

Foreword

URBAN POLARIZATION
AND EPISTEMIC REFLEXIVITY

Loïc Wacquant

Over the past three decades, social inequality and marginality have grown in concert in the metropolis, spawning a deeply polarized class structure that has beset central and local governments with a host of thorny administrative challenges and pressing policy quandaries: homelessness and gentrification; the involution of districts of dereliction and the return migration of bourgeois families hungry for public amenities, street policing, and infrastructural rebuilding; rent control and skyrocketing real estate; and bureaucratic upheaval spawned by fiscal retrenchment and the neoliberal revamping of the state. New discourses have correspondingly swirled about the city, themselves bifurcated into a buoyant celebration of urban “renaissance,” diversity, and technology, on the one hand, and dark tales of festering crime, uncontrolled immigration, creeping surveillance, and the crystallization of “ghettos” of ethnic secession and social perdition, on the other.¹

Surveying the landscape of urban studies at this pivotal moment, *Shaking Up the City* tackles many of these issues head on and sounds an urgent clarion call for *epistemic reflexivity*, that is, the critical examination of the core categories, questions, methodological moves, and discursive tropes informing scholarly and policy debates on the metropolis. Where do the

problems that urban sociologists, geographers, and economists pose come from? Why do they pose them in just these terms? What symbolic forces and institutional processes cause them to diffuse across the academic field and become hegemonic topics, absorbing disproportionate research funding, brain power, and administrative resources? What are the questions that students of the city *could* be raising instead with a different set of theoretical constructs and observational foci? Finally, moving into the normative register, what are the issues urban scholars *should* be articulating, based not only on a more sober and independent assessment of social trends and historical transformation, but also on grounds of social justice in the city? (Fainstein 2010).

Slater's treatment of the moral panic around the "sink estate" and its policy consequences is methodologically exemplary in these respects. Instead of deploying the notion to capture the devolution of social housing or settling for a moral critique of its negative connotations, he queries its origins, painstakingly retraces its trajectory, and maps out its semantic range and uses by cultural elites and state managers. Charting the travels and travails of the sink estate from the science of ethology to journalism to the world of think tanks, philanthrocapitalists, and policy makers, and back into scholarly discourse allows Slater to demonstrate that this construct is, properly speaking, not a scientific category but a *social catagoreme*, that is, an instrument of public accusation that skews both science and policy: science by fixating the scholarly gaze on the estate itself at the expense of locating it in the structure of objective positions in symbolic, social, and physical space that makes up the city; and policy by fostering programs of demolition of social housing and geographic dispersal of the poor that disregard the social fabric of their existence and treat their neighborhoods, anthropomorphized as so many urban bogeymen, as the self-standing cause of their social predicament. Moreover, it emerges from this genealogy that the symbolic denigration of public housing and its residents partakes of a broader discourse of devaluation of the *public*, the collective, the common, and thence of the state as the institutional incarnation and guardian of the *urban commons* (Stavrvides 2016). Indeed, many of the categories in the reigning lingua franca spoken by fashionable urban scholars and au courant city policy analysts and decision makers is stamped by an overt or covert antistatism that bespeaks the corroding influence of neoliberal thinking.

The rich case studies in the politics of urban constructs that compose this book converge to remind us of what should be the first commandment of every working social scientist: *thou shalt construct thy own concepts and formulate thy own problematic*, instead of borrowing ready-made notions and social problems prepackaged by policy experts and government elites. They also suggest that one should be especially wary of the importation of language from the natural into the social sciences, as with the falsely neutral notion of urban “resilience.” The idiom of nature has for inescapable effect the paradoxical *dehistoricization* of historical reality and the *elision* of the relations of material and symbolic power that constitute the city as the site of accumulation, differentiation, and contestation of capital in its different forms (and not just economic capital, as Tom Slater would have it). The deft theoretical move whereby Slater joins Robert Proctor’s agnotology, the historical science of the fabrication of collective ignorance, with Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of symbolic power, the sociology of the realization of categories, gives us the necessary tools to thwart this danger.

But the effort to free ourselves from policy fads and academic bandwagons and to avoid the deadly *lemming effect* that has struck urban studies over the past few decades, enticing so many students of the metropolis to jump with bravado from the “underclass” to the “creative class,” from “gentrification” to “revitalization,” and from “resilience” to “data-driven innovation,” will only succeed if it is a collective endeavor, carried out by a community of scholars committed to helping one another forge and keep their intellectual tools clean, so that they may marry scientific rigor and civic relevance without ceding to political subservience (Bourdieu [2001] 2004).

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1 Challenging the Heteronomy of Urban Research

If you're unwilling to muster the courage to think critically, then someone will do the thinking for you, offering doublethink and doubletalk relief.

Cornel West (2008, 9)

At a time when doublethink and doubletalk relief are very widespread, this book responds in the form of a double move. It addresses the causal mechanisms behind urban inequalities, material deprivation, marginality, and social suffering in cities across several international contexts, and while doing so, it scrutinizes how knowledge (and all too often *ignorance*) on these issues is produced by a range of urban actors (such as intellectuals, policy officials, journalists, planners, urban designers, think tank writers, and economists writing for popular audiences). The motivation for this double move is not only the urgent problem of widening urban inequalities, but also the striking deficit of collective intellectual reflection on the social and political organization of urban research. The allure of fashionable concepts and policy buzzwords (e.g., *resilient cities*, *regeneration*, *smart cities*, and *placemaking*), and especially the worries of politicians, business leaders, university leaders, and the mainstream media, has meant that urban scholarship often fails to call into question the prefabricated problematics and imposed categories of urban policy. This has led to analytic neglect of the changing balance of state structures and institutional arrangements that shape, and in turn are shaped by, the evolution of capitalist urbanization.

Throughout this book I offer many examples of urban buzzwords in action, but for now let's consider *placemaking*, which has become something of a cottage industry among architects, "sustainable" urban designers, neoclassical urban economists, policy officials, and urban planning gurus. Many of those involved display a near-evangelical belief in the physical appearance and feel of neighborhoods, parks, and streets as the principal determinants of economic and social life in them (not vice versa), and that the way to address all existing and future urban problems is via engaging local communities in hands-on placemaking (i.e., facilitating urban design and functional use from the ground up). One illustration comes from New York City and the Project for Public Spaces (PPS), founded in 1975 to mobilize the visions of celebrated urbanists Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte vis-à-vis what makes for "livable" neighborhoods and "inviting" public spaces. Building on the commercial success of its 1980s transformation of Bryant Park in Midtown Manhattan, PPS has grown into a hugely influential organization working in all fifty states in the United States, with a set of values that have spread very widely on a global scale (policy makers in multiple international contexts, too numerous to list, have jumped on the placemaking bandwagon). The PPS is guided by a conviction that "a strong sense of place can influence the physical, social, emotional, and ecological health of individuals and communities everywhere" (Project for Public Spaces n.d.). Upon reading some PPS pronouncements, it is easy to see why its notion of placemaking has traveled so widely: "When people of all ages, abilities, and socio-economic backgrounds can not only access and enjoy a place, but also play a key role in its identity, creation, and maintenance, that is when we see genuine placemaking in action."

