties of Citizenship Since Brown V. Board of Education,* Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2006), 175-184.

[149] Clarissa Hayward, *How Americans Make Race,* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 192-202.

cases, the city is figured as the site where a disharmony between citizen and state and economic institutions can work itself out through local political actions and reforms.

Other accounts of democratic spatial politics emphasize the particular importance of public space as a bridge between citizens and states. John Parkinson's *Democracy and Public Space* argues that democratic institutions require a "space in which claims can be tested, weighed against each other, and turned into binding collective agreements."[150] Formal public space, he holds, serves as the foundation for popular input into state institutions and policies. Margaret Kohn's *Brave New Neighborhoods* similarly argues that public spaces are a necessary condition for a healthy democratic state:

> Access to public space is important, because public forums are used to communicate ideas to allies and adversaries through techniques such as street speaking, demonstrations, picketing, leafleting, and petitioning… Although there are many other sources of political information, such as television advertisements and direct mail, these other forms of communication do not allow the citizen to answer back, ask a question, or take immediate action.[151]

Like Parkinson, and echoing arguments made by Allen and Hayward, Kohn presents public space as a unique ground for collective action that tethers the citizen to the democratic state. As opposed to paper and electronic media, public space allows for an (almost) immediate connection between citizens, their allies and adversaries, and political institutions.

---

[150] John Parkinson, *Democracy and Public Space: the Physical Sites of Democratic Performance,* Oxford: Oxford University Press (2012), 185.

[151] Margaret Kohn, *Brave New Neighborhoods: the Privatization of Public Space,* New York: Routledge (2004), 6.

Each of these accounts of democratic spatial politics casts the city as a medium uniquely capable of negotiating historical, legal, and economic ills. The built environment of the city provides a medium through which citizens can come together, develop collective claims, and advocate for reforms to even the most broad and deep forms of inequality and disempowerment. Ideally, the city would disappear as in the Rousseauist dream, leaving citizens and states in immediate contact and political unity.

My claim, however, is that this ideal is normatively problematic and inaccurate to the political realities of modern states and cities. This is the case for several reasons. First, a developing literature in democratic theory suggests that the compulsion to smoothly transfer local political movements into state-level policy and institutions may actually run counter to democratic norms. Sheldon Wolin's understanding of "fugitive democracy" and Jacques Ranciere's argument against "reduction of politics to the state" capture this claim.[152] In "Fugitive Democracy," Wolin suggests a fundamental opposition between the sedentary politics of the state and the dynamism of social movements. As Wolin puts it,

> Democracy is not about where the political is located but about how it is experienced. Revolutions activate the *demos* and destroy boundaries that bar access to political experience. Individuals from the excluded social strata take on responsibilities, deliberate about goals and choices, and share in decisions that have broad consequences and affect unknown and distant others. Thus revolutionary transgression is the means by which the *demos* makes itself political.[153]

---

[152] Jacques Ranciere, "Ten Theses on Politics," *Theory and Event* 5 (2001).

[153] Sheldon Wolin, "Fugitive Democracy," in *Democracy and Difference: Contesting Boundaries of the Political,* ed. Seyla Benhabib, Princeton: Princeton University Press (1996), 38.

Democracy, Wolin suggests, consists in the experience of breaking down barriers and opening new political possibilities, not in the institutionalization of popular movements. The democratic value of revolutionary politics is that it mobilizes the *demos* thought a particular sort of empowering experience; an experience that is quickly exhausted in institutional political practice.

Similarly, Ranciere locates the heart of democratic politics outside institutions and policies, referring to the shift from citizens' movements to political institutions as the implementation of "police order" that forecloses the proliferation of subjects and meanings in politics.[154] For Wolin, Ranciere, and other radical democrats, local transgression is part of the essence of democratic empowerment, while the desire to instrumentalize this experience through policy implementation on the state-level undercuts the proliferation of ideas and identities that are constitutive of democracy. While no radical democrat would argue that policy should never respond to the demands of popular movements, statist efforts to formalize and institutionalize social movements can prematurely foreclose the openness that characterizes democracy.

Beyond democratic theory, changes in the form of the modern state also undercut the democratic politics of the city. As recent work by James Holston and James Scott has noted, modern states are composed of numerous institutions overseeing vast territories, marked throughout by a fundamental dependence on other states and economies.[155] The complexity and vastness of the modern state requires it to distance itself from the realities it governs, rationalizing and centralizing key social functions and realities in order to render the populations,

---

[154] Jacques Ranciere, *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy,* Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (1999), 30-32.

[155] James C. Scott. *Seeing Like a State*; James Holston, *The Modernist City*.

economies, cultures, and territories it oversees "legible."[156] As Scott explains the state therefore approaches the world as a representation, seeing "human activity…largely through the simplified approximations of documents and statistics."[157]

Further, Holston and Scott's reviews of modernist urban planning show how state and economic institutions remake cities to better conform to these representations. Statist abstraction and simplification redefine urban space, disarticulating the subjective experiences of city- and community-life from state imposed meanings. Urban life is fragmented into different zones, splitting the experience of the city into so many distinct and disconnected functions. While this facilitates state administration, it undercuts the knowability of the city and, as I will go on to claim, the empowerment of the city-dweller.

Finally the political life of cities has changed rapidly in modernity. Largely dependent on a vast array of economic and cultural connections, both wealthy global cities and the rapidly expanding ranks of impoverished mid-size cities are described as "fragile," "splintered," and "networked."[158] Contrary to the image of the city as an independent community relying on a small and well-controlled local area, modern cities are marked by constant flows of people, goods, and information, making them dependent on distant ecologies and economies.

Urbanist Henri Lefebvre referred to this as the birth of worldwide "urban society,"[159] defined by the global interaction of urban forms, political institutions, cultural products,

---

[156] James Scott, *Seeing Like a State,* 2.

[157] Ibid., 76.

[158] Peter Soppelsa, "Finding Fragility in Paris: The Politics of Infrastructure after Haussmann," *Proceedings of the Western Society for French History* 37 (2009), 233-47.

[159] Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution,* 2.

environmental impacts, and economic imperatives in a way that exceeds the vocabulary available to describe the city.[160] With this development, "Urban reality simultaneously amplified and exploded, [losing] the features it inherited from the previous period: organic totality, belonging, an uplifting image, a sense of space that was measured and dominated by monumental splendor."[161]

This combination of statist legibility, bureaucratic administration, and globalization undercuts the democratic potential of the contemporary city. The sum of these changes is a shift that Fredric Jameson describes as an "urban alienation" that is "directly proportional to the mental unmappability of local cityscapes."[162] The changes in the politics of the city leads to a gap (or "contradiction") between "lived experience and structure," or phenomenological experience and a statist reality "that transcends all individual thinking or experience."[163] In the face of the cognitive unmappability and fragmentation of urban space, we face a crisis of "the imaginary representation of the subject's relationship to his or her real conditions of existence."[164] Alienation results from the inability to contextualize one's immediate experience of urban spaces within a mental representation of the entire city.

In sum, developments in democratic theory, state formation, and urban form and experience culminate in a problem for political theory. Where the city was once a meeting point for citizens and states – whether the relationship was figured as one of Aristotelian harmony,

---

[160] Ibid., 52.

[161] Ibid., 13.

[162] Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*, Durham: Duke University Press (1991), 353.

[163] Ibid., 353.

[164] Ibid., 353.

Hobbesian sovereignty, or Tocquevillian social pedagogy – now democratic norms of diversity and openness, the vast and transformative state, and the city's expansion into global economic and political networks leaves those nostalgic for the *polis* without a firm foundation in political right or reality.

While the work of Aristotle, Hobbes, and Tocqueville may have been normatively insightful and empirically founded when they wrote, their theoretical claims about the political life of citizens, cities, and states do not map onto our contemporary political realities. In spite of this, their basic understanding of spatial politics continues to be the touchstone for even the most spatially sensitive accounts of democratic norms and practice. In a world marked by vast and baroque governments, transnational economic flows and exploitations, enduring historical injustices, and cities that explode into a global urbanism and implode in fragments and functions, political theorists and practitioners must consider the possibility that these changes have introduced a tension in the basic terms of social and political thought.

For this reason, the following three sections turn to the Paris Commune of 1871. The Communards' actions confronted the tension between urban democracy and the modern state at the city-level and in real time. Turning to the context of the Commune will help solidify the material life of the normative and empirical changes outlined above, while helping us interpret the democratic value of the Commune's spatial politics. That Prosper Lissagaray sees fit to take his readers to an "enormous ditch," that "the marble seemed to come alive" to Louise Michel when she was behind the barricades, that the revolutionary government saw the efficient functioning of the city's public services as a political imperative, or that the clubs distributed alter flowers across the city might seem like extraneous background details to democratic

theories of spatial politics. I, however, will take the Communards at their word that these moments capture something of central importance to their politics.

Before considering this, I will provide a brief history of the spatial and political context of the Commune by offering an account of the preceding decades of urban reform. This material history puts the modern political conflict between citizens, cities, and states into concrete terms, serving as the backdrop for my account of the Commune's affective politics.

3: Unsettling Paris

While Paris before the French Second Empire was no backwater, it was widely criticized for its difficult living conditions and ramshackle planning and architecture. Writing in the 1770s, Jean-Jacques Rousseau predictably panned Paris: "Entering through the faubourg Saint Marceau, I saw only small dirty and stinking streets, ugly black houses, an air of filth, poverty, beggars, carters, sewing women, women hawking tisane and old hats."[165] Speaking as many critics did before and after him, Voltaire called for a complete rebuilding of Paris: "May God find some man zealous enough to undertake such projects, possessed of a soul firm enough to complete his undertakings, a man enlightened enough to plan them, and may he have sufficient social stature to make them succeed."[166] By the time Louis Napoleon III established the Second Empire in 1852, these cries had grown in their frequency and immediacy.

To address this increasingly urgent situation, Napoleon III installed Eugene Haussmann to the position of Prefect of the Seine and changed him with modernizing and securing Paris.

---

[165] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *The Confessions,* trans. Angela Scholar, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2000), 67.

[166] Voltaire, quoted in: David P. Jordan, *Transforming Paris: The Life and Labors of Baron Haussmann*, New York: Free Press (1995), 15.

Neither Haussmann nor Napoleon III had spent much of his life in Paris (Napoleon III, because of exile and Haussmann, by birth), leaving them with a distant relationship to the city that became theirs to recreate (Haussmann even boasted of his disconnect from Paris in his memoirs, claiming that his "long residence in the provinces (no less than twenty-two years!)," had left him with only "memories and impressions" of the city[167]).

Notably, both had been absent from the city during the tumultuous insurrection of 1848, giving them little insight into the roots of the most recent urban revolt. David Jordan writes that, "[v]iewed from a safe distance, urban insurrection was transposed from a social to a technical problem."[168] Haussmann's planning was conducted primarily through maps, and was only rarely supplemented by visual inspection of building locations. Orders were placed and armies of workers commanded from the distance of administrative offices.[169] Haussmann, when speaking of the philosophy behind his method claimed, "geometry and graphic design play a more important role than architecture itself."[170] As such, Paris's move into modernity during the 1850s and 1860s took place largely through the creation of grand spaces and spectacles viewable from the planner's 30,000 foot view or from the opulent apartments lining the city's new boulevards.

Haussmann's vision, one in which the principles of line and façade were of utmost importance, led him to destroy many of the small neighborhoods and winding streets of old Paris. Whole communities along the Rue Saint Denis, home to the narrow streets and ramshackle

---

[167] Walter Benjamin, *The Arcades Project,* trans. Howard Eiland and Kevin McLaughlin, ed. Rolf Tiedmann, Cambridge: Belknap Press (2002), 126.

[168] David P. Jordan, *Transforming Paris*, 169.

[169] Ibid., 169.

[170] Eugene Haussmann, *Memoirs de Baron Haussmann: Grands Travaux de Paris*, Paris: Victor-Havard (1893), 3.

architecture that had once been emblematic of Paris, were scrapped in favor of buildings and streets of consistent, aligned axes.[171] Boulevard widths of up to one hundred feet forced the demolition of great swathes of the city. These thoroughfares were then lined with grand blocks of uniform apartment buildings. Monuments like the *Arc de Triomphe* and the Grand Opera House were built to cap the end of nearly every major street.[172]

The Paris of old was now replaced with grand plazas, monuments and a uniform architecture that flatly denied intimate and individual engagement. The block, rather than the building, became the essential unit of Paris. Buildings were no longer independent structures, with their individual builders and occupants having ultimate control over their form and facade. Instead, a set of strict regulations forced new buildings placed along avenues to meet uniform standards of outside appearance.[173] Architecture was thus subordinated to an urban syntax where the form and meaning of space was found in reading the continuities and discontinuities of façades and functions.

The aesthetic mechanisms that helped legitimize the Haussmannization of Paris combined ornament with technologies of control. The grand tree-lined boulevards also facilitated travel and suppression of civil unrest; the clearing of neighborhoods to construct immaculate new buildings and streets fractured the historical hotbeds of dissent; the new parks and trees aimed to pacify the city as they were believed to have in London and New York; and the grand

---

[171] David H. Pinkney, "Napoleon III's Transformation of Paris: The Origins and Development of the Idea," *Journal of Modern History* 27 (1955), 129.

[172] David P. Jordan, *Transforming Paris*, 205-206.

[173] Naomi Miller, "Urban Architectural Studies: Paris," *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 32 (1973), 70.

arcades satisfied the new mercantile and middle classes' new consumerism, subduing the possibilities of bourgeois unrest.[174]

Friedrich Engels' "The Housing Question" identifies this combined aesthetic and political impulse as the core of Haussmann's contribution to urban planning practice:

> By 'Haussmann' I mean the practice which has now become general of making breaches in the working class quarters of our big towns, and particularly in those which are centrally situated, quite apart from whether this is done from considerations of public health and for beautifying the town, or owing to the demand for big centrally situated business premises, or owing to traffic requirements, such as the laying down of railways, streets, etc. No matter how different the reasons may be, the result is everywhere the same: the scandalous alleys and lanes disappear to the accompaniment of lavish self-praise from the bourgeoisie on account of this tremendous success, but they appear again immediately somewhere else and often in the immediate neighbourhood.[175]

Coupled with the annexation of the suburbs, these changes created a city of residential communities that were isolated from their places of employment and able to be quickly made subject to state control.

The end result was an odd stupor among the Parisians that had lived through the dramatic rebuilding of their city. "As the physical structure of the city disappeared – as it buildings, shops, neighborhoods and interlocking social relations were obliterated and new ones took shape," writes one historian. "Parisians' images of the city – their habits, interactions, memories and

---

[174] David P. Jordan, *Transforming Paris*, 165-84.

[175] Frederick Engels, "The Housing Question," Part 2 Sec. III, available at http://www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1872/housing-question/ (accessed 18 May 2014).

perceptions – underwent drastic and often discomforting metamorphoses."[176] The changes in the form of the city undercut residents' identities, practices, affinities, and understandings.

As poet Charles Valette asked of Haussmann, "Cruel demolisher, what have you done with the past? I search in vain for Paris: I search for myself."[177] With the loss of the city, displaced and marginal communities were doubly alienated from their political and built environments. Similarly, looking out over the Place du Carrousel at the former site of a community of ramshackle homes and shops, poet Charles Baudelaire reflected:

> Paris changes! but nothing in my melancholy
>
> Has budged! new palaces, scaffolding, building blocks,
>
> Old faubourgs, everything becomes allegory for me,
>
> And my dear memories are heavier than stone.[178]

Baudelaire's "Le Cynge" reflects on the personal and social tolls of changes to the city. On a personal level, these changes prompted him to reflect: "the old Paris is no more…the form of a city changes more quickly, alas! than the heart of a mortal."[179] Watching the city change around him left Baudelaire torpid, weighted with memory, and melancholic. Where before the form of the city and his life had taken shape together (however melancholy that life may have been), now sites once imbued with memory were being replaced by something new. The city and the self

---

[176] Shelley Rice, *Parisian Views*, Cambridge: MIT Press (1997), 31.

[177] Robert L. Herbert, *Impressionism: Art, Leisure, and Parisian Society,* New Haven: Yale University Press (1988), 3.

[178] Charles Baudelaire, "Le Cynge," available at http://fleursdumal.org/poem/220 (accessed 15 August, 2014).

[179] Ibid.

became untethered, leaving Baudelaire alienated and disconnected from the materials and spaces of this new Paris.

As a result of these changes, "the corporeal unity" of pre-modern Paris was lost, "exposing an innate tension between function and perfection in the design of Second Empire Paris."[180] While city was still the material condition of Parisian bodily and sensual life, the socio-spatial dialectic took on a new form, splitting Parisians' inner lives and outer experiences. Manuel Castells' study of urban social movements, *The City and the Grassroots,* recognizes Haussmannization as a part of a broader trend in which state and economic forces secure their power by severing the connection between cities and their residents' sense of meaning:

> The spatial project of the new dominant class tends toward the disconnection between people and spatial form, and therefore between peoples' lives and urban meaning. Not that people will not be in places or that cities will disappear; on the contrary, urbanization will accelerate in most countries and the search for housing and services will become the most dramatic problem facing people.[181]

The experience of Parisians during and after Haussmannization reveals the core antagonism between modern states and citizens' investment in their cities. Haussmannization broke the connection between the form of the city and the lives of memories of Parisians such that citizens' experiences no longer mapped onto their image of a new Paris built to conform to administrative

---

[180] Matthew Gandy, "The Paris Sewers and the Rationalization of Urban Space," *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographer*s 24, 36

[181] Manuel Castells, *City and the Grassroots,* 314.

imperatives that were remaking their city and society.[182] This statist urbanism split existing communities, destroyed shared social practices, rendered public spaces more easily controlled, and disarmed oppositional politics.

Yet, shortly after Haussmann lost his post as Prefect of the Seine and the Second Empire government fell, a municipal revolt saw the citizens of Paris drive the new French national government from their city and establish an autonomous municipal Commune. How is it that the Commune articulated its democratic politics in spite of (and by way of) changes in urban form and meaning that were carried out in order to prevent this articulation? And what does this contribute to a democratic theory of the political life of the modern city? To begin to address these questions, I turn to Charles Taylor's account of identity formation. Taylor's account helps us see selfhood as fundamentally tied to a collective process of place-based meaning-(re)formation. As I will argue, Haussmannization fundamentally undercut the spatial and material foundations of Parisian identity, prompting the Communards to rebuild it democratically on the city level.

4: Foundations of Democratic Identity

Taking place in the wake of a radical transformation in the material, political, economic, and cultural life of Paris, the Commune had to redefine political expectations, identities, and

---

[182] It is worth noting that alongside Haussmannization's negative impact on the city's poor and marginalized, it also had a number of positive impacts on the city. The public parks, sanitation infrastructure, and stunning architectural accomplishments of Haussmann's tenure were all great and good accomplishments (Patrice de Moncan, *Le Paris d'Haussmann*, Paris: Les Éditions du Mécène [2012]). While the story I am telling is primarily one of the French Second Empire's negative impact on Parisian democratic life, this is certainly not the only story that can be told about these urban reforms.

practices in a new built and social landscape. The situation faced by the Communards was exemplary of a tension between modern cities and states as sites of democratic norms and practices. Counter to the classical image of the city as a mediator that connects citizens to the state, the urban reforms undertaken by Haussmann and the French Second Empire disarticulated Paris' form and its subjective meaning. The city was no longer the carrier of an affective unity of citizens and the state, but instead a contested terrain through which Parisians battled for a meaningful experience of the material world against the forms and norms dictated by the French state.

The following section uses Charles Taylor's spatialized account of subjectivity and political identification in *Sources of the Self* to attend to the affective core of the Communards' material practices. While Taylor's spatial vocabulary is largely figurative, it provides a foundation for my explanation of the way urban social movements draw from the built environment as an empowering resource. However, I will also claim that Taylor lacks an account of what ultimately catalyzes these acts of appropriation and reform. Thus, the subsequent section will supplement Taylor by considering the affective life the of architectural and material practices that catalyzed this democratization of the city by the Communards.

Mirroring Charles Valette's post-Haussmannization lament "I search in vain for Paris: I search for myself," Taylor notes that, "To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand."[183] To lack an identity (an answer to the question "Who am I?") is to lack a fundamental orientation within a horizon. This disorientation – and thus, this lack of self-certainty – can take

---

[183] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: the Making of the Modern Identity,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press (1989), 27.

two forms: one can either fail to know the lay of the land (and, thus, know the "shape of the good") or one can be ignorant of one's place on the map (the "direction of travel" relative to the good).[184] To be a subject is therefore to be located within a horizon, to possess knowledge of the landmarks within that horizon, and to sense of one's location and movement relative to these landmarks. Within the horizon is the fundament of selfhood; beyond it lie a- or extra-moral norms and unfamiliar cultural understandings that are not incorporated into the self. For Taylor, this moral cartography is the essence of human subjectivity and agency.[185]

This cartographic sense arises from membership in a political community. This is true in two distinct senses. First, "A person without a framework altogether would be outside of space of interlocution; he wouldn't have a stand in the space where the rest of us are. We would see this as pathological."[186] Like the shared understandings that form the necessary backdrop for Habermas' discourse or Rawls' public reason, a shared (or, at minimum, shareable) set of coordinates for navigating a moral landscape is a necessary condition of social life. The individual that either lacks this coordinate system or situates coordinates in a manner that is wholly unfamiliar to others is going to be unrecognizable, unrelatable, and alien.

Second, not only is knowledge of where one stands necessary to political life, but political life is necessary to understanding where one stands. For Taylor, we cannot be meaningfully considered people without initiation into a linguistic community. Thus, "I am a self only in relation to certain interlocutors: in one way in relation to those conversation partners who

---

[184] Ibid., 41-42.

[185] Charles Taylor and Amy Gutmann, *Multiculturalism : Examining the Politics of Recognition,* Princeton: Princeton University Press (1994), 27.

[186] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self,* 31.

were essential to my achieving self-definition; in another in relation to those who are now crucial to my continuing grasp of language of self-understanding."[187] It is only by relating to others regarding the position and shape of the objects within one's horizon that one gains a sense of those who share one's particular identifications and universally valid commitments. "The very confidence that we know what we mean, and hence our having our own original language, depends on this relating. The original and (ontogenetically) inescapable context of such relating is the face-to-face in which we actually agree."[188] It is only through contact with others that our words are confirmed as having meaning and our self is confirmed as having substance.

However, Taylor's use of "face-to-face" is deceptive. Interaction within a horizon is not simply a series of unmediated face-to-face interactions in which subjects are brought to bear on one-another in acts of confession and confirmation. The mediating role of objects is crucial: "In talking about something you and I make it an object for us together, that is, not just an object for me which happens to be one for you…The object is for us in a strong sense."[189] A political space is opened up by bringing multiple perspectives to bear on an object, and it is only reflexively, though this world of mediating objects, that we gain solidity and confidence in ourselves as subjects and agents.

In this way, Taylor locates a certain inherently democratic practice at the heart of subjectivity and agency. Taylor argues that it is moments of understanding and agreement concerning a mediating world of objects that grant "the very confidence that we know what we

---

[187] Ibid., 36.

[188] Ibid., 38.

[189] Ibid., 35.

mean." Without the ongoing and collective generation of meaning within a shared horizon of moral and material landmarks, we lose something fundamental to the self as a subject and agent. Thus, Taylor proposes the outline for a virtuous democratic cycle: collective engagement in the things of the world solidifies us as subjects, and these subject can then serve as more effective members of a democratic community.

In the context of democratic spatial politics under the modern state, Taylor's helps frame the Commune's task: to reorient Parisians' sense of themselves as citizens in the new spaces and materials of the city. Modern state-driven urbanism, as exhibited during the Haussmannization of Paris, takes the form of a double displacement: first destroying the landmarks that had been integral to self-formation and, second, breaking up the communities that had collectively developed senses of meaning, subjectivity, and agency through those landmarks.

The mutual imbrication of the built form and citizen experience was severed by a radical intervention into the form and meaning of the city. Castells describes the modern state as relying on exactly this kind of displacement to sustain its control:

> What tends to disappear is the meaning of places for people. Each place, each city, will receive its social meaning from its location in the hierarchy of a network whose control and rhythm will escape from each place and, even more, from the people in each place… The new urban meaning of the dominant class is the absence of any meaning based on experience… The outer experience is cut off from the inner experience. The new tendential urban meaning is the spatial and cultural separation of people from their product and from their history. It is the space of collective alienation and individual

> violence, transformed by undifferentiated feedbacks into a flow that never stops and never starts. Life is transformed into abstraction, cities into shadows.[190]

The experience of urbanism in modernity is one in which the state forestalls citizen empowerment by isolating people from one another and by imposing meaning on the built environment.

Modern urban space, reformed and defined through the overlapping vocabularies of the state and economy, defers meaning upward in a hierarchy of institutional discourses, away from subjective and collective experience. State-driven urbanism is transcendental, operating by shifting meaning outside the immanent plane of matter and experience. The state maintains itself as "the ethical producer of life and the world," controlling not just the material form, but the popular understanding, of the body of the city.[191]

As the state's material and discursive representations of the city were untethered from the experience of Paris' inhabitants, the material form of the city increasingly came to be experienced as an abstraction, shadow, and unceasing flow.[192] The accounts of the poets and historians of Haussmannized Paris help us see is that this displacement is not only a matter of spatial organization and discourse, but also of affect. The loss of the city as a common object during the Second Empire threw Paris and Parisian into flux, severing the form and experience of the city uprooting Parisians and undercutting the self-, social-, and space-certainty that empower political action and judgment. Without this foundational rootedness, citizens lack a grounding

---

[190] Manuel Castells, *City and the Grassroots,* 314.

[191] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire*, 78.

[192] Henri Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*, 150.

element that solidifies them as subjects, as members of a political community, and as moral and political agents.

What Taylor does not provide is a sense of how Parisians could begin the process of reorienting themselves in their city after their communities and identities had been torn up at the roots. By severing the social continuities and communities that were the footholds of popular Parisian politics, Haussmannization transferred the sources of political power and subjectivity away from citizen experience and upward into the state. Alongside the question of collective reorientation introduced by Taylor is therefore a set of practical questions addressed by urban social movements: how can alienating built environments be practically remade as sites of popular agency? How can social movements build the foundations of a democratic city when the meaning and use of the material environment is radically disconnected from citizen experience? What are the spatial politics that catalyze meaningful citizen agency in contemporary urban society?

The following section interprets the affective politics of the Commune as a guide for the practical work of rebuilding citizen power in modern cities. Building off work on the subjective and political power of affect, I claim that the Commune promoted an affective experience of excess that was foundational for empowered democratic citizenship. This will help me make a broader claim: urban social movements, even when unsuccessful in their instrumental claims, have the ability to produce a democratic joy through the built form of the city. This joy constitutes citizens as agents capable of effecting social change by politicizing urban space and bodily practice, serving as an effective democratic antidote to the alienating and oppressive experience of state- and capital-driven urbanism.

5: Building a Democratic City

Returning to the examples that opened this chapter, we can now interpret the democratic task of the Communards' as rebuilding political power by reconnecting the city and subjective experience. The normative core of the Commune can be read through two complementary practices: first, the Communards created *heterotopic spaces*: spaces that represented citizens' experiences in ways that affectively and effectively staged broad questions of the political, economic, cultural, and material life of Parisians. These spaces gained their power from the political geography of the modern state but simultaneously undercut the state's spatial politics. Second, the Commune participated in a *politics of concretion*: it drew together material forms and ethical claims, shortening the gap between democratic ideals and the body of the city itself. While the Second Empire's reforms were presented through transcendent ethical and administrative imperatives, the Communards worked to articulate their normative ideals as immanent in the form of the city itself.

Where heterotopic spaces drew the Communards out of themselves and rebuilt far-reaching connections between citizens and their built environment, the politics of concretion instead solidified citizens as spatial, corporeal, and moral actors. This heterotopic explosion and concretizing implosion situates citizens in a built environment that meaningfully connects them to broad political realities, while simultaneously empowering them to work through space and matter to affect positive political change.

5.1 Heterotopia / Explosion

Henri Lefebvre and Michel Foucault separately popularized the term "heterotopia."[193] While each defines the term differently, both authors broadly understand heterotopic spaces as environments that bring the latent political and ideological contents that structure space into the conscious foreground. Where everyday experience typically approaches the built environment as the neutral background of collective life, heterotopias subvert everyday spatial politics by showing naturalized space to be contingent and emplacing what is marginalized or unthought.[194] In this sense, heterotopic spaces are spaces of representation in which the public, its problems, and its possibilities become visible, visceral, and subject to political claims.

The political life of heterotopic space emerged with a shift in the geography of the modern state. The increasing connections between state and economic institutions, the globalization of production and culture, and the development of networked urbanism distributed power away from a small number of political and industrial centers.[195] Existing in a less hierarchical arrangement than in the past, Hardt and Negri describe this shift as presenting "a superficial world, the virtual center of which can be accessed immediately from any point across

---

[193] Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution,* 8-13; Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," 22-7.

[194] Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-imagined Places,* Cambridge: Blackwell (1996). Lefebvre's work with the Situationists and during the 1968 student Protests in Paris is exemplary of this: the revolutionary project began in part by building spaces where the political tensions and possibilities of the built environment could erupt into consciousness.

[195] Administrative and economic imperatives now connect spaces in a way that commercial and political centers did in prior centuries (Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*).

the surface."[196] This displacement results in a world where "each struggle, though firmly rooted in local conditions, leaps immediately to the global level."[197]

This geography – one in which urban spaces are connected by shared institutions and discourses – links bodily practice, sensual life, and broad political and economic structures. Exactly the displacement that Castells and Lefebvre cast as the source of urban alienation can, when disrupted, become a resource for feeling oneself at the center of political and economic life. This explosion of localized resistance to the scale of dispersed and complex structures and institutions is the affective power of heterotopic space.

Arising in response to the emergence of this new urban geography, the Commune built heterotopias that connected concrete urban spaces to broader political phenomena. Practices like barricade construction, the public redistribution of flowers, or the festival inauguration of the Commune challenged the existing spatial order and reflected the experiences and desires of Parisians. When Louise Michel claims that "the marble seemed to come alive" when viewed from behind the barricades,[198] or the *Union des Femmes* brought flowers to the city's forgotten and destitute, or the inauguration of the Commune's elected members saw the City Hall occupied and draped in red flags.[199] The Commune drew material culture into the conscious foreground in a way that reconnected the material life of the city and its citizens to the political forces that shaped their lives. These moments inflected banal material spaces with a new and expansive

---

[196] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire,* 58. This remaking of state geography anticipates a number of the post-Commune reforms that are discussed in Chapter 2.

[197] Ibid., 56.

[198] Stewart Edwards, *The Communards*, 126.

[199] Stewart Edwards, *The Paris Commune*, 186.

meaning that resonated across the city and challenged the power of the state to control urban form and meaning.

Destructive heterotopias similarly resonated broadly and deeply. Throughout the Commune, the clubs organized festive "exorcisms" of the markers of the old regime.[200] When citizens of the 11th arrondissement discovered a guillotine designed and built by the exiled French government, they met and organized a public burning, "for the purification of the Arrondissement and the consecration of our new freedom."[201] Similarly, the destruction of the Vendôme Column, a memorial to Napoleon, was treated as a ritual purification. People approached and took photos of themselves with the rubble, where "the excitement was so intense that people moved about as if in a dream."[202] According to André Breton, "the magnificent light in Courbet's paintings is for me the same as that in the Place Vendôme when the Column fell."[203] Like the living marble that Michel saw from behind the barricades, these destructive rituals enchanted the built environment.

To destroy the city was not to dismiss the importance of urban space and architecture, but instead to give it pride of place. Gustave-Paul Cluseret, an elected representative of the Commune, reflected that the "general principles of street fighting" dictated that from the beginning the Communards should have

---

[200] Ibid., 299.

[201] Ibid., 150.

[202] Alistair Horne, *The Fall of Paris*, New York: Penguin (2007), 351.

[203] Margaret Cohen, *Profane Illumination: Walter Benjamin and the Paris of Surreal Revolution,* Berkeley: University of California Press (1993), 79.

> concentrated on destructive devices that damage material rather than persons. 'War on material!' should be our slogan in future wars. We must not hesitate to destroy what we cannot defend, even if it be an entire city. This is the reverse of bourgeois warfare where men, who cost nothing, are destroyed and property, which costs a great deal, is respected.[204]

Acts of destruction negated the Second Empire as a political and social order –repurposing the material of the city for popular empowerment, rather than economic development and centralized administration. In destroying the signifiers of state order, the Communards drew attention to the violence embedded in the urban landscape and presented the possibility that it could better reflect the will of the Parisian citizenry.

