

The Practice of Spatial Justice in Crisis¹

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"Your view of the world, your ideology, was not right, was not working?"

"That's precisely the reason I was shocked, because I have been going for forty years or more with very considerable evidence that it was working exceptionally well."

[U.S. Congressman Henry Waxman questioning former U.S. Federal Reserve Chairman, Alan Greenspan, October 2008]

The Wall Street Journal has declared the end of Wall Street; a Nobel laureate economist has questioned the difference between a Ponzi scheme and the workings of finance capital in the pages of the New York Times; former Chairman of the U.S. Federal Reserve Alan Greenspan has recanted—with the apparent force of a crisis of faith—his allegiance to the core tenets of neoliberalism: that markets are self-regulating and that private self-interest will safeguard the public welfare.² At the time of this writing, more than two trillion U.S. dollars in Federal reserve loans have been used to shore up the faltering financial institutions in the United States: home values have plummeted; a growing number of people owe more on their houses than they are worth; home foreclosures are estimated at 10,000 per day; "7.3 million homeowners are expected to default on mortgages during 2008-10 with 4.3 million losing their homes;" more people lost their jobs in 2008 than in any year since 1945, with more than half a million in December alone.³ This is just to sketch in brief the contours of the financial and economic crisis in the United States, increasingly described as the most severe since the depression of the 1930s—which is to say nothing of the force with which the financial crisis continues to ramify throughout the global financial system. With the growing insolvency at the centers of neoliberal finance, many have begun to declare that neoliberalism itself is finally bankrupt.⁴ But what is neoliberalism?⁵ And what does its apparent de-legitimation promise for a consideration of spatial justice? In what follows I use the work of political theorist Wendy Brown as a framework for a consideration of spatial justice in the context of a "wounded" neoliberalism, keeping in mind that neoliberalism in the U.S. has long been shadowed by a neoconservatism that inures it to crises of legitimation. In ways that I elaborate below,

¹ I wish to thank the organizers and audiences at "Spatial Justice/Justice Spatiale," University of Paris, Nanterre, especially Philippe Gervais-Lambony.

² "The End of Wallstreet," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 23, 2008; Paul Krugman, "The Madoff Economy," *The New York Times*, Opinion Section, December 19, 2008; Edmond L. Andrews, "Greenspan Concedes Error on Regulation," *The New York Times*, Economy Section, October 23, 2008.

³ RGE monitor estimates that home prices will continue to fall until 2010, "pushing 40 percent of mortgages (5 million) into negative equity (of over 30 percent)," *RGE Monitor*, December 30, 2008; Michael Crittendon and Jessica Holzer, "Relief Nears for 3 Million Strapped Homeowners," *Wall Street Journal*, A3, October 30, 2008; Mark Pittman, "Fed Refuses to Disclose Recipients of \$2 Trillion," *Bloomberg*, Dec 12, 2008; Julia Gordon, "Letter Re: Section 102 of the Emergency Economic Stabilization Act of 2008", National Consumer Law Center, October 28, 2008; Rich Miller and Shobhana Chandra, "U.S. Payrolls Hemorrhage is Likely to Persist After 2008 Drop", *Bloomberg*.

⁴ See Joseph Stiglitz, "The End of Neo-Liberalism?" *Project Syndicate*, July 7, 2008.

⁵ In taking up the spatial logics of neoliberalism as a political rationality, this paper seeks to contribute to an understanding of the spatial registers of governmentality. Margo Huxley has recently claimed, "it is only recently that conceptions of the productive rationalities associated with the making of liberal freedom have been connected to the spatial concerns of geography." Margo Huxley, "Geographies of Governmentality," in Jeremy W. Crampton and Stuart Elden, eds., *Space, Knowledge and Power: Foucault and Geography* (Hampshire, England and Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2007), 193.