At first glance, such a scenario seems impossible to dislike. But on closer inspection, although placemaking is usually rolled out through a notion of people-centered inclusivity, what often emerges is a process that disavows the realities of politics and power in which it is embedded (Montgomery 2016). There are uncomfortable parallels with colonialism: in any context where placemaking is planned, *what if there is a place already there*, one to which residents might be deeply attached and might not want transformed? What if local communities take exception to external placemaking professionals arriving and engaging them in a process they never wanted in the first place? It is well documented that placemaking can be

deeply undemocratic and dismissive of resistance and can amount to a strategy of *placebreaking* to serve vested interests (MacLeod 2013). On a structural and institutional level, who stands to reap the financial rewards that an attractive new place might bring, and at whose expense? Placemaking normalizes, if not naturalizes, the claims of particular institutions with profit interests in urban land and real estate and reframes them as if in the urban public interest. For instance, in 2017 CBRE (the world's largest commercial real estate services company) and Gehl Architects authored a document entitled *Placemaking: Value and the Public Realm*, which opened with the following: "Placemaking happens when buildings are transformed into vibrant urban spaces that offer wellbeing, pleasure and inspiration. Its success can be measured by improved lives, greater happiness and, when done successfully, an uplift in property values."¹

Furthermore, people's experiences of urban life are not solely determined by the appearance and vibrancy of the public spaces they use. They are determined, to a far greater extent, by people's ability to make a life in the city. Concerns over making rent (harder when there is an "uplift in property values"), feeding your family, accessing health care, childcare, and a reliable network of support are of much more immediate importance than the appearance and vibrancy of public spaces. For policy elites, embracing and trumpeting placemaking as a panacea for all urban problems is a very convenient way to sidestep the difficulties of addressing material deprivation. Grassroots struggles and social movements tend not to march to city hall with banners demanding placemaking as an end to their problems. Their cries and demands are for much more profound changes.

This book, therefore, articulates a critical approach to urban studies that *guards against the subordination of scholarly to policy agendas* and weds epistemological critique with social critique, with a view to opening up alternatives and formulating research-driven ideas, as a counterpoint to mainstream, policy-driven approaches to urban research. It goes against the grain of established research orthodoxies to dissect multiple aspects of urban division, to diagnose and challenge the hegemonic economic and political order of the metropolis, and to critique the categories of urban research that serve the interests of state elites and big business. This approach is nourished by a combination of abstract theory and concrete

empirical evidence from multiple sources and across multiple urban contexts to critique existing conceptual formulations—while extending and advancing what I see as more helpful ones—vis-à-vis the themes of urban “resilience,” gentrification, displacement and rent control, “neighborhood effects,” territorial stigma, and ethnoracial segregation.

In the pages that follow, I take aim at a fast-moving and expanding target: the *heteronomy of urban research*. At first glance this may seem like abstruse academic jargon, but it is really rather simple: it refers to the condition of scholars being constrained in asking their own questions about urbanization, instead asking questions and using categories invented, escalated, and imposed by various institutions that have vested interests in influencing what is off and on the urban agenda. These institutions range from major arms of the state to philanthropic foundations, to university research centers, to urban design consultancies, to think tanks across the political spectrum. In the next section I provide a detailed example of heteronomy in action by focusing on the explosive growth of recent interest in “urban science” prioritizing “data-driven innovation.” But for now, it is important to note that the heteronomy of urban research is not a brand new development. It was present in rounds of twentieth-century urbanization, for instance during the Fordist-Keynesian era and its subsequent mutation into post-Fordist entrepreneurialism. But why has it expanded and intensified in the twenty-first century? Given the enormous pressures on university finances (which are the outcome not just of state disinvestment in higher education but also of the warped priorities of university leaders), scholars are under greater pressure than ever before to secure substantial external research funding, and it is frequently to government funding bodies that many apply. The result is the rise of *policy-driven research at the expense of research-driven policy*, and with it, *decision-based evidence making at the expense of evidence-based decision making*. Within the field of urban studies and in public debates outside it, what has been emerging for some time now is what we might call a *vested interest urbanism*. This book is a critical response in the form of an analytic intervention, one that is positioned against the prevailing political wind: the steady erosion of intellectual autonomy. This seems necessary because the moment that we cannot ask our own questions about cities due to the priorities of the state (which are all too often in

dialogue with the priorities of big business), what we are doing ceases to be research and becomes propaganda.

The ethical problem of heteronomy versus autonomy has a long history that predates urban studies. In moral philosophy, the problem stretches back to Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712–78), who saw most of his contemporary philosophers as little more than rationalizers of self-interest and spent considerable time arguing that personal autonomy is achievable “only if citizens surrender part of their status as individuals and think of their social membership as essential, not merely accidental, to who they are” (Neuhouser 2011, 478). Rousseau’s famous liberal musings on the formation of this social contract informed the writings of Immanuel Kant, who argued that possessing autonomy of the will is a necessary condition of moral agency (his overriding goal being to explain what autonomous moral reasoning would look like). He argued that in contrast to an autonomous will, a heteronomous will is one of obedience to rules of action that have been legislated externally to it, and the moral obligations it proposes cannot therefore be regarded as binding upon the person(s) being obedient. Kant presented an understanding of heteronomy as something that precluded any sustained consideration of where such obedience stems from in the first place, which was, for him, a poor foundation for ethical reasoning.

Much more helpful in thinking through the *political* ramifications of autonomy and heteronomy are the writings of Pierre Bourdieu in the field of cultural production. Bourdieu analyzed societies as consisting of a series of fields in which people jostle for status and control vis-à-vis the economic, social, cultural, and symbolic capital at stake in the particular field. For instance, Bourdieu (1993, 1996a) described the field of cultural production (arts, music, television, film, etc.) as having autonomous and heteronomous poles. Taking the example of the arts, he explained how, as they gain distance from political, economic, and religious dictates, they become rich in symbolic capital but poor in economic capital. Producers in the field struggle among each other to accumulate symbolic capital such as prestige, with those showing a deep commitment to art for art’s sake (or “restricted production,” as Bourdieu put it) gaining the most status. Such a commitment is “founded on the obligatory recognition of the values of disinterestedness and on the denigration of the “economy”

(of the ‘commercial’)” (Bourdieu 1996a, 142). He argued that this was an inversion of practices occurring in the economic field:

In the most perfectly autonomous sector of the field of cultural production, where the only audience aimed at is other producers . . . the economy of practices is based, as in a generalized game of “loser wins,” on a systematic inversion of the fundamental principles of all ordinary economies: that of business (it excludes the pursuit of profit and does not guarantee any sort of correspondence between investments and monetary gains). (Bourdieu 1993, 39)

By contrast, Bourdieu defined the heteronomous pole of the field of cultural production as one that is ruled by commercial and business interests. To Bourdieu, heteronomous arts range from the “bourgeois arts,” which sell to and gain a following among more privileged social classes, to low-brow commercial works, or “industrial arts.” These are poorer in status than the autonomous arts but much richer in economic capital (or in the potential to accumulate it).