The Commune also built what could be called heterotopias of time, drawing out connections across the experiences of marginalized populations through history. Georges Vallés reported of the final meetings of the Commune: "The last stories I heard were in honour of heroic resistances, of Numance in ruins, Carthage in cinders, Saragossa in flames."[205] By striking up connections across the revolutionary tradition through time, the Communards infused the material form of the city with a new potency. The Communards drew the history of struggle and resistance together, taking a leap in the "open sky of history" to draw together the history of resistance. Revolutionary movements are aware, in the words of Walter Benjamin, "that they are about to make the continuum of history explode…at the moment of their action," showing

---

[204] Stewart Edwards, *The Communards of Paris*, 166-7

[205] Stewart Edwards, *The Paris Commune*, 327.

through their deeds both continuities with the history of resistance and the possibilities of the present.[206]

In constructive, destructive, and temporal heterotopias, the Commune built counter-sites to the state-imposed order of the Second Empire. By approaching space and matter as deeply meaningful, the Communards infused the city with immanent meaning. Doing so unlocked a new sense of possibility in the existing social order – whether by building a new model of city life, destroying the placeholders of the French state, or by connecting the Communards with past moments of resistance.

Returning to the vocabulary of Charles Taylor, heterotopias are simultaneously orienting and disorienting. On the one hand, they help draw out connections between concrete spatial experience and the broader political order. Redistributing flowers and destroying the monumental symbols of the French state were spatial practice of new and visceral meaning. On the other hand, heterotopias are disorienting precisely in their immanence. By denaturalizing the city at the same time that they infused it with meaning, heterotopias take an urban form that is "not so much hard to question as hard to even think of as containing questions at all," and showed that it could be made otherwise.[207] This explosion allowed the Communards to simultaneously challenge and bolster popular understandings of the city.

---

[206] Walter Benjamin, "Theses on the Philosophy of History," in *Illuminations*, 261-2.

[207] Nigel Thrift, "Non-representational Spaces," 19.

5.2 Concretion & Implosion

Alfred North Whitehead coined the term concretion to refer to the way that all things take shape through a combination of idea and matter.[208] Opposed to idealists (who attribute reality exclusively to mental phenomena) and realists (who attribute reality exclusively to material objects), Whitehead argued that all things – building, people, moral ideals – must be understood as a combination of ideas and matter. The existence of bricks, citizens, or norms is derived from their continual ability to couple their current forms with the objects and properties that they contact through time.[209]

Democratic theory and practice can fall into what Whitehead would call "fallacies of misplaced concreteness": the descriptive error of attributing existence to undefined, diffuse, or ideal entities.[210] Untethered from the spatial and material conditions of their practical realization, democratic theory's normative and procedural accomplishments are left dangling without an anchor in the body or built environment, leaving the polity "ripe for capture by powerful, noncollective interests."[211] For those groups facing oppression, violence, and marginalization, the space between ideal and practical politics allows justice to be deferred and normative claims to be displaced.

---

[208] Alfred North Whitehead, *Science and the Modern World,* New York: Free Press (1997), 51.

[209] There is a strong parallel here to Spinoza's *conatus,* though with a distinction in emphasis. Spinoza's *contatus* is presenting as a striving inherent in all things to adhere in their current form, while Whitehead's concretion stresses the constant change in the ideal and formal properties of objects as they come into contact with others.

[210] Ibid. 51.

[211] Betsy Taylor, "'Place' as Prepolitical Grounds of Democracy: An Appalachian Case Study in Class Conflict, Forest Politics, and Civic Networks," *American Behavioral Scientist* 52 (2009), 827.

Addressing this gap is one of the struggles of revolutionary politics. Aimé Césaire said of Toussaint L'Ouverture, leader of the Haitian Revolution, that he pushed 18th century revolutions across the terrain "that separates the *only thought* from concrete reality; right from its actualization, reason from its proper truth."[212] Where the gap between the normative and positive registers of politics can often be figured as essential to the structure of reality (on the one side there are normative concerns, on the other side is are material and empirical realities), revolutionary efforts to confront oppression and violence often challenge this political ontology.

Thus, concretion is not only a matter of interest for political movements but can also catalyze normative political thought. Historian Frank Jellinek noted, "The Commune was the first concrete example of a workers' seizure of power."[213] Similarly, Hardt and Negri suggest that, "At a certain point in his thinking Marx needed the Paris Commune in order to make the leap and conceive communism in concrete terms as an effective alternative to capitalist society."[214] While the Commune was communist neither in its politics nor in the eyes of the majority of the Communards, Hardt and Negri indicate a useful truth about social movements: normative ideals find life in the resistance of the disempowered.

From the perspective of the citizen making democratic claims through the city, however, the gap between the moral claims and material practices of the state is both disempowering and problematic. Achieving situated subjectivity and democratic agency within the city requires understanding normative claims as they come to bear on concrete material realties. The

---

[212] Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, *Empire,* 117-8.

[213] Ibid., 76.

[214] Ibid. 206.

Commune thus had to build a new political landscape even as they criticized, combated, and deconstructed the existing social order.

The Commune's politics closed this gap, both through legal reforms and material practices. As historian Edith Thomas explains, the Communards' hope to remake the city's politics "took an immediate concrete form in measures that were very simple, but went straight to the heart of the poor people made even poorer by war and siege."[215] In limiting night labor by bakers, elected representative of the Commune Auguste-Jean-Marie Vermorel noted that: "It would be against all principles of justice and human rights if we were to allow a worthwhile class of workers to remains outcasts of society for the benefit of the aristocracy of the belly."[216] To actively include all Parisians in city life required more than just promises of formal equality, but the reorganization of the eating and baking habits of the city. At the Hôtel de Ville, this concretion took the form of both maintaining the administrative practices of the Second Empire, and distilling the Commune's principles into practical measures that addressed the needs of Paris' impoverished citizens. The "prose of work" was required to keep the sewers running, the garbage collectors collecting, the Central Bank circulating currency, and the museums open.[217]

In more spatial terms, the political clubs brought moral and material reform of the city together. A series of women's political clubs sprang up, including the *Union des Femmes*, one of two city-wide womens' organizing groups. The *Union* requested that the Commune give it a hall in every *mairie* in which its committees could "establish centres permanently open to the public,

---

[215] Edith Thomas, *The Women Incendiaries,* 47.

[216] Stewart Edwards, *The Communards of Paris,* 138

[217] Ibid., 186.

and that it take on the printing costs of the circulars and posters that were needed for publicity."[218] The *Union*'s arrondissement committees were composed of eleven members, had to be open day and night, and hold a plenary session at least daily (the same rules concerning constant accessibility also applied to the group's central committee). By May, a federation of arrondissement councils met daily opposite the Hôtel de Ville, guaranteeing both spatial proximity and timely representation of the demands of individual clubs and neighborhoods.[219]

Democracy was no longer a deferred promise in the clubs, but instead was practiced nightly. Louise Michel described these conversations as uniquely empowering: "One was a little more fully alive there, with the joy of feeling oneself in one's element, in the midst of the intense struggle for liberty."[220] Michel's description of the clubs as spaces of intense life, joy, and struggle also provides a fuller view of the Janus-faced affective life of urban democratic movements.

Both the violence that accompanied the destruction of state space during the Commune and the Communards' experiences of enchantment and joy were intrinsic to the affective life of the movement. References to experiences of "enjoyment-violence" (as Lefebvre calls it) occur frequently in the personal accounts of the Communards, reaching out because it can no longer stand to be "oppressed, refused, reduced."[221] At the same time, the Communards acted out of loving care for their community. Recognizing that the city and its people were the conditions of

---

[218] Ibid., 57.

[219] Stewart Edwards, *The Paris Commune,* 281

[220] Edith Thomas, *The Women Incendiaries,* 36.

[221] Henri Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment,* 147.

their freedom, the people of Paris took to caring for each other and preserving all those material forms and community norms that gave their life meaning.

In sum, the affective life of the Commune created the conditions of popular orientation and empowerment in Haussmannized Paris. In the following section, I will claim that the affective excess of enjoyment-violence is integral both to the continued vitality and normative value of urban social movements. This democratic value is inextricably tied to popular efforts to materialize and embody democratic principles in the built forms and sensory experiences of the city.

6: The City Against the State

The construction of heterotopic spaces and the concretion of norms are two ways that the Commune transformed the embodied experience of the city to catalyze democratic politics under conditions of alienating state-driven urbanism. Where the Second Empire displaced political realities and moral claims outside the lived experience of Paris, the Commune exemplified a affective transformation that built immanent representation and popular agency into the urban fabric. I take the Commune to be exemplary of a tension at the heart of modern urban democracy: that there now exist parallel and irreconcilable systems of organizing the phenomenological experiences of the built environment and everyday life, one reflecting the citizens, the other of the state.

Hardt and Negri's *Empire* provides a useful framework for thinking through parallel practices of citizenship, describing liberation in the vocabulary of "two cities" that occupy the same spaces and materials – one defined by hierarchy, oppression, and violence, the other by

immanent meaning and form that comes through the collective project of living in the same space. Imbricated in the same space are two cities and citizenship, one of economic and institutional imperatives and another of immanent meaning generated by its residents. Like the image in Augustine's *City of God*, the physical forms and social metabolism of each city is, viewed from outside, essentially the same. The key difference between the two is where the citizens of each locate meaning and orient themselves relative to it: one paralleling the Spinozan "true city" that "offers citizens the love of freedom," and the other displacing citizens and directing action toward the interests of state and economic actors.[222]

Through this study of democratic spatial politics in theory and practice, I have considered how urban social movements reorient citizens around meanings generated out of the spaces and communities that form them as subjects. If disoriented or oriented only by the norms and forms of the state and economy, urban residents lack the embodied and sensual foothold that makes subjectivity, agency, and the material world meaningful. The construction of heterotopic spaces and the concretion of popular norms illuminate an Earthly City where meaning emerges from the popular politics of occupation and appropriation.[223]

The Communards built this Earthly City, not by totally changing the built environment (at least, not until their destructive last days as they were being massacred by the Versaillaise), but by recreating the affective life of citizenship. Paris became an object held in common by the

---

[222] Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: The Practical Philosophy*, 26.

[223] See Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri: "This is the founding moment of an earthly city that is strong and distinct from any divine city. The capacity to construct places, temporalities, migrations, and new bodies already affirms its hegemony through the actions of the multitude against Empire… The only event that we are still awaiting is the construction, or rather the insurgence, of a powerful organization" (*Empire,* 411).

Communards where norms, political possibility, and personal agency developed out of the fabric of the city itself, rather than being formed through the transcendental source of the state or economy.

This transformation was not only privately empowering bu also served to rebuild the sense of a unified Parisian *demos*. The Commune's "Proclamation of Principles" describes the redevelopment of Parisian unity:

> Unity, as it has been imposed on us until today by the Empire, the monarchy or parliamentarism is nothing but unintelligent, arbitrary or onerous centralization. Political unity, as Paris wants is, is the voluntary association of all local initiatives, the spontaneous and free concourse of all individual energies in view of a common goal: the well-being, the freedom and the security of all.[224]

If democratic citizenship begins with the constitution of empowering excess and care, then the success of the Commune is not something that can be measured in terms of its lasting influence as on a set of political institutions. The Proclamation of Principles presents the city as the source

---

[224] Pierre Denis, "The Manifesto of the Paris Commune," available at https://www.marxists.org/history/france/paris-commune/documents/manifesto.htm (accessed 18 March 2014).

of the common life of its citizens.[225] If the state displaces the meaningful experience and communities that are the core resources of self-certainty and agency, disguises violence as social hygiene, and celebrates norms in abstraction from the people and materials where they should be rooted, then the democratic city represents, and provides meaningful forms of action relative to, these realities. As Mustapha Khayati of the Situationist International put it:

> The international revolutionary movement, as set in motion over a century ago by the western proletariat, failed. Its so-called 'victories' and 'defeats', if judged in the light of their historical consequences, tend to confirm Liebknecht's remark, that day before his assassination, that 'some defeats are really victories, while some victories are more shameful than any defeats'. Thus the first great 'failure' of workers' power, the Paris Commune, is in fact its first great *success*, whereby the primitive proletariat proclaimed its historical capacity to organize all aspects of social life *freely.*[226]

---

[225] In this sense, democratic materialism may reveal itself to be a form of radical republicanism: the collective infusion and immanent normativity of the Commune made the city into a *res publica* – a common thing. Paris drew the Commune together and was a continual site of exploration and development. In contrast with the transcendent telos of state-imposed meaning (or the City of God), democratic materialists develop concrete ideals within the immanent frame of it's a lived world held in common. As Hardt and Negri put it in *Empire:* "Being republican today, then, means first of all struggling within and constructing against Empire, on its hybrid, modulating terrains. And here we should add, against all moralisms and all positions of resentment and nostalgia, that this new imperial terrain provides greater possibilities for creation and liberation. The multitude, in its will to be-against and its desire for liberation, must push through Empire to come out the other side" (218).

[226] Mustapha Khayati, "On the Poverty of Student Life," available at http://www.notbored.org/poverty.html (accessed 2 December, 2014).

This free organization of society, like the Parisian unity developed through the unity forged under the revolutionary government, are achievements to be measured by the constituent powers they call forth, rather than the institutional legacy they set in stone.[227]

The great democratic lesson of the Commune came in its affective incorporation of Parisians as embodied and emplaced citizens; a synesthetic experience of democracy that grew through the Communards' occupation of the city in ways that drew from the full range of sensory, emotional, and physical resources.[228] This power that emerged through the experience of the unity of the body, city, and moral and political life is what I call "embodied enfranchisement."

This corporeal element in citizen empowerment – what take to be the foundation of democratic norms and practices – suggests that the alienated, repressed, oppressed, refused, and reduced life constituted by state-driven urbanism is an ongoing democratic challenge. Returning to Taylor's account of the material and spatial roots of community- and identity-formation, urban social movements present the possibility of reorienting the material, subjective, and embodied in

---

[227] Edwards' history argues that the Commune's "failure [was] more important than anything moderation could have gained," as this allowed it to become "a truly revolutionary event, the breakthrough into a new realm where what seemed barely to be possible, however, fleetingly, actual, thereby revealing all other forms as condemned." The Commune represented more in its striving and in the way that it unlocked alternative possibilities than it possibly could have in a sustained moderation. "In this," Edwards offers, "the Commune was a revolutionary of more than just its own time."(*The Commune of Paris 1871*, 365-6).

[228] Nigel Thrift, "Non-representational Theory," 116-7: "Affect is synaesthetic, implying a participation of the senses in each other: the measurement of a living thing's potential interaction is its ability to transform the effects of one sensory mode into those of another… Affects are virtual synaesthetic perspectives anchored in (functionally limited by) the actually existing particular things that embody the, actually existing particular things that embody them. The autonomy of affect is its participation in the virtual. Its autonomy is its openness."

moments of affective excess. Urban social movements take up the exceptional and mundane features of the built environment to build popular power though the physical features of the world and the body.[229] Rather than separating experience, administration, aspiration, speculation, physicality, and material culture, movements like the Commune open the door to an enchanted experience of the city that brings all of these valences together in an emplaced and embodied moment of citizen empowerment.[230]

Thus, even while movements like the Commune often lead to violence and destruction, quickly exhaust themselves, and generate problematic political consequences, they nonetheless play an important role in democratizing deadening and disempowering cities. The obvious shortcomings, inconveniences, and injustices that accompany these movements are counterbalanced by their unique ability to help citizens gain a rootedness, knowledge, and agency through their city

---

[229] Alan Ripley describes an ideal of citizenship in which democracy is built "not in spite of [the people's] physical form, but because of it" (Alan Ridley, "Displays and Fragments: Embodiment and the Configuration of Social Worlds," in *The Body and Psychology*, ed. Henderikus J. Stam, London: SAGE Publications [1996], 20). This idea of being a citizen through one's body captures the phenomenon of embodied enfranchisement that I am foregrounding through this project.

[230] Embodied enfranchisement requires a certain sincerity of convictions and desire for an authentic unity of life, environment, and society. On the level of affect, urban social movements do not just work against alienation, exploitation, and violence, but also against criticism, cynicism, and negativity. The Commune had a remarkably affirmative character, with its interventions in the socio-spatial order premised on the sincere belief that the city could be organized in a way that is meaningful, representative, and empowering.

7: Summary, Questions, Limitations

Elisé Reclus, an anarchist geographer and supporter of the Commune, argued that "geography should begin by everything at once: cosmography, natural history, history, topography."[231] The disciplinary distinctions between the study of metaphysics, the natural environment, human history, and the form of the land miss the fact that citizens navigate all of these facets of meaning and matter at once. "Life," Reclus claimed, "cannot be accommodated to these arbitrary modes of instruction."[232] Neither, I've tried to suggest, can democracy.

As Taylor, Hardt and Negri, and the Communards suggest, the core of democratic cities and citizenship is found in constructing a world that draws diverse spaces, discourses, populations, problems, possibilities, and norms together in embodied experience. Where most historical and contemporary democrats understand cities as the media in which individuals become citizens and learn to participate in state institutions, I have argued that contemporary democratic theory, the increasing bureaucratization and borderlessness of the state, and the birth of a global urban society where cities are primarily defined by external forces each pit the city against the state. Generating knowledge and agency now takes place in the context of an essential conflict between the city and the state as sites of democratic citizenship.

Exemplified in the case of the mid-19th century reconstruction of Paris by the French Second Empire, modern cities have become a "space of collective alienation and individual violence" – alienation from a meaningful sense of self and violence at the hands of a state that uses urban space to marginalize and fragment democratic subjects.[233] I have presented the

---

[231] Quoted in Kristen Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space,* 91

[232] Ibid., 91.

[233] Manuel Castells, *The City and the Grassroots,* 314.

Commune as the first moment when the growing conflict between the city and state reached articulacy and prompted political mobilization. The Second Empire reorganized the city around a set of imperatives that were cast as necessary for the city and the state. Using Charles Taylor's spatial account of identity-formation, I have shown how this state-driven urbanism undercut the foundational affective connections and practices of collective meaning making that are central to democratic citizen-formation.

I read the Communards as exemplifying the affective politics of embodied enfranchisement, transforming the life of the city to reconcile the statist alienations that had separated the meaning of Paris from Parisians. Through practices like the distribution of flowers and the construction of barricades, the Communards worked collectively to embed their subjectivity, agency, and normative ideals in the material form of the city. While the Communards may not have generated enduring institutional changes on the level of the French state, they created spaces to draw attention to ongoing and unseen oppressions and concretized democratic equality and empowerment through direct material interventions, creating a new sense of municipal democratic identity.

I believe this analysis opens several questions. A first question is provoked by what happened after the Commune, namely, very little. There was a conspicuous absence of large-scale radical mobilizations in Paris in the decades after the Commune was put down. This suggests that the French Third Republic, whose urban reforms were both farther-reaching and less conspicuous than Haussmann's, succeeded in ways that the Second Empire failed. What was it in the decades after the Commune that made the city resistant to democratic mobilizations? I turn to the question of the Third Republic's anti-democratic spatial politics in chapter two.

Second, just as the Commune fell after only three months, so too it is hard to imagine an urban social movement sustaining its vitality over a long period of time. While Henri Lefebvre may have had a point in arguing that "urban revolution and concrete (developed) democracy coincide," the constant overturning of space and state orders that this entails would result in chaos, while the constant effort to rebuild the normative and material world would likely be dizzying and exhausting.[234] Part of what remains to be explored in this project is the interaction between urban social movements' affective politics of joy, embodied enfranchisement, and the more sustainable spatial politics of everyday democracy. How can urban social movement politics be brought together with contemporary democratic theory in ways that are normatively and practically valuable?

Third, while the Commune is a powerful case, its relationship to contemporary political movements like the Occupy and Arab Spring protests is yet to be described. Not only have the spatial politics of the modern state become more sophisticated since the Commune, but the structures of political oppression and marginalization that are the target of mobilizations have become farther reaching and less easily targeted (think, for instance, of the globalization of economic structures or questions of environmental justice). Parallel to this, the ability to build networked protests across spaces and cities is now less of a question of spatial proximity and more often mediated by technology. Do the Occupy protests and Arab Spring really share much with the Commune? How have shifting urban, economic, and institutional contexts affected urban democratic movements since the Commune?

---

[234] Henri Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution*, 137.

Finally, do the political practices of the Commune and my affective reading of urban social movement politics point to a broader set of limitations in the division between normative and positive political analysis? Democratic theory, and political science more broadly, tends to consider the built environment as a passive background condition to political actions and institutions. Urban social movements disregard this division between the normative and empirical conditions of politics, suggesting that the operative distinctions between material and ideal, practical and utopian, and positive and normative politics (and political analysis) ought to be broken down. How, then, can political analysis remain open to and accommodate this possibility?

While these are challenging questions, I believe they are generated not by the limitations of my account of modern democratic spatial politics but rather because it is a generative frame for understanding a number of recent social movements. By providing and affective reading of urban social movements and democratic theory, we open new avenues for analyzing contemporary cities, citizenship, and popular empowerment.

Chapter 2: A City of Sad Passions: Urban Affect after the Paris Commune

In the previous chapter, I tracked the tactics that the Paris Commune used to mobilize in a city that had been designed to stabilize and empower the state. I argued that this democratic foothold cannot simply be materialized through architecture and urban planning, but instead that the *experience* of the city must support empowering embodied, sensual, material, and moral connections. The Communards' contribution to my account of democratic urbanism comes in its cultivation of a collective experience of joyful affect. The joyful empowered unity of bodies, built forms, and norms manifest as both a disruption of state-lead urbanism and a care for the immanent politics of the urban community.

An affective politics of joy inheres in the action of many urban social movements. Movements from the Commune to Occupy Wall Street construct a new popular experience of the city by reimagining the relationship between the forces that shape citizens' lives, incoporating the body, moral life, and the built environment into an empowering unity. Their heterotopic explosion and concretizing implosion is joyful in the sense of the term used by Benedict Spinoza – a feeling of embodied power that is as sensual and material as it is rational and formal. By attending to embodied enfranchisement through an affective reading of urban social movements like the Commune, I claim that democratic theory can gain a new set of resources for supporting popular empowerment in urban spaces that are alienating and violent.

This poses several questions: if democratic spatial politics is located in moments of affective unity of citizens and cities, then what is a corresponding antidemocratic spatial politics? How does the built environment maintain disenfranchisement? What are the democratic implications of a city that displaces and disembodies its residents? These questions are

particularly pointed given how little has been written on antidemocratic space and architecture. Within political theory, Susan Bickford has noted that the study of the democratic deficit in cities "has been too often left to those who focus on the policy process and the efficient delivery of services,"[235] leaving connections between the "built environment, public life, and democratic politics" rarely explored.[236] Meanwhile studies of urbanism and architecture engage questions of the political harms of privatization, overzealous and prejudiced police practices, residential segregation, and the replacement of place by space, but make little effort to offer a synthetic theoretical account of undemocratic space.

Building on my account of embodied enfranchisement, this chapter provides an account of undemocratic space by focusing on the material strategies that states use (intentionally or not) to suppress urban social movements. My claim is that antidemocratic space is not just a spatial matter: while architecture and urban planning are integral to the political life of the city, they must be seen as part of a broader organization of citizen affect under conditions of contemporary urbanism. In keeping with my affective reading of democratic spatial politics, I track how in the years after the Commune the French Third Republic shifted the forms and norms of the city to sever the connection between urban space and the embodied and moral lives of citizens. This alienation of citizens from the normative meaning and material form of the city exemplifies an insidious and under-analyzed form of antidemocratic urbanism.

In developing this account of antidemocratic space, I will make three major claims: first, that contemporary democratic theorists and the French Second Empire in the years before the

---

[235] Susan Bickford, "Constructing Inequality," 355.

[236] Ibid. 355.

Commune share in some basic misunderstandings concerning the form of antidemocratic space; second, that this oversimplification limits contemporary efforts to build informed and empowered democratic citizenship in contemporary urban spaces – spaces that share much in common with the Parisian urbanism of the French Third Republic; and, third, that considering the urbanism during the French Third Republic will help form a theory of antidemocratic space that sheds light on the challenges and pitfalls facing urban social movements today.

1: The Origins of Antidemocratic Urbanism

In the chapter prior to this, I argued that the popular occupation and appropriation of urban space during the Paris Commune of 1871 exemplified the affective life of contemporary urban democratic social movements. The historical novelty and importance of the Commune emerged from the unique position of Paris at the time. Between 1853 and 1870, Prefect of the Seine Baron Eugene Haussmann and Emperor Louis Napoleon III led the French Second Empire's efforts to reconstruct Paris. After a half-century when the city had become overcrowded, unhealthy, and served as the setting of several popular movements against the state, the representatives of the Second Empire set about planning a modern city that would support and exemplify the stability of the French nation under the Second Empire.

Haussmann and Napoleon III undertook an urban planning and regeneration project on a scale unknown in modern Europe. Poor and revolutionary neighborhoods were gutted and replaced with broad boulevards and upscale housing. Fortifications were built throughout the city to protect it from internal uprisings and external invaders. An extensive park and sewer system was constructed to distribute clean air and water throughout the city. Monuments were built to both beautify the city and offer constant reminders of the power and benevolence of the Second

Empire. Supported by a perilous debt-fueled financial scaffold, the Haussmannization of Paris was a costly investment in a city that was to serve as the functional and symbolic center of both France and modern Europe.[237]

The Second Empire's effort to achieve political stability through the reformation of the built environment failed. Following France's defeat in an ill-considered war with Prussia, the city's population rose against the state in 1870 to overthrow the Second Empire and again in 1871 to expel the nascent Third Republic and form an independent municipal Commune. During the Commune, patterns from the previous half century of rebellion reasserted themselves: radicals around the city organized republican committees in working class neighborhoods, National Guard troops fraternized with the city's residents, and Parisians pledged to "bury" themselves in their city's ruins rather than submit to a national government perceived as allied with provincial wealth.[238]

The strategies of past revolutions adapted to the new city: poorer peripheral areas like Montmartre, Belleville, and Montparnasse became new revolutionary hotbeds; the city's broad boulevards prompted the Communards to construct larger barricades; and the defenses the French state had designed to secure Paris were reappropriated by those defending the city against the state. Beyond this, the new parks and sewers designed by Haussmann were administered by the city's revolutionary government and only served to improve the Communards' quality of life, while the monuments built to symbolize the Second Empire and the French state were joyously destroyed in elaborate public ceremonies. In short, the project to build a hierarchical, controllable

---

[237] David Harvey, *Paris: Capital of Modernity*, New York: Routledge (2005), 117-24.

[238] George Valles quoted in Stewart Edwards, *The Paris Commune, 1871*, Chicago: Quadrangle Books (1973), 327.

city that bore monumental and symbolic marks of the state did little to end Paris' tradition of movements appropriating the city to promote broadened equality and empowerment.

Like earlier Parisian uprisings, the Communards placed the built environment at the core of their politics: the material form of city again provided a common site for exploring an emergent set of claims and gave concrete form to a new political vision. Built to suppress movements like the Commune, the city was easily retaken by the city's marginal population.

While the Communards' tactics demonstrate the importance of the built environment to urban social movements, they also challenge intuitions about democratic and antidemocratic spatial politics. Haussmannization's failure to render Parisians more controllable provides a challenging case for an account of democratic and antidemocratic space: in Paris, the transformation of the built environment during the Second Empire had little effect on citizens' political behavior and outcomes. What, then, is an antidemocratic city if Haussmannized Paris failed? This challenging question was compounded in the years after the Commune, when the more liberal, and less radically transformative, Third Republic oversaw the end of large-scale democratic political movements in Paris. After the Commune, it would be almost a century before the citizens of Paris mobilized on a mass scale.[239]

To summarize: the authoritarian transformation of the urban plan and architecture overseen by Haussmann had little direct effect on the revolutionary life of Paris and Parisians,

---

[239] I refer to the 1968 French student protests, which I consider in chapter three. While there is a vast gap in both scale and intensity between the expulsion of the French national government under the Commune and the students' movement, it does mark the first time since the Commune that residents of Paris organized a large-scale, hostile movement against the national government. It should be noted that the French resistance to German occupation during World War II occurred before the student protests, though the circumstances were quite different than those of the democratic amterialist mobilizations that I am considering here.

while the subtler changes under the Third Republic coincided with the end of citywide political mobilizations. What does this contrast tell us about antidemocratic spatial politics? What can theorists and political actors learn about antidemocratic space from the decline of popular mobilizations under the Third Republic? In short: what is an antidemocratic city?

I address these questions by analyzing urban planning practice after the Paris Commune, during the early years of the French Third Republic. By contrasting Third Republic urbanism with that under the Second Empire, I locate narrow and inaccurate understandings of antidemocratic space that were shared by both Paris' planners before the Commune and contemporary democratic theorists. Consonant with my claim that the built environment matters to democratic politics, but not in a directly causal way, I contend that Third Republic urbanism reveals the much more subtle and effective ways that the built environment can undercut democratic politics by severing the connection between the material life and normative claims of city-dwellers.

In the decades after the Commune, I claim that the French Third Republic responded to the Commune through architecture, urban planning, and official discourse that disconnected the material form of the city and its inhabitants' embodied experience. I consider the cases of the construction of Paris' municipal rail system (the *Métropolitain*), the Basilica of the Sacred Heart (*Basilique du Sacré-Cœur*), and innovations in the academic discipline of geography as exemplifying the Third Republic's antidemocratic spatial politics. I read Third Republic urbanism as indicative of a broader, ongoing set of material and discursive strategies that serve as the spatial context of urban social movements.

I describe this as a spatial politics of 'world alienation,' characterized by the adoption of an outside administrative perspective for managing urban life, and an internalization of moral life. Where the city under the Second Empire was designed to directly reflect state authority, and the Communard's city was the shared object uniting and expressing their political claims, the Third Republic's spatial politics created a city that severed material and normative claims through this twofold flight of politics outside lived experience and into the private world of the individual's ethical life.[240] In considering Parisian urbanism in the years after the Commune we can learn about the subtle and enduring ways that the built environment contributes to the limited repertoire of oppositional strategies available to contemporary democratic movements.[241]

By attending to these changes, democratic theorists can better understand how the built environment affects politics and better appreciate the limitations of existing accounts of anti-democratic space. My intention is to develop an account of the challenges urbanism poses to democracy that takes its lead from Foucault's understandings of the politics of bio-power and discipline. Biopower, understood as the "numerous and diverse techniques for achieve the subjugations of bodies and the control of populations"[242] and discipline, "tiny, everyday, physical mechanisms…those systems of micro-power that are essentially non-egalitarian and asymmetical,"[243] are the subtle techniques of state and economic domination that are built into the texture of everyday life. Building on Foucault's work, my reading of antidemocratic space

---

[240] The vocabulary of a "twofold flight" is found in: Hannah Arendt*, Human Condition,* 6.

[241] Charles Tilly. *The Politics of Collective Violence*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press (2003).

[242] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, London: Penguin (1998), 140.

[243] Michel Foucault*, Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, New York: Random House (1975), 222.

considers the material and discursive reforms that undercut practices of political resistance in modern cities. While the statist spatial politics of world alienation that I track are not necessarily intentional or violent, they indicate a set of neglected practices that work together on the levels of discourse and affect to undercut democratic spatial politics under conditions of contemporary urbanism.

The chapter will proceed as follows. Section two reviews the literature on anti-democratic space, situating it relative to the Third Republic's response to the Commune. Section three analyzes the planning and construction of two Third Republic planning projects: the Basilica of the Sacred Heart and the Parisian municipal rail system. These projects exemplify how changes in the built environment can undercut popular mobilization. The fourth section refines this reading in the context of Hannah Arendt's work on anti-democratic and state spaces. The final section concludes by framing the broad significance of this new account of antidemocratic spatial politics.

2: Antidemocratic Spatial Politics in Theory and Practice

Recent decades have seen a considerable literature develop concerning the relationship between the built environment and politics. Sociologist Thomas Gieryn notes that the range of the built environment's political effects include that it "stabilizes and gives durability to social structural categories, differences and hierarchies; arranges patterns of face-to-face interaction that constitute network-formation and collective action; embodies and secures otherwise intangible cultural norms, identities, memories – and values."[244] Space and architecture are the

[244] Thomas Gieryn, "A Place for Space in Sociology," *Annual Review of Sociology* 26, 473.

intersection of many axes of political order, upholding and articulating a broad range of state, social, and financial structures.