Brown argues that the combined force of neoliberalism and neoconservatism is producing a “new political form,” the effect of which is the radical de-democratization of the United States; I explore the spatial registers of this new political form, for what it suggests for the practice of spatial justice in a time of crisis.⁶

Anti-democracy

Wendy Brown approaches neoliberalism not primarily as a set of free-market economic policies that dismantle the institutions of welfare states, nor as a political-economic reality, but—following Foucault—as a specific form of “political rationality,” a specific kind of “normative political reason [that organizes] the political sphere, government practices, and citizenship.”⁷ Neoliberalism is a constructivist project; it endeavors to create the world it claims already exists. It not only aims to govern society in the name of the economy, but also actively creates institutions that work to naturalize the extension of market rationality to all registers of political and social life. Market-rationality—competition, entrepreneurialism, calculation—is thus not presumed by neoliberalism as an innate human quality, but is rather asserted as normative, and as something that must be actively cultivated. The practice of governance in the neoliberalizing regime is precisely to cultivate such market rationality in every realm. Thus, crucially, what many have called the “roll-back phase” of neoliberalism—the dismantlement of the institutions and policies of the Keynesian welfare state—does not amount to the withdrawal of the state or its power from the social sphere. Rather, neoliberalism’s so-called “roll-back” marks the expansion and recalibration of the techniques of governing.

A chief technique (as well as product) of such a mode of governance is the entrepreneurial or “responsibilized” citizen—the citizen who manages his or her own well-being through the prudent application of rational self-interest; and thus, neoliberalism “shifts the regulatory competence of the state onto ‘responsible,’ ‘rational’ individuals,” encouraging them to “give their lives a specific entrepreneurial form.”⁸

[Neoliberalism] is a formation made possible by the production of citizens as individual entrepreneurial actors across all dimensions of their lives, by the reduction of civil society to a domain for exercising this entrepreneurship, and by the figuration of the state as a firm whose products are rational individual subjects, an expanding economy, national security, and global power.⁹

Neoliberalism seeks to establish the conditions under which “the state leads and controls subjects without being responsible for them.”¹⁰ The critical point is not (merely) that subjects are controlled through their freedom—the premise of governmentality—but the kind of citizen that neoliberalism seeks to constitute,

⁶ Here I adapt a quote by Thomas Lemke, “‘The Birth of Bio-politics’: Michel Foucault’s Lectures at the College de France on Neo-liberal Governmentality,” *Economy and Society* 30: (2001), 190-207. Lemke is describing neoliberalism; I use it here to describe both neoliberalism and neoconservatism.

⁷ Wendy Brown, “American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-democratization,” *Political Theory* 34, no. 6 (2006): 693.

⁸ Wendy Brown, *Edgework: Critical Essays on Knowledge and Politics* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2005), 44; Brown is citing Lemke, “The Birth of Bio-politics,” 202.

⁹ Brown, *Edgework*, 56-57.

¹⁰ Brown, *Edgework*, 43, citing Lemke.

and the consequences for what kind of state.¹¹ The entrepreneurial citizen is a profoundly de-democratized citizen, the construction of which enables a fiercely anti-democratic state form.

In addition, neoliberalism represents a radical “de-politicization” of structural inequality, along with an increased tolerance for it. Social inequalities are not seen as structural or political problems, but are rather seen to be the result of imprudent choices individuals have made, without regard to anything that might constrain those choices. “A permanent underclass, and even a permanent criminal class, along with a class of aliens or non-citizens are produced and accepted as an inevitable cost of such a society, thereby undermining a formal commitment to universalism.”¹² Moreover, the production of the citizen as entrepreneur evacuates the civic realm of substantive meaning. As Brown explains, “A fully realized neoliberal citizenry would be the opposite of public-minded; indeed, it would barely exist as a public. The body politic ceases to be a body but is rather a group of individual entrepreneurs and consumers.”¹³