Bourdieu’s student and collaborator Loïc Wacquant has expanded this understanding of heteronomy as deriving from penetration by commercial interests to include a consideration of penetration by the *state*.² When responding to and extending the argument of a paper I wrote many years ago on the eviction of critical perspectives from gentrification research (Slater 2006), Wacquant pointed to the “growing subservience of urban research to the concerns, categories and moods of policy- and opinion-makers,” where intellectual inquiry is “guided primarily by the priorities of state managers and the worries of the mainstream media” (2008a, 200–201). He offers several examples of this, including this particularly powerful one:

In France, the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium, political tensions around postcolonial immigration and the deterioration of public housing have fueled a wave of studies and policy evaluation programmes on “neighborhood mixing,” “community-building” and crime-fighting centered on working-class neighborhoods, but studiously avoiding the socioeconomic underpinnings of urban degradation, in keeping with the design of politicians to deploy territory, ethnicity and insecurity as screens to obscure the desocialization of wage labor and its impact on the life strategies and spaces of the emerging proletariat. (201)

As I demonstrate in several chapters of this book, what Wacquant calls “the common malady of heteronomy” (201) that afflicts urban research has strengthened over the years since he penned those words. A great deal of urban scholarship has not resisted the “seductions of the prefabricated problematics of policy,” nor has it advanced what Wacquant hoped for: “research agendas sporting greater separation from the imperatives of city rulers and carrying a higher theoretical payload” (203). Instead, political and media worries and the funding bandwagons they create appear irresistible to many urban scholars, especially the institutions that employ them. The moral philosopher Christine Korsgaard contended, “When you are motivated autonomously, you act on a law that you give to yourself; when you act heteronomously, the law is imposed on you by means of a sanction” (1996, 22). If we replace *law* with *concept*, her contention applies to much contemporary thinking about cities, and intervening in this state of affairs is what, I hope, animates much of the analysis in the pages of this book.

This is not to say that the pendulum between autonomy and heteronomy has become firmly and irretrievably stuck on the latter. Critical urban studies, as a multidisciplinary field combining multiple theoretical approaches and methodologies, is very vibrant and ensures that a tug of war is underway between autonomous and heteronomous approaches. It is simply that, at the moment, the heteronomous side is pulling harder. Helga Leitner and Eric Sheppard (2013, 516) provided a helpful definition of critical approaches to the urban question as “presaged on a vigilant examination and critique of the logic and assumptions underlying pre-existing mainstream theoretical accounts of cities, narratives of urban process and urban life, and the urban policies reflecting these.” In the same article they were quick to caution against “othering the mainstream,” which they felt might “undermine the vitality of critical urban geographic knowledge production” (517). They saw the mainstream as quantitative urban scholarship in the positivist tradition of validity, reliability, replicability, verification, and falsification, the knowledge produced by which, they felt, could not be glibly dismissed as lacking in radical potential, an argument subsequently extended by Elvin Wyly (2011) in a riveting essay tellingly entitled “Positively Radical.” I have much sympathy with this

argument, and rather too many scholars identifying as critical are quick to shun quantitative analysis as positivist/empiricist number crunching without delving into the details or the findings that statistical analyses produce (the majestic work of the Radical Statistics Group over four decades being a case in point).³ I see the “mainstream” as something characterized not by methodology, but rather by an *atheoretical, unquestioning embrace of the structural and institutional conditions (and concepts and categories) favored by city rulers and the profiteering interests surrounding them.*

Over a decade ago, in introducing a special issue of the journal *CITY* entitled “Cities for People, Not for Profit,” Neil Brenner, Peter Marcuse, and Margit Mayer (2009, 179) offered a helpful articulation of five core concerns of a critical urban studies:

- To analyze the systemic, historically specific, intersections between capitalism and urban processes;
- To examine the changing balance of social forces, power relations, sociospatial inequalities and political-institutional arrangements that shape, and in turn are shaped by, the evolution of capitalist urbanization;
- To expose the marginalizations, exclusions, and injustices (whether of class, ethnicity, “race,” gender, sexuality, nationality, or otherwise) that are inscribed and naturalized within existing urban configurations;
- To decipher the contradictions, crisis tendencies, and lines of potential or actual conflict within contemporary cities, and on this basis;
- To demarcate and to politicize the strategically essential possibilities for more progressive, socially just, emancipatory, and sustainable formations for urban life.

This is by no means an exhaustive list, and the authors acknowledged that fact, saying that critical urban studies is not “a homogenous research field based on a rigidly orthodox or paradigmatic foundation.” However, this list of concerns does help identify a distinctively critical branch of thinking about cities that “can be usefully counterposed to ‘mainstream’ or ‘traditional’ approaches to urban questions” (179). To this I would add that it can be usefully counterposed to heteronomous approaches, which leave unquestioned and sometimes even thrive upon the structural and

systemic problems that lie behind the stubborn inequalities in cities of the twenty-first century. A clear example of an emerging heteronomous approach is the recent interest in “urban science,” to which I now turn.

THE FALSE PROMISES OF “URBAN SCIENCE”

In June 2018 the Department of Urban Studies and Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) tweeted that it had “discovered a new kind of science” when announcing the launch of “a novel sort of program”: an undergraduate major in “urban science.” The tweet was in fact a quote from an article in *Wired* (a magazine focusing on digital technologies vis-à-vis society, culture, and the economy), which celebrated MIT’s new program as one in which students would “examine patterns mined from data, explain them in ways any urban dweller can understand, and transform them into effective, helpful policy—the guidelines that make cities go” (Marshall 2018). The message from both MIT and *Wired* was that teaching students to analyze urban “big data” would have genuine benefits for policy, planning, and practice in urban communities, as it would lead to “an increased supply of workers—the kids who are interested in civics and willing to go through the urban programs and then fan out into city governments.” The *Wired* article also referred to similar new programs in other universities across the United States, barely containing its excitement that informatics students across the country might start thinking about the wider implications of their work, guided by instructors asking them: “How do you create a good citizen *and* a good computer scientist?”

It did not take long for the MIT tweet to generate backlash in the form of a staggering range of tweeted responses from urban scholars all over the world, with a vast majority angered that a prestigious academic institution could claim, with colonialist arrogance, to have “discovered” a field of study that has existed for well over one hundred years. The scientific study of cities is not a new development. Perhaps more powerful still were the responses of scholars who were distressed by the increasing hard scientization and data-driven obsessions of a multidisciplinary field, to the elision of theory and the exclusion of all other existing approaches,

methodologies, and forms of knowledge within that field. For instance, the urban geographer Ayona Datta, a renowned critical analyst of “smart city” boosterism, tweeted eloquently on July 3, 2018: “The ‘urban’ is not ‘science’. It cannot be measured, replicated and forecast like other sciences. The urban is an imaginary, a relationship between multiple spaces and scales from the personal to the global, a site of politics and governance. The urban is much more than ‘science.’” MIT chose not to respond to any of the tweets—perhaps having achieved its publicity goals—and the program admitted its first cohort of students in the fall of 2018.

The hype surrounding the relationship between big data analytics and cities, and the central role of universities in it, is certainly not limited to the United States. In 2017 the university where I work signed the Edinburgh and South East Scotland City Region Deal and became a major institutional player in a strategy to “identify new and more collaborative ways that partners will work with the UK Government and Scottish Governments to deliver transformational change to the city regional economy” (City Region Deal n.d.). The City Region, in the eyes of those behind the deal, comprises six local government authorities, containing a total of 25 percent of the Scottish population. The deal was justified along two fronts, first, to “accelerate economic growth through the funding of its infrastructure, skills, and innovation” (City Region Deal n.d.), and second, because “prosperity and success is [sic] not universal across the city region. 22.4% of children are living in poverty; there is a lack of mid-market and affordable housing; and too many people are unable to move on from low wage/low skill jobs. The City Region Deal will address these issues” (City Region Deal n.d.) Very substantial sums of money are behind this deal, which was announced during a protracted period of austerity that caused enormous misery. The UK and Scottish governments will each invest £300 million over fifteen years, and numerous regional partners (a mix of public, private, and third sector organizations) committed to adding more than £700 million over the same time frame. The money is to be spread unevenly across five themes: research, development, and innovation (receiving well over half the total investment); employability and skills; transport; culture; and housing.