Others have noted that the endurance of the built environment does not mean that it only upholds the institutional, cultural, and economic status quo. Margaret Kohn notes that space and matter are powerful tools for articulating new identities and connecting experiences of the oppressed and marginalized: "The political power of place comes from its ability to link the social, symbolic, and experiential dimensions of space. Transformative politics comes from separating, juxtaposing, and recombining these dimensions."[245] When marginal bodies and ideas take up space, the built environment can serve as a fecund ground for political and social critique.

From these perspectives, the built environment has the broad powers to both solidify (Gieryn) and challenge (Kohn) political norms, forms, and identities. In light of the power of the built environment, democratic theorists have offered numerous accounts of the role of space and matter in realizing norms of political equality and empowerment, including increasingly sophisticated models of the interactions of institutional and non-institutional spaces in producing political legitimacy,[246] studies of how space and territory contribute to forming communal ties that bind polities together,[247] and analyses of the role of space in the articulation of dissenting

---

[245] Margaret Kohn. *Radical Space.* 4.

[246] John Parkinson. *Democracy and Public Space*. 122-45.

[247] David B. Knight, "Identity and Territory: Geographical Perspectives on Nationalism and Regionalism," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 72, 514-31.

claims by nascent political identities.[248] Beyond these efforts, a range of articles, monographs, and edited volumes have considered how different aspects of the built and natural environments can support democratic values like accountability, tolerance, respect, representation, equality, and empowerment.[249]

While this effort to make a place for space in democratic theory has increased in its subtlety and sophistication, work on anti-democratic spatial politics has been slower coming. Beyond broad condemnations of the privatization of public space or of residential segregation, few critical interrogations of the contemporary built environment have emerged in democratic theory. This lack of a thoroughgoing engagement with anti-democratic space stems from the broad acceptance of two intuitions of the built environment's relationship to democracy: one emphasizing the value of flux, the other emphasizing stability.

Theories of flux begin from the assumption that the built environment is inherently challenging to democratic norms. Given that one of the values of democracy is its ability to rebuild and reform law in line with shifts in the will of the demos, the stability of the built environment (which Gieryn summarizes) challenges democratic norms from the perspective of deliberative and radical democrats. In the words of Bruno Latour, "It is always things – and I now mean this last word literally – which, in practice, lend their 'steely' quality to the hapless 'society;'" political norms and power differentials cannot sustain themselves but must be

---

[248] Jacques Ranciere, *Proletarian Nights: The Workers' Dream in Nineteenth Century France,* New York: Verso Press (2012); Chantal Mouffe & Ernesto Laclau, *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy*, New York: Verso Books (1985).

[249] Robert Dahl, "The City in the Future of Democracy," *American Political Science Review* 61, 953-70; Marcel Henaff and Tracy Strong (eds.), *Public Space and Democracy*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (2001), 33-120; Ali Aslam, *Building the Good Life: Architecture and Politics*, dissertation, Duke University (2010).

mobilized and concretized through space and matter in order to endure.[250] In this way, built environments characterized by monumental architecture challenge democracy by literally giving shape and endurance to social hierarchy. Spaces maintain a "partition of the sensible," keeping some populations firmly at the margins of the discursive, formal, and physical life of the polity.[251] These objects and spaces serve as silent, stable foundations that support inequalities and that resist shifts in popular will – the larger and more enduring the built environment, the more threatening it is to democratic norms.

A second group of theories of anti-democratic spatial politics emphasize material stability as a condition for democracy. Exemplary of this tradition is Hannah Arendt, who claims the importance of the fact that political boundaries have traditionally been "quite literally a wall."[252] Without the material stability of a wall, or of the built environment generally, the political community lacks a firm foundation. John Parkinson makes a similar argument from a liberal and deliberative framework: "For public space to be genuinely accessible to all there must be rules which regulate interactions between individuals, a Rawlsian freedom for each consistent with a like freedom for all, not individualistic anarchy."[253] By demarcating the boundaries of the demos,

---

[250] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social,* 68.

[251] Jacques Ranciere, *Dissensus: On Politics and Aesthetics*, London: Continuum International Publishing (2011), 36.

[252] Hannah Arendt, *Human Condition*, 64. Arendt may be willing to accept Anderson's assertion that, "All communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined" (Benedict Anderson. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism,* New York: Verso Press [2006], 6) though she would be unlikely to accept that such an imagined community could aspire to politics.

[253] John Parkinson. "Holistic Democracy and Physical Public Space" *British Journal of Political Science Conference* (2006), available at http://www.researchgate.net/publication/228378096_Holistic_Democracy_and_Physical_Public_Space (accessed 7 June 2015), 6.

facilitating the development of practical norms of interaction, and providing a firm and unchanging core of public life, the built environment creates a stable foundation for democratic politics. On the other hand, a built environment that constantly changes to reflect popular wills and tastes risks social dissolution.

Even if it is a bit overdrawn, this contrast between democratic theories of flux and stability can help make sense of the proliferating and contradictory normative taxonomies used to describe the formal political characteristics of space. Distinctions developed to assess how spaces help or hinder democratic politics (public v. private, accessible v. exclusive, place v. space, public v. counter-public, safe v. risky, disciplinary v. free, beautiful v. ugly, pedestrian v. vehicular, institutional v. informal, inclusive v. segregated, humanized v. mechanized, single- v. open-minded, etc) often have one side stand in for a quality of the built environment that supports democracy, while the other represents a challenge to it. Those equating flux with democratic space may generally favor one side in these distinctions (for example: public, freely accessible, informal, risky, free, open-minded), while those emphasizing stability favor another set (semi-private, exclusive, institutional, safe, disciplined, single-minded).

Understandings of flux and stability can be seen underlying the French Second Empire's reorganization of Paris in the mid-nineteenth century. Understanding the anti-democratic power of spatial stability, Napoleon III and Haussmann attempted to build a monumental city that would be immune to changes in the popular will. Nearly every boulevard had a major building or monument to cap it off, drawing attention to the power of the state and the endurance of the nation. Architectural forms rehabilitated Roman designs, lending new constructions an aura of permanence. The scale of this intervention in the city was unprecedented – boulevards were

wider, new buildings were taller, and public festivals more dramatic. In all, these changes leant the efforts of the Second Empire a sense of stability that was meant to firmly place the city's form and meaning in the hands of the state rather than the people..

At the same time, the Second Empire increased spatial flux in areas of the city that had been revolutionary strongholds. Haussmann and Napoleon III understood the democratic power of stable communities and set about wiping out the longstanding spaces and buildings that had bound revolutionary neighborhoods and democratic movements together. In working class neighborhoods, the physical foundations that bound the revolutionaries of 1830 and 1848 together were torn apart and replaced, and the population of these districts was displaced.[254] In fragmenting and displacing these populations, the Second Empire hoped to destabilize revolutionary populations by placing them in a position of material and spatial disorganization and disorientation.

And yet, as has already been highlighted, these changes did not prevent the uprising of 1870 or the Commune of 1871. The Communards reacted to the newly materialized stability of social hierarchies either by occupying, reappropriating, and destroying many of the markers of Second Empire authority, or by capitalizing on the political power of these sites to legitimize their own revolutionary government. On the other side, the efforts to prevent democratic materialist political mobilizations through spatial flux failed to break apart the networks of neighborhood- and community-organization that had supported the mobilizations of 1830 and 1848. The same chains of solidarity that had connected prior experiences of marginalization and

---

[254] T.J. Clarke, *The Painting of Modern Life: Paris in the Art of Manet and his Followers*, Princeton: Princeton University Press (1999), 3-22, 259-270.

exploitation continued amid changes in neighborhood structures, while the urban form remained a primary battleground for conflicting political norms.[255]

These failures both point to the inadequacy of Haussmannization as an effort to construct an anti-democratic city and help put the need for a theory of antidemocratic spatial politics suited to contemporary urban realities into starker relief. Haussmannization was premised on the erroneous assumption that the reorganization of the material and spatial life of Paris could disrupt its history of urban revolt and stabilize economic and political liberalism. Similarly, insofar as we continue to trade in naïve and incomplete understandings of how anti-democratic spaces work, we will provide limited resources for promoting democratization in these built environments. Both the French Second Empire and contemporary democratic theorists understand disempowerment as taking material form in spaces where the built environment embodies and concretize social hierarchy, or where stability and orientation are denied to citizens. These naïve understandings of spatial politics miss the subtlety with which the built environment affects democracy.

Antidemocratic space does not simply lend social hierarchy a "steely form" in matter, or displace potential members of the *demos*, but instead works through a complex and ongoing interaction between bodies, discourses, norms, and the built environment. As I will go on to claim, a more subtle spatial politics that disconnects the built environment, bodily practice, and moral life presents a profound and pressing challenge to democratic norms. The following analysis considers how material and normative politics came to be disarticulated in the modern

---

[255] Roger V. Gould. *Insurgent Identities: Class, Community, and Protest in Paris From 1848 to the Commune*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (1995), 153-194.

city, with an eye to how this can inform a reading of how recent efforts by movements like the Black Panthers, Occupy Wall Street, and Arab Spring build democratic norms back into the core of contemporary societies and cities.

To do this, I consider two planning projects that were central to the early French Third Republic: the construction of the Paris *Métropolitain* rail system and the *Basilique du Sacré-Cœur* in Montmartre. By attending to both the discourse and forms of these projects, we gain a better understanding of the subtleties of antidemocratic space. As I will claim, Third Republic urbanism did not primarily consist in creating spaces that channelized flux and stability in support of the government. Instead, these projects, and their reflection in academic geography, show how space, policy, and discourse – all conjoined under an emergent "urban ideology" – served to affectively enervate public life.

3: Urban Planning After the Commune

The contrast between Haussmannization (and the Commune) and Third Republic urbanism (and the decline of democratic social movements) challenges both the democratic theory literature and the broad understanding of the built environment's political significance. Through the *Métro* and *Sacré-Cœur*, we can see how urban planning under the Third Republic contributed to the decline of certain forms of democratic mobilization. Broadly, the *Metro* corresponded to a new administrative logic that elevated and professionalized the planner, converting planning conversations into discussions of social infrastructure; *Sacré-Cœur* supported an effort to sever material and normative discourses, devaluing of the built environment as a popular force and resource.

A brief note on the context of Parisian urbanism under the Third Republic will contextualize these projects and claims. While histories often credit Haussmann's Second Empire tenure as Prefect of the Seine with shaping modern Paris, recent studies suggest that the Third Republic was equally transformative.[256] Haussmann's tenure came to an end with a number of projects incomplete and significant blind spots remaining that required action on the part of the Third Republic. Paris' periphery, the Left Bank, and eastern neighborhoods were relatively untouched under the Second Empire, while the city's transportation and sewage networks continued to be inadequate to accommodate the city's rising population.[257] For these reasons the two decades following the end of Haussmann's tenure in 1870 saw the continuation and extension of many of his projects; as a Third Republic contemporary noted, "haussmannism witnessed its finest days after 1870."[258]

That said, Third Republic urbanism's continuities with Haussmannization were limited and these discontinuities are consistently unacknowledged in accounts that either credit Haussmann with planning modern Paris or that cast the Third Republic as merely an extension of Haussmannization. Writing in 1895, journalist Albert Shaw explained what was new in the Third Republic's urbanism:

> The Haussmann transformations were begun when Paris had only a million people and an area of only thirteen square miles.... But in 1875 the authorities had to provide for nearly

---

[256] See: Philippe Panerai et. al., "Haussmannien Paris: 1853-82," in *Urban Forms: The Death and Life of the Urban Block*, Oxford: Architectural Press, 1-29.

[257] Peter Soppelsa, "The Fragility of Modernity: Infrastructure and Everyday Life in Paris, 1870-1914," Dissertation, University of Michigan (2009), 43-45.

[258] Bernard Marchand quoted in Ibid., 46.

> two million people, a number that in 1895 was fast approaching three millions. These last two decades have witnessed transformations less pretentious and not so widely advertised, but touching more closely and deeply the lives of the people, and ministering more perfectly to the best demands of modern civilization. Services of education, of cleanliness and of health, on a vast and varied scale, have occupied the administrative machinery that was once so engrossed with boulevards and architecture.[259]

Under the Third Republic, the government continued materially transforming the city, but shifted to addressing new questions and problems. While these projects may have been subtler in their effects on the city, they had a more intimate effect on Parisian life than Haussmannization.

The Third Republic claimed to aim for the material and moral well-being of the city's residents; one of their repeated mantras was to pursue the "moral and material improvement of the conditions of life."[260] As historian of technology Peter Soppelsa has argued, this transformation distinguished between public works projects that merely aspired to keep infrastructure in line with the demands of a growing population (equated with Haussmannization) and those that aspired to inspire the moral and economic uplift of the city's residents.[261] These later projects were characterized by an increasingly technical urban planning and administrative apparatus.

It is in this subtle transformation that we find the material context of the declining vitality of democratic political movements in the years after the Commune. This section tracks this

---

[259] Albert Shaw, *Municipal Government in Continental Europe*, New York: The Century Company (1895), 12-13.

[260] Peter Soppelsa. "The Fragility of Modernity," 88.

[261] Ibid., 87.

change through the development of the Paris *Métro* and the construction of *Sacré-Cœur* in the years after the Commune. Both cases point toward more general efforts by Third Republic city authorities to contain both the memory of the Commune and the possibility of its resurgence. While the Commune hinged on coupling material practice with their project for democratic transformation, this new urbanism built what Hannah Arendt calls "world alienation" – a severing of political vitality from the lives of political subjects in their concrete experience and action.[262]

3.1: The Paris Métro and Sociologizing Urban Life

Throughout the nineteenth century, the space under Paris was associated with trouble in the French popular imagination. Victor Hugo's description of the Parisian sewers as "the evil in the city's blood" in *Les Misérables* captures the senses of both moral degradation and social illness associated with the city's below-ground space.[263] The underground world where Hugo's revolutionary hero Jean Valjean took refuge (just as Jean-Paul Marat had supposedly done during the French Revolution[264]) was the home of the two great subterranean threats to early modern Paris: disease and criminality. Hugo's 1862 image of the subterranean city as the receptacle of the city's human waste thus drew from longstanding anxieties that the urban underground teemed with unknown harms and subversive potential.

---

[262] Hannah Arendt, *Human Condition*, 8.

[263] Matthew Gandy, "The Paris Sewers and the Rationalization of Urban Space," 24.

[264] Donald Reid, *Paris Sewers and Sewermen: Realities and Representations,* Cambridge: Harvard University Press (1993), 19.

Paris' early sewers captured, both in reality and in popular imagination, modernity's leftovers. In this way, they were an example of what Michel Foucault calls heterotopic spaces: "real places – places that do exist and that are formed in the very founding of society – which are something like counter-sites…in which the real sites, all the other real sites that can be found within a culture, are simultaneously represented, contested, and inverted."[265] The power of heterotopias is in their contraposition of different patterns and systems of meaning. They take the typical experience of space – as a patterned, conditioned context in which one spends one's life – and uncomfortably represent the social forms and norms that support them.

As Hugo put it, "The sewer is the conscience of the city. All things converge and confront one another there. Everything takes on its true shape, or at least its definitive shape."[266] While experiences of the urban fabric as a smoothly articulated and cohesive space serve the interests of the state and economic actors by leaving uncomfortable oppositions and contradictions out of everyday practice and thought, the lurking presence of heterotopias emplaces the threatened, dangerous, and marginalized. The sewers' heterotopic quality emerged because they stood outside the logics and expectations of daily experience, while simultaneously giving a place to what would otherwise (and ideally, from the position of political and economic elites) be placeless. The sewers gave spatial and psychological proximity to the anxieties, oppressions, and waste that characterized the modern city.

Because of this, proposals for an underground transportation network in Paris were met with anxiety and criticism. While demand for a citywide public transportation system grew

---

[265] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," trans. Jay Miskowiec, *Diacritics* 16, 24.

[266] Victor Hugo, *Les Miserables,* Book II Chapter 3, available http://www.gutenberg.org/files/135/135-h/135-h.htm (accessed 7 June, 2015).

during the population and economic boom in the years after the Commune, the proposals for the *Métropolitan* were dismissed as opening the city to disease, deviance, danger, and death.[267] Plans were quickly labeled the "nécropolitain" and "sewer train."[268] Coupling these anxieties about belowground space with the city's ongoing reliance on an above-ground network of horse-drawn trams, the *Métro* seemed an expensive novelty that would only expand a terrain already occupied by revolutionaries, alcoholics, the sick, and other social ne'er-do-wells.

Yet, something did need to be done to update Paris' transportation network. Haussmann's infrastructure designs were inflexible and out of date when he oversaw them in the mid-eighteenth century. While London had already begun to shift to rail infrastructure to facilitate the flow of goods and people through the city, Haussmann had designed a city almost exclusively with pedestrians and horse-drawn carriages in mind. This not only resulted in a Third Republic anxiety that Paris was losing the race to become the economic and political capital of Europe, but also saw goods flow inefficiently through urban markets.

Beyond this, poor workers could not live far from their places of employment. In the years after the Commune (particularly following the mass pardon of the Communards in 1880), rents in Paris skyrocketed while popular anxiety about economic vitality and urban hygiene gained urgency. The *Métro* was presented as a way to increase the flow of bodies and goods through the city in a way that could ultimately increase the effective size of the city, open up new rental properties, facilitate a new urban health and cleanliness, and place Paris back at the forefront of European urbanism.

---

[267] Peter Soppelsa, "Finding Fragility in Paris," 117-8.

[268] Ibid, 108.

While Paris' residents, the municipal government, and the Third Republic agreed that something needed to be done (there was a broad popular consensus around "solutionism" – the belief that some action on municipal public transportation needed to be taken) debate emerged between groups campaigning for a locally-controlled Métro system, designed to serve the social needs of Parisians, and groups framing the Métro as a national resource that ought to support free-market economics and the integration of Paris into the national economic and rail systems. As Peter Soppelsa summarizes the debate:

> The first model envisioned renovating the existing city as living space for its inhabitants, while the second model envisioned draining it of its inhabitants... The first saw the Métro as 'public works,' meaning that it should be used and enjoyed by the public, while for the second 'public works' meant appropriate to the needs of the nation-state and therefore in the public interest. The first suggested that infrastructure should serve existing social practice, while the second suggested that infrastructure should steer practice. The national option was state-centered and technocratic, while the local option domesticated the Métro as an instrument of social mobility and equality. As in the Commune, this conflict pitted everyday Parisians and the local government against the Haussmannizing agenda of the national government.[269]

The *Métro* sat at a nodal point between numerous political and normative discourses. The undefined form of the prospective urban rail system provided a ready material venue through which these competing ideas could fight for power.

---

[269] Ibid. 144.

Though Soppelsa is right to note the political fecundity of these planning conversations, these normative elements of the design process were not made explicit at the time. Questions of right were lost in conversations concerning the administrative and technical challenges and possibilities of the *Métro*. As historian Alain Cottereau has shown of the planning debates at the time, "veritable choices of urbanization and of modes of life were unleashed, under cover of technical arguments."[270] Public discourse on "choix d'urbanisation" (city planning choices) supplanted discourse on "choix de mode de vie" (choices of way of life), and by the time a city planning decision was made, the politics of the built environment had shifted into an administrative conversation about the technical challenges of public infrastructure, rather than a question of how to materialize conflicting visions of the good.[271]

Proposals for the *Métro* were presented from the perspective of the needs of the city as a social whole, and representatives of the Third Republic shifted conversations about urban form into a new discourse about "public works." This implied a new administrative rhetoric, part of which was initiated under Haussmann with the growth of a conversation about the city as an organic whole. While prior generations of republicans had adopted biological images of the nation as a family or organism, modern planners introduced the idea that the city itself was an organic whole. Roads became the "arteries" of the city, parks became the "lungs," and citizens and/or capital were the "blood."[272] Where republican discourse had, in a sense, attempted to

---

[270] Alain Cottereau, cited in Ibid., 143.

[271] Ibid. 143.

[272] Nicholas Papayanis, *Planning Paris Before Haussmann*, Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press (2004), 118-9.

depoliticize the question of who was a member of the French state by adopting a nationalist organicism, the Third Republic performed a similar function on the built environment.

The *Métro* introduced a new sense of the city as a single, coherent, and knowable whole such that Franz Kafka could write in 1911, "Because it is so easy to understand, the *Métro* is a frail and hopeful stranger's best chance to think that he has quickly and correctly, at the first attempt, penetrated the essence of Paris."[273] As historian Richard D.E. Burton noted of the changes, "Everywhere the heterogeneity of *le vieux* Paris, with its vivid chiaroscuro of poverty and wealth, its alveolated structure of largely self-contained, autonomous urban villages, was giving way to the monochrome of the modern metropolis, spatially homogenized but no less divided sociologically."[274] While the waste, disease, and crime that characterized early fears of the Parisian underground continued to exist in the city's margins, and while the *choix d'urbanisation* remained *choix de mode de vie*, the construction of the *Métro* pushed discourses on, and popular experiences of, the city's complex political and economic realities out of sight, body, and mind.[275]

---

[273] Franz Kafka, cited in *Paris: The Collected Traveler*, New York: Three Rivers Press (2000), 55.

[274] Richard D.E. Burton, *Blood in the City: Violence & Revelation in Paris*, Ithaca: Cornell University Press (2001), 117.

[275] In this way, the *Métro* conforms to the "authoritarian high modern" model of urban planning that James Scott finds at the core of many modern state-building projects, insofar at the city was discussed and designed such that it would be made coherent and readable whole from the perspective of the outsider (James Scott, *Seeing Like a State*, 87). However, when these changes are considered from the perspective of democratic materialism, we can see that they not only supported the centralized state authority, but they furthered that distinction between the management of public life and the democratic-capacity to rebuild the city.

As the planning conversation shifted during the Third Republic – from an exploration of the means to materialize normative goals to an administrative discourse of the objective (economic, hygienic, cultural, governmental) needs of the city – the discourses and forms that guided the affective politics of the city changed. Henri Lefebvre refers to this centralization and new socio-spatial imaginary as the "urban ideology;" an understanding that "exaggerates the importance of the so-called planned activities it sanctions. It gives the impression, to those who use these representations, of managing people and things in innovative and positive ways… Here, the urban illusion awakens the somewhat somnolent mythology of the Architect."[276] This urban ideology impresses on designers, economic and political elites, and urban residents that the city is a coherent whole over which a benevolent Architect reigns. While we can travel through, and even find pleasure in, this space, the norms and forms of the city are not for us to determine.

Thus, when the *Métro* conquered the Parisian underground, the heterotopic spaces that Hugo had described lost a large degree of their power, while the material form and management of the city's marginal became a technical problem to be managed rather than a subject of popular normative imagination and appropriation. Where the Commune had made a place for the forgotten and marginalized in public life, and transformed urban administration into a collective practice, the Métro worked against these practices.[277] Under the Third Republic, the city was to

---

[276] Lefebvre. *The Urban Revolution.* 156.

[277] This is not to claim that the Métro does not also do significant good in empowering the Parisian population. Like the Second Empire's urban planning reforms, the Third Republic's work on the Métro (as well as their expansions of the municipal park system and public hygiene infrastructure) proved to be a mixed-bag in Paris. While the subway system allows speedy, clean, and inexpensive movement through the city, I claim that these gains are accompanied by other, less well-recognized, challenges to popular democratic empowerment.

be treated as a single coherent system to be administered externally from the desk of the sociologist or the planner.

3.2: La Basilique du Sacré-Cœur and Privatizing Moral Life

Several studies have noted how the early years of the Third Republic saw a conscious effort to erase memories of the Commune and other past uprisings from Paris. Historians refer to a "statueomania" that marked the early years of the Republic – a broad effort to build a stock of nationalist memorials throughout the city.[278] Paris went from fewer than a dozen statues of Marianne (the female symbol of the French nation) in 1870 to over 150 in 1914; statues honoring and elevating other national heroes like Pasteur, Diderot, and Voltaire also propagated in Paris during this period.[279] Historian Maurice Agulhon argues that this sort of concerted monumentality was "an inherent feature of modern urbanism and liberal and secular society,"[280] while Maurice Halbwachs' work draws attention to how national unity is born in large part of affective ties. These public artifacts serve as "frameworks" though which individuals come to view themselves as members of a broader collective.[281]

While this emphasis on the role collective memory as a nationalist tool draws attention to a set of material practices that are politically formative, they contribute little toward

---

[278] Devin Zuber, "Flanerie at Ground Zero: Aethetic Countermemories in Lower Manhattan," *American Quarterly* 58, 269-99; Kristen Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space: Rimbaud and the Paris Commune*, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press (1988).

[279] Erika Doss, *Memorial Mania: Public Feeling in America*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press (2010), 19-20.

[280] Maurice Agulhon, quoted in Ibid., 20.

[281] Mauric Halbwachs, *On Collective Memory*, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 37-45.

understanding the anti-democratic spatial politics of the Third Republic. The Third Republic was unique neither in its nationalism (both the Communards and the anti-Commune Versaillaise claimed to be acting on behalf of the French nation), nor its emphasis on public rites of collective memory (again, both opposition and state political actors consistently drew from history to shape public affect throughout the nineteenth century. Both nationalism and memorialization are ambivalent, able to be deployed in favor of conflicting political agendas.[282]

What made the Third Republic's architecture of memory so remarkable was the way its projects not only wiped away the traces of the Commune, but also subtly disconnected the urban form from normative political claims. The Third Republic didn't just narrativize and forget the Paris Commune out of existence – it also offered a broader account of the relationship between subjectivity, political history, and the normative significance of material life. The construction of the *Basilique du Sacré-Cœur* suggests how public architecture supported a popular discourse and moral ontology that disarticulated normative and material questions in the years after the Commune.

The years immediately after the Commune saw the rise of the Cult of the Sacred Heart in France. Gaining popularity throughout the nineteenth century, the Cult's roots were in monarchism and ultraconservative Catholicism. Captured in the phrase "Gallia poenitens" (France repents), which was something of a mantra for its members, the Cult claimed that the failures and instabilities of nineteenth century French politics grew out of a national spiritual crisis.[283] Predicated on a public allegiance to the Pope in matters of faith and social

---

[282] Erika Doss, *Memoral Mania,* 47.

[283] David Harvey, *Paris: Capital of Modernity,* 322-323.

discipline (ultramontanism), this movement rejected what it saw as the sinful materialism common to the politics of the Second Empire and the Commune.

The conflation of the material and moral by temporal authorities was a subject of heavy condemnation through the early years of the Third Republic. Pope Pius IX described the Communards as "devils risen up from hell bringing the fires of the inferno to the streets of Paris."[284] Social critic Maxime du Camp described the Commune's material destructiveness in its last days as a "fetishism in reverse which is the height of fetishism."[285] This equation of the people taking to the streets with the devil's work helped reframe the politics of the Commune as the moral degeneration of the city.

The fires that had spread across Paris in the last days of the Commune popularized the sense that the French nation had sinned, giving rise to, as David Harvey has described, "manifestations of expiation and a movement of piety that was both mystical and spectacular."[286] The Cult of the Sacred Heart of Jesus offered a solution to this moral and political crisis in the form of the *Basilique du Sacré-Cœur* on Montmartre, the hill that had been home to much of the city's revolutionary population.

Harvey shows how the construction of the Basilica was tied to a broader effort to purge the city of the Commune and prevent revolutionary resurgence:

> On that sixteenth day of June in 1875 when the foundation stone was laid, Rohault de Fleury rejoiced that the basilica was to be built on a site which, 'after having been such a

---

[284] Ibid, 322.

[285] Quoted in Burton, *Blood in the City,* 87.

[286] David Harvey, *Paris: Capital of Modernity,* 323.

> saintly place had become, it would seem, the place chosen by Satan and where was accomplished the first act of that horrible saturnalia which caused so much ruination and which gave the church two such glorious martyrs.' 'Yes,' he continued, 'it is here where *Sacré-Coeur* will be raised up that the Commune began, here where generals Clément Thomas and Lecomte were assassinated.' He rejoiced in the 'multitude of good Christians who now stood adoring a God who knows only too well how to confound the evil-minded, cast down their designs and to place a cradle where they thought to dig a grave.' He contrasted this multitude of the faithful with a 'hillside, lined with intoxicated demons, inhabited by a population apparently hostile to all religious ideas and animated, above all, by a hatred of the Church.'[287]

The new Basilica provided an opportunity to wage war against (and ultimately absolve) the sins of the city. Facilitated by a certain geographical license (the generals had been assassinated in the Marais, not Montmartre), the Basilica was to absolve the sins of the surrounding area and reconsecrate the city as a whole.[288]

The construction of the Basilica came to be viewed as a baptism for the nation – a radical chance to renew the spiritual heart of France after the materialist, fetishist politics of the Commune.[289] As the Archbishop of Paris noted, the construction of Sacré-Cœur and the spiritual

---

[287] Ibid, 318

[288] It is along important to note the way the municipal and national rail system was a key part of this, facilitating movement to pilgrimage sites.

[289] The role of violence in this effort shouldn't be overlooked. Audéoud delighted in the sight of all the bodies "riddled with bullets, befouled and rotting," and took "the stink of their corpses" as "an odor of peace, and if the all-too sensitive nostril revolts, the soul rejoices." "We, too," he went on, "have become cruel and pitiless and we should find it a pleasure to bathe and wash our hands in their blood" (Edith Thomas, *The Woman Incendiaries*, 322).

practice of the Cult of the Sacred Heart broke from materialism: "the work had been inspired… by a profound conviction that politics was powerless to deal with the ills of the country. The causes of these ills are moral and religious and the remedies must be of the same order."[290] The Cult's discursive and spatial practice offered to take a nation that was split by politics and reunite it around the moral convictions of Christianity, preventing revolutionary recrudescence.

The anti-democratic potential of the effort to split the built environment from politics was quickly recognized by sympathizers of the Commune. Radical Georges Clemenceau contrasted the construction of the Basilica with the revolutionary cause, stating that "we fought and still continue to fight for human rights," the Basilica was "an attempt to stigmatize revolutionary France, to condemn us to ask pardon of the Church for our ceaseless struggle to prevail over it in order to establish the principles of liberty, equality and fraternity." For Clemenceau, the solution to the political and social problems of the Third Republic was to draw out the political core of this material transformation: "We must respond to a political act by a political act."[291] The spiritual flight of moral life into faith and religious institutions depoliticized the city at a moment when deprivations and exclusions called for material and practical address. The struggles faced by the city were political in the most concrete, lived terms and could only be addressed, Clemenceau claimed, through an unapologetic focus on the material life of the residents of the city and state.

---

[290] Harvey. *Paris: Capital of Modernity*. 334 fn. 30.

[291] David Harvey, *Paris: Capital of Modernity,* 331.

Clemenceau's criticism directly addresses the anti-democratic power of the new Basilica.[292] Where the construction of the Basilica aimed to naturalize a certain anti-democratic political ontology that divided lived, material, embodied, and sensual experience from moral life, the popular political causes of equality and empowerment sought to articulate an inextricable connection between normative questions and material practices. Clemenceau and the left recognized the material and discursive construction of an ontological division between material practices and normative questions through *Sacré-Cœur.* While this ethos may be rooted deeply in the ultramontane Christianity of the time, the effect the Third Republic achieved through the Basilica is exemplary of present-day efforts to marginal conversations about the good life and sever the built environment from popular claims.

4: Geography and the Urban Ideology

To make Paris undemocratic took reducing the claims of its residents' experience by sociologizing urban administration (converting choices about ways of life into city planning choices) and privatizing moral life (by converting materialized moral claims into idol-worship and sin). Through the figures of the *Métro* and *Sacré-Cœur*, we can track the material and discursive emergence of a new form of anti-democratic space during the French Third Republic.

---

[292] Clemenceau's point thus provides an interesting counterpoint to Arendt's (or Rousseau's) claim that Christianity results in a certain disconnect between the world and moral/political judgment. Of course, Arendt gives short-shrift to the side of Christianity that supports a turn toward love through worldly acts. However, from the perspective of one interested in supporting democratic practices, this discourse is highly problematic. By equating the Communard's interest in the built form of the city with something akin to Satanism, du Camp and the Catholic church created a sense that the good life involved a turn away from politics, confrontation, and materially-situated normative aspirations.