As Brown importantly reminds us, as a mode of political rationality, neoliberalism thus represents not a return to the ideals of political liberalism, but rather their (as yet incomplete) foreclosure. In the neoliberalizing state, economic liberalism is substituted for political liberalism. In contrast to classical liberalism which “articulated a distinction and at times even a tension between economic actions, societal obligations and individual moral reason,” neoliberal political rationality “erases the discrepancy between economic and moral behavior by configuring morality entirely as a matter of rational deliberation about costs, benefits, and consequences.”¹⁴ Thus neoliberalism works to close the “modest ethical gap” between the political and the economic in liberal democracy: “The saturation of the state, political culture and the social with market rationality effectively strips commitments to political democracy from governance concerns and political culture.”¹⁵ Neoliberal political rationality is not scandalized by disclosures of the inequitable distribution of rights, instances of injustice, unequal life chances, or breaches of democratic morality on the part of governing officials, but rather incorporates these as the necessary costs of what it now takes as its political, cultural and social—not merely economic—imperative: fostering “economic growth.” Thus, “growth” is called upon to legitimate both the extension of state power and the withdrawal of state provision.

To anticipate a point I will elaborate more fully below: “growth” is an abstract economic ideal; to function as a legitimating strategy, it must be made concretely intelligible in the everyday lives of citizens subject to neoliberal rationality. This is where the urban scale becomes so very central—if fully under clarified in Brown’s analysis—to the expansion of the neoliberal state project. In the last three decades, “growth” has become naturalized as the newly built: gleaming office towers, big box stores, ever-larger houses in outer-ring suburban neighborhoods: these are routinely invoked as evidence of “growth.”¹⁶ I will return to this in a moment.

¹¹ See Barbara Cruikshank, *The Will To Empower: Democratic Citizens and Other Subjects* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999).

¹² Brown, “American Nightmare,” 695.

¹³ Brown, *Edgework*, 43.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 42.

¹⁵ Brown, “American Nightmare,” 695.

¹⁶ I refer here to the “growth machine” hypothesis, the classic articulation of which is Harvey Molotch, “The City as Growth Machine: Towards a Political Economy of Place,” *American Journal of Sociology* 82 (1976): 309-32. See more recently Andrew E.G. Jonas and David Wilson, *The Urban Growth Machine: Critical Perspectives Two Decades Later* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1999) and John R. Logan and Harvey L. Molotch, *Urban Fortunes: The Political Economy of Place*, Twentieth Anniversary Edition

Brown further argues that emerging alongside neoliberalism is an increasingly potent neoconservatism — enabled by the devaluation of democratic institutions created by the figuration of the citizen as entrepreneur and of the state as a firm. Neoconservatism is avowedly particularist, authoritarian and imperial. Neoconservatism promotes a strong authoritarian state that actively intervenes in the lives of its citizens, and actively seeks to advance its civilizationalist aims both domestically and abroad. It expressly seeks to right the perceived wrongs of the new social movements—to promote a normative family and to sanction familial forms that would deviate from that norm, to “defend” marriage, and to use the state explicitly to reward individuals for adherence to that norm, and punish those who would deviate from it. Unlike traditional conservatism, which guards against the encroachment of the state on individual moral freedom, neoconservatism actively enlists the power of the state to “restore” the threatened nuclear family to an imagined former primacy.¹⁷ As Brown argues, neoconservatism cultivates a citizen who is receptive to authoritarian state power, and who is inured to deliberative reason and primed to receive declarative, even counter-factual assertions of moral truths founded on a certain concept of “the West”.¹⁸ Neoconservatism cultivates a citizen who is hostile to claims of political liberty and to formal egalitarianism and thus furthers the hollowing out of the political, while bolstering the power and resurgent moral agency of the state. Brown argues that the contemporary convergence of neoliberal and neoconservative political rationalities is producing a “new political form” whose effects are the increasing de-democratization of the United States.