The University of Edinburgh’s involvement (and stated aim) in this deal is “to work with partners to establish the region as the *data capital of Europe*, attracting investment, fuelling entrepreneurship and delivering

inclusive growth” (University of Edinburgh n.d.). Boasting about its “world-leading expertise in data science,” the university claims that it wants to “help all citizens adapt to the data economy,” including “less advantaged groups,” for whom it aims “to develop skills and employability, and increase their potential to access good career opportunities.” The overarching message that comes from all the deal documentation and public statements across government, private, and higher education sectors—in the form of what can only be described as a declamatory bombardment—is that “data science” is the solution for poverty, inequality, and disadvantage in the City Region, all of which are apparently due to a lack of data innovation and digital skills among people who have been left behind by the “data revolution.” For example, under the heading “Let’s Unlock Growth,” the university argues that there is “a digital skills gap that is holding back growth” in the City Region. The key to unlocking growth, apparently, can be found in producing “an extra 12,800 workers each year with digital skills.” These workers will be central to a “Data-Driven Innovation (DDI)” strategy, to “harness the economic, social and scientific benefits of data . . . ensuring the benefits are shared across the whole city region” (University of Edinburgh n.d.)

To provide various home bases for this data science, the university is currently creating a range of new research institutes, one of which is the jazziestly named Edinburgh Futures Institute (EFI), “a global centre for multidisciplinary, challenge-based DDI research, teaching and societal impact” that will “provide thought-leadership in cultural, ethical, managerial, political, social and technological DDI issues, and help to transform the application, governance and benefits delivered from the use of data” (housed in a very expensively refurbished old hospital building scheduled to be opened in 2021, part of the university’s increasingly grand real estate and rent-seeking ambitions). The EFI website states in rather nebulous fashion that it will “assemble experts who can tackle issues from different and unconventional perspectives, gathering many hands to untangle the world’s knottiest problems” (Edinburgh Futures Institute n.d.). As I write these words in 2020, I have just received a circular email asking academics for secondment proposals to develop postgraduate teaching programs that are “data fluent” and will equip students with the skills needed to develop insights from computational data, in which ideal candidates are those who understand that the future trajectory of their discipline lies in data technologies and the “data society.”

There can be no doubt that basic digital skills are important to acquire, and it is equally important that students interested in working with more advanced techniques to sift and sort through massive data sets related to urban issues have the opportunity to do so. Furthermore, the analysis of big data, as it has become known, when theoretically informed and cognizant of disciplinary histories and complementary approaches to the urban question, can lead to all sorts of fascinating and important insights into urban problems (perhaps best exemplified by the work of Rob Kitchin and colleagues in a large research project entitled *The Programmable City*).⁴ But the matter of great concern is that university managers and senior science professors in several countries are bleating about discovering a new urban science, yet when we take the trouble to look closely, it is one that is robbed of its historical and intellectual context, emptied of its sociological contents, and a very particular and *exclusive* vision of what the study of cities should be.

They are doing this not only out of scientific interest, but because vast sums of money can be extracted by universities from governments and large corporations that are themselves motivated by the fast extraction of more money (“accelerated growth”). This vision of urban studies is thoroughly geared to the interests of profit, yet dressed up as being for the benefit of all urban dwellers, or “to leave no person behind,” according to the convenor of the City Region Deal’s decision-making body (City Region Deal n.d.). “Data-driven innovation” on urban issues, to the policy elite and business leader, is a way of producing knowledge to grease the engines of capital accumulation and circulation and a way of producing workers trained to believe that all urban problems—housing affordability, transportation maladies, environmental degradation, unemployment, ethnic segregation and so on—will be solved by crunching the data. Simply put, what disappears in the hype over data-driven innovation are the *relations of power* in and over space that constitute a city, about which *nobody* is proposing to build big data.

A much darker side to data-driven innovation has recently been subjected to a blistering and elegant critique in an article by the anthropologist Shannon Mattern (2018). Focusing on similar DDI university initiatives in the United States and trawling through the hyperbole surrounding them, she takes down the big data/artificial intelligence mantra, “With a sufficiently large dataset we can find meaning even without

a theoretical framework or scientific method.” Placing these initiatives in their historical context (medical scientists have long harbored ambitions to quantify the human/urban condition), Mattern is skeptical of “the blind faith that ubiquitous data collection will lead to discoveries that will benefit everyone” and demonstrates that many large-scale empirical studies actually *reinforce* urban inequalities when they are not grounded in specific hypotheses and without any theoretical or conceptual guidance, for most of these studies never articulate what class, race, gender, and culture actually mean and how such definitions are shaped by social and political forces. Even more disturbing is how data-driven models are increasingly used in law enforcement and “predictive policing,” as well as how conclusions about future criminality drawn from observed correlations—never theorized nor historicized, and from data sets with high error rates riddled with demographic bias—have led to court and police decisions that further stigmatize, marginalize, and punish vulnerable urban dwellers and the neighborhoods where they reside:

Biology, behavior, culture, history, and environment are thus reduced to dots on a map. End users don’t know which agencies supplied the underlying intelligence and how their interests shaped data collection. They can’t ask questions about how social and environmental categories are operationalized in the different data sets. They can’t determine whether data reinscribe historical biases and injustices. (Mattern 2018)

These developments have also been exposed and critiqued by Virginia Eubanks in *Automating Inequality*. As she explains, marginalized groups

face higher levels of data collection when they access public benefits, walk through highly policed neighbourhoods, enter the health-care system, or cross national borders. That data acts to reinforce their marginality when it is used to target them for suspicion and extra scrutiny. Those groups seen as undeserving are singled out for punitive public policy and more intense surveillance, and the cycle begins again. (Eubanks 2017, 7)

Eubanks calls this a “feedback loop of injustice” and is absolutely clear that the driving force behind it is the new regime of digital data that we all live under but are affected by to very different degrees depending on class, income and (especially in the United States—the context in which Eubanks researches) race. Perhaps most impressively, Eubanks’s analysis

is grounded in a deep understanding of the history of surveillance of (and punitive policies toward) the poor, and when considering her wealth of case study material on how the new age of databases, equations, predictive algorithms, and risk models curbs the life chances of already marginalized people, she argues that what has emerged is a “digital poorhouse” that engages and entraps today’s poor.⁵ This new poorhouse bears striking similarities to the poorhouses of the nineteenth century, in that it is undergirded by stigmatizing views of the poor as undeserving, dependent, immoral, and dangerous. Against the hype surrounding the “innovative solutions” of the urban big data age, with its grand promises of alleviating poverty, Eubanks demonstrates compellingly how “the new regime of data analytics is more evolution than revolution . . . simply an expansion and continuation of moralistic and punitive poverty management strategies that have been with us since the 1820s” (37).