Where the Paris Commune's politics united action and history, space and meaning, norms and material forms, the construction of the *Métro* and *Sacré-Cœur* distanced Parisians from this immediacy and unity. Through the planning and construction of the *Métro*, a conversation about the manifold meanings and imperatives of the city was supplanted by a dispersed discourse about technical norms and needs. The construction of *Sacré-Cœur* participated in a broader split between the material form of the city, individual moral life, and collective political claims.

Democratic empowerment suffers in a world that favors a displaced perspective outside individual material and moral experience.[293] In *The Human Condition*, Hannah Arendt describes modernity as characterized by a "twofold flight from the earth into the universe and from the world into the self."[294] Her genealogy traces this world alienation through the modern scientific displacement of personal experience and judgment with the abstract perspective of the telescope and Archimedean point, as well as with the Christian division between moral questions and the material experience of the world. Both shifts contribute to this alienation by disconnecting the subjective experience, the experience of the material world, and political and moral life. The modern subject therefore lacks fundamental confidence in its ability to know, judge, and act into the world.

The Third Republic's planning agenda materialized this twofold shift. While Kristen Ross shows how the Commune's politics drew together the material form of the city and political

---

[293] Where Arendt's account of the philosophical, technological, and spiritual roots of world alienation adds an analytical depth and normative vision to Marx's account of the worker's fourfold alienation under capitalism from the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts* (Karl Marx, tran. Martin Mulligan, New York: Promethius Books [1988], 72-4), she also misses (in a way that Marx does not) the affective roots of this alienation in the material world.

[294] Hannah Arendt, *Human Condition*, 6.

possibility and hope, the construction of the *Métro* and the Basilica *Sacre-Coeur* affected both material and discursive shifts that contributed to placing the city on the other side of a normative-material divide. The *Métro* reflected the understanding that the administration of the city would be best done from the privileged perspective of the planner, rather than from the practical experience of the city's people. The construction of *Sacre-Coeur* reflected the belief that ethical projects are private, spiritual, and must be based on a certain flight from the material world. In short, during the Third Republic, politics fled from the streets into administration and norms fled from the material to the spiritual.

This changing spatial politics can also be tracked in academic treatments of the city in the discipline of geography in the years after the Commune. Elisée Reclus, a Communard and anarchist geographer, saw that the study and politics of space were caught up in each other: "Geography is nothing but history in space."[295] Those who study space had to treat it as a nonstatic, differentiated, changing ensemble: "Geography is not an immutable thing. It is made, it is remade every day; at each instant, it is modified by men's actions."[296] Paralleling Marx's observation that, "Men make their own history, but they do not make it as they please," Reclus and other radical geographers used their discipline to draw out the complex dialectic between the matter, space, and political action.[297]

During the Third Republic, however, Reclus' peers tried to separate the profession of geography from social and political claims. Shifts in the national geographic curriculum,

---

[295] Kristen Ross. *The Emergence of Social Space*, 61.

[296] Ibid. 91.

[297] Karl Marx, "The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Napoleon," in *The Marx-Engels Reader*, New York: W.W. Norton & Co. (1972), 595.

underseen by Ludovic Drapeyron and Vidal de la Blanche, attempted to replace the political study of geography with a neutral positivistic study of space as an objective phenomenon. de la Blache's described this emergent approach to geography as "the science of places and not of people."[298]

Reclus offered a succinct critique of "Vidalean" geography's professionalization and specialization:

> It seems to me that Drapeyron's point of departure for the teaching of geography is very badly chosen. The study of geography according to him should no longer begin with cosmography as it did in the past, but with topography: that is understanding science in the most narrow of ways. Life cannot be accommodated to these arbitrary modes of instruction. Science should be a living thing or else it is nothing but a scholastic misery. Like a plant that draws its nourishment from afar through all its roots as well as though the pores of its leaves, geography should begin by everything at once: cosmography, natural history, history, topography.[299]

In this contrast between geography taught as a hard science predicated on parsimony and empirics, and as "everything at once" we find a neatly encapsulated contrast between the urbanism of the Commune and of the Third Republic. The Communards' geography was deeply political: the built form of the city was infused with meaning. The spaces that had been made alien under the Second Empire were treated as the dense manifestations of political complexities, personal aspirations, and creative speculations. Like Reclus' geography, the Communards

---

[298] Quoted in: Kristen Ross, *The Emergence of Social Space*, 61.

[299] Quoted in: Ibid, 90.

democratized the city by accommodating the broadest and deepest image of popular vitality into the built environment. The city and citizens achieved an affective unity and new power by making space and matter the immanent domains of democratic life.

Where the Commune had been premised on crafting a vital spatial politics in which the material and normative grew together, the Third Republic instead shifted to a politics of space which, in the words of Henri Lefebvre, "sees space only as a homogenous and empty medium, in which we house objects, people, machines, industrial facilities, flows, and networks."[300] Lost was the sense that space is always part of political claims to equality and empowerment, as moral privatism and sociologizing administration lead to the flight of politics into self and away from the living development of city life. These shifts in the discipline of geography thus track on another level what we have seen in the planning of the *Metro* and the construction of Sacré-Cœur: a world alienation that ultimately harmed democratic politics by severing space and matter from popular political claims.

Thus we arrive at a broader account of anti-democratic space. By tracking these changes in the built environment, public discourse, and academia, we can see how a discourse that made the urban form a "science of places and not of people," and a social expectation to keep moral claims out of public and material life, we see a transformation in the spatial politics of contemporary urbanism. In these changes, modern urbanism has come to take an anti-democratic shape as its forms and meanings emerge from political imperatives outside the *demos*. Morals are split from matter, the built environment is split from popular experiences and ways of life, and democratic politics' foundation in citizens' bodies and places is undercut.

---

[300] Henri Lefebvre, *Urban Revolution,* 48.

This is a space of what Spinoza called the "sad passions" – an affective fragmentation and disempowerment that undercuts agency and knowledge. The foundation of democratic citizenship during the Commune was found in the active taking up of everything at once: morality, materiality, past and present possibility, and meaningful embodied experience. Opposed to this disruptive democratic joy, the Third Republic built anti-democratic space that divided the citizen's moral life, material context, sense, and embodiment. This was not achieved simply by building stabilizing symbols of the state or by placing oppressed communities into flux (as current theories of anti-democratic space may suggest). Instead, the process was a complex material and discursive construction of a city of sad passions, severing the link between the people and their place.

The successes of the Third Republic in containing the memory and resurgence of the Communes indicate a new urban discourse and built form that later movements would have to contend with. The city of sad passions can be traced forward through modernity, where we find philosophers, planning professionals, governments, and economic elites fostering a spatial politics in which space and matter were evacuated of their political content. Through projects like the *Métro* and *Sacre-Coeur*, the Third Republic inaugurated a shift in urban administration to a point outside lived experience and the spiritual shift of normative claims into the self. In this way, space was effectively neutralized as a political resource, losing its vitality as a resource for concretizing democratic norms, and building equal and empowered citizens.

5: Recovering Embodied Enfranchisement

The premise of this chapter has been that democratic theory's understanding of anti-democratic space is incomplete and can be filled in by looking to the political life of modern urbanism. Before citizens can make claims for institutional or policy reform, they must feel that they have adequate knowledge and power to act meaningfully. One foundation of this knowledge and agency is in the built environment. Without a foundational sense of the meaning of space, citizens' capacity to connect their political claims to a material practice is diminished. This oversight results in democratic theorists engaging little with affective politics of the movements that foster this foundational rootedness, limiting their resources when they seek to critically and constructively engage the built environment.

By addressing the challenging case of the decline of democratic social movements during and after the French Third Republic, I aimed to provide a new perspective on anti-democratic spatial politics. Through the cases of the *Métro* and the *Sacre-Coeur*, I have tried to illustrate how Third Republic urbanism crafted a form of world alienation that undercut the spatial and material resources that empowered the Communards. In the case of the *Métro*, we can track how conversations about urban infrastructure shifted from the concrete experiences of Parisians to administrative plans articulated from a perspective outside individual experience and political claims. In the case of the *Sacre-Coeur*, we see how political and religious authorities used both material and discursive shifts in order to sever the connections between politics and the built environment that had reached their peak during the Commune.

The result of these shifts is a twofold flight from democratic spatial politics. The *Metró* pointed to the ways the built environment can alienate politics from individual subjectivity. The

Basilica was part of a broader project to divide the material world from political and moral claims. In this flight to sociologizing administration and moral privatism, Third Republic urban planning contributed to the development of a subtler anti-democratic spatial politics than is often considered in democratic theory. Instead of continuing with the Second Empire's goal of building a statist city characterized by stability and flux, the French government contributed to the erection of a clear division between the material and normative registers of politics. By making normative political discourse impersonal and immaterial, the city lost its vitality as a tool of realizing an equal and empowered populace.

Thus, what began as a hard case for an account of the political power of the built environment ended up showing that it only appears a challenge from within the narrow understanding of anti-democratic spatial politics found in much of the literature. I found that anti-democratic spaces can work by severing the affective unity of the built environment, normative claims, and embodied experience. A built environment that signifies transcendent imperatives and dematerializes individual moral life evacuates the city's power as an immanent site of democratic meaning and action.

Like academic geography during the Third Republic, studies of democratic norms and practice can fall into disciplinary segregation and scholastic misery, missing the way that democratic social movements work to viscerally affect a normative claims in lived experience by bringing subjects, spaces, and norms together in a single, vivid space. To enliven the field, and construct an account of democracy capable of engaging with contemporary realities of alienation and oppression, I believe a productive next step is to use this account as a listening device that can help us attend to the tactics that urban social movements have developed to challenge and

overcome anti-democratic spatial politics. How do urban social movements build an affective democratic politics into contemporary cities?

The chapters that follow on this will thus take up cases where democratic political movements have used the built environment in order to build democracy in cities that deny popular political power. Through an analysis of the role of the Situationist International during the May 1968 protests in Paris, the Black Panther's work in Oakland in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and of community-generated sustainability movements, I will identify a set of practices that democratic actors use to help realize broad norms of equality and empowerment through the built environment. In the context of my broader account of democratic space, this will serve as the foundation for a theory of contemporary urbanism at the intersection of academic and activist practice.

Chapter 3: Everything at Once: The Democratic Politics of Heterotopic Space

To review the argument up to this point, urban social movements make democratic political claims by incorporating material, embodied, and normative claims into their practice. This unity of experience serves as the affective foundation for democratic citizenship. As the Paris Commune demonstrated, the collective occupation and reappropriation of space lead to a disruptive and democratizing public *jouissance* found in the fleeting of unity of bodies, moral claims, and the built environment. Barricade construction, monument destruction, festivals, and public administration served as sites where the public explored, embodied, and emplaced democratic citizenship. This sensation of embodied enfranchisement is a powerful anchor as urban residents seek to empower themselves to transform the material, cultural, economic, and political forces that shape their lives.

Discursive and material practices can fragment cities, bodies, and norms, undercutting the ability of citizens to generate this democratic joy. Chapter two's study of urbanism in the early years of the French Third Republic showed how this fragmentation is a powerful tool for building antidemocratic space. I highlight two means to undercut the sense of the city as a political resource and the self as a democratic claim-maker. First, the form of the built environment can be alienated from the immanent claims of citizens through administrative planning. Public administration can displace popular claims on the built environment by identifying particular state and economic imperatives as the drivers of urban form and meaning. Second, political claims and moral life can be detached from the urban built environment through discursive and architectural shifts that construct a division between the material and normative worlds. Privatization places individual moral life behind closed doors, disconnecting

the material and moral in citizen experience. These two forms of world alienation undercut the affective unity of material, bodily, and moral experience, leading to what I call the construction of a city of sad passions. Under these conditions, enfranchisement grows to be purely a formal quality. This lack of an affective and embodied register to citizenship leaves marginal and oppressed populations without recourse to make claims on the individuals and institutions that shape their lives.

This and the following chapter survey the resources available for social movements in contexts where urban space and architecture contribute to the fragmentation and disempowerment citizens. In particular, I consider the orientations and tactics used to mobilize affective joy in contemporary cities through the Situationist International (a French Marxist group), the Black Panthers (as they operated in Oakland in the 1960s and 1970s), and Sustainable Seattle (an urban environmental movement). While these studies do not exhaust the tactical repertoire of urban social movements, each does have the value of constituting their participants as agents capable of effecting change by politicizing urban space and architecture.

The following chapter attends to the ways that Situationism attempted to build on a lost history of Paris, and the Black Panthers attempted to transform the meaning of urban space. In these movements we can see two tools applicable to the contemporary city for building an affective unity of urban space, bodily practice, and normative claims to empowerment. Through the creation of spaces that build new power in the ghetto through the geographic imaginary and practice of the Black Panthers, or the through the wish-image of a fully-reconciled historical Paris crafted by the Situationists, the occupation of urban space and architecture came to take on a new, concentrated power.

1: Foregrounding the City

If space has an air of neutrality and indifference with regard to its contents and thus seems to be 'purely' formal, the epitome of rational abstraction, it is precisely because it has been occupied and used, and has already been the focus of past processes whose traces are not always evident on the landscape. Space has been shaped and molded from historical and natural elements, but this has been a political process. Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies.

Henri Lefebvre[301]

"Reflections on the Politics of Space"

Urban social movements often build a sense that the organization of matter, space, and the built environment is integral to personal and political life. Within these movements, the existing spatial order is seen as supporting undemocratic social organizations. They therefore explore and express their politics by reimagining and reconstructing the spaces that solidified and symbolized the old regime, breaking from and rebuilding the forms, uses, and shared understandings of their built environments (the term "occupation," which has been applied to movements from Zuccotti Park to Gezi Square over the past few years, describes this). By using space and matter to put forward political claims in concrete form, these movements anchor citizens to their environments, empower people to act together, and build norms of equality into the fabric of urban space.

---

[301] Henri Lefebvre, "Reflections on the Politics of Space," 31.

While social and spatial theorists have repeatedly and convincingly argued that the built environment and spatial practice are always political, it is also true (and quite understandable) that it is not treated as such most of the time. As Henri Lefebvre suggests, our frames of spatial reference are social products, developed through time and complex institutional work. This can lead the built environment to appear minimally political. Space has an air of neutrality and passivity about it that comes because it has been thoroughly "filled" by familiar political and economic ideology. Indeed, one's social competence and private sanity depends, in large part, on being able to take our built environments for granted; constantly deconstructing the ideologies embedded in the forms and everyday use of grocery stores, public parks, and homes would be exhausting. Yet, these spaces do perform (often un- or anti-democratic) political work: grocery stores convert circuitous supply chains and foreign cultures into easily consumable commodities, public parks are as conspicuous for who is absent from them as for who is present, and domestic spaces have long been integral to maintaining gendered labor practices and racial segregation.

Recognizing that neutralized and naturalized spaces can be alienating and violent, many social movements approach the city as a means to shed light on the individuals, institutions, and spaces and sustain problematic political practices and norms. To promote a critical and constructive engagement with the built environment, social movements draw latent spatial politics into consciousness. While urban space and architecture can contribute to the sense that the existing social order is inevitable and permanent, once the political work and possibilities of space are brought out of the inert background of social life and into the open they can then serve as resource for political empowerment and mobilization.

Doing so, however, is difficult: as Lefebvre points out, it is precisely the environments that appear most neutral that can be the most problematic. The less political a space feels, the more insidious its politics can be. Further, both the built environment and politics are organized in such a way that local and material interventions can be ineffective or improper means to spur political change. The structures that shape spatial politics are difficult to understand and transform in localized political practice, while the tactics used to challenge the spatial order (occupation, violence, or the public appearance of marginalized bodies) challenge social propriety. In sum: democratic movements must make politics in a world that is not of their design, that appears to be politically neutral, that seems unconnected to the forces that are responsible for political oppression and marginalization, and that is understood as an inappropriate venue for conflict over the nature of the good life.

In this chapter, I analyze the way movements break through neutralized and naturalized space to promote an understanding of the built environment as a political resource. The movements I consider share a belief that empowerment starts with the construction or imagination of urban space and architecture in order to show the political work it performs and to suggest the political potency of agency situated in these spaces. Building on Michel Foucault's account of heterotopic spaces – marginal spaces that stand outside of the social structure in a way that provides unique analytical and practical leverage – I argue that these movements recast the city to show the political content of an existing spatial regime in a way that catalyzes a sense that space can be a potent site for exploring alternative political and social realities. While the concept of heterotopia proved theoretically untenable for Foucault (in particular, the structuralism implied in heterotopia's position outside, but also privileged in relation to, the

social order), I claim that it was its theoretical weakness that provides its practical and analytical strength. I explore two movements that made use of heterotopic spaces: the Situationist International during the French Student Protests of May 1968 and Huey Newton's theory of intercommunalism as it related to the Black Panther Party's Survival Programs in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

The Panthers rose to national prominence in the mid-1960s. Images of the Panthers' armed patrols in Oakland and their 'invasion' of California capitol building in 1967 drew on the space and the body as sites of power under alienating and violent political regimes.[302] The Situationist International, active from 1957 to 1972, was a radical movement assembled around a core of theorists and artists in Paris. Their revolutionary politics began with the analysis and development of unexpected and creative interventions into the world artistic and imagination transformations of material forms and norms.[303] Each movement saw that it had to create a new spatial consciousness, both by developing new imaginations of spatial practice and through material interventions into environments that had been the background sites of oppression. Either by looking forward to a globalization of the African diaspora as the Panthers did, or by looking back at a wish-image of a unitary Paris as the Situationists did, the active political, economic, and ideological roles of the city were brought into consciousness in a way that empowered oppressed people to act out into their world.

I proceed as follows. The next two sections consider existing theories of the political life of heterotopic space, drawing primarily from the work of Michel Foucault. Section two

---

[302] Huey Newton, *Revolutionary Suicide*, New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovitch (1973).

[303] Simon Sadler, *The Situationist City*, Cambridge: MIT Press (1998).

highlights ways that spaces efface their own political effects, while section three considers accounts of spaces that draw unacknowledged spatial politics into the foreground. In section four, I outline four democratic traits of heterotopias though the theory and practice of the Black Panther Party and the Situationist International. Section five then offers a summary of the democratic possibilities inherent in the construction of heterotopic space and concludes with a look ahead to my fourth chapter.

2: Contemporary Forms of Spatial Alienation

From the Communards' reconstruction of Paris, to the more recent public occupations of the Occupy Wall Street and Arab Spring movements, urban social movements can play an important role in building democratic citizenship. As I have argued in the first part of this project, joy is an affective resource that the marginalized can use to gain a powerful political foothold. The excitement of building and occupying spaces where embodied practice expresses political aspiration and power is both a foundational and fleeting resource as urban social movements assert a democratic right to the city.

However, as I argued in chapter two, the twofold flight of urbanism into the administrative distance of bureaucratic management, and of individual moral life into private thought and action, has limited the proliferation of democratic norms and practice by separating citizens' political imaginaries from their concrete material circumstances. The built environment is in these cases treated as either a neutral background of social life or as derivative of actions going on elsewhere (in the economy, in society, or in some higher-level administrative politics).

The harm in this experience of spatial-political alienation, neutrality, and abstraction is that it divorces space from the embodied practices by which citizens make claims of the forces that shape their lives. While more direct forms of state violence and economic exploitation are also significant challenges to democratic urbanism, I claim that this emptying of space not only occludes active harms inflicted by the state and economy, but also places an imaginary barrier between citizens and the spaces in which they make their lives and their politics. The built environment appears neither in the control of citizens, nor in a meaningful relationship to moral and political life.

Henri Lefebvre's *The Urban Revolution* catalogs the myriad ways that the built environment's political role has been effaced under conditions of contemporary urbanism. He refers to this form of alienation as the "politics of space." As Lefebvre argues, "The politics of space sees space only as a homogenous and empty medium, in which we house objects, people, machines, industrial facilities, flows, and networks."[304] Our spatial imaginary has developed through the slow interaction of geographic, urban, physical, medical, and sociological intuitions which work together to construct space as an abstract and formal emptiness.

---

[304] Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, 48.

The naturalizing politics of space emerge through the slow accumulation of expectations and affective orientations through time.[305] As the state and economy partition, classify, and shape the built environment, these reforms build a particular understanding of social reality into the discourses, bodies, architectural forms, and planning practices that shape the popular experience of the city.[306] This "socio-spatial dialectic," as geographer Edward Soja calls it, is a dynamic process wherein materials and subjectivities come together over time to condition the body and the polity.[307] While this dynamic interaction is constantly taking place, the affective politics of space shift it into the experiential background:

> At this moment, a representation of space – which is by no means innocent, since it involves and contains a strategy – is passed off as disinterested positive knowledge. It is projected objectively; it is affected materially, through practical means. This is thus no

---

[305] Other prominent accounts have stressed a similar function of spatial normalization in maintaining political order. Michel Foucault's *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France 1977-78* (New York: Picador [2007]) offers a narrative of the development of a particularly modern spatial organization and imaginary suited to contemporary forms of government. James Scott's *Seeing Like a State* also offers an account of spatial normalization and the distancing of individual experience from the built environment. Both accounts, however, offer a significant drawback in that they do not adequately consider the phenomenological quality of the politics of space.

[306] "Each new form of state, each new form of political power, introduces its own particular way of partitioning space, its own particular administrative classification of discourses about space and about things and people in space. Each such form commands space, as it were, to serve its purpose." (Lefebvre, *The Production of Space*, trans. Donald Nicholson-Smith, Cambridge: Blackwell [1991], 281).

[307] Edward Soja, "The Socio-Spatial Dialectic," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 70, 207-25.

> real space or authentic space, only spaces produced in accordance with certain schemas developed by some particular groups within the general framework of a society…[308]

The everyday experience of space and spatial practice as an inherited doxa is not a sign of space's inherent neutrality. The spaces that we travel in most comfortably, and the norms we adopt with the least thought, are ones situated where the politics of space have passed into the realm of positivist assertion and neutral practice.

This air of spatial neutrality can take a number of forms. For one, it can take the form of a conceptual lag that results in a blindness to spatial politics. When spatial politics are viewed through a conceptual lens developed under a prior set of institutions and norms, or are poorly suited to a particular spatial-political context, forms of oppression through the built environment lurk unseen. As Lefebvre put it, describing the state of his contemporary urbanists:

> We focus attentively on the new field, the urban, but we see it with eyes, with concepts, that were shaped by the practices and theories of industrialization, with a fragmentary analytic tool that was designed during the industrial period and is therefore *reductive* of the emerging reality. We no longer see that reality; we resist it, turn away from it, struggle against it, prevent its birth and development.[309]

In these cases, contemporary forms of urbanism can appear to be the realization of a new triumph over some older form of spatialized repression. Seen from within an analytical frame

---

[308] Henri Lefebvre, *The Critique of Everyday Life Volume 3: From Modernity to Modernism: Towards a Metaphilosophy of Daily Life*, trans. John Moore, London: Verso (1981), 135.

[309] Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, 29

designed to analyze prior political and material forms, contemporary urban spaces slip into a "blind field" within which they are not subject to democratic critique.

Another contributor to spatial neutrality can be the repetition of material forms. Regularized architecture can discount the particular social and political vitality of individual places, "[converting] the concrete specificity of a particular place into the 'generalized function' of being a site – which is no less efficacious, however, for being generalized and functionalized in endless replication."[310] Under conditions of contemporary urbanism and globalization, spaces use certain architectural forms and cues to signal a broad social function – the smoothly replicable facades of restaurant chains, airports, police cruisers, public parks, or sports venues all draw from a well-established set of design and social expectations. As sites identified by their general social functions, these repetitive forms resist popular interrogation, smuggling their political content in their intuitive forms.

Space can further appear politically and socially neutral through the displacement of oppressed populations. As Clarissa Hayward has argued, the racial segregation of space is sustained in large part by "objectifying" segregation in "material forms…that social actors experience with their bodies as they engage in practical activity."[311] As she shows, practices like redlining and expectations regarding private home ownership "depoliticize" political exclusion by organizing bodily practice and social expectations to make a contingent social order seem inevitable.

---

[310] Edward Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History*, Berkeley: University of California Press (1998), 186.

[311] Clarissa Hayward, *How Americans Make Race*, 2.

Pierre Bourdieu refers to this as a form of "symbolic violence,"[312] defined by one commentator as:

> …done when those with relatively more power define (to their advantage) what is to be cherished and what is to be discarded (be it mannerisms, behaviours, or material possessions) in a way that makes it seem self-evident (to themselves, and to others), scientifically defensible (bolstered by the appropriate epidemiological data), and a matter of social competence (rather than a matter of class or economic interest), by virtue of being designated as 'socially desirable' in such a way that the deviant 'other' is marginalized, excluded, and silenced.[313]

The symbolic violence of displacement works when certain bodies, actions, sounds, smells, and other practices come to be thought as naturally excluded from public life. As another account puts it: "If people cannot be present in public spaces…without feeling uncomfortable, victimized and basically 'out-of-place', then it must be questionable *whether or not these people can be regarded as citizens at all*."[314] When social and scientific norms conspire to deem particular people and populations publicly unacceptable, they can be quietly removed from the community.

Space can gain also an air of neutrality when it is subordinated to other phenomena viewed as socially or ontologically prior. As recounted in previous chapters, spatial organization is often treated as the derivative consequence of economic and bureaucratic imperatives. Urban

---

[312] Pierre Bourdieu, "Social Space and Symbolic Power," *Sociological Theory* 7, 21.

[313] Blake Poland, "The 'Considerate' Smoker in Public Space: The Micro-politics and Political Economy of 'Doing the Right Thing,'" *Health and Place* 6, 9-10.

[314] Joe Painter and Chris Philo "Spaces of Citizenship," *Political Geography* 14, 115.

planning narratives that hinge on the imperatives of the market (that argue that the urban form must facilitate the flow of capital), bureaucratic administration (that facilitate state observation and ordering), or public health and safety (that claim that the form of the city must prevent disease and violence above all else) frame both the existing and future built environment as merely reflective of action going on at another level. Even if such concerns are valuable in a number of ways (improving many quality of life metrics), these narratives and spaces challenge citizens' ability to shape urban form and meaning.

While not an exhaustive list, the four practices of conceptual lag, repetition of material forms, displacement, and ontological subordination indicate the complex ways that space, matter, and the built environment can be neutralized and alienated from individual experience. In each practice, a given organization of the built environment, bodily practice, and institutions come to be taken as pre-political. While the harm of spatial neutrality seems minimal relative to the damage that can be done through active state violence, Hayward argues that the built form supports everyday social practices that are their own form of subtle violence:

> When racial stories are institutionalized, however, and when they are built into the very fabric of urban and suburban landscapes, they acquire a kind of geographic facticity that renders them lived reality. If race is embedded in our minds, if race is installed in our minds when we are children, this is the case, not simply because we are told, 'There's certain place you don't go.' It is because we come to know – as a matter of fact, as a matter of practical knowledge – that 'there's certain places you don't go. There's certain

> people you don't socialize with.' Learning to function as competent actors in racialized space means learning the common sense of racial practice.[315]

The "common sense" of our most unthought daily practices is a product of years of subtle spatial pedagogy and of the laws and spaces that sustain the spatial order. The institutionalization of racial stories in spatial form and practice often makes the most contingent and unjust politics feel like simple common sense. This is where space's ideological content performs its most insidious political work.[316]

As these account and practices suggest, the politics of space culminates in a built environment that appears neutral, abstract, and prepolitical. This air of neutrality comes precisely because space has been "occupied and used" by "processes whose traces are not always evident on the landscape."[317] Where the politics of space casts the built environment as the culmination of inevitable historical and social processes, urban social movements often show that space is always contingently politicized.

---

[315] Clarissa Hayward, *How Americans Make Race*, 47

[316] While many of the practices and spaces I consider would traditionally be considered public, bell hooks' "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance" helps draw attention to way the spatial politics of resistance cut through existing distinctions between public and private space and practice. In particular, she draws attention to the ways the construction of a home is in-itself a radical political gesture in the African-American community, as homes are the where women could learn to be subjects. She claims that homeplace is site where resistance is born (bell hooks, "Homeplace: A Site of Resistance," in *Philosophy and the City: Classic to Contemporary Writings*, ed. Sharon M. Meagher, Albany: State University of New York Press [2008], 175-83).

[317] Henri Lefebvre, "Reflections on the Politics of Space," 31.

3: Heterotopia in Theory

I have claimed that the organization of everyday spatial practice can make problematic political and social practices appear prepolitical, neutral, and inevitable. Following the accounts of Lefebvre, Hayward, Bourdieu, and others, I have cataloged how spaces that appear banal and feel natural can perform insidious and problematic political work. Because our social experiences are formed in dialectical interaction with spatial forms, spatial norms do a great deal of work in shaping our thought and unthought expectations of who is a citizen, what counts as a pressing political question, and what should be done to reform a given social order. This depoliticization-through-naturalization is democratically problematic in cities and states where certain bodies, oppressions, and experiences are excluded from public life.

What tools are available for urban social movements as they seek to intervene in built environments that naturalize undemocratic social norms? In the following two sections, I provide a reading of two social movements that intervene in the built environment to challenge inherited built forms, bodily practices, and normative expectations. I follow others in referring to the spaces of denaturalization as heterotopias. These spaces politicize the city by creating a material and psychological place for the displaced, drawing oppression into the political foreground, crystallizing the unseen politics of space, and creating an opportunity to construct a lived critique of anti-democratic spatial politics.

Most uses of the term "heterotopia" cite a lecture entitled "Of Other Spaces" delivered by Foucault in 1967.[318] In this lecture, Foucault was tracking the political and social force of a

---

[318] Michel Foucault, "Of Other Spaces," *Diacritics* 16, 22-27.

particular kind of modern space. The meaning of heterotopias, he notes at the outset of this lecture, has shifted through time along with our social imagination. This is the source of their analytical value:

> The great obsession of the nineteenth century was, as we know, history: with its themes of development and suspension, of crisis and cycle, themes of the ever-accumulating past, with its great preponderance of dead men and the menacing glaciation of the world….The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity: we are in the epoch of juxtaposition, the epoch of the near and far, of the side-by-side, of the dispersed. We are at a moment, I believe, when our experience of the world is less that of a long life developing through time than that of a network that connects point and intersects with its own skein.

Where earlier eras had been marked by a self-understanding that was primarily temporal, viewing lives, social forms, and institutions as the culmination of long processes, Foucault sees technological and conceptual innovations recasting our experience of ourselves and our world. Now, the world appears and functions as a series of sites with different purposes and functions operating in tandem. As he puts it, "The space is which we live, which draws us out of ourselves …is also, in itself, a heterogenous space. In other words, we do not live in a kind of void, inside of which we could place individuals and things. We do not live inside a void that could be colored with diverse shades of light, we live inside a set of relations that delineates sites which are irreducible to one another and absolutely not superimposable on one another."[319] Each site is

---

[319] Ibid., 23.

a distinct from and irreducible to other, yet these sites form the greater structural whole of modern life.

This heterogeneity feels settled and self-evident, ultimately serving as the unthought foundations of the existing social order. Lives are lived across spaces that are organized according to certain distinctions (public/private, family/social, cultural/useful, leisure/work, sacred/profane) and functions (social, economic, political, natural) that are contingent historical products.

In the lecture, Foucault is interested in sites that cut across these distinctions: "spaces… which are linked to all the others, which however contradict all the others."[320] Defined by their effective position and subversive function relative to the social order, heterotopias cut through the solidity and self-evidence of the politics of space by drawing attention to the contingency and contradictions of the existing social order. Foucault outlines several types of heterotopic spaces: among them, crisis heterotopias (spaces like a boarding schools and military camps that are the "elsewhere" that contain adolescents as they undergo the crises of the "first manifestations of sexual virility"), heterotopias of deviation (asylums or prisons where we place individuals whose behavior is outside the norm), or heterotopias of ritual or purification (spaces like monasteries or saunas that are isolated and penetrable yet not freely accessible like a public place).[321] In all cases, these spaces lie outside the social order, while assuming responsibility for phenomena that are not at home in the dominant structures. Heterotopic space provides place to the placeless and draws attention to those that are without a home in the dominant social order.

---

[320] Ibid., 24.

[321] Ibid, 24-27.

As critics have noted, Foucault's concept of heterotopia begins from a commonplace in contemporary geography (that spaces are marked and demarcated by external and internal differences), then extends it into the untenable assertion that some spaces are outside the existing (itself internally-consistent) spatial order.[322] This interpretation grows in large part out of the context of the lecture (1966 was arguably the height of Foucault's structuralism) and of the vocabulary used to describe the term, which can seem to oppose heterotopic spaces to the social totality. Embracing this wishful distinction between dominant and other spaces, scholarly uses of heterotopia often oversimplify spatial politics in a way that is theoretically problematic and political unhelpful. The untenable structuralism at the heart of Foucault's development of the term undercut its analytical value.