One profound implication of the fiercely anti-democratic political culture that emerges at the conjoining of neoliberalism and neoconservatism is the shifted politics of legitimacy of the state: to the extent that neoliberalism justifies its authority via claims to growth, the absence of democratic structures does not lead to legitimation crises, for neoliberalism does not derive its legitimacy from them but rather from the promise to create structures that enhance and guarantee economic growth. Moreover, the apparent absence of “growth” does not necessarily provoke a legitimation deficit for a strictly neo-liberalizing regime. A “growth crisis”—such as the one we are now experiencing—will likely intensify the call for growth at any cost. Thus, even as the financial crisis inspires demands for the re-regulation of finance capital (which was never de-regulated, but was, rather subject to neoliberal regulation), the crisis will not stall the core process by which responsabilization takes place. To the contrary, the financial crisis and broad-scale economic hardship will likely ratchet up the call for growth and further entrench the process by which market rationality and entrepreneurialism is expanded to every domain. In addition, as a mode of political rationality, neoconservatism also does not seek to legitimate its authority in democratic institutions; rather, it asserts its legitimacy through a moral righteousness backed by and expressed through the exercise of power, and is emphatically and explicitly hostile to democratic egalitarianism. Thus, this “new political form,” this anti-democracy taking shape at the conjunction of neoliberalism and neoconservatism inures itself to crises of legitimation by oscillating between authority and power—by appealing to the alibi of economic growth and by cultivating fear. Growth legitimates the authority of the neoliberal state project; fear legitimates the expansion of unaccountable state power. The conjoined force of neoconservatism and neoliberalism is profoundly shifting the terrain of the politics of state legitimacy in the U.S., with profound implications for the contours of political mobilization in this time of global economic crisis.

(Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007). A central conceptual weakness of the “growth machine” as a critical paradigm is that it often leaves unchallenged the core problematic: that the built *is* growth, instead of the merely built.

¹⁷ See Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Family and the Nostalgia Trap* (New York: Basic Books, 2000).

¹⁸ Wendy Brown, “American Nightmare,” 696-698.

Spaces of neoliberalism

Brown does not address the spatial registers of this emergent anti-democratic political form. Yet her emphasis on the importance of understanding neoliberalism as a normative, constructivist project—a project “that endeavor[s] to create a social reality it suggests already exists”—would seem to underscore the centrality of the built environment, of physical constructions and of the spatial scale of lived experience in the effort to produce the truth-effects of this “new political form.” A review of the key socio-spatial transformations over the last three decades reveals that the urban scale is a central spatial register within which and through which the responsabilization and de-democratization of citizens takes place. A brief and non-exhaustive summary of these transformations includes: the rise of entrepreneurialism as the primary mode of urban governance, resulting from and producing increased competition and “place-marketing” between cities within regions, between regions, and between cities competing in an increasingly global(ized) economy; the emergence of new actors and new institutions which constrain the political autonomy of urban governance, such as bond-rating agencies, public private partnerships, privatization of public assets, and tax increment financing schemes; the increased power of the real estate sector within the urban landscape, such that real estate is, as Jason Hackworth has argued “the leading edge of neoliberalism on the urban scale in the United States”; the shift from urban planning to urban mega-projects, or what Peter Marcuse has aptly termed “deplanning” which removes urban spatial transformation even further from democratic accountability; the intensification of spatial division, and the emergence of the “quartered” or “layered” city: fortified enclaves, ghettos of exclusion, and center-city citadels of capital; the increased “securitization” through official and unofficial policing of the disparate zones of the divided city; the increased salience of anti-immigration and anti-homelessness law, and the emergence of the legal category of the “illegal” person”; the rescaling of the state function or what Neil Brenner terms “state spatiality” from the Keynesian welfare state, which emphasized the horizontal distribution of state spatiality across the national territory, to the “multi-scalar recalibration” of spatiality which puts renewed emphasis on the urban scale as a command center in the operation of global capital.¹⁹

The extreme responsabilization of the citizen happens by way of and at the spatial scale of responsabilized, entrepreneurialized, and increasingly de-democratized urban spaces. Indeed, David Harvey argues forcefully that the fiscal crisis in New York City in the mid-1970s and the success with which the crisis enabled financial institutions to transform urban governance in New York functioned as a kind of policy-incubator, honing a process that was later exported to other cities in the United States and to whole countries, through the instrumentalities of neoliberal finance.²⁰ Brown’s analysis importantly augments the socio-spatial accounts of neoliberalism, as she urges us to understand these material transformations not as the Neoliberal Real, but rather as spatially-embedded strategies by which neoliberalism—as a political project—attempts to create the reality it claims already exists.