The advancement of *urban science* as a catchall term for the intellectual scrutiny and solution of urban problems—regardless of all the disciplines that constitute urban studies as we know it—recently received promotion and validation via the formation and output of an expert panel on science and the future of cities endorsed by the august science journal *Nature Sustainability* (a subsidiary publication of *Nature*). The panel emerged from discussions that took place in October 2016 at the Habitat III summit in Quito, where the United Nations New Urban Agenda was launched. Before and during that conference, there was wide concern about something of a disconnect between science and policy vis-à-vis the major challenges facing cities, so the expert panel was formed to assess, encourage reform of, and offer independent advice on “the global state of the urban science-policy interface.” The panel was cochaired by Michele Acuto, Susan Parnell, and Karen Seto, and together they assembled a further twenty-six eminent urban scholars from all over the world. They are undoubtedly shrewd and dynamic scholars, the work of many of whom I have admired and respected for a long time, from a wide variety of disciplines spanning the natural sciences, social sciences, humanities, architecture and planning, engineering, and computer and environmental science. In addition to meeting as one panel several times, the cochairs conducted interviews with each individual panelist. The results of these discussions

were published as a report with the same title as the panel, which begins with a foreword entitled “For a Global Urban Science.”

The immediate question that any nonscientist reader might ask is how a panel with such wide disciplinary expertise well beyond the sciences could subsume all this expertise under a global urban *science*: “The urban science we advocate here for is a cross-cutting field of engagement across different urban disciplines” (IEP 2018, 3). The report is in fact a very odd and inconsistent document. Admirably, it is upfront that urban science is a “loaded term” that prompts “self-critique of the way we develop knowledge about cities” (22). Mercifully, the report departs from the claims and tone of university marketing teams by noting that the scientific study of cities has a long and rich history. But then this peculiar statement appears:

The panel, mindful of the limits and problematic associations that the term urban science invokes, cautiously endorsed a call for a ‘global’ urban science, not as merger or flattening of the messages from across diverse constituencies, but as field of collaboration that would open up new frontiers of inquiry and new audiences with more leverage on policy. (22)

But labeling the scholarship of humanists and even qualitative social scientists as urban science is not to flatten but to *trample* all over the enormous intellectual, analytical, methodological, and often political differences that exist between those scholars and natural science scholars. This is hardly a conducive point of departure for collaboration. It is worth imagining, for one moment, what the reaction would be if the work of natural scientists on urban questions was labeled “urban humanities” by an expert panel.

Reading on, it is difficult to avoid the conclusion that the panel felt that using the term *urban science* instead of a more generic *urban studies* would mean that urban scholarship will draw more attention and respect and augment efforts to attract research funding (of a certain sort). In fact, they are quite candid about this:

The term [urban studies] is however relatively mute in the natural sciences, where in fact ‘urban science’ might currently have a greater resonance. . . . Pulling together all aspects of urban research and its encompassing areas. . . . under a common banner “urban science,” has the potential to be a strong

marking and legitimization of the academic scientific community that produce urban knowledge, in order to shape practice at the local, national and global scales. (24)

The implication of this highly unfortunate passage is that urban studies—a term that does not privilege one form of scholarly praxis over another—is a weak field that *eo ipso* cannot possibly produce adequate urban knowledge or shape urban practice, at least not without a scientific branding. Far from celebrating, promoting, and encouraging inquiry across different constituencies, it reads as a surrender to physical/natural science approaches, one that carries with it an implicit denigration of approaches that are not somehow “science.” In a recent intervention, Ben Derudder and Michiel van Meeteren (2019, 560) view critiques of data-driven urban science as counterproductive, arguing that the enormous diversity of approaches to urban questions means that “there is a need to respect this diversity to its fullest.” They continue with a plea that “actively embracing pluralism needs to go as far as respecting radically different ontological perspectives, as it is only through cross-ontological translation skills that we can capitalize on this diversity” (560). While there is much to admire in this necessary plea and in the way they call for attention to the history and importance of what Wyly (2009) refers to as “strategic positivism,” it seems to me that Derudder and van Meeteren are going after the wrong target, for “urban science” attempts to scientize the urban, to the exclusion of the very diversity they imply critical urban scholars have been disrespecting.

As the expert panel’s report proceeds, it becomes increasingly clear that its *de facto* remit was to explore how urban scholars might produce practical knowledge for bureaucratic policy application, to facilitate the transition from research to state utility, and to reanimate a positivist project within urban scholarship. Bizarrely, the interview quotations from the panelists dotted randomly throughout the report are frequently at odds with the report text and often highly critical or suspicious of such a remit. There is an interesting section on confronting fads in urban research such as smart cities, yet a peculiar lack of awareness among the report’s authors that urban science is one such fad. The report comments that the rise of an urban data discourse was “perceived by some on the Panel as legitimizing (and even driving) a very quantitative and data-driven understanding

of cities and urbanization” (IEP 2018, 43), yet this comes after a lengthy barb against “old fashioned individual or narrow disciplinary pursuits” that are deemed “inadequate to deal with the complexity of the urban nexus,” meaning that “local actors, especially local governments, often lack usable scientific knowledge about urbanization processes” (19).

Before it was released, the report was distilled into a piece published in *Nature Sustainability* lamenting that much of what is known and taught about cities is “inappropriate or inadequate to meet today’s challenges,” that “urban knowledge is out-dated and underfunded,” that it “tends to rely on selective samples,” and that it is “trapped in the twentieth-century tradition of the systematic study of individual cities” (Acuto, Parnell, and Seto 2018, 3). The authors propose “revolutionizing urban research to meet the demands of the twenty-first century” via “efforts towards reproducibility (and therefore accountability) in urban research if ultimately we want to produce a balanced and comprehensive knowledge through the collection of diverse topical and geographical data” (4). The keyword here is *ultimately*, and the prioritization of the positivist scientific method could not be clearer. Far from “opening up a systematic and globally oriented dialogue across different kinds of expertise” (4), the work of this panel (if the report is an accurate reflection of what was discussed and agreed) may well shut it down, simply by alienating urban scholars who are not scientists or positivists. My point here is not that urban scholars are somehow being brainwashed into doing urban research in a certain way, but rather that it is the structures of funding and the concomitant shape of the urban studies field that establishes the center of gravity around system-conserving concepts like urban science. Quite simply, a huge report on *critical* approaches to twenty-first-century urbanization would not have been funded and promoted in the same way as this urban science report. How individual urban scholars conceive of their own work is less important than the wider structures of careers, funding, and prestige, structures that promote particular research approaches and conceptual schemas as more legitimate and valid ways of doing urban research than any others (and that usually involve disparaging and/or marginalizing other ways of producing knowledge).