Yet, it is my contention that creating just such an impossible structure through heterotopic space is one of the ways that social movements rebuild the sense that urban space and architecture are democratic resources. By building sites that concentrate unseen and dispersed structures and political questions, heterotopic spaces shed light on the norms built into the world, providing an empowering leverage point for social change. Bodies, spaces, and norms are brought together as heterotopias incorporate movements relative to the political and economic structure.

It is important to note that heterotopic space does not grow out of an inherent alterity that adheres in the material forms of the spaces-in-themselves, but instead arises from a more complex affective, experiential quality that draws attention to the contingency and political force

---

[322] Arun Saldanha, "Heterotopia and Structuralism, *Environment and Planning A,* 2082.

of the built environment. As comparative literary scholar Pia Maria Ahlbäck writes: "What can be absolute about heterotopias, these places of relative otherness, except the individual experiences of them? The experience of a heterotopia, of subversive strangeness, can make it seem absolutely other but, nevertheless, it necessarily remains relatively so."[323] Heterotopias are defined as much by their affective as their effective location.

As such, the political role of heterotopias cannot be read by looking strictly at their narrowly instrumental role. Heterotopias work on citizens' thoughts and imaginations as much as they perform some particular function. As sociologist Kevin Hetherington put it:

> Heterotopia are not quite spaces of transition – the chasm they represent can never be closed up – but they are spaces of deferral, spaces where ideas and practices that represent the good life can come into being, from nowhere, even if they never actually achieve what they set out to achieve… Heterotopia, therefore, reveal the process of social ordering to be just that, a process rather than a thing.[324]

These spaces are characterized not by their material forms or political results, but instead in the way they help citizens reconstitute themselves as potent agents in the midst of a world full of meaningful material forms (that thus is possibly subject to meaningful political interventions). This is what connects them to the account of democratic joy: they foster citizen engagement with

---

[323] Pia Maria Ahlbäck, *Energy, Heterotopia, Dystopia: Geogre Orwell, Michel Foucault, and the Twentieth Century Environmental Imagination* 2001, Domkyrkogatan: Åbo Akademis University Press (2001), 161.

[324] Kevin Hetherington, *The Badlands of Modernity: Heterotopia and Social Ordering*, New York: Rutledge (1997), ix.

the imagined socio-spatial totality, allowing them to think and act into the previously unseen or unthought politics of space.

Achieving political empowerment requires that participants in social movements see their occupation of space as a meaningful form of agency relative to the diverse and dispersed forces that space their world. Heterotopia provides this sense of concentrated political significance, even if it is necessarily romantic and mythical. When spaces are imputed with meaning and constructed to have connections with far-flung places, institutions, and people, urban social movements can create a sense that one's body stands at a potent political site. This outside that emplaces and gets leverage on an imagined social totality is heterotopic space. Heterotopias do not need to exist as an ontological other to have the disruptive and disquieting role that Foucault recognizes in them.

Heterotopic spaces are useful to urban social movements as they catalyze popular engagement with the seemingly pre-political qualities of the built environment. They do so by using localized imaginative and material interventions to reframe the relationship of the built environment to the broader social and spatial totality. While this retains a certain logical similarity to an untenable structuralism, in social movement practice it can instead be read as an affective accomplishment contingent on a particular coming-together of people as part of a socio-spatial dialectic. Heterotopic spaces are not inherently and wholly other, but they do help show the social order to be a whole against which one can push.

As the following cases show, heterotopic space is not just about achieving critical awareness, but is "achieved in everyday practices," when "'ways of operating' or doing things,

no longer appear as merely the obscure background of social activity, and if a body of theoretical questions, methods, categories, and perspectives, by penetrating that obscurity, make it possible to articulate them."[325] What heterotopia suggests is that there are ways that defined moments of spatial occupation and opposition can achieve broad change in the spaces and experience of their occupants. In 'penetrating the obscurity' of depoliticized space, heterotopias can provide everyday life with a new depth of meaning and political richness.[326]

While the connection between theories of heterotopic space and democratic political practice seems clear on the surface, few efforts have been made to understand either how movements made political use of these spaces or how effective these spaces actually are in breaking through the seeming neutrality of the built environment. The following section analyzes the shared traits of two political movements whose material practices and political theories provide an empirical application of heterotopic spaces to political reality. Through Huey Newton's theory of "intercommunalism" and the Black Panther Party's Survival Programs, and the Situationist International's theory of "unitary urbanism" as it relates to the 1968 French

---

[325] Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life,* Berkeley: University of California Press (1988), xi.

[326] Heterotopias are thus about coming to feel how myriad diverse and dispersed actors form and reform you as an embodied subject. This fits into my account of affect and embodiment because it creates a new sense of the relationship between the world, body, and normative aspirations. They place the world in focus. As Deleuze writes of Spinoza's *Ethics*, a condition of loving or hating the world, and thus feeling empowered to act to preserve or transform it, requires seeing and feeling the ways it works on you (Gilles Deleuze, *Spinoza: Practical Philosophy)*. Heterotopias provide a space of feeling one's affective constitution. To see and feel the world, and subsequently to love or hate it, is the condition of seeing and feeling new connections to it. To create a space in which one feels the world's actions on them, and feels empowered to act back, is a condition of feeling a life-affirming joyful agency.

Student Protests, consider how these movements constructed spaces of love, hate, and violence in ways that served democratic norms, citizens, and cities.

4: Heterotopia in Practice

I have claimed that heterotopias promise to be an effective catalyst for an embodied experience of democratic enfranchisement under contemporary conditions of alienating and violent urbanism. This is the case for two reasons. First, they function to denaturalize social and spatial orders by foregrounding the work that the built environment does to promote a particular regime of inclusion, exclusion, and oppression. And, second, they draw this denaturalized field of social and spatial forces together into a coherent structure that can be seen and felt by embodied and emplaced subjects. This combined denaturalization and embodied and emplaced empowerment are foundations of joyful citizen affect.

Though analyses of the relationships between the Black Panther Party's Survival Programs and Huey Newton's theory of intercommunalism, and the Situationist International's urban theory as it related to the May 1968 French wildcat strikes, I aim to show how social movements imagine and construct spaces that denaturalize the spatial and political order in a way that empowers populations to make claims on the forces that shape their lives. I consider these particular movements because they exemplify the way the theoretical promise of heterotopic space was realized by groups that understood their politics in explicitly spatial terms.

Each movement's efforts to occupy, reimagine, and rebuild space took up the specific material and imagined conditions of particular communities to address the more general issues of alienation and disembodiment that I have claimed characterize contemporary urbanism. My

framework for considering the heterotopic politics of the Black Panthers and Situationist International is thus not comparative so much as it is concerned with cataloging the ways different movements navigate particular built environments and political imaginaries under the antidemocratic conditions of contemporary urbanism. While there are a number of important contrasts between the Panthers and Situationists (vanguardism v. avant-gardism, pseudo-communism v. pseudo-anarchism, the central positions afforded to race v. class, etc.), for the purpose of my analysis these only serve to make the overlap in their spatial politics all the more remarkable.

The theoretical and practical overlaps between the Black Panthers and Situationists show how urban social movements embody enfranchisement by constructing spaces that recenter politics in experience and architecture. This section thus considers four traits of heterotopic spaces in the theory and practice of such movements. Heterotopias (1) deconstruct disempowering spatial imaginaries; (2) offer a totalizing imaginative geography; (3) privilege the architectural as a scale of experience; and (4) craft a weak messianic openness to possibility.

4.1: Deconstructing Disempowering Material Imaginations

Heterotopias build a new world that is both imagined and material. For this reason, their construction often begins by undercutting an existing popular understanding of the organization and meaning of the built environment. In the cases of the Black Panthers and Situationist International, a core element in their practice was confronting misunderstandings of the spatial politics of oppression that were undercutting the possibility of an effective affective orientation toward the field of political forces that shape urban life. This critique of the existing spatial order

was foundational in the process of building heterotopic spaces that could empower and embody the claims of the oppressed.

Thus, the Black Panthers' theory of intercommunalism began with a critique of the understandings of space common among their contemporary activist groups. In a speech at Boston College on November 18, 1970, Supreme Commander of the Black Panther Party Huey Newton offered an outline of the party's theoretical and ideological foundation. In this speech, Newton offers an account of economic and political oppression that connects geographic, urban, and personal spatial practice to broader social phenomena.

Before Newton's speech at Boston College, the Black Panthers' official ideology had been one of "revolutionary internationalism." Premised on the idea that the nation-state remained the primary site of oppression, and thus would be the scale on which revolutionary actions would unfold, internationalism framed the primary goal of the Black Panther Party as supporting revolutionary action against national-level political and economic institutions around the globe.[327] The police brutality and high incarceration rates inflicted on the black community, the internationalist account claimed, showed that spaces from African states to the American ghetto were not simply disadvantaged areas but colonized nations ruled over by the American police state.[328] The inherent assumption was that the economic and geographic logics of colonialism

---

[327] Huey Newton, *"Let us Hold High the Banner of Intercommunalism and the Invisible Thoughts of Huey P. Newton, Minister of Defense and Supreme Commander of the Black Panther Party," The Black Panther vol. 5 no. 30, A-G.*

[328] Michael Newton*, Bitter Grain: Huey Newton and the Black Panther Party*, Los Angeles: Holloway House (1991), 13-18,

persevered, and that the action thus called for was a unity among those living in colonized territories around the world.

Newton argued, however, that this was based on an outdated understanding of the world's economic and political geography:

> We believe that there are no more colonies or neocolonies. If a people is colonized, it must be possible for them to decolonize and become what they formerly were. But what happens when the raw materials are extracted and labor is exploited within a territory dispersed over the entire globe? When the riches of the whole earth are depleted and used to feed a gigantic industrial machine in the imperialist's home? Then the people and the economy are so integrated into the imperialist empire that it's impossible to 'decolonize,' to return to the former conditions of existence.[329]

The spatial logic revolutionary internationalism did not map onto the empirical realities of the world Newton saw around him. "Nations," Newton argued, "no longer exist," at least as thefundamental territories within which powerful institutions (and revolutionary movements) found themselves.[330]

As Eldridge Cleaver wrote of Newton's critique, the outdated "faulty analyses" of the internationalists were "greatly responsible for the retardation of the development of the revolution in urban situations."[331] Like Lefebvre's argument that we see the world "with eyes,

---

[329] Huey Newton, *The Huey P. Newton Reader*, New York: Seven Stories Press (2002), 187.

[330] Ibid., 187.

[331] Eldridge Cleaver, "The Ideology of the Black Panther Party," Black Panther Party, available: http://www.africanafrican.com/folder12/african%20african%20american3/africa%20history/Cleaver.S.pdf (accessed 14 June 2015), 11.

with concepts, that were shaped by the practices and theories of industrialization" that were "therefore reductive of the emerging reality," the Panthers had failed, Newton argued, to appreciate the way inherited and outdated concepts limited their libratory politics.[332] To confront the depoliticized and inaccurate readings of their contemporary geography of oppression, the theory of intercommunalism reformed the spatial imaginary in order to provoke a critical engagement with the discourse and built forms that reproduced oppressive structures of everyday life.

As is likely to be the case with any theoretical statement of practiced realities, Newton's theory of intercommunalism was of limited significance to the Panthers initially. In a series of interviews with former Party members, Nik Heynen demonstrates the disconnect between Newton's theoretical project and the practical politics of the Panthers. For one interviewee, it was difficult to integrate this broad theoretical project into daily life: "on the one hand there was for me, a fascinating theory of revolutionary intercommunalism but then somewhat more practically, there was the idea of the survival programs." For another, the theory seemed to be a distraction from the practices of caring for the community: ""We believed 'practice was the criterion of truth.' Now that, I do remember! So no matter how much you talked, no matter how much you theorized…you were like, 'Did you read Huey Newton's treatise on blah-blah-blah?' 'uh, no' [laughter]."[333]

---

[332] Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, 29.

[333] Nik Heynen, "Bending the Bar of Empire from Every Ghetto for Survival: The Black Panther Party's Radical Antihunger Politics of Social Reproduction and Scale," *Annals of the Association of American Geographers* 99 (417).

Yet, Heynen notes that intercommunal theory and Survival Program practice did mix during the early 1970s. The dialectical development – with the Programs concretizing theory and the theory inflecting and inspiring the practice – showed how the geographic imagination can engage, and eventually come to modify, Party and democratic spatial politics (even in a case where the theoretical vocabulary did not immediately resonate with all Party members).[334]

A similar critical impulse underlay the Situationist International's constructive project. Contemporary culture was, the Situationists believed, in a state of "ideological decomposition" that had washed away the foundations of radical politics: "nothing new," they believed, "can be built any longer on these ruins."[335] In the recent past, revolutionary aesthetic and political movements were admitted to the dominant culture only "at the price of a vital repudiation."[336] Yet, where prior creative and political radicals renounced their revolutionary vision and instead produced fragmented and ambiguous work in order to be accepted, the Situationists took responsibility for providing an ideological rigor, artistic outlet, and uniting theory of the conditions and perspectives of their politics.[337]

---

[334] As Heynen observed, "Newton made headway through the case of Oakland because as an organizer he was committed to the visible politics carried out in local space ("Bending the Bar of Empire from Every Ghetto for Survival," 418). As Robert O. Self claims, while central Party's theory-building project may have been abstract, "Newton and other party insiders…long believed that the principle problem with late-twentieth century radicalism was its abstractness and distance from the material experience of ordinary people" (Robert O. Self, *American Babylon: Race and the Struggle for Postwar Oakland*, Princeton: Princeton University Press [2003], 302).

[335] Tom McDonough (ed.), *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*, Cambridge: MIT Press (2004), 37.

[336] Ibid., 31.

[337] Ibid., 40.

Guy Debord, an artist and theorist at the center of the movement, provided a simple statement of the core of the Situationists' cultural politics: "Everything that was directly lived has receded into a representation."[338] Culture had cultivated "an immense accumulation of spectacles." The spectacle was "a social relationship between people mediated by images," standing between individual subjective experience and real life.[339] This particular form of alienation created a smooth flow of spectacular images, gratifying sensory experiences, and material and social forms that resisted critical interrogation and distanced the oppressed (and everybody else) from the reality of the world around them.

As Debord and Pierre Canjeurs put it in "Preliminaries Toward Defining a Unitary Revolutionary Program":

> Present culture as a whole can be characterized as alienated in the sense that every activity, every moment of life, every idea, every type of behavior, has a meaning only outside itself, in an 'elsewhere' which, being no longer in heaven, is only the more maddening to try and locate: a utopia, in the literal sense of the word, dominates the life of the modern world.[340]

The literal meaning of "utopia" is "no place" and this is precisely where the Situationists saw their contemporaries living their lives: in a world where action, motivation, and politics had no meaning in one's concrete material circumstances, but instead only in some other (economic,

---

[338] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, Detroit: Black and Red Publishing (2000), 1.

[339] Ibid., 1.

[340] Pierre Canjuers & Guy Debord, "Preliminaries Toward Defining a Unitary Revolutionary Program," Bureau of Public Secrets, available: http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/prelim.htm (accessed 14 June 2015).

political, cultural, moral) register. Even the state was an "alienated means" – a way of understanding and acting into the world that drew individuals away into the "no place" of government, the global commodity, and the spectacle-commodity society.[341]

The Situationists saw the world as distance and representation, leaving action and subjectivity untethered in the concrete circumstances that were the source of oppressions and the site where one could act to overcome them. The Paris Commune served as a positive example of this denaturalization of space in practice, representing "the only implementation of a revolutionary urbanism to date — attacking on the spot the petrified signs of the dominant organization of life, understanding social space in political terms, refusing to accept the innocence of any monument."[342] This refusal of the naturalized, monumental, and transcendental state was a guiding example of the negation that necessarily initiated the Situationists' heterotopic construction.

In this sense, the Black Panthers and Situationists both denaturalized spatial experience and confronted stultifying false and saddening imagination. Each shared in the basic understanding that, "All space is already occupied by the enemy" and reconstruction begins "when the absence of this occupation is created in certain zones."[343] To build democratic urbanism through heterotopic sites requires acknowledging the ways that outdated concepts and intuitions guide action and enervate political action.

---

[341] Guy Debord, *The Society of the Spectacle*, 47-90.

[342] Guy Debord et. al., "Theses on the Paris Commune," Bureau of Public Secrets, available: http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/Pariscommune.htm (accessed 14 June 2015).

[343] Attila Kotányi & Raoul Vaneigem, "Bastic Program of the Bureau of Unitary Urbanism," Bureau of Public Secrets, available: www.bopsecrets.org/SI/6.unitaryurb.htm (accessed 14 June 2015).

4.2: Totalizing Imaginative Geography

Communard radical geographer Elise Reclus' statement that the study of geography should begin with "everything at once" is an operative impulse behind the constructive politics of heterotopic space. The Black Panthers' intercommunalism and the Situationists' unitary urbanism each claim that the functionalization of urban space, and the disciplinary divisions that split up the study of social and political life enervated urban politics. To confront this, both movements sought to concentrate and unify the totality of social forces in particular spaces. They built joy into spatial practice by focusing on everything at once, bringing the forces that shape the lives of the oppressed into a single space, making political institutions imaginable and empowering.

In articulating a revolutionary intercommunalism, Newton proposed a new theory and practice of resistance better suited to contemporary political forces and geographies. Where the Ten Point Program accepted the nation as the fundamental political unit and internationalism as the best way for the Party to understand global solidarity, Newton stated:

> We say that the world today is a dispersed collection of communities. A community is different from a nation. A community is a small unit with a comprehensive set of institutions that exist to serve a small group of people. And we say further that the struggle in the world today is between the small circle that administers and profits from the empire of the United States, and the peoples of the world who want to determine their own destinies.[344]

---

[344] Huey Newton, "Let Us Hold High the Banner of Intercommunalism," F.

Where the basic unit of internationalism was the nation state, intercommunalism concentrated the field of political meaning and action within the sensory and practical experience of individuals and local communities (see Section 4.3 below).

In claiming "We are not separate nations of men to continue the pattern of fighting amongst ourselves" but instead "a large collection of communities who can unite and fight together against our common enemy,"[345] Newton sketched a new spatial politics of global oppression that recast the relationship between individuals, communities, and the global powers that expropriate labor, incarcerate the young, and keep much of the world's population in precarity. This infusion of the local environment with concentrated political meaning and agency is captured in the practices that Newton outlines in his Boston College speech, the Survival Programs:

> We recognized that in order to bring the people to the level of consciousness where they would seize the time, it would be necessary to serve their interests in survival by developing programs which would help them to meet their daily needs. For a long time we have had such programs not only for survival but for organizational purposes. Now we not only have a breakfast program for schoolchildren, we have clothing programs, we have health clinics which provide free medical and dental services, we have programs for prisoners and their families, and we are opening clothing and shoe factories to provide for more of the needs of the community. Most recently we have begun a testing and research program on sickle-cell anemia.[346]

---

[345] Huey Newton, *The Huey P. Newton Reader*, 236.

[346] Ibid, 229.

To these Programs, the Panthers later added Sickle-Cell testing centers, senior transportation and services, and legal aid. The programs were all free to their users, avoided bureaucratic structures, questions, and paperwork, and were organized and operated independently by the communities they served.[347] By seeing communities as the fundamental political, social, and economic unit of the world, the Panthers focused on organizing, empowering, and building solidarity across a new inter communal geography.

Through Newton's theoretical project to imagine communities as the fundamental political, social, and economic unit of political resistance, the Panthers' focus on organizing and empowering these local sites took on a more pointed focus. The aim of the Survival Programs was to generate empowering spaces and active citizens that could serve the oppressed and ultimately build and strengthen institutions that would support black liberation. While these practices had existed before intercommunalism, what this theory provided was a new imagination and theoretical-ideological account of the relationship between these actions and the practices of the survival programs.

As Eldridge Cleaver wrote of the Panthers' pre-school breakfast programs, "Breakfast for Children pulls people out of the system and organizes them into an alternative. Black children who go to school hungry each morning have been organized into their poverty, and the Panther program liberates them, frees then from that aspect of poverty."[348] He continues elsewhere to state that the condition of liberation and power was to "free black communities from the imperialistic control exercised over them by the racist exploiting cliques within white

---

[347] Huey Newton, *To Die for the People*, San Francisco: City Lights Publishers (2009).

[348] Ibid., 213.

communities, to free our people, locked up as they are in Urban Dungeons, from the imperialism of the white suburbs."[349] This connection between the spaces of the churches and community centers that hosted the breakfast programs and the broader geographic and political imagination of the Panthers' revolutionary politics made visceral the political struggles against racism and imperialism. Through a combination of bodily practice and a new geographic imaginary, the Panthers imbued these community-building projects with a new political meaning.[350]

A similar focus on concentration and unification is at work in the theory and practice of the Situationists. We can see this in their role in the 1968 student protests and wildcat strikes

---

[349] Eldridge Cleaver quoted in Nik Heynen, "Bending the Bars of Empire from Every Ghetto for Survival," 418.

[350] As Elaine Brown explained in an interview, the Breakfast Programs were also unique in introducing an element of gender parity in the politics of care:

> The Breakfast Program represented the beginning of breakdown within the party ranks of the roles between men and women. You can believe me, there was resistance to this shit. These men did not want to work; I mean breakfast for children, why do you think Eldridge [Cleaver] himself said this wasn't even manly. Remember, revolutionaries are men [laughter], they don't cook breakfast. . . . I mean what else could you do that was less manly, quote-unquote, than getting up in the morning and fixing food, and yet not only that, but for children. But yet every single person that was ever in the Black Panther Party in the day that they operated in the so called rank- and-file, including people like me, had to work in the Breakfast Program. And that was the beginning of the change in dynamic in terms of how we viewed our roles. I would say that you could almost tag the discussion within the party of gender to the Breakfast Program because food, cooking, kitchen, come on, that's all women. So for men, here you came in, you wanted to fire your gun and kill some pigs, kill some white people, whatever your thought was, and you ended up with a spoon in your hand and apron on, and serving some kids in the community . . . no uh uh! This is not a man's thing, so this was a very big dividing line issue . . . the most amazing part was that everybody accepted it. You could have a thousand dialogues on gender issues and you would have never gotten that result faster than you did by saying look, if you love these children, if you love your people, you better get your ass up and start working in that breakfast program (Ibid., 413).

Where the everyday and quotidian politics of community nourishment has formerly been women's work, the effective and affective politics of the Survival Programs empowered a

across France. The Situationists' relationship to the May '68 protests was condensed in the pamphlet, "On the Poverty of Student Life," written by Tunisian Situationist Mustapha Omar Khayati. The pamphlet served as a manifesto for the protests, decrying the conceptual and political imagination of contemporary society.

The student movement started from the assertion that overcoming ongoing oppressions began with a disciplinary and practical concatenation. They said the students must seek change without "titillation in the passionless polemics between the celebrities of Unintelligence: Althusser -- Garaudy – Barthes -- Picard -- Lefebvre -- Lévi-Strauss -- Halliday – Châtelet – Antoine, and between their rival ideologies, whose function is to mask real problems by debating false ones."[351] As the pamphlet goes on:

> Up to now, studies of student life have ignored the essential issue. The surveys and analyses have all been psychological or sociological or economic: in other words, academic exercises, content with the false categories of one specialization or another. None of them can achieve what is most needed--a view of modern society as a whole. Fourier denounced their error long ago as the attempt to apply scientific laws to the basic assumptions of the science ('porter régulièrement sur les questions primordiales'). Everything is said about our society except what it is, and the nature of its two basic principles--the commodity and the spectacle. The fetishism of facts masks the essential category, and the details consign the totality to oblivion.[352]

---

[351] Situationist International and UNEF Strasbourg, "The Poverty of Student Life," Bureau of Public Secrets, available: http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/poverty.htm (accessed 14 June 2015).
[352] Ibid.

Against the fragmentation of academic disciplines and the scientific analysis and management of everyday life, the Situationists claimed that a "critique of the modern world must have the totality as its object and objective."[353] Beyond theoretical distinctions lay a unitary reality, and in occupying the temples to the vacuous gods of alienation, the revolutionaries sought to bring individuals into contact with their material circumstances.

Rather than proposing to address this situation through the academic formalism of the contemporary left, the Situationists focused on the affective experience of political awareness and revolt. Echoing the Black Panthers' claim that situatedness in a concrete community is the leverage point of knowledge and action, Situationists sought to draw new meanings out of the material and built environment:

> [A revolutionary] organization makes an integral critique of the world, or is nothing. By integral critique we mean a comprehensive critique of all geographical areas where various forms of separate socioeconomic powers exist, as well as a comprehensive critique of all aspects of life. Such an organization sees the beginning and end of its program in the complete decolonization of everyday life. It thus aims not at the masses' self-management of the existing world, but at its uninterrupted transformation. It embodies the radical critique of political economy, the supersession of the commodity system and of wage labor.[354]

---

[353] Ibid.

[354] Situationist International, "Minimum Definition of Revolutionary Organizations," Bureau of Public Secrets, available: http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/11.mindef.htm (accessed 14 June 2015).

Rather than building up more walls of representation between the oppressed and their world, the Situationists saw their project as jarring individuals out of their complacency and disorientation through an "integral critique of the world," replacing the exploitative and alienated geographies of global capitalism with a new, more empowering frame.

Echoing Marx's call for philosophers to change (rather than merely interpret) the world, the Situationists saw their task as one of active construction: "So far philosophers and artists have only interpreted situations; the point now is to transform them."[355] This transformation, according to the Situationists, was to begin by constructing new spaces. Their politics began by building, not theorizing. Their "central purpose is the construction of situations, that is, the concrete construction of temporary settings of life and their transformation into a higher, passionate nature.

In doing so, they sought to "develop an intervention directed by the complicated factors of two great components in perpetual interaction: the material setting of life and the behaviors that it incites and that overturn it."[356] Like intercommunalism, Situationism aimed to build finite interventions with broad political and affective footprints. Spaces within the city were to be treated as manifestations of global patterns, with a unique capacity to resonate through the entire world system when appropriately critiqued and reappropriated.

In the communitarian geography of the Black Panthers and the unifying politics of the Situationists, we see how urban social movements frame the global totality of oppressions through a new geography of resistance to situate power in the bodies and spaces of the

---

[355] Guy Debord quoted in David Pinder, *Visions of the City*, New York: Routledge (2010), 166.
[356] Tom McDonough (ed.), *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, 44.

oppressed. These imagined and built geographies break down the formal and disciplinary distinctions that fragmented and alienated individual agents. By creating spaces that concentrate and unify the forces that shape political life, heterotopias help urban social movements build the conditions of informed and empowered citizenship on the level of local experience. This imaginative connection-making between communities, situations, and the broad structures of global racism and exploitation serves to bring political structures into contact with the embodied and emplaced experiences of urban residents.

4.3: Privileging the Architectural Scale Of Experience

This heterotopic unification and concentration are built at the level of architectural experience. As Henri Lefebvre argues in *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*, "It is at the architectural level that the space of enjoyment is projected, the space of use and reclaimed immediacy… Here, the irreducible becomes manifest, expands, imposes itself in turn."[357] The level of the city is abstracted from experience, which is always located in a more localized horizon. To zoom out from this experience risks technocracy; as Lefebvre claims, "they are the ones who want to build the perfect city. They concern themselves with the 'real': needs, services, transport, the various subsystems of urban reality, and the urban itself as a system. They want to arrange the pieces of a puzzle to create an ideal."[358] Building empowering communities and unitary urban situations requires installing the social totality at the immediately imaginable level.

---

[357] Henri Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment,* 146.

[358] Ibid., 149.

Newton's theory of intercommunalism was an original contribution developing what geographers refer to as a new "politics of scale."[359] As a number of geographers have noted, folding the socio-spatial skein opens up new possibilities for localized actions to resonate across vast spaces and institutions. Now, local scales "have become pivotal terrains around which political action crystallizes and social mobilizations take place."[360] This is a quality of sites that are discursively and materially connected to one-another by a number of intervening economic, cultural, and political mediators.

This attentiveness to the affective power of the architectural scale as a means to promote the oppressed to imaginatively and actively engage broad political problems and depoliticized built environments can be seen in David Hilliard's arguments for intercommunalism: "The people of the world are united in their desire to run their own communities: the black people in Oakland and the Vietnamese. We need to band together as communities, create a revolutionary intercommunalism that will resist capital's reactionary intercommunalism."[361] Similarly, Bobby Seale said of the Survival Programs that, "We realized that regarding hunger, the breadcrumbs they [U.S. Keynesian welfare state] were throwing at us was only to pacify us, to keep us quiet. It wasn't to sustain us."[362] For Hilliard, the small scale built new solidarity between victims of

---

[359] For a longer engagement with questions of scale, resistance, and the geographic imaginary in the Survival Programs and Newton's intercommunalism, see: Nik Heynen, "Bending the Bar of Empire from Every Ghetto for Survival," 406-22.

[360] Nik Heynen, et. al. *In the Nature of Cities: Urban Political Ecology and the Politics of Urban Metabolism*. London: Routledge *(*2006), 6.

[361] David Hilliard and Lewis Cole, *This Side of Glory: The Autobiography of David Hilliard and the Story of the Black Panther Party*, Boston: Little Brown (1993), 319.

[362] Bobby Seale quoted in Heynan, "Bending the Bar of Empire from Every Ghetto for Survival," 415.

imperialism in Oakland and Vietnam; for Seale, the breakfast programs were a chance to address the subtle violence of Keynesian economics. Through these small-scales, larger realities were condensed and brought into view.

Former Panther Elaine Brown noted that these heterotopic sites and connections helped denaturalize and politicize daily experiences in the communities of the oppressed:

> Because we are so used to the capitalist construct, it doesn't occur to us that we have a human right to eat; because if you don't eat you will die, it's not complicated. So, if there is a price tag to eating, then there is a price on your head, because the minute you don't have enough money to eat, you're slated for death… What I also believe today and what I see is important about this, is the right to eat. It's not just the question of, am I dealing with hunger, because I could set up a thousand charities that will feed a bunch of people. The question is, do I as a human being in this society, or in this life, have a right to eat. And does this society have any duty at least with children to make sure that they eat. And that was the other principle that was important; because it isn't whether the Black Panther Party feeds you or not, or if anyone else will feed you. 'Cause that is a hit and miss idea. The question is: are we prepared to make a commitment, at least, to our children that we will not put a price on their lives by denying them food unless their parents have the money to pay for it.[363]

For the Panthers, intercommunalism as a theory and the Survival Programs as practices drew out new resonances between the individual and intercommunal scales. The connection between large-scale economic questions and everyday practical realities developed through local spaces that politicized practices like consumption and production. The effect was a sense that the

---

[363] Elaine Brown in Ibid., 411.

spaces, practices, and experiences that are too easily (if also painfully) taken as given or inevitable are approached as opportunities for engagement and action.

The temporal shift of these heterotopias is also significant. As Andrew Jonas notes, "language of scale is an anticipation of the future."[364] This is way, the scalar flattening of the Black Panthers' theory and practice cast the local community as the privileged site of political struggle and the only scale on which the individual could imagine (and, therefore, resist) global oppression. "You are connected to that rebel in Mozambique, so fight with us here in Oakland." Or, as Cleaver put it elsewhere:

> We say that we are working for our national liberation, and in order to achieve that we must have a universal national consciousness within our people. But before we can really tackle that monumental job, an essential step is to achieve community liberation, we must have a solid community consciousness. A community that year in and year out allows itself to be raped politically is not consciousness.[365]

In all of these cases, the geographic imaginary and practical politics of resistance focused on the scale of lived experience. The bodily occupation of sites that connected with the broad social structure converted the visceral experience of the church breakfast programs (in their sights, smells, sounds, and flavors) into the space of a lived and resistance to the global political order of oppression.

---

[364] Andrew E.G. Jonas, "The Scale Politics of Spatiality," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 12, 262.

[365] Eldridge Cleaver quoted in Heynan, "Bending the Bar of Empire from Every Ghetto for Survival," 418..