The responsabilization of cities—the de-democratization of and in the urban scale—presents particular challenges for the practice of spatial justice, for cities are increasingly less powerful than they look, in this

¹⁹ There is an extensive and growing literature on the spatial forms of neoliberal urbanization, in critical urban theory, and political economic geography. I invoke here, especially, the work of Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore, *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in Western Europe and North America* (Oxford and Boston: Blackwell Publishing, 2002); Neil Brenner, *New State Spaces: Urban Governance and the Rescaling of Statehood* (Oxford and Boston: Oxford University Press, 2004); Jason Hackworth, *The Neoliberal City: Governance, Ideology and Development in American Urbanism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2005); Erik Swyngedouw and Andy Merrifield, eds., *The Urbanization of Injustice* (New York: New York University Press, 1997).

²⁰ David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*. See also Jamie Peck et al., “The City as a Policy Lab,” AREA Chicago, July 7, 2008.

sense: gleaming towers and big boxes are touted as the accomplishments of neoliberal urban governance. As signals of the achievements of neoliberal governance, however, they are also signs of the loss of political autonomy and the diminishment of the capacity of democratic institutions at the urban scale—the capacity that is a necessary precondition of the re-direction of urban policy toward different, more egalitarian aims. The gleaming towers and big boxes do not signal the expanded capacity of urban governance itself, but increasingly are signs of the impotence of the capacity of urban governance relative to the forces that have captured public institutions and assets for private gain, forces which increasingly do not operate at the urban scale. Yet the apparent self-evidence of the built as “growth” provides a principle alibi for the extension of neoliberal political rationality. Moreover, the responsabilization of the city has meant that the city is a core spatial register within which the de-politicization of socio-spatial inequality takes place. Cities are left with decreased capacity to manage the political, social and economic problems neoliberalization produces; moreover, these problems are de-politicized—they are not viewed as a political symptom of systemic failures, but as the result of the poor choices made by individual cities, by individual neighborhoods within cities, or by individuals within those neighborhoods. The ongoing fiscal crisis will only escalate the process of inter-urban competition, as extreme fiscal discipline is imposed on states, cities and individuals, as all compete for shrinking funds as state governments and municipalities contend with budget shortfalls, drastic losses in tax revenue, and increased social need. It remains an open and critical question whether the ongoing financial crisis will trigger a re-politicization of social inequality or whether the crisis and resulting economic distress will continue to be seen as personal failures caused by bad choices made by imprudent individuals.

Securities and insecurities

If socio-spatial theory has amply elaborated “spaces of neoliberalism,” it has not attended to the “spaces of neoconservatism” to nearly the same degree, nor has it attended to the ways in which the two are contingently if also powerfully mutually re-enforcing. Socio-spatial theorists have not described the spatial registers upon which neoconservatism relies, but tend instead to see neoconservatism as an ideology that floats above, or lurks within, neoliberal spatial transformations.²¹ Yet, if we accept with Brown that neoconservatism is a distinct mode of political rationality—one that chafes against neoliberalism in certain key respects—so too must neoconservatism produce a landscape, so too must it work through (and produce) distinct spatial forms, that only contingently bolster the social force of neoliberalism—and potentially disrupt it. Thus, I turn now to ask: what are the spatial practices that are critical to neoconservatism’s constructivist project? What are the key spatial registers through which neoconservatism works to create a landscape in its own image, through which it works to construct that which it claims already exists? And how does this landscape work with that of neoliberalism to produce what Brown terms a “new political form,” one that cultivates a de-democratized citizenry—the “abject,