In *The Urban Revolution*, Henri Lefebvre ([1970] 2003, 181) concluded his analytic broadside against the professionals, specialists, and

technocrats of the urban planning apparatus by tackling the question of urbanism as ideology, which establishes “a repressive space that is represented as objective, scientific and neutral.” In particular, notwithstanding some celebrated urban insurrections of the past (and during the time he was writing), Lefebvre was disturbed by the far more common *passivity* among those most affected by large-scale urban planning projects and strategies, and attempted to offer some explanations for widespread political apathy. Most relevant to the foregoing account of the embrace of urban science and data-driven innovation are Lefebvre’s remarks on the particular character of urbanism as ideology:

Ideologically, technically and politically, the quantitative has become rule, norm and value. How can we escape the quantifiable? . . . The qualitative is worn down. Anything that cannot be quantified is eliminated. The generalized terrorism of the quantifiable accentuates the efficiency of repressive space, amplifies it without fear and without reproach, all the more so because of its self-justifying nature (ideo-logic), its apparent scientificity. In this situation, since the quantitative is never seriously questioned, the working class has no scope for political action. In terms of urbanism, it can offer nothing of consequence. (185–86)

The power of today’s urban science lies in its strategically deployed rhetoric of reducing inequality, alleviating poverty, accelerating growth, and delivering efficiency, justified by the hyperbole and propaganda surrounding big data and finding eager audiences courtesy of the widespread popular belief in scientific practice and numerical evidence as objective, unbiased, and value free. For their part, leading urban scholars who embrace urban science may well have succumbed to what Bourdieu called the *scientific syndrome*, which he defined as “an attempt by disciplines defined as doubly negative (neither arts nor science) to reverse the situation . . . through the miraculous conjunction of the appearance of scientific rigour with the appearance of literary elegance” (1988, 121). In doing so, those scholars provide academic endorsement for an institutional embrace of urban science and data-driven innovation, one that has all the signs of what Logan and Molotch (2007) called “the same old growth machine with a decorative skin” (p. xx). This is where a constellation of powerful actors work together to ensure that urban development will proceed according to the needs of capital over the needs of people. It

is very telling that, notwithstanding the illustrious intellectual pedigree of the panel membership (panelists know the history of the discipline very well; several are central figures in it, and nearly all are on the political left), the only time capitalism is mentioned in the *Science and the Future of Cities* report is in a half-baked concern about the spread of “philanthrocapitalism.” The report is utterly silent on the structural conditions and institutional arrangements driving the urban inequalities that, its authors contend, urban science can reduce, and equally silent on how these conditions and arrangements have been studied in a huge literature. Silences are powerful.

CONCEPTUAL GUIDANCE: AGNOTOLOGY AND SYMBOLIC POWER

I deploy two concepts all the way through this book in order to expose and critique the heteronomy of urban research. First is agnotology. It’s a troublesome and perhaps off-putting term, but like heteronomy, it is simple to understand. Some context is necessary before we arrive at a definition. We have been living through times when rigorous investigative journalism was dismissed by the forty-fifth president of the United States, Donald Trump, as “fake news”; when clear evidence of small presidential inauguration crowd numbers in 2017 was ridiculed by a senior adviser to Trump as “alternative facts”; and when a scandalous yet successful 2016 campaign to encourage people to vote for Britain to leave the European Union was aided by a false statement, printed on a campaign bus, that a “Leave” vote would save £350 million per week that could instead be spent on the National Health Service. Rigorous scholarship has traditionally and justifiably been concerned with epistemology, the production of knowledge. But for some time now, this by itself seems insufficient. How is *ignorance* produced, by whom, for whom, and against whom? James Baldwin’s (1972, 58) famous statement, “It is certain, in any case, that ignorance, allied with power, is the most ferocious enemy justice can have,” seems especially relevant in this era of truth-twisting in the face of injustice.

In his swashbuckling critique of the economics profession in the build-up to and aftermath of the 2008 financial crisis, Philip Mirowski argues

that one of the major ambitions of politicians, economists, journalists, and pundits enamored of (or seduced by) neoliberalism is to plant doubt and ignorance among the populace: “This is not done out of sheer cussedness; it is a political tactic, a means to a larger end. . . . Think of the documented existence of climate-change denial, and then simply shift it over into economics” (2013, 83). Mirowski advanced a compelling argument to shift questions away from “what people know” about the society in which they live toward questions about what people do *not* know, and why not. These questions are just as important, usually far more scandalous, and remarkably undertheorized. They require a rejection of appeals to epistemology and, instead, an analytic focus on intentional ignorance production: *agnotology*. This term was coined by historian of science Robert Proctor to designate “the study of ignorance making, the lost and forgotten” where the “focus is on knowledge that could have been but wasn’t, or should be but isn’t” (Proctor and Schiebinger 2008, vii). The etymological derivation is the Greek word *agnōsis*, meaning not knowing, which Gilroy (2009) draws upon to argue the following: “We need a better understanding of the relationship between information and power . . . a new corrective disciplinary perspective that interprets the power that arises from the command of not knowing, from the management of forms of ignorance that have been strategically created and deployed, and institutionally amplified.” Proctor’s own work provided a hugely instructive conceptual apparatus for scholars interested in the production of ignorance (e.g., Proctor 1995). It was while investigating the tobacco industry’s efforts to manufacture doubt about the health hazards of smoking that he began to see the scientific and political urgency in researching how ignorance is made, maintained, and manipulated by powerful institutions to suit their own ends, where the guiding research question becomes: “Why don’t we know what we don’t know?” As he discovered, the industry went to great lengths to give the impression that the cancer risks of cigarette smoking were still an open question even when the clinical evidence was overwhelming: “The industry was trebly active in this sphere, feigning its own ignorance of hazards, whilst simultaneously affirming the absence of definite proof in the scientific community, while also doing all it could to manufacture ignorance on the part of the smoking public” (Proctor 2008, 13–14).

Numerous tactics were deployed by the tobacco industry to divert attention from the causal link between smoking and cancer, such as the production of duplicitous press releases, the publication of “nobody knows the answers” white papers, and the generous funding of decoy or red-herring research that “would seem to be addressing tobacco and health, while really doing nothing of the sort” (Proctor, 14). The tobacco industry actually produced research about everything except tobacco hazards to exploit public uncertainty (researchers commissioned by the tobacco industry knew from the beginning what they were supposed to find and not find), and the very fact of research being funded allowed the industry to claim it was studying the problem.

When agnotology is transposed into the register of the urban, we can study the techniques and strategies of powerful institutions (such as think tanks, philanthropic foundations, and university research centers) that want people not to know and even not to think about certain urban conditions and especially their structural causes. Key techniques include the concoction of a falsely balanced debate in which there should always be two sides to every story and fostering a sense of massive controversy where actual debates are marginal or limited. As Mirowski illustrates, agnotology “presents itself as liberating, expanding the cloistered space of sanctioned explanation in an era of wrangling and indecision”, and involves two steps: “One is the effort to pump excess noise into the public discussion of appropriate frames within which to approach the controversy; the second is to provide the echoic preferred target narrative as coming from many different sanctioned sources at once; ubiquity helps pave the way for inevitability” (2013, 297). By working with the concept of agnotology, it becomes possible to uncover how and why certain questions are kept off the urban agenda while others remain firmly on it.