As Situationists Atilla Kotányi and Raoul Vaneigem wrote in 1961's "Basic Program of the Bureau of Unitary Urbanism":

> The main achievement of contemporary city planning is to have made people blind to the possibility of what we call unitary urbanism, namely a living critique of this manipulation of cities and their inhabitants, a critique fueled by all the tensions of everyday life. A living critique means setting up bases for an experimental life where people can come together to create their own lives on terrains equipped to their ends. Such bases cannot be reservations for 'leisure' activities separated from the society. No spatio-temporal zone is completely separable.[366]

The Situationists recognized the way these heterotopic spaces resonated in different countries and cultures in May '68; "In the space of ten days workers have occupied hundreds of factories, a spontaneous general strike has brought the country to a standstill, and de facto committees have taken over many state-owned buildings." But, resonant with the Occupy and Arab Spring Protests, these finite intervention were far broader in their political resonance: "The French example is already having repercussions in other countries, reviving the internationalism that is inseparable from the revolutions of our century."[367]

It is because of this belief that finite interventions could transform individual life and global politics that the Situationists advocated aesthetic and practical interventions into the built environment. This hinged on the construction of human scale architectural interventions, rather

---

[366] Atilla Kotányi and Raoul Vaneigem, "Basic Program of the Bureau of Unitary Urbanism."

[367] Council for Maintaining the Occupations, "For the Power of the Workers' Councils," available http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/May68docs.htm (accessed 14 June 2015).

than anything as abstract and technical as urban planning. As Raoul Vaneigem, an architect and member of the Situationist International put it:

> There is an incredible dullness in everything having to do with urbanism. The word build sticks straight up out of the water where other possible words float to the surface. Wherever bureaucratic civilization has spread, the anarchy of individual construction has been officially sanctioned, and taken over by the authorized organisms of power, with the result that the building instinct has been extirpated like a vice an only barely survives in children and primitive (those not held accountable, in administrative parlance).[368]

Political freedom is contingent on the ability to act into the world through the construction of new means and spaces against state-driven urbanism.

The Situationists saw the affective life of architecture encompassing all modes of experience, down to sounds, smells, and flavors.[369] The full range of affective experience must be mobilized with all the resources available to build new possibilities into urban space. Architecture must be considered as the creation of emotionally moving situations, not forms, through material; "the use of such tools will mark the leap from a utopian revolutionary art to an experimental revolutionary art."[370] In these seemingly small-scale interventions, the Black Panthers and Situationists show how heterotopic spaces used a broad range of affective tools to

---

[368] Tom McDonough (ed.), *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, 121-2.

[369] Guy Debord, "Introduction to a Critique of Urban Geography," available http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/urbgeog.htm (accessed 14 June 2015).

[370] Guy Debord, "Theses on Cultural Revolution," available http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/1.cultural-revolution.htm (accessed 14 June 2015).

make political claims. The occupation and affective reconstruction of space draws attention to the limited and contingent grasps of institutions and social forces on individual subjects:

> The occupation of factories and public buildings throughout the country has not only brought a halt to the functioning of the economy, it has brought about a general questioning of the society. A deep-seated movement is leading almost every sector of the population to seek a real transformation of life. This is the beginning of a revolutionary movement, a movement which lacks nothing but the consciousness of what it has already done in order to triumph.[371]

Once the mass of politics, society, and the economy is reduced to the material elements that hold it in place, all of a sudden the workers found a new ability to act critically on a level far beyond anything they had thought possible.

4.4: Weak Messianic Openness to Possibility

A final trait of heterotopias is their role in opening future possibilities, rather than defining a particular route to radical change. Put another way, unitary urbanism and intercommunalism are not strictly instrumental. They do not aim to directly realize a final image of the good life, but instead to build the possibility of radical change in an as-yet undetermined form. They share, in a sense, in an awareness of uncertainty in affecting radical change. In this way, heterotopias are constructed out of what Walter Benjamin refers to as a "weak messianic

---

[371] Enragés–Situationist International Committee Council for Maintain the Occupations, "Address to All Workers," available http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/address.html (accessed 14 June 2015).

power." They open themselves to interpretation and possibility, rather than simply constructing a particular utopian image of what the future had to be.

As Huey Newton described, "A Ten Point Program that is not revolutionary in itself, nor is it reformist. It's a survival program." In order to address the conditions of globalized racism and exploitation, "there must be a total transformation," but the conditions for achieving this are unclear. As such, Newton offers that "until…we can achieve that total transformation, we must exist." In this sense, the survival programs operating in communities across the world are not utopian models of an ideal community but, instead, "a survival kit" necessary for "children to grow up healthy, with minds that can function and be creative. They cannot do this if they do not get correct nutrition."[372] Thus, the community serves as a site of practical care for the everyday, both framing the broad social structure and leaving space open for radical change:

> All these programs satisfy the deep needs of the community but they are not solutions to our problems. That is why we call them survival programs, meaning survival pending revolution. We say that the survival program of the Black Panther Party is like the survival kit of a sailor stranded on a raft. It helps him to sustain himself until he can get completely out of that situation. So the survival programs are not answers or solutions, but they will help us to organize the community around a true analysis and understanding of their situation. When consciousness and understanding is raised to a high level then the community will seize the time and deliver themselves from the boot of their oppressors.[373]

---

[372] Huey Newton, *The Huey P. Newton Reader*, 160.

[373] Ibid., 230.

The Black Panthers described their project as providing a means of sustenance and orientation within an unfamiliar and alienating horizon (Newton elsewhere describes the survival programs as like "the kit that is used when a plane falls and you find yourself in the middle of the sea on a rubber raft"[374]). The programs provided a firm ground and a means of basic orientation in a hostile world where meanings and structures felt beyond individual control.[375]

Like the survival programs, the situations built by the Situationists were seen as the foundation for a future radical change. In "The Beginning of an Era," a reflection on the May '68 protests, the group claims that, "[In] order to say what they want it is first necessary for the workers to create, through their own autonomous action, the concrete conditions that enable them to speak and act, conditions that now exist nowhere."[376] The role of situations is to create the space for the emergence of a new voice.

While aspiring to more than survival, the Situationists shared with the Black Panthers a conviction that spaces should be built to open a new range of possibilities. Thus, the article goes on to show how these occupations were a foundation for an eventual democratic rebirth and empowerment:

---

[374] Ibid., 161.

[375] In this sense, the Survival Programs, and Newton's effort to construct a new geographical imaginary around them, provide an interesting qualification on the vanguardist politics of the Black Panthers. While the Panthers were firmly committed to the hierarchy of a centralized Party that would provide theoretical and practical guidance for their revolutionary politics, the spaces and spatial imaginary I am outlining also shows that they leave significant space available for creative re-imagination and construction on the city level. There is an open-ended quality to the material and geographic project of the Party, as least at the intersection of the Survival Programs and intercommunalism.

[376] Situationist International, "The Beginning of an Era," available http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/12.era1.htm (accessed 14 June 2015).

> The movement was a rediscovery of collective and individual history, an awakening to the possibility of intervening in history, an awareness of participating in an irreversible event where "nothing would ever be the same again." People looked back in amusement at the strange existence they had led a week before, at their outlived survival. It was a passion for bringing everything and everyone together, a holistic critique of all alienations, of all ideologies and of the entire old organization of real life. In this process property was negated, everyone finding themselves at home everywhere. The recognized desire for genuine dialogue, completely free expression and real community found their terrain in the buildings transformed into open meeting places and in the collective struggle. The telephones (which were among the few technical means still functioning) and the wandering of so many emissaries and travelers around Paris and throughout the entire country, between the occupied buildings, the factories and the assemblies, manifested this real practice of communication. The occupations movement was obviously a rejection of alienated labor; it was a festival, a game, a real presence of people and of time.[377]

A number of connections between the physical process of occupation and democratic politics are suggested in this account. First, situations were designed to reinvigorate history; as it was put elsewhere, the Situationists asserted a "non-continuous conception of life," wherein new connections and possibilities were constantly emerging. Further, this lead to a new sense of authentic presence and communication, in which all could feel at home in the world. It thus

---

[377] Ibid.

allowed for a new and open discussion concerning the possibilities latent in the spatial and political order.[378]

In the face of urban spaces that built expectations of state and economic continuity into everyday practice, Situationism and the Black Panthers both assert a "noncontinuous conception of life."[379] Echoing Walter Benjamin's claim that the materialist's task is not to redeem the world, but instead to strive to open the "straight gate" through which unpredictable (redemptive, in his words) change can occur, the heterotopic spaces of the Situationist International and Black Panther Party create material and imagined environments that open the way for radical change.[380] Whether through the Black Panthers' "survival pending revolution" or the Situationists' "passion for bringing everything and everyone together," these spaces cared for their people while building the popular power to transform politics. By denaturalizing space, concentrating and

---

[378] We can see gestures toward this opening of possibilities in the graffiti that famously overtook the Sorbonne in Paris during the May '68 student protests. The students expanded the sense of possibility of the space through interventions that suggested the potency of the building and the deadening qualities of modern urbanism:

> Barricades close the streets but open the way.
>
> Under the paving stones, the beach.
>
> Concrete breeds apathy.
>
> Coming soon to this location: charming ruins.
>
> Comrades, people are making love in the Poli Sci classrooms, not only in the fields.

("May 1968 Graffiti," available http://www.bopsecrets.org/CF/graffiti.htm [accessed 14 June 2015).

[379] Tom McDonough, *Guy Debord and the Situationist International*, 48.

[380] Note: this wasn't exactly a Situationist movement. Haussmannization diminished the working class neighborhood community as a means to organize, though they couldn't undercut the importance of the Hotel de Ville as a site of government . When this burned down, the Hotel lost much of its importance as a site of political contention. Paris became the center of national government, but the city government was well-eclipsed. It was nearly forgotten as a part of the geographic imaginary of 1968.

unifying social and political forces, and building a new experience of place and body at the architectural scale, these spaces promise to open a new field of possibilities without naturalizing or instituting a particular vision of the good life or political order.

5: The Materialism of Heterotopic Space

In the face of a contemporary urban society that depoliticizes its built form and forecloses on the field of social possibility, architect Constant Nieuwenhuys described the task of the radical designer as follows: "The architect will substitute [a principle] of incomplete perfection (which is pursued, which is sought in practice) or, preferably, that of perfect incompletion, which discovers a *moment* in life (expectation, presentiment, nostalgia) and provides it with an expression.'"[381] Where the mainstream architecture of perfect completion takes form in order to support the popular perception of flow, inevitability and naturalness, the architecture of a perfect incompletion creates a moment in which something new can emerge. By building an incomplete space, Nieuwenhuys claims, the architect politicizes everyday life and jars occupants into a new awareness of the contingency of the spatial order, inviting them to critically engage its forms.

Carrying this vocabulary into the account I have provided, heterotopias are spaces of this perfect incompletion and social movements are their radical architects. By building spaces that allow their occupants to feel both the contingency and possibilities in the organization of their cities, social movements perform the democratic task of opening the future beyond the moment to new meanings and possibilities.

---

[381] Constant Neiuwenhuys quoted in Henri Lefebvre, *Toward an Architecture of Enjoyment*, 151.

For both the Black Panthers and the Situationist International, the projects of political empowerment began by reimagining and reappropriating space. In the case of the Panthers, this took the form of revolutionary intercommunalism as a local/global geography, armed patrols of both ghettoes and political institutions, and the Survival Programs. For the Situationists, liberation began through creative aesthetic interventions into urban space and the occupation of factories, universities, and public spaces. Both movements understood these interventions into existing spaces and practices as crucial elements in drawing attention to the anti-democratic core of the built environment and to the prospects for transformation of local and global institutions.

The results were heterotopias: new built environments and political practices that brought the unacknowledged political contents of space into the core of daily experience. By taking spatial practices that seemed most natural (the absence of black voices and bodies in public space, or the smooth functioning of universities and factories within global political and economic institutions) and drawing attention to their contingency, the Panthers and Situationists provoked dispersed oppressed populations (the African diaspora, global populations of workers and students) to think and act into space. This is the democratic core of heterotopic space: it prompts critical engagement with the concrete material conditions of life and a constructive approach to the built environment and political institutions.

The Situationists' Council for Maintaining the Occupations, "Report on the Occupation of the Sorbonne" shows how a democratic politics emerged from the "very logic of these occupations":

> By surrendering the Sorbonne, the government hoped to pacify the student revolt, which had already succeeded in holding a section of Paris behind its barricades an entire night before being recaptured with great difficulty by the police. The Sorbonne was given over to the students in the hope that they would peacefully discuss their university problems. But the occupiers immediately decided to open it to the public to freely discuss the general problems of the society. This was thus a prefiguration of a council, a council in which even the students broke out of their miserable studenthood and ceased being students.[382]

When students turned the Boulevard St. Michel into a lecture hall, or invited workers into the Sorbonne to set up workers' councils, they constructed spaces where the existing spatial order was drawn into question. Similarly, the small-scale production facilities and breakfast programs operated by the Black Panthers allow for an expansion and possession of the tools for community survival and thriving.

As noted in this dissertation's introduction, a number of recent projects have suggested that our imagination of space and matter can limit our senses of political reality, possibility, and right. Common sense assumptions about the material world provide an unseen structure for our political and social imaginary. Projects like Jane Bennett's *Vibrant Matter* have a twin aim: to explore the origins and boundaries of our unthought spatial and material politics and to expand our imagination in ways that support political right. As Bennett suggests, political theory can explore new modes of political representation in ways that simultaneously track the empirical

---

[382] Council for Maintaining the Occupations, "Report of the Occupation of the Sorbonne," available http://www.cddc.vt.edu/sionline/si/occupation.html (accessed 14 June 2015).

reality of the world and perform the affective work of shaping citizens better suited to addressing current and developing political crises. Thus, Bennett describes her "thing-power materialism" as a "speculative ontostory" — or, an imaginative interpretation of the way the world works that provides a compelling account of material reality and "fosters greater ethical appreciation of thing-power."[383]

To conclude this chapter with a similar reflection: what kind spatial politics is embedded in the construction of heterotopias? What kind of world are the Panthers and Situationists constructing? What are the lessons for political theory and science if it hopes to better track and support democratic political mobilizations?

I have tried to show that heterotopias are spaces of affective unification, concentrating both the oppression and the possibilities latent in the existing social order. They are a single effective location that serves as a nodal point that brings a broad network of spaces, norms, and individuals into affective proximity. My claim is that this localized concentration helps social movement participants imagine broad political totalities and, in doing so, expands citizens' feeling of agency across scales and spaces. The affective function of heterotopias is like that of the historical materialist in Benjamin's "Theses on the Philosophy of History": bringing dispersed questions and realities together in a single moment and place to provide a brief, systematic view of oppressive structures and create new hope and agency.

The spatial politics of oppression are not nearly so coherent as they may seem in these heterotopias. There is little to suggest that there is a physical or theoretical position from which

---

[383] Jane Bennett, *Vibrant Matter: A Political Ecology of Things*, Durham: Duke University Press (2009), 94-109.

one can gain a coherent image of the global economic, cultural, or political order. In this way, the social totality revealed by heterotopic spaces is necessarily imagined. Yet, the senses of agency unlocked in the Breakfast Programs and occupation of the Sorbonne, and in the geographic imaginaries of intercommunalism and unitary urbanism, is is very real. This sense of a social totality, emplaced by social movements in material and bodily practices, may be a structuralist fallacy but this imagined totality is a potent condition of affective empowerment. Repoliticizing the built environment and empowering the body in the face of a world that can easily appear neutral, natural, and incoherent takes just such an affective leap. The fleeting eruption of social meaning that makes for a heterotopia brings democratic empowerment to the body.

Heterotopic spaces suggest several characteristics of a urban spatial politics of joy. First, heterotopic spaces have their own temporality: they are about drawing the past together and leaving their occupants with a sense of future possibility. Material forms can unlock a visceral sense of past oppressions and the belief that they could now be transformed. Second, the construction of heterotopic spaces involves minimal claim on the future: while it is going too far to suggest that urban social movements always have no future, they often make minimal claims for the concrete policies and institutions they are trying to create. While this can be a weakness in terms of social movements' ability to generate enduring institutional changes, this lack of a set image of the future is also an important democratic contribution. It leaves the future open to multiple interpretations, making it a site of potent political possibility. Third, heterotopic spaces reveal the dialectical nature social norms and spatial forms. By revealing that politics emerges through contingent spaces, urban social movements show the fragility and dependence of political norms and institutions.

Finally, heterotopic spaces reveal that political, economic, and social institutions exist in much the way Foucault imagined: as a vast network with countless connections, parallels and intersects. At the same time, they suggest that every individual material form and spatial practice has lurking layers of political meaning; as Lefebvre suggests, all space is thoroughly filled with politics, power, and ideology. Heterotopias explode individual locations outward into complex networks and infuse all spaces with a sense of being haunted by unseen politics. Of course, the reasons Foucault had for abandoning the concept of the heterotopia in his own work persist: there is an impossible quality to the totalizing material imaginary in heterotopias. Society is not a structure and there's no perfect outside from which one can see and act on the totality. Thus, the incoherence of the social world and the demands of diverse and dispersed institutions eventually tear apart the imaginative connection between a heterotopia and the forces that space the rest of the world. Yet, in spite of this futility, it is the flash of possibility inherent in the imaginative practice is the self-exhausting joy that opens new possibilities in the socio-spatial order and empowers citizens to act. This futility is not damning – it is the condition for democratic transformation under the unimaginable, global, diverse, and dispersed forces that make up contemporary urbanism.

In sum, heterotopias localize global political forces in the bodies of citizens, building imaginative and material connections between the world and one's experience. This strength opens a new set of questions, however. What of phenomena that are less easily localizable? What if the immediacy of heterotopic space cannot inform us of a political reality or inspire us into action? What happens when the city isn't the location to address a pressing problem? In the following chapter, I take up these questions by considering the spatial politics of climate change

activism. As opposed to heterotopic spaces that build joyful affect by localizing the global, I argue that the spatial politics of climate change require globalizing the local – building imagined and material prostheses that extend citizen experience and agency outside their local milieu.

Chapter 4: Statistics as a Democratic Pedagogy: Indexing and the Civic Imagination

While my focus in the dissertation up to this point has been on the way that the occupation and appropriation of urban space and architecture can prompt popular democratic empowerment, this chapter turns to a hard question: what happens when pressing political questions are difficult to confront in cities? How can urban social movements approach political issues that are widely dispersed, slow moving, and not immediately perceptible by the *demos*? What if the public's problems are, in effect, sublime – seemingly infinite in scope and scale, beyond the easily perceptible bounds of the individual or collective?

In this chapter, I explore the possibilities for city-level mobilization relative to one example of the political sublime: global climate change. Climate change is difficult to imagine and act into on the scale of the city or urban social movement, being massively dispersed both in space and time in a way that can stifle popular understanding and action. I find a democratic resource in the growing statistical quality of life and sustainability indexing literature. While they also have important limitations and pitfalls, I argue that a democratic approach to index development and dissemination is a powerful tool for motivating the civic imagination and citizen empowerment. This is because indexes have the ability to serve as a democratic pedagogy for motivating the civic-imagination and connecting everyday experience to sublime problems in while generating popular empowerment. This popular approach to statistical representation is fundamentally materialist, rooted in the connection between physical phenomena, dispersed civic and global political questions, and the experiences of city dwellers.

1: Statistics, Sustainability, and Democratic Anxiety

Responding to a dearth of accurate and accessible cross-country economic and environmental data, the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development

(UNCED) called for governments and NGOs to "develop and identify indicators of sustainable development in order to improve the information basis for decision-making at all levels."[384] The UNCED's hope was to build on the utility of earlier measures like Gross Domestic Product, creating new statistical resources that would help assess and craft policies suited to contemporary political realities.

The UNCED's goal was twofold: first, to "bridge the data gap" that exists at various points on the local, regional, national, and international level on key environmental and economic issues; second, to improve "information availability" in order to insure that data is accessible to all decision-makers and managed securely and openly.[385] In doing so, the UNCED hoped not only to improve elite decision-making but also to democratize sustainable development practices:

> In sustainable development, everyone is a user and provider of information considered in the broad sense. That includes data, information, appropriately packaged experience and knowledge. The need for information arises at all levels, from that of senior decision makers at the national and international levels to the grass-roots and individual levels.[386]

The economic and environmental data the UNCED proposed to track aimed to serve democratic ends in a "broad sense": information was to be generated and used by all individuals, it "packaged experience" in ways that would reflect and resonate with popular understandings, and it would empower actors on the international and grassroots levels.

---

[384] United Nations Conference on Environment and Development, "Agenda 21," Ch. 40 (1992).

[385] Ibid.

[386] Ibid.

Following the UNCED's call, the growth in the number, influence, and scope of these indicators over the past two decades has been described as "nothing short of phenomenal."[387] The "Compendium of Sustainable Development" notes the existence of over 600 indicator sets, attended by a vast network of professional organizations, publications, statisticians, boosters, and academic outlets.[388]

These indexes aim to develop what have been called "deep measures" – empirical accounts that capture, in a variety of ways, the full breadth of the politically important facts of the world.[389] Indexes range from the extremely parsimonious (the Human Development Index tracks four indicators) to the extremely complex (the Boston Indicators Project tracks over 300 indicators). They can range from efforts centered on cities (Sustainable Seattle, Community Indicators Victoria, Greater Portland Pulse), values (the Child and Youth Well-being Index, Ease of Doing Business Index, Index of Sustainable Economic Welfare), and particular demographics (UK Index of Urban Child Development, the Wealth Report's Global City Survey), to much broader global accounts of wellbeing (Calvert-Henderson Quality of Life Indicators, Value-Based Index of National Quality of Life, the Better Life Index). These indicator sets have transformed the ways economic development, environmental sustainability, cultural vitality, and quality of life are understood on all levels of government and civic action.

---

[387] C. Morel Journel et. al., "Devising Local Sustainable Development Indicators: From Technical Issues to Bureaucratic Stakes, The Greater Lyon Experience" *Local Environment* 8. 582.

[388] International Institute for Sustainable Development, "Compendium of Sustainable Deveopment Indicator Initiatives," available: http://www.iisd.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2004/measure_compendium_brochure.pdf (accessed 15 August 2014).

[389] Meg Holden, "A Pragmatic Test for Sustianablility Indicator Projects: The Case of Social Learning in Seattle," dissertation, New School University (2004), 2.

As these indexes grow in their influence and sophistication, they reformulate existing connections between policymakers, institutions, and citizens. One report on city-based indexing projects notes:

> Reporting on sustainability indices and livability metrics can potentially enhance the reflexivity of the urban planning process, but there is a galloping tendency to treat the issue of how to improve one's 'city ranking' on a hierarchical table as more important than the sustainability issues themselves.[390]

As the website for one influential index notes, "You get what you measure."[391] Another adds, "If you can't measure it, you can't manage it."[392] Like the USA Today ranking reports that drive amenities arms races at colleges and universities, these indexes provoke governments to best one-another according to a certain range of measures, with ambiguous consequences.

While the UNCED framed these indexes as serving democratic ends, these indexes can appear problematic from the perspective of democratic theory. In one light, they appear as neoliberal tools that support elite interests; a truth borne out in the history of measures like the GDP, used to monitor and inform elites' economic lives while showing little concern for the broad wellbeing of the population as a whole. In another light, the indexers' assertions of statistical fact serve as epistemic trump cards that can close off democratic discourse.

---

[390] Paul James and Andy Scerri, "Auditing Cities through Circles of Sustainability," M. Amen et. al. ed., *Cities and Global Governance*, Farnham: Asgate Publishing (2011), 112.

[391] Sustainable Seattle, "FAQ," http://sustainableseattle.org/faq, (accessed 15 August 2014).

[392] Neal Peirce, "Finally, Clear performance Data for Comparing the World's Cities," Citiscope, available http://citiscope.org/story/2014/finally-clear-performance-data-comparing-worlds-cities (accessed 15 August 2014).

Conversations about measures and rankings can quickly lead to the political apotheosis of the statistician over and against the *demos*. Finally, from the perspective of a robust account of democratic empowerment, these indexes give a reductive account of citizenship. As Philip Pettit notes on the democratic politics of indexing:

> Every year a number of reports surface that attempt to rank the world's most livable cities. In arriving at their rankings, the reports consider the services available in each city, the cost of living, the natural surroundings, and other amenities. But the reports do not generally factor in the residents' level of control over how things are done in government. They consider how residents benefit from what a given city offers, but they usually ignore whether and to what extend residents have a role as the makers and shapers of the arrangements under which they live. The reports treat residents as consumers of cities, we might say, not properly as citizens.[393]

The kinds of data captured in most indexes fail to address democratic institutions and citizenship in contemporary cities, instead reducing the good life to a quantity of goods that can be distributed by markets and government. This tendency to reduce citizenship to consumer and economic terms leaves important questions of popular power and elite domination off the table.

Acknowledging the legitimacy of these concerns, my aim in this chapter is to suggest that these indexes are like any other medium of political representation: they come with their own attendant inadequacies and problems, but they also have their strengths. The problems facing the contemporary polity defy the procedures and terms most familiar and well-suited to democratic

---

[393] Philip Pettit, *Just Freedom: A Moral Compass for a Complex World*, New York: W.W. Norton Company (2014), 109.

theory and practice. The environmental, economic, and institutional phenomena that these indexes track cross cultural and political boundaries, affecting vast publics that find issues like climate change or the global economy hard to imagine. What media are best suited to developing a civic imagination supportive of democratic norms on the scales of global economic, environmental, and political institutions? How do we bring these large-scale phenomena to mind in a way that adequately represents complex realities, spurs judgment, and supports democratic citizenship?

This chapter explores quality of life and sustainability indexes as an unlikely resource for addressing these questions. My intent here is to draw attention to their strength in helping to motivate what I call the "large-scale civic imagination" – the sense of the self and its relationship to the broad, complex, unseen communities and institutions of which it is a part, on which it has an effect, and to which it can make, or be made subject to, political claims. While statistics are not self-explanatory, learning to interpret their methodological foundations can empower citizens and social movements. This learning can do so by bridging the gaps between lived experience and complex political realities, without falling into depoliticizing mediators of the civic imagination that posture at an undemocratic epistemic authority. In the course of this, I aim to both clarify the undemocratic history of the indicator movement and develop a reading of the indicator movement as a material and practical tool to expand the experience of citizenship up to the global scale.

The following chapter aims to do four things: (1) present the problem of the large-scale civic imagination in greater detail through the example of contemporary urbanization, (2) draw from the theoretical and methodological account of the civic imagination developed by Bruno

Latour and Emile Hermant in their essay "Paris, Invisible City " in order to present sustainability indexes as a democratic resource for addressing this problem, (3) survey the history and methodology of quality of life and sustainability indicators, then (4) consider the example of the development and implementation of the Sustainable Seattle indicator as a democratic exercise in motivating the large-scale civic imagination. I will then summarize and conclude.

2: The Problem of the Large-Scale Civic Imagination

Citizenship is motivated by a particular civic imagination: the sense of the self and its relationship to the communities and institutions of which it is a part, on which it has an effect, and to which it can make, or be made subject to, political claims. Much like Benedict Anderson's "imagined community," this civic imagination is grounded in mores and media that frame the world and the citizen's place in it.[394] Through places, gestures, objects, languages, and other media, this imagination makes the world vivid and gives rise to civic identity and political agency.

Spinoza defines the imagination in the *Ethics* as mental representation of "the affections of the human Body."[395] Without this mental representation of our affective and embodied experience, we lack the capacity for empowered action – we are shaped by forces outside ourselves that we neither see nor understand. Without an orienting and anchoring imagination of the field of forces that structure our embodied experiences, we lack the most fundamental condition of understanding and action. It is this sense of the civic imagination is a necessary condition for empowerment that I am exploring in this chapter.

---

[394] Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities*.

[395] Spinoza, *Ethics*, 2p, 17s.

The civic imagination has been historically framed as operating on two levels. On a first, small-scale level, the citizen builds a sense of self as a political actor rooted in a particular community, bounded by a defined moral, material, and cultural environment. As the Athenian Stranger argues in Plato's *Laws*, the political community ought to be bound at 5040 citizens.[396] This limitation maintains citizens' ability to have a strong imaginative connection to the life of the *polis*. Without such limits, "[citizens] have no insight into each other's characters and are kept in the dark about them" and "no one will ever enjoy the respect he merits."[397] Similar concerns motivate Aristotle's bounded and homogenous *polis* and Rousseau's image of the sovereign gathered under an oak tree.[398] On this small scale, the local community serves as the foundation for the civic imagination, guaranteeing that the public and its problems are knowable in a way that leads to informed and empowered citizens, and accountable and coordinated political action.

On a second level of the civic imagination, the contemporary citizen is tied to a network of unbounded economic and political institutions, sprawling environmental effects and affects, and global cultural flows extending far beyond the limits of the city, region, or state. The question of what media and mental calisthenics can develop the civic imagination and connect citizens to these large-scale phenomena are a central problem facing contemporary normative theories of democracy, global ethics, distributive justice, and environmental politics. In each of

---

[396] Plato, "Laws," trans. Trevor J. Saunders, in *Complete Works*, ed. John Cooper, Indianapolis: Hackett Publishing Company (1997), 737e1-2.

[397] Ibid., 738e3-5. For a philosopher thought to have so little regard for political matters, it is quite surprising that the promise of politics itself becomes Plato's justification for founding his new city.

[398] Aristotle, *Polis;* Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *On the Social Contract*.

these cases, the problem of scaling consciousness up to the level of contemporary political problems is a continuing issue.

Mirroring Immanuel Kant's understanding of the sublime, large-scale economic, environmental, political, and cultural problems can feel "boundless" and "formless" from the perspective of the citizen.[399] Kant speculates that our inability to grasp the sublime is ultimately empowering. While the sublime's daunting scale leads to a "momentary inhibition of the vital forces," Kant claims it would be "followed immediately by an outpouring of them that is all the stronger."[400] This comes as we grasp the ungraspability of the sublime, as "to be able to even to think the infinite *as a whole* indicates a mental power that surpasses any standard of sense."[401] In the infinite scope and scale of the sublime, we find "in our mind a superiority over nature itself in its immensity."[402] The infinite should, on this account, increase our vitality as we find our mental powers grasping the massive scope and scale of the sublime.

Yet, while there may be a degree of truth in Kant's account of the sublime, this empowerment-through-humbling does not clearly translate into politics. Instead of experiencing global economic structures or climate change as empowering motivators of the large-scale civic imagination, the political sublime is simply ungraspable. We cannot imagine it and therefore we cannot act into it. The democratic problems of the large-scale civic imagination can thus be

---

[399] Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime,* Cambridge, Cambridge University Press (2011), sec 23-25.

[400] Immanuel Kant*, Critique of Judgment*, trans. Werner S. Pluhar, New York: Hacket Publishing (1987), 98.

[401] Ibid., 111.

[402] Ibid., 120.

described first in terms of a *crisis of representation*: how do we represent distant ecological, economic, and moral problems in a way that promotes accurate understanding, personal empowerment, and political accountability? As Adam Smith noted in *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, distant and complex phenomena have a certain political unreality to them, lacking as they do a psychological and physical proximity to our own experiences.[403]

On a second level the problems of the large-scale civic imagination can be described as a *crisis of judgment*: how do we gain the knowledge necessary for moral and political judgment and action in a vast world of unfathomable complexity. As John Dewey described it in *The Public and its Problems*, the political and social world is such that the contemporary citizen is "bewildered."[404] Similarly Hannah Arendt's *Human Condition* ends with a long survey of the marginalization of the capacity to reach political judgments under contemporary social, technological, and institutional conditions.[405] Where Kant argues that the sublime's scale defies sensibility and imagination in a way that can empower the individual (because one's ability to recognize the boundless and formless whole that surrounds us as a single whole demonstrates the remarkable power of cognition[406]), the large-scale civic imagination instead proves stultifying.

The crises of representation and judgment that adhere in questions of the large-scale civic imagination can be seen clearly in the way political theory approaches cities. Cities are increasingly central to social and political life. For the first time, the world's urban population

---

[403] Adam Smith, *Theory of Moral Sentiments*, New York: Penguin Classics (2010), 84-6.

[404] John Dewey, *The Public and Its Problems*, Columbus: Swallow Press (1954), 123.

[405] Hannah Arendt, *Human Condition*, 248-89.

[406] Immanuel Kant, *Observations on the Feeling of the Beautiful and Sublime*, sec. 26.

outnumbers the rural and projections estimate that two-thirds of people will be city-dwellers by 2050.[407] This globalized urbanism presents new political questions, both in impoverished and relatively affluent cities.

