

SPACES OF ALLIANCE POLITICS ACROSS CLASS AND DIFFERENCE

The Space Management of the Middle Class: The case of Chacarita, Buenos Aires *Santiago Canevaro, CONICET / UNSAM & Nicolás Viotti, CONICET / FLACSO*

This work is framed in a larger project which purports to consider the way in which middle classes cohabit with poverty in a relational perspective of inequality. In this case, we are particularly keen on the space matter, as a substantial element of both representations and practices of middle classes. The case of Chacarita neighbourhood, located in the northern area of the city, becomes meaningful since in that very area there coexist logics of social and urban reconfigurations of the latest decades. Thus, there can be found gentrification processes, related to the new globalized lifestyles, as new poor urban settlements linked to the reconfiguration of social distances. Such processes have transformed the way in which those identified with the middle class live and imagine the space of the neighbourhood. In that context, we would like to understand continuities and transformations of the ways of managing the space in a wide extent signed by the so called neoliberalism.

The ‘sustainability’ of class relations in Bangalore, India

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Sustainability scholarship is increasingly focusing on individual behavior change as a crucial component of engendering more sustainable societies. Practices like bicycling to work, recycling and reusing goods, eating organic food, or buying used clothes are heralded as both integral to, and generative of larger societal transformations. Scholars have begun to identify the individual and societal conditions that can help engender such practices; studying attitudes, social norms, and infrastructures. Less attention has been paid to the situated class politics of greening lifestyles, which is especially important as most ‘green’ lifestyle practices are also the very quotidian acts that sustain and support the livelihoods of the poor, especially in developing countries. In this paper, I draw on an ethnographic study of bicycling and waste management practices in Bangalore, India to ask critical questions about the links between middle-classness, poverty, and sustainability. I ask how middle class practitioners of bicycling and waste management in Bangalore relate to those poor others who bicycle and recycle; and define themselves in relation to both the urban poor in Bangalore, and to cyclists and recyclers in the USA and Europe. I argue that as middle class groups adopt and promote these practices, class distinctions are both transformed and reinforced. Class relations are mediated in new spatial territories like bicycle lanes and recycling centers, and around new discourses on global environmental problems like climate change. At the same time, familiar and embedded cultures of servitude and distinction pervade these new practices, limiting their transformative potential.

Waste Removal: the Middle class politics of informal recycle in San Francisco

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Thanks to generous government incentives, recycling has, for decades, been a way for Californians to earn extra cash. For some, informal recycling (or scavenging) serves as a primary or important secondary source of income in the wake of both recession and skyrocket living costs. However, beginning in 2008 informal recyclers in San Francisco became the target of a negative press campaign that labelled them as "thieves", "invaders" and "poachers". This narrative came to a head in 2013 with the neighborhood association backed push to close one of San Francisco's oldest and largest recycling centers. Since then, the city has closed down 3 more centers making recycling increasingly difficult for those without automobile transportation. Some have labelled this "class war" while others view informal "guerilla" recycling as a blight that threatens neighborhood livability. This paper draws upon public meeting transcripts and interviews with neighborhood associations and recyclers to better understand how ideas of recycling and informality function as sites of class-based identity and boundary formation in a starkly class-divided city.

Building Cross-Class Alliances Through Urban Food Provisioning

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This paper examines the role of relational poverty knowledge and the formation of cross-class alliances in urban farming and gardening. Gardening and farming leaders, gardeners, food bank managers and program directors in Seattle, Washington, and Vancouver, British Columbia, describe their garden and farm operations, and how they contribute to food provisioning for most vulnerable people living in their cities. I argue that the structure of the garden and farm in its relation to the differing poverty knowledges of growers and consumers may or may not contribute to cross-class alliances. Leadership within the organization of the farm or garden is also pivotal to building or discouraging these alliances.

Public Kitchens, Private Lives: Community Kitchens and the End of the End-User Food Bank Model

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Though food banks have been the norm in North American societies for at least the past two decades, recent research suggests that the "charity model" of emergency food distribution (food banks), while providing a necessary service of triage food provisioning, are limited in their ability to meet the population's food needs on an ongoing basis. Long-term dependence on such triage food-provisioning locations has been shown to reinforce patterns of social marginalization among frequent and habitual users, and has contributed to many ill effects (and causes) of being poor.

In contrast, a growing movement toward public food practices in neutral and horizontally-organized spaces such as collective and community "public kitchens", where healthy food, prepared collectively, can become an instrument of communication and transformation among populations usually separated by material, economic, and geographical factors. Activities include shared meals, cooking groups, community gardens, urban seed banks and community right-to-food advocacy groups, all of which

have been shown to increase participants' interest and involvement in food practices, with has many desirable mental and physical health outcomes.

Taking into account previous research and preliminary observation in two public kitchens, this paper/presentation suggests that the time has come for a reimagining of the charity model of end-user food distributors.

This paper discusses the beginnings of field research in two food-related sites of encounter: The annual Public Kitchen put on by Boston's Design Studio for Social Intervention, and at The Stop in Toronto, one of Canada's Community Food Centre locations, where former "food bank users" at a re-imagined food bank have augmented their roles within the community as a result of increased participation in on-site food education, preparation, production, and advocacy programs. In this presentation, I'll discuss lessons learned and outline further research questions on how food-related sites of encounter can provide a movement towards spatial justice.