Many scholars (and certainly, as we shall see later in the book, many think tank writers) might claim that there is no such thing as the intentional production of ignorance; all that exists are people with different worldviews, interests, and opinions, and people simply argue about and defend their beliefs with passion. This claim would be very wide of the mark. Even when there is a vast body of all kinds of evidence that is wildly at odds with what is being stated, and when the social realities of poverty and inequality expose the failures of deregulation at the top and punitive

intervention at the bottom of the class structure, the technocrats of neo-liberal reason become noisier and even more zealous in their relentless mission to inject doubt into the conversation and ultimately make their audiences believe that government interference in the workings of the “free” market is damaging society. An agnotological approach seeks to dissect the ignorance production methods and tactics of these and other messengers of disinformation. There are, of course, many different ways to think about ignorance, such as John Rawls (1971) did positively in his promotion of a “veil of ignorance” as an ethical method with respect to his hypothetical ‘original position’ (whereby ignorance of how we might personally gain in a society’s distribution of benefits and burdens might guarantee a kind of neutrality and balance in thinking about what a just distribution should look like). It therefore needs to be clarified that agnotology does not have a monopoly on ignorance studies and is just one element of that nascent and fascinating field (Gross and McGoey 2015; McGoey 2019). However, it is something of a surprise that agnotology has hardly escaped from the disciplinary claws of science and technology studies and permeated social science, less still urban studies, where the relationship between evidence and policy is always contentious and sometimes tortured (for some fascinating recent exceptions, see Stel 2016; Cupples and Glynn 2018).

Agnotology, though very useful in dissecting the methods and tactics of messengers of disinformation, is less useful in explaining precisely how certain terms and categories are converted into common sense (often across the political spectrum) and become so powerful that alternative or competing terms, and the arguments they anchor, are kept off the political grid and the policy agenda. This brings me to the second concept I use throughout the book to expose and critique the heteronomy of urban research: Pierre Bourdieu’s *symbolic power*, which I feel is crucial for any exploration of the categories of urban research and their consequences. As explained by Bourdieu himself, symbolic power is

the power to constitute the given through utterances, to make people see and believe, to confirm or to transform the vision of the world and, thereby, action upon the world and thus the world itself, an almost magical power that enables one to obtain the equivalent of what is obtained through force (physical or economic) by virtue of the specific effect of mobilization. . . .

What makes for the power of words and watchwords, the power to maintain or to subvert order, is belief in the legitimacy of the words and of those who utter them. (1991, 170)

Wacquant helpfully distills these words to define symbolic power as “the capacity for *consequential categorization*, the ability to make the world, to preserve or change it, by fashioning and diffusing symbolic frames, collective instruments of cognitive construction of reality” (2017, 57; emphasis added). Bourdieu produced an enormous body of work on symbolic power; indeed, Wacquant notes that it is “a concept that Bourdieu elaborates over the full spectrum of his scientific life” (57), which runs from his early work on honor in Algeria to his late lecture courses at the Collège de France on the state, art, and science. It is especially useful in analyzing the classifying and naming powers of the state (Auyero 2012). Even when nonstate institutions such as tabloid newspapers and think tanks might be responsible for inventing and circulating particular terms and categories, symbolic power is helpful in tracing how such categories become elevated into authoritative and consequential discourses emanating from state officials and institutions: “In the social world, words make things, because they make the meaning and consensus on the existence and meaning of things, the common sense, the *doxa* accepted by all as self-evident” (Bourdieu 1996b, 21).

Taken together, the conceptual articulation of agnotology with symbolic power, I argue, allows us to understand the institutional arrangements and symbolic systems that fuse and feed off each other to structure the deeply unequal social relations behind the profound differences we see in life chances in cities in so many geographical contexts today.

STRUCTURE OF THE BOOK

In chapter 2 I explore and critique the production and circulation of “urban resilience.” Since the famous and hugely influential writings of the Chicago School of Human Ecology, there has been a long—and disturbing—history of concepts being brought from biological sciences to be applied to the social sciences and especially the study of cities, “resilience” being the

most pervasive recent example. Urban resilience has a large institutional apparatus behind it, most visible in The Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities competition, which from 2013 to 2019 awarded generous grants to the one hundred cities across the globe that it felt demonstrated "a dedicated commitment to building their own capacities to prepare for, withstand, and bounce back rapidly from shocks and stresses." Effectively, cash prizes were offered to the city administrations that showed the most energy in returning their cities back to market-led planning as quickly as possible following economic shocks and stresses. That there was a strong desire among urban managers to compete is evident in the fact that more than one thousand cities registered to take part in the program, and almost four hundred formally applied for inclusion.

Using examples from two of the Rockefeller Foundation's 100 Resilient Cities, Glasgow and Cape Town, I argue that urban resilience serves as a screen that deflects analytic and political attention away from the structural and institutional conditions that are forcing urban dwellers to be "resilient" the first place. Viewed through the lens of resilience, a global financial crisis morphs from being a political creation into a naturally occurring phenomenon that requires a program of public expenditure gutting—austerity—to set it back on its natural path. Working with a conceptualization of neoliberalism as "an articulation of state, market and citizenship that harnesses the power of the first to impose the stamp of the second onto the third" (Wacquant 2012a, 66), I argue that resilience is a political project to renounce responsibility for economic and environmental crises, to scapegoat people who are struggling as a consequence, to submit to "shocks and stresses" rather than address their underlying causes, and to preclude questions and practices of resistance.

Chapter 3 considers the field of gentrification research, including some of the debates my own work has ignited, and argues that a great deal of scholarship on this process succumbs to an analytically defective formula: weigh up the supposed pros and cons of gentrification, worry about threats to "social diversity" and housing affordability, and conclude that gentrification is actually "good" on balance because it represents the reinvestment that stops neighborhoods from "decaying" during a financial crisis. Informed by the (so often misconstrued) rent gap theory produced by the late geographer Neil Smith, I unravel such false choice

urbanism by arguing that disinvestment and reinvestment do not signify a moral conundrum, with the latter somehow being “better” than the former. Drawing upon examples from numerous contexts, among them Philadelphia, New Orleans, Edinburgh, Beirut, and Santiago de Chile, I demonstrate that gentrification and urban decay are not opposites, alternatives, or choices, but rather tensions and contradictions in a global system of capital circulation, amplified and aggravated by the global crisis of affordable housing, a system that relies on propitious conditions for accumulation laid down by the neoliberal state. I contend that the rent gap theory, understood as its author intended, is very helpful in explaining the dramatic transformations roiling cities across very diverse geographical, structural, and institutional contexts. It can also inform numerous strategies of resisting gentrification that I explore toward the end of the chapter.

Chapter 4 considers the most harmful effect of gentrification: the displacement of working-class people from urban space and the role of rent control in mitigating against it. I examine the much-in-vogue advocacy of housing subsidy vouchers by leading urban scholars in the United States and critique the argument that they are a remedy for the exploitation and displacement of tenants by landlords. This sets the scene for a consideration of what I see as a much more appropriate housing policy: rent control. Rent control is one of the most despised yet misunderstood policies across a variety of disciplines and professions concerned with urban issues. The hegemonic view is that rent controls—in any form, in any context—will eventually hurt those on whose behalf they are supposedly introduced (people struggling to find somewhere affordable to live). Like so much agnotology, however, this view is riddled with vested interests and grounded in deep contempt for state regulation and in veneration of the supposed efficiency of the “free” market. Drawing on scholarship from southern European cities, together with recent studies on the subject from New Jersey and California, I expose and dissect three of the prevalent myths about rent control: (1) that it negatively affects the quality of rented properties, (2) that it negatively affects the supply of housing, and (3) that it leads to “inefficiencies” in housing markets. Once we take the trouble to look closely at different kinds of rent control and, more broadly, at what leads to high housing costs, then it is possible—as I attempt in

the chapter—to shift the analytical and political focus toward the urgent question of housing justice.