More than half of new urbanites live in quickly expanding cities of less than five million residents. Primarily located in impoverished regions, these cities are growing faster than any other urban form. As the United Nation's "World Urbanization Prospects" report states, "The absence of infrastructure, such as roads, water supply and communication facilities, in many small and intermediate-sized cities makes these cities less competitive locally, nationally and regionally and leads to a lower quality of life for their citizens."[408] Springing up rapidly at the margins of the world economy, these cities defy both inherited images of the city and the popular imagination of what 21st-century cities would look like:

> [These] cities of the future, rather than being made out of glass and steel as envisioned by earlier generations of urbanists, are instead largely constructed out of crude brick, straw, recycled plastic, cement blocks, and scrap wood. Instead of cities of light soaring towards heaven, much of the twenty-first century urban world squats in squalor, surrounded by pollution, excrement and decay.[409]

Defined by their connections to the global economy, and formed in a piecemeal fashion out of crude materials, these cities defy past theories and aspirations for urban space.

---

[407] World Health Organization, "Global Population Growth," available http://www.who.int/gho/urban_health/situation_trends/urban_population_growth_text/en/ (accessed 15 August, 2014).

[408] United Nations – Habitat, "State of the World's Cities," available http://unhabitat.org/?wpdmact=process&did=OTAyLmhvdGxpbms= (accessed on August 15, 2014).

[409] Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums,* London: Verso (2006), 19.

As these unplanned and impoverished cities expand in their number and population, affluent cities also grow in new ways. Cities like London, New York, Tokyo, and Los Angeles cast global political, economic, and ecological shadows. Largely dependent on a vast array of institutional and cultural connections, these global cities are described as "networked:" relying on broad, ex-urban social, environmental, and technological infrastructures, they depend on distant ecologies and are marked by constant flows of people, goods, and information. Described as "fragile" and "splintered," one urban historian argues that these, "networked infrastructures are delicate, and because modern urban life has come to depend on them so vitally, this fragility not only compromises subways and water pipes, but also destabilizes urban modernity more broadly – socially and spatially, materially and symbolically."[410] Contrary to the image of the city as an independent community, relying on a small and well-controlled local area, these large affluent cities are instead increasingly built into a complex global network of goods, people, and ecologies.

These affluent and impoverished cities are tied together in a vast environmental, economic, political, technical, and cultural network, the scale and complexity of which baffles the civic imagination, defies inherited media of representation, and paralyzes political judgment. Henri Lefebvre describes this expansion of cities as the birth of "urban society," defined by the interaction of cities as they define, and are defined by, global economic, ecological, cultural, and political phenomena.[411]

---

[410] Peter Soppelsa "Finding Fragility in Paris," 233.

[411] Henri Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution,* 52.

Concepts developed in tandem with old urban forms lead policymakers and social scientists to either ignore the question of the city altogether or to flatten all population centers into a homogenous whole. In *The Urban Revolution*, Lefebvre described this conceptual lag as a form of blindness to urban politics:

> What does our blindness look like? We focus attentively on the new field, the urban, but we see it with eyes, with concepts, that were shaped by the practices and theories of industrialization, with a fragmentary analytic tool that was designed during the industrial period and is therefore *reductive* of the emerging reality. We no longer see that reality; we resist it, turn away from it, struggle against it, prevent its birth and development.[412]

Cities exceed our inherited frames of understanding, leading to analyses that necessarily reduce their complexity.

Political and popular readings of cities are frustrated by the illegibility and incoherence of urban forms with inherited modes of urban representation. The categories used to represent cities by policymakers and social scientists fail to map convincingly onto political reality, while the standards and practices of judgment developed prior to global urbanism fail to empower the contemporary civic imagination. The small-scale civic imagination simply cannot grasp (and may actually prevent our grasping) the complex realities of an urban society, guided as it is by the concepts and norms developed on the smaller local scale. How do we represent the complexity and scale of urban society in a way that informs and improves the popular capacity to judge and act?

---

[412] Ibid., 29.

Confronting the problem of the large-scale civic imagination democratically requires resisting two opposing impulses: first, an apotheosis of the technocrat or statistician as the individual possessing the tools necessary to clarify and analyze large-scale civic phenomena; second, a retreat into localism that privileges more immediate access to the world by turning away from the large-scale. Both of these reactions to the problem of the large-scale civic imagination seek to create a new social immediacy – one treating statistics as a tool capable of delving into the core of political reality, the other seeking to draw the political world into a defined, bounded space.

Michel Foucault refers to this as a "Rousseauist dream," meaning, "A transparent society, visible and legible in each of its parts, the dream of there no longer existing any zones of darkness, zones established by the privileges of royal power or the prerogative of some corporation, zones of disorder."[413] Whether through statistical insight or localism, each solution to the crises of representation and judgment seeks to shed light on large-scale political realities through a mode of unmediated political access. Both share the ideal of a shared (statistical or communitarian) subjectivity, collapsing large, diverse, dispersed, and complex networks of events into immediate and totalized wholes.

Such statistical or localist aspirations are both untenable and harmful, only addressing the problem of the large-scale civic imagination by depoliticizing representation and judgment: the first by seeking a set of facts that serve to undercut debates about meaning and judgment, the

---

[413] Michel Foucault, *Power/Knowledge,* New York: Pantheon (1980), 152.

second by turning its back on how local communities are increasingly inadequate to addressing contemporary political problems.

The task is thus to find modes of political representation that motivate the large-scale civic imagination while fostering local empowerment (without turning away from the larger world) and retaining the statisticians grasp of large scale political realities (without foreclosing democratic debate on the nature of these realities or the appropriate response to them). In the following section, I draw from Bruno Latour and Emile Hermant's study of modern Paris as a guide for developing and democratizing quality of life and sustainability measures. Latour and Hermant's "Paris, Invisible City" serves as a methodological guide for motivating the large-scale civic imagination without the cheap grace of immediate representations of political reality through social scientific megalomania or Romantic localism.

3: Statistics as a Democratic Pedagogy

As Jonathan Franzen recently wrote in the *New Yorker,* "The great hope of the Enlightenment—that human rationality would enable us to transcend our evolutionary limitations—has taken a beating from wars and genocides, but only now, on the problem of climate change, has it foundered altogether."[414] Building on Dale Jamieson's *Reason in a Dark Time*, Franzen notes that climate change shares a number of similarities with another recent advent that has stretched the capacities of reason and the imagination – global capitalism:

---

[414] Jonathan Franzen, "Carbon Capture," *The New Yorker,* available: http://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2015/04/06/carbon-capture (accessed 13 June, 2015).

> Climate change shares many attributes of the economic system that's accelerating it. Like capitalism, it is transnational, unpredictably disruptive, self-compounding, and inescapable. It defies individual resistance, creates big winners and big losers, and tends toward global monoculture—the extinction of difference at the species level, a monoculture of agenda at the institutional level...As a narrative, climate change is almost as simple as 'Markets are efficient.' The story can be told in fewer than a hundred and forty characters: We're taking carbon that used to be sequestered and putting it in the atmosphere, and unless we stop we're fucked.[415]

In capitalism and climate change, we see an overwhelming and seemingly inexorable shift toward a world dominated by forces outside human control. While the issues prove "usefully imponderable" for governments and NGOs as they claim administrative authority over the climate, and for capitalists as they deny the reality of climate change, a disempowering helplessness adheres in the "story" of a global, decentralized, and hard to perceive (at least from the perspective of the nations that produce the vast majority of the world's greenhouse gas emissions) shift toward ecological and economic collapse.

My claim in the following two sections is that an epistemology of index development that attends to the messy processes of drawing together our understanding of complex political realities can enliven the large-scale civic imagination. This is a shift, as I will claim, to a mediated politics of "sense making." Rather than trying to use reason to grasp imponderable wholes – and languishing in the political sublime – I consider the way statistical indicators can

---

[415] Ibid.

(when looked at and developed with an eye toward popular empowerment) bring a broader range of sensory experiences to bear in making sense of large-scale realities. Through Bruno Latour and Emile Hermant's work on the role of mediation in forming social and political reality, I contrast the affective politics of sense making to state-centric models of "legibility" as the means to grasping questions of the large-scale civic imagination.

Latour and Hermant's "Paris, Invisible City" models a civic imagination that embraces the fact that our understanding of the world is always mediated and partial. As they argue, all modes of access to political reality are filtered through media that shape our knowledge of the world. Mirroring Foucault's critique of the Rousseauist drive for immediacy, Latour and Hermant recognize an epistemological drive for authenticity underlying contemporary understandings of political knowledge:

> Romantics always dream of an assembly that, with neither schedules nor lists, signs nor intermediaries, transparently reveals Society in its immediate solar presence. By dreaming of a full, entire reality, common sense simply dreams of a diorama enclosed in a narrow room. For four thousand years we haven't had the good fortune of living in a Swiss canton, gathered in the town square to decide on current affairs, hands raised. It's been a long time that Society hasn't seen itself entirely in a single glance.[416]

Even allowing an increase in scale (Latour and Hermant are willing to scale "localism" up from the Athenian Stranger's city of 5040 to one of several hundred thousand[417]) the scope and complexity of urbanism defies the Romantic desire for social immediacy. The contemporary

---

[416] Ibid., 7-8.

[417] Ibid., 13.

world is defined by a vastness and occlusion that filters perceptions of society through myriad lists, signs, and mediators.

For our civic imagination to access to the world on the large-scale, Latour and Hermant argue that we must resist both the Romantic urge for authentic knowledge, as well as the twin vices of believing that the scientific viewpoint is a privileged mode of access of reality (what they describe as "megalomania") and the belief that this kind of knowledge is exclusively or inherently a mode of observation and domination ("paranoia").[418] In short, they argue that we need to embrace the fact that our civic imagination is always mediated and partial.

Political reality cannot simply present itself to our imagination. In the face of the recalcitrant realities that define contemporary politics, Latour argues in *Reassembling the Social* that, "specific tricks have to be invented to *make them talk*, that is, to offer descriptions of themselves, to produce *scripts* of what they are making others – humans or nonhumans – do."[419]

To draw attention to the work that goes into imagining our world, Latour develops a distinction between intermediaries and mediators. The intermediary is that which "transports meaning or force without transformation: defining its inputs is enough to define its outputs. For all practical purposes, an intermediary can be taken not only as a black box, but also as a black box counting for one."[420] The intermediary is a neutral conveyor, propagating information throughout a system without itself exerting any influence. This is roughly the political

---

[418] Ibid., 28.

[419] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 79.

[420] Ibid., 39.

epistemology of the Romantics: reason, power, and knowledge are transported in a stable form throughout a through a network of citizens by relatively inconsequential intermediaries.

In contrast to the Romatic myth of the intermediary, mediators "cannot be encountered as just one; they might count for one, for nothing, for several, or for infinity. Their input is never a good predictor of their output; their specificity has to be taken into account every time."[421] Where the intermediary transports a given input between two entities, mediators plays an active role in "translating" the information that passes through them.[422] There is no transparent representation and, as Graham Harman puts it, "Every medium must be negotiated, just as air and water strike back at the vehicles that traverse them."[423] Immediate access is a political impossibility, much the same as perfect representation or an ideal speech situation – useful for theoretical parsimony but wholly inadequate for the complex world of a large-scale functioning democracy.

Once the invisible and inert background of politics, mediators become "actors endowed with the capacity to translate what they transport, to redefine it, redeploy it, and also to betray it. The serfs have become free citizens once more."[424] If we follow the logic of Latour's anthropomorphizing language, the means by which information is transported within the *demos* becomes an active participant in politics. Mediators must be attended to as political actors just like any other member of the democratic community. The quality of an account of politics comes

---

[421] Ibid., 39.

[422] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 37.

[423] Graham Harman, *Prince of Networks,* 18.

[424] Bruno Latour, *We Have Never Been Modern*, 81.

to be its ability to increase "the relative share of mediators over intermediaries," drawing attention to the diverse constituency of actors exerting influence on the collective.[425]

As opposed to the depoliticizing drive to immediately, the task becomes to trace the myriad representations and mediators that shape our civic imagination, rather than obscuring their active role in assembling our sense of ourselves and our world. Translated into the more concrete vocabulary of civic imagination in the context of contemporary urbanism, Latour and Hermant's "Paris, Invisible City" offers a conscientious tracing of mediators involved in representing and understanding Paris. By following such diverse phenomena as the assignment of classroom space at the Ecole des Mines (across spreadsheets, computer screens, and faculty meetings), café life (tracing the movement of an order to a cup of coffee, to a receipt and payment), water distribution (across myriad pipes, systems, and screens), citizens' identities (through ID cards, police interpellation, and spatial practice), and myriad other seemingly mundane phenomena, Latour and Hermant show that our imagination of the city always travels through the mediators that are actively participating in, and transforming, our experience.

Doing so, Latour and Hermant claim that we gain access to the large-scale matters that motivate the civic imagination and make it real:

> We can see the social; we can even touch it. Through comments, images and models we can show this showing and make this touch tangible provided we follow up the traces, a little despised, often barely visible, that bureaucracies abundantly multiply, that

---

[425] Bruno Latour, *Reassembling the Social,* 61.

> computers materialize, and that we call 'paper slips' when they circulate and 'signs' when they have been fixed to something.[426]

Tracing mediators draws attention to the contingency and construction that goes into all representations of reality (it "shows the showing" inherent in any representation) and postures individuals so that they are equipped to judge and act into a complex social world (it "makes this touch tangible"). In doing so, a democratic epistemology that approaches questions of the large-scale civic imagination by tracing mediators serves democratic norms by reducing the complexity of large-scale phenomena to "a small number of variables that can be listed and counted;" it reduces the overwhelming complexity of the world to the "merely complicated" task to composing an imperfect image of the world.[427]

Attentiveness to the materials and practices that allow us to see and touch politics is, I claim, helpful in motivating the large-scale civic imagination. This awareness of the work that goes into composing a mediated grasp of reality eschews the drive to immediacy. Rather than overwhelming citizens with the ungraspable sublime of issues like climate change, attending to the work necessary to make its diverse and dispersed features understandable goes beyond a purely cognitive relationship to the political sublime and connects it to material practices and sensual reality.

Rather than attempting to present climate change to consciousness as a single, immediate issues that the intellect can both grasp as ungraspable and affirm, this attention to mediators

---

[426] Ibid., 18.

[427] Ibid., 30.

draws on the full range of materials and practices necessary to make large-scale realities seeable and touchable. This sensual politics follows David Abram's Spinozan take on political affect:

> '…making sense' must be here understood in its most direct meaning: to make sense is *to enliven the senses.* A story that makes sense is one that stirs the senses from their slumber, one that opens the eyes and the ears to their real surroundings, tuning the tongue to the actual tastes in the air and sending chills of recognition along the surface of the skin. To *make sense* is to release the body from the constraints imposed by outworn ways of speaking, and hence to renew and rejuvenate one's felt awareness of the world. It is to make the senses wake up to where they are.[428]

Motivating the large-scale civic imagination through accurate representations that catalyze judgement and action requires an attention to the role of the mediators that compose our sense of reality and that work on our full range of sensual capacities into new contact with the world. Where our intellect and our conceptual structures fit new realities into readymade conceptual structures, attending to mediators can prompt us to consciously engage the process of translating diverse and dispersed realities into tangible experiences that enliven the senses.

Following Latour and Hermant, I propose that sustainability and quality of life indexes provide an opportunity to overcome depoliticizing impulses to scientism and localism while retaining the drive to large-scale knowledge and democratic empowerment. As I will argue, this involves a twofold shift. First, it requires an epistemological shift toward recognizing that the facts depicted in urban indexes are gradually composed and partial representations of political

---

[428] David Abram, *The Spell of the Sensuous: Why the Struggle Against Climate Change Failed – And What it Means for our Future*, Oxford: Oxford University Press (2014), 265.

reality. To "show the showing" draws attention to the series of steps that go into generating representations of urban society, the global economy, or climate change. Second, it involves popular participation in the generation and analysis of the data that is incorporated into the index. As I will go on to claim, if the indexing process involves both recognizing mediation and promoting popular participation, then it has the ability to reduce the bewildering complexity of the political world to a "merely complicated" situation that can be known, judged, and acted upon by the *demos*.

4: Varieties of Statistical Experience

I have argued in the previous sections that the problem of the large-scale civic imagination is a pressing question for democratic theory, global ethics, distributive justice, and environmental politics. Through Bruno Latour and Emile Hermant's work, I have suggested that attending to the transformative role of the media that convey information about political reality can help address this question. While democrats are ready to dismiss sustainability and quality of life indicators for the litany of reasons outlined above, my hope is to show how they can serve to attune our senses to large-scale realities. In particular, by being aware of the composed and partial natures of these indexes we can humble them epistemically and engage the *demos* in their composition. Through an awareness of the contingency and partiality of quantitative representations of reality, as well as a popular engagement with the process of these representations' development, the uncertainty and paralysis that accompany confronting sublime political realities can be replaced by a cautious and constructive engagement and empowerment.

The dismissal of urban sustainability and quality of life indexes is often premised on the very same reification of fact and apotheosis of the (social) scientist that their detractors claim to

argue against. While the wills to epistemic superiority and technocratic control can adhere in indexing projects, Meg Holden and Sara Moreno Pires' research suggests that, "It is painting with too broad a brush to state that indicators work by 'occlud[ing] local forms of knowledge' as a matter of necessity."[429] Indicators are not just (and, in fact, infrequently aren't at all) purely statistical projects that aim to take on the God's-eye-view of society. Holden and Pires continue:

> Despite pretensions to the contrary, indicators do not offer any comprehensive access to a reality that is ultimately, objectively, neutrally or rationally packaged. We all are inhibited or influenced by our own perspectives and biases, and to borrow from the philosopher Hilary Putnam, none of us can attain a 'god's eye view' from above, regardless of the data or position we command.[430]

Even if they do aspire to or claim some epistemic authority, indexes are not able to step outside the world and provide an unmediated view of reality that appeals directly to reason and that dictates a clear technocratic response.

In order to understand the self-awareness, diversity, thoughtfulness, and capacity of social indexing projects, the following section highlights the historical, methodological, and conceptual diversity and capacity of the indexing movement. In doing so, I highlight the active role that data generation, analysis, and propagation play in composing the indexes' image of political reality. This process of composition provides resources for challenging both the democratic theorist's anxiety about the reification of fact and social science, as well as the index developer's claim to privileged access to large-scale political realities.

---

[429] Meg Holden and Sara Moreno Pires, "The Minority Report: Social Hop in Next Generation Indicators Work," *Regional Studies, Regional Science* 2, *36.*

[430] Ibid., 34.

By surveying the diversity of the indicator movement, we can see that the identification of statistical measures as epistemic trump cards (either by anxious democrats and megalomaniacal social scientists) misses the diverse, complex, contingent, and, in the best cases, empowering life of indexes.[431] After this review, I will turn to Meg Holden's study of the development and implementation of the Sustainable Seattle indicator project to show how this attentiveness to mediation helps confront the crises of representation and judgment in practice.

Metrics such as Gross Domestic Product (GDP), created in the United States during the Great Depression, were the first modern large-scale effort to establish the utility of systematic measurements of large-scale social institutions. As a part of the System of National Accounts – a set of measures designed to serve as a proxy for general wellbeing – GDP was the first of an early generation of indexes that understood wellbeing in purely economic terms.[432] While the use of economic success as a proxy for social wellbeing has generated significant criticism from feminists (for failing to account for unpaid work), social scientists (for failing to account for the range of institutions necessary to support a good life), economists (for giving an inadequate sense of the distribution of economic resources), and others (for failing to capture the breadth of

---

[431] For a similar argument on the world-building opportunities inherent in administration and government: Stephen Klein, "'Fit to Enter the World': Hannah Arendt on Politics, Economics, and the Welfare State," *American Political Science Review* 108, 856-869.

[432] See Joseph E. Stiglitz et. al., *Mismeasuring Our Lives: Why GDP Doesn't Add Up*, New York: New Press (2010).

experiential factors that figure into national wellbeing), the method showed the utility of large-scale statistical measures for making sense of dispersed and complex phenomena.[433]

In response to criticisms of measures like GDP and the System of National Accounts, efforts were undertaken to develop more holistic measures of wellbeing in the 1960s and 70s. Representative efforts were the King of Bhutan's Gross National Happiness Index and the United Nations' Human Development Index developed by Amartya Sen and Mahbub ul-Haq. Bhutan's Gross National Happiness Index measures wellbeing according to four primary pillars: the promotion of sustainable development, preservation and promotion of cultural values, conservation of the natural environment, and establishment of good governance. Combining a seven-hour interview and statistical measures, Gross National Happiness is a complex, detailed, and holistic measure of the status of Bhutan's residents.[434]

The Human Development Index was instead more parsimonious. As Sen and ul-Haq noted, the index aimed to be "as vulgar as GDP but more relevant to our own lives."[435] It therefore reduced well-being to four core measures: life expectancy at birth, mean years of schooling, expected years of schooling, and gross national income per capita.[436] Where gross national happiness took a broad survey, incorporating subjective experiences into a complex

---

[433] For a survey of these critiques, see R.K. Singh et. al., "An Overview of Sustainability Assessment Methodologies," *Ecological Indicators* 15, 281-299; Christoph Böhringer and Patrick E.P. Jochem, "Measuring the Immeasurable — A Survey of Sustainability Indices," *Ecological Economics* 63, 1-8.

[434] Winton Bates, "Gross National Happiness, *Asian Pacific Economic Literature* 23, 1-16.

[435] Jon Gertner, "The Rise and Fall of the G.D.P.," *New York Times*, available http://www.nytimes.com/2010/05/16/magazine/16GDP-t.html?pagewanted=all&_r=0 (accessed 15 August, 2014).

[436] Ibid.

statistical apparatus, the Human Development Index instead used four widely available statistical measures in order to gain a quick baseline for comparison across countries and cultures.

Surveying an original collection of over 100 indexes, I note three broad domains of variation within the contemporary indicator movement: Even when tied together by a single over-arching ideological frame (sustainability, quality of life, prosperity), variation within any of these domains greatly changes the meaning of an index's findings and its role as a mediator of the civic imagination. Variations in political and social frame (Table 1) mark what can be called the political ontology of the index – the basic assumptions about what types of phenomena are representative of a desirable and sustainable political world, while methodological variations (Table 2) affect data collection, analysis, and presentation.

Five clusters of values repeatedly present themselves as core qualities to be pursued. In surveying a collection of nearly 2000 individual indicators, I identify five domains, each with their own sub-domains, which indexes tend to measure:

1. Prosperity: business environment, resource and human mobility, and economic equity
2. Ecological stability: ecology and consumption
3. Rule of law: democracy and security
4. Vitality: social cohesion and public health
5. Knowledge production: education, cultural production, and news media

TABLE 1

POLITICAL AND SOCIAL FRAMES		
Domain	What is the phenomenon being measured?	Economic prosperity, quality of life, environmental sustainability, "smart" city, subjective well-being
Intended audience	What readers and practitioners is the index meant to reach?	General public, institutions, businesses, foundations , government, media
Developer	Who should be involved in the creation of the index?	Non-profit, for-profit, national/state/regional/city government, NGO, citizen groups
Timeframe	Does the index concern present conditions or likely future conditions?	Quality of life (present), sustainability (future)
Objects of analysis	What sort of things should be measured to evaluate the city?	Individuals, institutions, nature/ecology
Guiding metaphors	What images are used to conceptually guide the index?	Biological (ecological), biological (life-cycle), architectural, directional/motion, topological, cartographic, physics and astronomy, economic
Understanding of well-being	What is the implicit theory of human well-being in this study?	Hedonic (measure experience of pleasure), eudaimonic (objectively measured social endowments)
Historical context	What indexes and urban phenomena prompted the creation of the index?	Various cited precedents and catalysts
Theory of social change	What actors are considered responsible for improving the lives of urban residents?	Support-led (institutions and public actors), growth-led (economic and individual actors)
Social ontology	How is the urban community understood?	Community as a sum of individual parts, community as separate larger whole

TABLE 2

METHODOLOGICAL VARIATIONS		
Concept development	Who is responsible for developing the measurements?	Core concepts, purposes, indicators, measures, and audiences determined through top-down (expert) or bottom-up (citizen-developed) process
Data	What kind of data will be used?	Quantitative, qualitative, mixed
Measures	What is the source of the data to be collected?	Objective, subjective, mixed
Timeframe	Will the data be presented as a snapshot or as shifting over time?	Static (absolute value at one time), dynamic (change in values over time)
Level of detail	How many indicators should the index measure?	Parsimony, complexity
Output	Should the output be a single aggregate score or multiple indicators?	Composite, disaggregated
Standards	What standard is used to evaluate successes and failures?	Livability (absolute value for a place), comparative (relative to others or a baseline)
Cultural scope	Are the indicators measured specific to a particular culture, city, or demographic?	Universal or culturally-, city-, or demographically-specific
Scale	What scale should the analysis operate on?	Global, regional, municipal, neighborhood
Data generation	Where is the data sourced?	Self-generated data, pre-existing data

Each domain contains its own individual indicators (for a sample of indicators within each subdomain, see the appendix).

These indexes have been subject to a number of critiques from within the indicator movement. Critiques have drawn attention to problems of methodology (for example, the inherent arbitrariness in efforts to normalize and weigh individual indicators within an index[437]), variability across cultures and communities (for example, accounting for diverse cultural understandings of sustainability, wellbeing, or flourishing[438]), the enduring disconnect between objective and subjective indicators of quality of life (for example, opinion surveys and empirical observations will often lead to opposite inferences about quality of life in a city[439]), and the concern, voiced in the earlier quote from Pettit, that indexes "treat residents as consumers of cities…not properly as citizens."

There is a further anxiety that indicators not only represent political life but they also drive its development: "Indicators arise from values (we measure what we care about) and they create values (we care about what we measure)."[440] The need to find measurable indicators that can be compared across city and state lines (per capita income, mean years of education, carbon dioxide output) can lead to governments increasingly valuing these particular measurable indicators as their highest value.

---

[437] Christoph Böhringer and Patrick E.P. Jochem, "Measuring the immeasurable," 8.

[438] W.E. Kilbourne, "The Role of the Dominant Social Paradigm in the Quality of Life/ Environmental Interface," *Applied Research in Quality of Life* 1, 40-47.

[439] Rod McCrea, et. al., "What is the Strength of the Link Between Objective and Subjective Indicators of Urban Quality of Life?" *Applied Research in Quality of Life* 1, 79-96.

[440] Donella Meadows, "Indicators and Information Systems for Sustainable Development," Hartland: The Sustainability Institute (1998), viii.

Further, this emphasis in measurement and government leads to an institutional bias in indexes as they focus on the actions and outcomes of institutions rather than the needs and experiences of individual people. This can, another study suggests, inhibit indexes' focus on citizenship and communities: "In the worst cases, such approaches blur the empirical and normative differences between institutions with particular and instrumental goals and interests, and the goals and interests of community or society in general that require sustainability be conceived of in holistic and open-ended terms."[441] As we come to value what we can measure, measure what can be compared across cities, and focus on the outcomes of institutions, the democratic values of self-determination and citizen empowerment comes to take on a less central role.

This is the great concern about the indicator movement from a democratic perspective: that these indexes have become "a de facto civic epistemology," guiding assessment and decision-making from a perspective that makes claims to serve popular interests objectively and immediately.[442] As I will argue in the following section, however, index development can actually both spur attentiveness to the concerns of individual citizens and prompt a process of social learning that can inform and motivate the civic imagination.[443] This, I will argue, aids the large-scale civic imagination in attending to, in the words of Dewey, "specific events in all their

---

[441] Andy Scerri and Paul James, "Communities of Citizens and 'Indicators' of Sustainability," *Community Development Journal* 45, 221.

[442] Rob Kitchin et. al., "Knowing and Governing Cities Through Urban Indicators, City Benchmarking and Real-time Dashboards," *Regional Studies, Regional Science* 2, 6-28.

[443] Meg Holden, *A Pragmatic Test for Sustainability Indicator Projects*," 41-50.

diversity and thatness" in a way that helps show the showing of political representation and spur judgment and action.[444]

5: Motivating the Civic Imagination with Sustainable Seattle

The challenges facing democratic theorists as they seek to motivate a civic imagination capable of representing large-scale phenomena and empowering people to act are, I have claimed, in part traceable to the romantic belief that politics should be sense-certain and immediately accessible. While questions of the small-scale civic imagination can be better understood in these terms, global climate change, economic relationships, and transnational institutions defy traditional models of political representation and judgment. This political sublime defies the democratic theorists and practitioners alike.

I have proposed that quantitative urban indexes can be treated as a mode of political mediation that is capable of giving dispersed political events a place in the democratic citizen's civic imagination. Statistical representations present an opportunity to spurn both untenable localism and undemocratic scientism. Following Latour and Hermant, I argued that accommodating the sort of information contained in these indexes into a lively democratic conversation involves a twofold shift. First, it requires an epistemological shift toward recognizing that the facts depicted in quantitative and qualitative indexes are composed and partial representations of political reality. Latour and Hermant refer to this as working to "show the showing," drawing attention to the series of steps that go into generating representations of political problems and realities. Second, it involves a democratic participation in both the generation and analysis of the data that is then incorporated into these measures. This

---

[444] John Dewey, *Creative Intelligence: Essays in the Pragmatic Attitude,* New York: Holt (1917), 55.

participation can reduce the bewildering complexity of the political sublime to a "merely complicated" situation that can be known, judged, and acted upon. In this section, I provide an example of how these indexes can democratize the political sublime through geographer Meg Holden's study of the design and implementation of the Sustainable Seattle index.

Of late, the literature on urban indexes has noted a developing consensus on "sustainability" as the metric most often used to evaluate large-scale political realities.[445] The Brundtland Commission, charged by the United Nations with developing a report on the global environmental harms, originally defined sustainable development as, "development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."[446]

Understood broadly as a "tool which gives regular people the ability to know, based upon information that tries to be objective, whether the things that matter most to them are getting better or worse," sustainability indexes track indicators through time.[447] This is what separates sustainability measures from prior "triple bottom line" (equality, economy, environment; people, profit, planet) approach as ratified in the United Nations Standard for Urban Accounting: the concern is not just with the current state of affairs, but with how these affairs are likely to be in the future.

---

[445] Meg Holden, *A Pragmatic Test for Sustainability Indicator Projects*," 10-30.

[446] World Commission on Environment and Development (Brundtland Commission), "Our Common Future," Oxford: Oxford University Press (1987).

[447] J. Gary Lawrence, "The Future of Local Agenda 21 in the New Millennium," London: UNED-UK Publications (2002), 9.

To better consider democratic promise of sustainability indicators, consider the history of Sustainable Seattle (S2). By far the most influential urban sustainability index over the past twenty years, over half of the 170 indexing groups in recent a Redefining Progress survey referenced S2 as a model. Even while the political legacy of S2 is ambiguous (more on this below), it exemplifies how sustainability indexes can motivate the large-scale civic imagination in a way that promotes democratic empowerment.

S2 began in 1992 with a one-day civic forum that brought Seattle residents together to address the question: "What legacy are we leaving to future generations?" Coming out of this meeting, the group resolved that its first goal was to develop and publish a list of "Indicators of Sustainability" that adhered to four basic criteria: reflect trends that impact long-term economic, cultural, and environmental sustainability; be statistically measurable, preferably across multiple decades; be engaging to the public and local media; and be comprehensible to the general public.[448] After building a coalition of volunteers and civic leaders, Sustainable Seattle developed an initial list of forty indicators, ranging from "wild salmon returning to spawn in King County streams" to "solid waste generated" and "equity in justice."[449]

As geographer Meg Holden's study of S2 suggests, these early efforts were deeply empowering for the community that developed the indicators. As one member of the community described it, "it was like a sudden infatuation with a real issue, the skills we had, the kind of

---

[448] Alan Atkisson, "Developing Indicators of Sustainable Community: Lessons from Sustainable Seattle," *Environmental Impact Assessment Review* 16, 340.