One of the more peculiar trends in urban studies is the ongoing popularity of scholarship exploring “neighbourhood effects,” the focus of chapter 5. This scholarship stems from an understanding of society that adheres to a simple overarching assumption, that where you live affects your life chances. For urbanists writing in this genre, neighborhoods matter and shape the fate of their residents; therefore, urban policies must be geared toward poor neighborhoods, seen as incubators of social dysfunction. A belief in causal neighborhood effects is now very widespread among policy elites, mainstream urban scholars, journalists, and think tank researchers. There is an enormous literature, which keeps growing even though scholars usually find weak or no evidence of neighborhood effects. In this chapter I argue that not only is this literature tantamount to “tautological urbanism” (scholars keep getting huge grants to research something they keep finding to be not very important, and keep on concluding that we need further research), but an acceptance of the neighborhood effects thesis, however well intentioned, misses the key structural question of why people live where they do in cities. Using a framing example from Cape Town, and scrutinizing studies of neighborhood effects in the Netherlands, Australia, and the United States, I turn attention to the structural factors that give rise to differential life chances and the inequalities they produce. By inverting the neighborhood effects thesis to “your life chances affect where you live,” the problem then becomes one of understanding how differential life chances in cities are produced. Such a focus highlights the problems and injustices inherent in letting the market (buttressed by the state) be the force that determines the cost of housing, and therefore the major determinant of where people live. I contend that the residential mobility programs advocated by neighborhood effects proponents—which have been influential well beyond their emergence in the United States—stand on very shaky ground, for if it is true that neighborhood effects exceed what would be predicted by poverty alone, moving the poor to a richer place would only eliminate that incremental difference, without addressing the structural and institutional arrangements that produce and sustain inequalities.

Chapter 6 tackles frontally one of the principal properties of urban marginality: territorial stigmatization. After providing an opening example of

territorial stigmatization in action from Vancouver, I offer some conceptual clarification and theoretical context before critically surveying some important themes emerging in a mushrooming literature. Highlighting the need for more attention to how territorial stigma emerges in the first place, I then explore the genealogy and trace the realization of a category that was invented by journalists, amplified by free market think tanks, and converted into *doxa* (common sense) by politicians in the United Kingdom: the “sink estate.” This derogatory designator, signifying social housing estates that supposedly create poverty, family breakdown, worklessness, welfare dependency, antisocial behavior, and personal irresponsibility, has become the symbolic frame justifying current policies toward social housing that have resulted in considerable social suffering and intensified dislocation. I dissect the hugely influential precursor to the sink estate designator: the “behavioral sink” categorized by the ethologist John B. Calhoun in his experiments with rats in the 1950s, in which he warned about the problems of population density for the human species in urban settings. I then explore the journalistic uptake of the *sink estate* label, especially in London, before tracing its extension into policy by way of an analytic dissection of the highly influential publications on UK housing by a free market think tank, Policy Exchange. These are scrutinized in order to demonstrate how the activation of territorial stigma has become an instrument of the state. The sink estate, it is argued, is the semantic battering ram in the ideological assault on social housing, deflecting attention away from social housing not only as an urgent necessity during a serious crisis of affordability, but also as an incubator of community, solidarity, shelter, and home.

With remarkable consistency over a twenty-year period, successive politicians and policy elites in multiple European contexts, sometimes across the political spectrum, have portrayed areas exhibiting large ethnic minority populations (especially those residing in social housing) as vortexes and vectors of social disintegration, fundamentally dissolute and irretrievably disorganized. The label *ghetto* is commonly hurled about to dramatize and denounce such disintegration. In chapter 7, therefore, I build on the critical interrogation of territorial stigmatization in chapter 6 to critique the loose and/or opportunistic use of the term *ghetto* to describe and castigate working-class territories or immigrant districts in

three national contexts: Britain, Denmark, and Belgium. To do so I draw upon Wacquant's conceptualization of the ghetto as an instrument of ethnoracial closure that employs space to fulfill two conflicting functions: economic extraction and social ostracization. This robust conceptualization of the ghetto, drawn from the historical realities of the original ghetto of Renaissance Venice, is essential in order to form a coherent and powerful response to the dangerous mythology and political panic surrounding the ghetto, which has everything to do with the racialized denigration of people's lives, something that cannot be separated from the racialized denigration of the places where they live.

In the final chapter I conclude the book by specifying the connections across all the thematic materials presented vis-à-vis the conceptual frames of agnotology and symbolic power, to offer some *potential* pathways for the field of critical urban studies, extending the challenge articulated by Wacquant for an urban studies that can

act as *solvent* of the new neoliberal common sense that 'naturalizes' the current state of affairs and its immanent tendencies, through the methodical critique of the categories and topics which weave the fabric of the dominant discourse. . . . [and] can also function in the manner of a *beacon* that casts light on contemporary transformations, making latent properties or unnoticed trends emerge from the shadows and especially reveals possible alternative paths. (2009, 129)

To this end, the conclusion offers some thoughts on the relationships between urban knowledges, urban ignorances, and urban struggles, and suggests that the reframing of urban inequalities along these lines (the subtitle of this book) carries some interesting analytical and political possibilities for critical urban studies as a vibrant and multidisciplinary intellectual field. Given the thematic content of the book, I make some observations regarding the importance of two issues at the core of each chapter: urban housing and urban land. I argue that in striving for what David M. Smith (1994) helpfully called "territorial social justice," there is much to be gained from engaging with insights from settler colonial and decolonial theory vis-à-vis Indigenous ontologies of land, and that a more complete grasp of the structural and institutional factors behind urban inequalities can be attained by holding marginalized and neglected

worldviews in productive dialogue with other, more established worldviews that are too often considered incompatible.

Before I proceed into the heart of the book, a final note about my approach. A newcomer to “academic Twitter,” as I have seen it called so often, could be forgiven for thinking that the only way to be a critical urban scholar these days is to use every possible theoretical and methodological approach that critical thought has ever invented, all the time and regardless of context and topic, and to duck and run for cover if you choose to ignore any of those approaches! So it seems important to state at this juncture that this is not possible here, nor anywhere else. My own work is rooted in an institutional political economy approach to urban geography, and throughout this book I therefore focus primarily on the political and economic structures shaping inequalities in cities.

Cities are not natural organisms but expressions and arenas of political struggles, and by analyzing some of the more disturbing transformations roiling stigmatized districts of unequal cities, I demonstrate how those transformations are always connected to strategies and skirmishes traversing circles of power. Where relevant and helpful to the double move aim of this book that I outlined at the start of this chapter, I have tried to incorporate and draw upon approaches that are often very different from my own. More particularly, I have sought to do something that too many other established white male urban studies scholars don't do: to learn from and cite women, early career scholars, and scholars of color. By my doing so, I hope that the reader will gain a sense of critical urban studies as a vibrant and multidisciplinary field that is most progressive when it fuses understandings drawn from the spectrum of approaches and analytic traditions, from structural Marxism to decolonial pluriversalism. There will of course be omissions and unwitting neglect of certain approaches and perspectives that undoubtedly would have enriched this book, but I don't ever claim to have the last word on anything. As I see it, critical urban scholarship is best considered as an ongoing and politically progressive intellectual conversation, wherein scholars are learning from each other all the time and, more importantly, learning from those who experience and contest urban inequalities at ground level.