[449] Sustainable Seattle, "Indicators of Sustainable Community 1995," available http://sustainableseattle.org/images/indicators/1995/1995indicators.pdf (accessed 15 August 2014).

feeling or sense of power to make a change."[450] Indicator development and dissemination, as Holden describes it, was defined by a collective process of "social learning" that made the process feel "alive" and the members "committed."[451]

The process of indicator development in the case of S2 can thus challenge the democratic assumption that statistical measures naturally lead to technocracy, scientism, and local disempowerment. In seeking indicators that spoke to local understandings of the objects worth sustaining, index developers connected large-scale questions of the environmental and economic structure to Seattleites' lived experience. It helped citizens make sense through the imagined and lived experience of the city. Measures like the "number of salmon returning to local streams to spawn" were, as Holden and Sara Moreno Pires suggest, "selected by local people as a 'keystone' for their indicator set because of its indication of the complex array of positive cultural heritage, economic opportunity and environmental quality conditions."[452] S2's developers thus collectively gained new skills in connecting broad urban, regional, and national political interactions to quotidian, concrete, imaginable phenomena that were part of their self understanding and everyday life.

Trustees voiced hopes that S2 would foster a public discourse on sustainability by presenting a holistic account of the relationship between lived experience and the large scale of sustainable environmental and economic practice. In the words of one participant:

---

[450] Meg Holden, "A Pragmatic Test for Sustainability Indicator Projects," 266-7.

[451] Ibid., 267-270.

[452] Meg Holden and Sara Moreno Pires, "The Minority Report: Social Hope in Next Generation Indicators Work," *Regional Studies, Regional Science* 2, 35.

> The key to a sustainable society is to integrate 'these things' together instead of taking one thing at a time. It will take noting signs that we have possibly overlooked before. We have overlooked strengths and weaknesses. We look at trends separately and have not connected the dots. The indicators link together. Look at air pollution and the amount we drive our cars. Look at long term economic prospects and link them to child poverty. Trying to look at the whole picture: environmental protection, social equity and economic vitality.[453]

The life and political commitments that emerged from S2 were borne of the process of developing connections across discourses, values, objects, and facts in a way that provided a fuller picture of large-scale political realities. As Holden explains, "by making these linkages explicit and by forcing people from different areas of expertise to interact, S2 provided environmentalists with a way to link their concerns to social and economic ones."[454]

Holden recounts one exercise undertaken by S2 to have participants in a community workshop build strings of connections between individual indicators:

> For example, S2 participants connected rising child poverty with a decline in wild salmon by a string of postulates. The argument went like this: increased child poverty can lead to increased incidence of street crime, which can decrease the perception of safety in the streets, causing people to drive rather than walk, increasing pollution from car exhaust, and ultimately killing salmon via decreased stream quality.[455]

---

[453] Meg Holden, "A Pragmatic Test for Sustainability Indicator Projects," 272.

[454] Ibid., 275.

[455] Ibid., 274.

While this sounds (and perhaps is) a specious chain of connections bordering on free-association, from the perspective of the motivating the large-scale civic imagination it is quite remarkable. It shows the power of community-lead sustainable indicator development to represent political realities that defy direct observation and imagination. By teaching S2's developers and implementers to participate in the generation and analysis of statistically measurable data, the process of indicator development allowed for the gradual composition of a sense of Seattle's connections to complex, large-scale realities.

Yet, in Seattle, this broad recognition did not correlate with political influence; as one critic put it, "The received wisdom has been that even during the project's heyday in the mid-1990s: the farther one sits from Seattle, the more likely one is to consider [S2] an influential project."[456] Early organizing efforts by the city met with reactions ranging from apathy to hostility. During S2's high point in the 1990s, efforts to reach racially- and economically-diverse crowds, as well as groups not already predisposed to adopt sustainability as a guiding norm, were unsuccessful. Holden notes that even a sympathetic outsider described his experience of an S2 meeting negatively: "There are so many good people here, they're so talented, and you're developing these great indicators, but you're just sort of tracking how quickly the world's going to hell! There's some pretty clear things we should be organized around and why don't we just focus on organizing rather than just tracking?"[457] When there is an issue out there that needs addressing, what is the point in exerting energy in developing new and deeper ways of understanding the problem?

---

[456] Ibid., 254.

[457] Ibid., 271.

To respond to the political shortcomings expressed by the community of its early projects, S2's developers went about modifying its indexing methods in order to achieve broader regional recognition and political efficacy. Within the broad frame of sustainability, the S2 trustees began to modify their project's political and social frames and methodology. These changes radically shifted the politics of S2 as it went forward. These reforms break down into second, third, and fourth generation projects, representing different approaches to community and elite collaboration, measurements of and linkages between indicators, and mobilization of the indexing results.[458]

The development of Sustainability Seattle's indicators can be read as the ongoing realization that "there is an art and science to indicator selection and refinement."[459] The way indicators are formulated and presented – their role as a mediator of political fact – is important to the civic imagination they most appeal to. While broad public participation may yield an index

---

[458] The differences between the generations of sustainability indicators can be captured as follows:

> 2nd generation: indicators were derived from public policy, aiming to measure policy compliance among elite actors. The primary political phenomena under consideration was growth management monitoring.
>
> 3rd generation: indicators were derived from a broad process of public participation, with particular attention to qualitative information from marginalized populations. These indicators were meant to serve as a tool for political empowerment of the community, conceptualizing and measuring sustainability in a way that represented the interests of the city as a whole.
>
> 4th generation: indicators were developed by experts and formulated in a way that was easily spread by the media and understood by policymakers. By minimizing and marketing the indicators, the goal was to appeal to political elites

Each phase in the process yielded significantly different political results. Where the first generation had been unpopular and uninfluential in local politics, subsequent generations can be read as a series of variations on urban indexing in order to appeal to a broader and more effective audience (Ibid., 310)

[459] Ibid., 274.

that reflects and encourages community support, the complexity of the resulting set of indicators will resist easy incorporation into the political life of the city. In short, though urban indicators like S2 aspire to provide a scientific survey of the city, deliberate decisions about the form and content of the indicators have a profound impact on the representative politics of the index. From early efforts that achieved empowerment and community-building only on the smallest and most sympathetic scales, later generations shifted to using consumer product marketers and "power-mapping exercises."[460]

In spite of its shortcomings, what makes S2 so significant in terms of the motivation of a large-scale civic imagination is that we see the development of statistical indicators performing two key tasks: first, it was individually empowering to the citizens that took part in indicator development and dissemination; second, it brought large, dispersed, incredibly complex administrative realities into focus for those who developed S2. In this sense, the Sustainable Seattle index (and statistical measures generally) provides a medium capable of bringing dispersed phenomena to bear on the civic imagination, while also serving as a civic pedagogy that develops the skills necessary for understanding, questioning, judging, and acting.

In terms of the crises of representation and judgment, what Latour and Hermant suggest and Sustainable Seattle supports, is an understanding that the political life of the urban society is made vivid to the civic imagination by slowly following the shift between large-scale phenomena and their representation. By making the project a slow and steady accumulation of civic data, we can gain a sense of the reality of the signs, signals, statistics, and traces that find their way through the indexing process. In doing so, we find that a vivid sense of the social whole is

[460] Ibid., 265-6.

gained, serving to draw the civic imagination out into the otherwise hard to imagine political reality.

Where the topics that S2 confronted (global climate change, economic structures, and their ties to local practice) could take the form of disempowering political sublime, they instead became tools for local empowerment. What we can see in their approach to building democratic politics through sustainability indexing is a collective process of making sense of the world. This politics of sense-making therefore stands in contrast with the account of statist legibility offered by James Scott in *Seeing Like a State.* According to Scott, the large-scale modern state aspires to "administrative ordering of nature and society" in order successfully govern.[461] By building a coherence into its territory and population, the statist drive toward legibility has historically "incapacitated civil society" in order to impose forms and norms on their terrain.[462]

S2 enlivened the senses of its participants by provoking a new and active engagement with the visceral politics of global environmental change. While confronting and organizing a response to large-scale political realities, the process of community index development instead enlivened the senses of its by translating dispersed political realities into the practical politics of everyday experience. My drawing attention to the need to compose an image of the world through material mediators, S2 made sense of pressing political questions in a way that motivated the large-scale civic imagination and motivated participants to commit to political action.

---

[461] James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State, 88.*

[462] Ibid., 89.

6: Conclusions

I have argued that statistical indexes are a crucial way to expand the civic imagination and promote popular empowerment under the conditions of contemporary urbanism. The importance of urban representations is that they make the city legible as it relates to the broader realities of global urbanism. As political communities have evolved, however, the representations that guided political and popular readings of cities have grown less adequate to understanding and managing them. One influential response to this crisis of representation is urban indexing. Urban indexes use statistical measures to represent complex realities in a way that can guide the development of institutions and norms. Under the rubric of sustainability, these indexes frame cities as confluences of prosperity, environmental sustainability, rule of law, vitality, and knowledge production, seeking to meet both the present and future needs of a population.

I have suggested that urban indexes are a medium that can address the civic imagination's twofold crisis of representation and judgment. These indexes provide a resource that can draw diverse and dispersed phenomena into political consciousness, even if they fall short of the Romantic ideals of sense-certainty or immediate statistical access. Instead, they provide a mode of access to a political world that denies these aspects of democratic citizenship. I have considered this world through the lens of the birth of the global urban society – a world in which the economic, cultural, environmental, and institutional life of cities is definitive of a number of pressing contemporary political issues.

To do so, we need to embrace signs and symbols as both reality and abstraction to get out of this crises of representation and judgment. This involves an intense social pedagogy, as Meg Holden's study of the multiple iterations of the Sustainable Seattle indicator shows. This way, we

get around the objection offered by both Arendt and Dewey that we must be wary of the way scientific expertise can function undemocratically to foreclose certain speculations and a plurality of perspectives. In this way, attentiveness to indicator development and application on the city-level can provide a bridge between local life and dispersed economic, ecological, cultural, and institutional phenomena. Rather than shifting knowledge of large-scale phenomena outside politics, it draws them into a democratic process of community knowledge generation and processing.

My intention in this chapter is not to suggest that statistical indicators can serve as some sort of missing "sixth sense" of democracy that can extend our awareness and capacities outward limitlessly. In fact, this is the opposite of my claim: statistical indicators do not and cannot provide immediate and objective access to political realities (nothing can). The democratic anxiety about quantitative methods doing this is just as deeply problematic as the mythologies of the scientist perpetuated by would-be technocrats. Both sides perpetuate a narrative of the anti-democratic implications of statistical measures that ultimately undercuts quantitative measures' capacity to represent the political sublime in ways that are democratically empowering. The imperfect work that goes into developing the data in individual indicators, the gradual composition of measures, and the iterative process of social education that goes into implementing them all draw attention to the contingency of the indicator development process in a way that serves democracy without surrendering to an untenable localism or immediacy.

Conclusion: Embodied Enfranchisement and Policing Democracy

When nonviolence is preached as an attempt to evade the repercussions of political brutality, it betrays itself. When nonviolence begins halfway through the war with the aggressor calling time out, it exposes itself as a ruse. When nonviolence is preached by the representatives of the state, while the state doles out heaps of violence to its citizens, it reveals itself to be a con. And none of this can mean that rioting or violence is 'correct' or 'wise,' any more than a forest fire can be 'correct' or 'wise.' Wisdom isn't the point tonight. Disrespect is. In this case, disrespect for the hollow law and failed order that so regularly disrespects the community.

Ta-Nehesi Coates

"Non-violence is Compliance"[463]

Responding to the recent protests following the death of Freddie Gray while in the custody of the Baltimore Police Department, President Obama condemned the violence he saw accompanying the unrest:

> There's no excuse for the kind of violence that we saw yesterday. It is counterproductive… When individuals get crowbars and start prying open doors to loot, they're not protesting. They're not making a statement. They're stealing. When they burn down a building, they're committing arson. And they're destroying and undermining businesses and opportunities in their own communities. That robs jobs and opportunity from people in that area.[464]

---

[463] Ta-Nehisi Coates, "Nonviolence as Compliance," *The Atlantic* (27 April 1015).
[464] Eric Bradner, "Obama: 'No Excuse' for Violence in Baltimore," *CNN*, available: http://www.cnn.com/2015/04/28/politics/obama-baltimore-violent-protests/ (accessed 1 July, 2015).

Baltimore Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake offered a similar sentiment: "Too many people have spent generations building up this city for it to be destroyed by thugs."[465] In claiming that none of the protestors' actions are a productive "statement," the President and Mayor reduce violating private property to stealing, burning a building to arson, and destroying a business to robbing the poor of jobs. In all cases, the spontaneous acts of the protestors are reducible to simple acts of destruction and negation, counter to political progress.

The President's reading of the protests as a negation of productive politics was echoed by others. The conservative news website *The Daily Caller* criticized Ta-Nehisi Coates' defense of the protestors' actions, "Nonviolence is Compliance," by claiming that "Sophisticated thinkers want you to understand that the mayhem unfolding in Baltimore is not a riot." Where intellectuals wanted to obfuscate the events at hand, *Caller* writer W. James Antle III saw the protests as a simple thing: "an uprising, an intifada, a revolution."[466] Civil rights historian David J. Garrow offered a similar skepticism of those that found politics in the protests: "Part of this is an affectation to give political meaning to behavior that may not have political content…We've got observers perhaps trying to give greater meaning to the behavior than the people involved may intend." He goes on: "But to my mind, this effort to label it with political meaning largely fails if you're targeting random retailing establishments not government institutions."[467]

---

[465] Abby Ohlheiser, "The Changing Context of Who Gets Called a 'Thug' in America," *Washington Post* (28 April, 2015).
[466] W. James Antle III, "The Riots in Baltimore Aren't Revolutionary," *The Daily Caller* (29 April, 2015).
[467] Damien Cave, "Defining Baltimore: #Riot, #Uprising or #Disturbance," *New York Times* (28 April, 2015).

In all of these readings, the protests are read as minimally politically meaningful (at best) or as the negation of (liberal democratic) politics (at worst). The apparent irrationality and unthinking destructiveness of the actions is taken as a sign that the protests were meaningless and worthy only of condemnation. Even if Freddie Gray's murder was exemplary of a long series of injustices perpetrated by police against black Baltimoreans, the fact that the protests used violence – and particularly violence against private property (two burnt out CVS pharmacies in Baltimore particularly occupied media attention and provoked sustained popular outrage) –is taken as clear evidence that the movement effectively undermined the foundations of American political culture and order.

These responses to the protests are exemplary of common efforts used to police the politics of urban social movements. In these condemnations of the protests, we see how dominant state and economic actors work to support their interests by establishing the meaning of the protestors' actions. And, just as my account emphasizes how democratic spatial politics operates on many valences – bodies, discourses, urban plans, architectural projects, and aesthetic and violent interventions, to name a few – so too do such efforts to police the politics of urban social movements proceed on multiple fronts.

Beyond only understanding the police in narrow sense of the force empowered with legitimate use of the means of violence in maintaining the rule of law, Jacques Ranciere's contrast between "politics" and the "police" captures the way policing functions in daily life and discourse to contain new political possibilities. Where Ranciere sees politics as characterized by rupture, intervention, novelty, and open-endedness, the police represent stability, predictability, unity, and closure. Police practices are the practices that maintain a particular "partition of the

sensible," leaving certain identities and ideas in sight and pushing others to the margins.[468] In an observation that treads a line between figurative and literal, Ranciere's "Ten Theses on Politics" explains,

> The police says that there is nothing to see on a road, that there is nothing to do but move along. It asserts that the space of circulating is nothing other than the space of circulation. Politics, in contrast, consists in transforming this space of 'moving-along' into a space for the appearance of a subject: i.e., the people, the workers, the citizens: It consists in refiguring the space, of what there is to do there, what is to be seen or named therein. It is the established litigation of the perceptible.[469]

In this sense, the police represents the stability of the regime of political and social norms and the maintenance of a particular ordering of the meaning of the world.

Beyond this legalist and discursive reading of the police, a Situationist interpretation of the Watts Riots in 1965 responded to the question "What is a policeman?" by offering that, "He is the active servant of the commodity…whose job is to ensure that a given product of human labor remains a commodity, with the magical property of having to be paid for, instead of becoming a mere refrigerator or rifle."[470] In this sense, the police are charged with maintaining the primacy of a particular kind of meaning: the quality of the material world as a commodity.

---

[468] Jacques Ranciere, "Ten Theses on Politics," *Theory & Event* (5), available: http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.its.virginia.edu/journals/theory_and_event/toc/tae5.3.html (accessed 1 July, 2015).

[469] Ibid.

[470] Situationist International, "The Decline and Fall of the Spectacle-Commodity Economy," available: http://www.bopsecrets.org/SI/10.Watts.htm (accessed 1 July, 2015).

The police can also be seen as built into the material world. As architect and activist Raoul Vaneigem put it, there is a homology between the police that are hired to maintain the social order and the spaces that facilitate its stability: "All space is occupied by the enemy. We are living under a permanent curfew. Not just the cops—the geometry."[471] James Baldwin recognizes a similar homology in "Fifth Avenue, Uptown:"

> The projects in Harlem are hated. They are hated almost as much as policemen, and this is saying a great deal. And they are hated for the same reason : both reveal, unbearably, the real attitude of the white world, no matter how many liberal speeches are made, no matter how many lofty editorials are written, no matter how many civil-rights commissions are set up.[472]

In being "cheerless as a prison" and "colorless, bleak, high, and revolting,"[473] Baldwin sees the projects and the police each revealing the hateful and racist politics built into the city.

In all of these forms of the police – the violent, discursive, economic, and architectural – we see a basic commonality: that the police's role is often to maintain a single, stabilizing sense of meaning, backed by some coercive force. This binds the many forms of "police" together – it is the imposition of a singular discourse of propriety that can mobilize itself in many forms, from

---

[471] Quoted in Christopher Grey, *Leaving the 20th Century: The Incomplete Work of the Situationist International*, London: Rebel Publishers (1998), 26.
[472] James Baldwin, "Fifth Avenue, Uptown," *Esquire Magazine* (July 1960), available: http://www.esquire.com/news-politics/a3638/fifth-avenue-uptown/ (accessed 2 July, 2015)
[473] Ibid.

a word to a crosswalk to a gun.[474] Politicians, media outlets, and academics participate in arguing that the actions of the protestors only have one legitimate interpretation. Like Ranciere's police, elite discourse asserts that there is "nothing more than a riot" to see in Baltimore. As the Situationists claimed, the protests are condemned as violating the commodity form of the city. As Vaneigem and Baldwin show, the built form of the city works to keep vast populations at the margins of public life.

This multivalent policing is at work in the interpretations of the Baltimore protests listed above and encapsulates the practices I am arguing against in my dissertation. My aim has been to show how movements (even when they appear violent or incoherent) also build empowering democratic possibilities under the challenging conditions of contemporary urbanism. My reading of these movements centers on an attentiveness to the bodily practices and diverse meanings that movements use to politicize the build environment. Rather than dismissing movements just because they fail to realize their revolutionary program, or their demands were unrealistic, or their actions destroyed private property, my aim is to help us reflect on how these movements' actions may contribute to citizens finding new power in themselves and others.

---

[474] At the same time, it is worth noting an important tension and possibility that municipal police forces present. As much as any other face of the state, police are tied to the local identities and communities of the people they oversee. Even while large percentages of many cities' police force live outside the boundaries of the cities that they work in, they are caught in a tension between representing the neighborhoods, districts, cities, states, and the diverse interests and understandings at work across these levels. Pulled in many directions at once – meeting federal, state, county, and city benchmarks, responding to particular local needs and eccentricities, made up of individuals who often have a great love of their communities – the practice of policing is simultaneously charged with presenting a single coherent legal order and with the ongoing negotiation of many interests.

While liberal democratic principles have gained the normative and procedural high ground, many people in purportedly democratic cities and states remain a long way from *feeling* included, equal, and empowered. This marks an important gap between the the formal and affective conditions of democratic citizenship. I have hoped to promote a way of reading the affective politics of urban social movements as they work from within cities that too often undercut citizens' abilities to make claims on the forces (administrative, economic, or cultural) that shape their lives. By considering in good faith the ways that people use their space we may learn to recognize the political claims of the people most excluded from public discourse and deliberation.

Acknowledging that there are many roots and causes of this democratic enervation, my focus has been on the pitfalls and promises of contemporary cities and social movements. I began by claiming that contemporary urban spaces pose a number of affective challenges to democracy: urban spaces are shaped and controlled by economic and administrative elites; cities are often constructed to divide marginalized populations from each other; the forces that shape the built environment and everyday life are located outside the city or state (and largely unaccountable to the populations whose lives they shape); state violence remains far more powerful than the tools available to the residents of cities; the plan of the city often proceeds according to imperatives that only marginally reflect popular will and understandings. While none of these features are absolutely determinative of political outcomes, I began by proposing that the experience of urban space works in a number of ways to disempower citizens in ways that are alarming from the perspective of democratic norms.

By turning to urban social movements as efforts to draw from the built environment, bodily practice, and normative ideals to address the anti-democratic affective gap built into contemporary cities, I have considered how certain strategies can construct an affective foundation that empowers oppressed populations to make claims on the institutions that shape their lives. In this sense, I consider urban social movements as producers of a particular sort of embodied joy – an imagined and visceral awareness of the myriad forces that shape our experiences. This is the joy that Kristen Ross describes as a form of "public happiness," experienced as movement participants find themselves "living beyond their intellectual, emotional, and sensorial limits."[475]

I have argued that this joyful excess builds a new sense of agency and possibility for many disenfranchised citizens, and that there is much to be learned from this joy as an antidote to the alienation, naturalization, and fragmentation that undercut embodied enfranchisement. I claimed that this empowering sense of the affective environment inheres in the material practices of urban social movements, which build democratic principles into space and bodily practice. I call this affective accomplishment of urban social movements embodied enfranchisement.

To make this claim, my first chapter turned to the first social movement that sought to build popular power in a modern urban space. Taking up the case of the Paris Commune, I consider how the people of the city drew from experiences of affective excess and care to build an empowered relationship to their city. I tracked how practices that do not occupy a central role in the literature on social movement politics – walking tours, gingerbread fairs, barricade construction, a program for the public redistribution of flowers – lay at the core of the

---

[475] Kristen Ross, *May '68 and its Afterlives,* 101.

democratic life of the Commune. Where the French state built a politics of alienation and disorientation into Paris in the mid-nineteenth century, the Commune worked through the bodies of citizens and the built environment of the city to help the people of Paris take control of their lives and feel themselves to be empowered agents of change. I read this joyful politics as an affective foundation of democratic citizenship under the challenging conditions of contemporary cities. This sense of lived equality and empowerment (embodied enfranchisement) is an important and under-considered democratic value.

In chapter two, I considered the politics of antidemocratic space – how are cities built to undercut empowering joy and embodied enfranchisement? By tracking the construction of the Paris municipal rail system and the Basilica of the Sacred Heart, I claim that we find exemplary material and discursive practices of antidemocratic space. I read these projects as exemplifying the spatial politics of world alienation, severing the affective connection to the material and moral life of the city. Contrasted with the joyful politics of the Paris Commune, the French Third Republic built Paris into a "city of sad passions" – organized to break the empowering imaginative connections to urban form that undergird embodied enfranchisement. Where the Second Empire's reforms preceding the Commune only served to disorient Parisians, these changes instead disembodied them by disarticulating citizen identity and spatial politics.

My next two chapters considered the democratic resources that are available for building embodied enfranchisement under the conditions of contemporary urbanism. In my third chapter, I considered the possibilities of heterotopias – spaces that politicize the built environment and bodily practice by reconnecting them with the affective life of urban residents. Derived from the work of Michel Foucault, heterotopias are spaces that exist outside the socio-spatial order but

can also be used to provide privileged points of access for imagining and acting into large-scale political realities. While Foucault quickly abandoned the term because of what he saw as an untenable structuralism built into it conceptually, I claimed that that same structuralism ultimately empowered the Black Panther Party and Situationist International to mobilize urban residents and bring democracy into the bodily practices of everyday life. Material practices like the Survival Programs and occupation of the Sorbonne, and geographic reimaginations like intercommunalism and unitary urbanism, create spaces that place the body in an empowered position relative to the dominant social order.

In my fourth chapter, I then considered the resources available on the city-level for addressing large-scale political problems that are not necessarily visible on the municipal level. In the case of issues like climate change, the citizens that are responsible for generating and addressing a slow-moving and massively distributed – in short, sublime – problem are often unable to understand and address it. I therefore turn to the controversial (at least among democrats) medium of statistical indexes as a resource for motivating the large-scale civic imagination and empowering individuals to act. Through a study of the Sustainable Seattle index, I claim that a democratic approach to the development and application of indexes can bring a broad range of senses to bear on political problems, motivating empowered and engaged action on the city-level.

Tying these studies of exemplary movements and material practices together is a focus on the role of an open-ended experience of the body, built environment, and normative claims as a foundation for empowered democratic citizenship. From the Communards' view of the barricades as manifestations of popular power, to the Black Panthers' breakfast programs,

Situationists' artistic interventions in French universities and factories, and Sustainable Seattle's connection of local animal-life to global ecological changes, each of these practices connected the experience of urban space to questions and realities of self-government. These cases show that embodied enfranchisement comes when citizens are asked to take up a place in the world and act in a way that can affect change in the economic, cultural, and political forces that shape their lives. They work, in sum, against the police in all its diverse forms.

As I noted at the outset, these movements rarely realized whatever large scale political changes they vocalized as their primary aims. An instrumentalist reading of these movements often guides popular discourse and takes center-stage in the social movement studies literature. Read in this light, many of these movements were failures. Acknowledging this, my dissertation has made a different claim – that the joy inherent to the politics of many urban social movements provides an opportunity for the oppressed to construct an experience of empowered citizenship and that this quality of experience is itself important to democratic politics. This generation of meaning through disruptive practice may be difficult to sustain but the quality of feeling oneself empowered is, I believe, an important contribution to thinking through the affective life of democracy.

Thus, in considering an event like the protests following the death of Freddie Gray in Baltimore, the question should not only be whether the movement achieved its goals (which, it is important to note, the Baltimore protests were exceptional in accomplishing to a significant degree) but, did they build a sense of popular power among the participants in the movement? Did they help Baltimore's residents feel like they could express themselves through the built

environment and bodily practice? Did the participants feel empowered? In short: what did the movement participants take out of it?[476]

My primary goal here has been to provide resources for thinking through and constructing democratic spatial politics and empowered citizenship in contemporary cities. While I have offered an interpretive framework for approaching the affective politics of urban social movements as they build joy and empower citizens, and have worked to employ it in my chapters, the questions I pose still need more attention. The next iteration of this project will therefore have to go much further into exemplary cases to see how the terms and premises I have developed connect with social movement practice and democratic norms.

[476] I would really like to be able to make a connected claim that the participants in these movements carried the power that emerged from their participation into the fabric of their everyday lives. I think this would be an excellent project for another day, though work like Kristen Ross' recent *Communal Luxury* provides an exemplary reading of the disperse, unpredictable, and productive afterlives of social movements in the lives of their participants.

Appendix: Five Primary Indicator Domains With Sample Indicators

I. Prosperity

Across these indexes, prosperity is generally recognized as consisting in three sub-domains: the business environment, resource and human mobility, and equity.

Business environment: low tax burden on business, operating and capital budget of the city, tax collection, bureaucratic and legal steps to incorporate and open a new firm, employment (rate and growth, growth in minority owned businesses), percent working over forty hours a week to fulfill basic needs, employee regulations (ease of firing and wage:value ratio), city product per capita (also, growth rate), loan availability, rent/square feet, technology and information exports, marine terminal tonnage, diversity of economic activity across business sectors, increases (business, annual sales, funds in locally-owned banks, growth in target sectors), historical preservation serving the economy, air (passengers, cargo), housing starts, inflation, subtract value of environmental damage, costs (commuting, advertising, pollution control, air damage), average wage, wage distribution, patents granted, number of international tourists, tourism/ski/ convention spending, low corruption, if the market is improving, confidence in financial institutions, perception that are is good to invest in for businesses and entrepreneurs,

Transportation: air traffic (seats filled, destinations), busses (per capita), commute times low, low transportation cost relative to income, road and bicycle fatalities, perception of freeway system, foreclosure rate, most expensive point-to-point mass transit trip within the city,

Equity: low-income housing, proximity of poor to rich and racial groups to public goods (transit and public services, libraries, schools, public space, healthy food, health services, internet, tree canopy, emergency response times), number of homeless residents, telephones per capita,

internet access, electricity, poverty rates (child), if working hard gets you ahead, perceived job quality, income changes, cost of living changes, burden of rent or mortgage, satisfaction with standard of living, Big Mac or iPod index, domestic savings, utility costs, rent, distribution of high-income loans (by race), rich and poor households (% of each, ratio between 10% and 90% incomes, GINI), % in poverty or receiving public assistance, CPI,

II. Ecological Stability

Environment concerns are limited to two broad sub-domains: ecology and consumption.

Ecology: animal populations, population growth, air and water quality standards achieved, water use (local or imported), energy use (gas, public utilities), waste generated, percent of acres of conserved/preserved/restored land, ecological stability, improving water table level, toxin counts, no invasive species, perception of stewardship,

Consumption: public and low-impact transport common and facilitated, buildings (LEED/ STAR, preserved), recycling, reduce ambient noise and light, sustainable energy use, vegetarianism, locally grown and sold food), air and water quality perception, awareness of the city's ecological footprint, ratio of bicycle:walker:private car:public vehicle,

III. Rule of Law

The range of measure of the traditionally political is limited to two sub-domains: democracy and security.

Democracy: cities score high for technological outreach and transparency, civil liberties protection, diversity of elected officials across gender and race, voter registration, turnout, and

contact with public officials, and public perception that the city's residents have an influence on local government, are politically aware, and that the local government is performing well. Embedded in these indexes is therefore a model of democratic government that hinges on elections and voting as an accountability mechanism, with less emphasis on direct access to public officials, and no real weigh for public deliberation, debate, or conflict.

Security is often weighed as or more heavily than democratic accountability. Measures include fire and police response times, number of police and firefighters per capita, rates of violent, property, and hate crime, youth crime (violent deaths and adjudications), racial parity in arrests, charges, convictions, and probation, trust in police and judicial system, and public perceptions of crime, gangs, police, safety, abuse, and the ability to walk alone at night.

IV. Vitality

Urban vitality encompasses the sub-domains of broad social cohesion and public health.

Cohesion: perceived social support, perceived neighborhood cohesion, trust in neighbors, knowing area residents by name, perception of racism (across races), tolerance (race, sexuality, immigrants), residential segregation, philanthropy, percent who give to non-profits (everywhere, in city, United Way), non-profits in the county, foundation assets, charity growth rate, percent who have helped a stranger, formal volunteering, percentage "participating in a group," increasing cohesion from year-to-year, belief that diversity is good,

Public health: life expectancy (general, plus variations by race and gender), people getting exercise (particularly the young and old, also accessibility of spaces for exercise), obesity rates (general, plus variations by race, gender, and neighborhood), caloric intake, infant health and

morality (across race), prevalence of disease, cause of death and injury rates (motor vahicles, murder, suicide), drug use, health insurance coverage, per capita hospitals and doctors, ADA accessibility, work death and injury, single and teen mothers, satisfied with public health policy and private health experience, cohabitation and marriage rates, foster care children reunited with their parents,

V. Knowledge Production

Urban indexes often gauge knowledge creation three sub-domains: education, cultural production, and news media.

Education: measured through spending (as investment), community college enrollment, book loans, libraries, literacy, school enrollment rate (also by gender, race), school retention rates, math and reading scores relative to other places, graduation and dropout rates, school suspension rates, college readiness and enrollment percentages, average years of secondary and tertiary education, graduation rates, student to teacher ratios, percent of qualified teachers, per pupil expenditures, students/computer, social worker availability, grant dollars in schools, local college and university rankings, Head Start Access, adult education courses, library membership, degrees awarded, STEM and health degrees awarded, patents per capita, incidents and safety on school grounds, arts education. Perceived satisfaction with education, opportunity to learn for children, school safety, university and college quality.

Culture: location of low-cost arts and community facilities, location of green spaces, tourist destination, per capita arts funding, earned income by arts organizations, cultural diversity of arts providers, arts employment, students and schools for the arts, theaters, museums, performance

numbers, music venues, museum attendance percentage, zoo attendance, sport attendance, percent that use parks, carnivals, cinemas, video arcades, Michelin star restaurants, bars, clubs, books published, book stores, music stores, photography stores, access (demographic and ADA) of culture and park amenities, world heritage sites, historical design district presence, increase in landmarks from year to year, comedy clubs, buildings are visually interesting, "creative class" (percent involved in higher problem solving), events celebrate diversity, religious attendance, work-life-balance, cultural amenity perception, park quality, public space appearance/maintenance quality.

Media: presence of ethnic and other language news sources, use of internet news.