²¹ Lisa Duggan, for example, sees neoconservatism as the “cultural politics” of neoliberalism, in *The Twilight of Equality? Neoliberalism, Cultural Politics, and the Attack on Democracy* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2003). David Harvey refers to the neoconservative elements within neoliberalism as a “neoliberal pragmatism,” even as he sees the political transformations in the U.S. in the 1990s “Contract with America” as a key and decisive moment in the neoliberal shift. But the Contract with America was a decisive moment in the consolidation of the new right as such. See David Harvey, “Neo-liberalism as Creative Destruction,” *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography* 88, no. 2 (2006): 149. Harvey elaborates further: “It is, however, interesting to look more specifically at how the process unfolded in the U.S., since this case was pivotal in influencing the global transformations that later occurred. In this instance various threads of power intertwined to create a very particular rite of passage that culminated in the Republican Party takeover of Congressional power in the mid-1990s, vowing what was in effect a totally neoliberal ‘Contract on America’ as a programme of domestic action.”

unemancipatory, and anti-egalitarian subjective orientation amongst a significant swathe of the American populace"?²²

As outlined earlier, neoconservatism is a mode of authoritarian nationalism in which home and homeland are mutually constituted as under siege, and in which the defense of a fiercely normative understanding of the family is yoked to and becomes a modality of the defense of the imperial mission of United States—and vice versa.²³ The spatial registers critical to the construction of neoconservatism as a political rationality are thus those that help to produce as axiomatic the juridical, spatial, and psychic relay between (patriarchal) "home" and (imperial) "homeland." This logic can be seen in an extreme form in the anti-immigration activism of the "Minuteman Civil Defense Corps," which describes itself as a "national citizen neighborhood watch, securing the American border."²⁴ The organization promotes itself as the "nation's largest neighborhood watch group," explicitly linking residential-scale crime prevention initiatives designed to reduce home break-ins to the work to secure the geographic borders of the nation. The Minuteman and other border defense organizations seek to incite the state to enact a more virulent defense of borders—to build the border wall, faster, taller, higher; a "full-on Israeli-style Security Fence."²⁵ These border enforcement activist groups also organize to defend a broad range of other locations which they define as a series of internal borders under siege—from day-laborer pick-up stations to residential zoning laws to taxes policy—which are depicted as the front-lines in the war with those who would "destroy sovereign America." The call to defend the nation's borders, which depicts a homeland broadly under siege, has become a powerful mobilizing ideology of the "new" new right which has consolidated and reorganized after 9-11. In addition, at least since Mike Davis' *City of Quartz*, critics have described the emergence of "Fortress America"—an increasing proliferation of walls, gates, and home-security devices along with new forms of social organization in single-family neighborhoods, and new forms of private government, such as common interest developments (CIDs) and residential homeowner associations (RHAs). These otherwise varied landscapes cohere around the effort to secure the home against external forces of instability and insecurity.²⁶

The alarm-rigged house, the gated community, the securitized urban street, the bordered nation: these are spatial forms that have arisen in the context of the broad neoliberalization of the U.S., but they cannot be said to cultivate precisely an entrepreneurial subject. Isin Engin has recently identified the home/homeland nexus as a key domain in the production of a subject whose conduct is governed not through its responsabilization—not by appealing to the subject's capacity to manage its own well being through the prudent application of market-rationality, but through its "neuroticization," by appealing to the subject's

²² Brown, "American Nightmare," 703.

²³ Brown, "American Nightmare," 696-697. See also Anne Norton, *Leo Strauss and the Politics of American Empire* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2005).

²⁴ "The Minuteman Civil Defense Corps: National Citizens Neighborhood Watch Securing the American Border". Even as border defense grows as a way to coordinate the new right the Minutemen organization is, as of this writing, in internal turmoil, over controversies stemming from the use of funds pledged for the rebuilding. See Zvika Krieger, "Time's Up: The Minutemen Turn on Each Other," *The New Republic*, November 19, 2008.

²⁵ Chris Simcox, "An Update from the Minuteman Fence Project Manager," *MinutemenHQ*.

²⁶ There is a growing literature on the privatization of urban and residential development in the United States; see Mike Davis, *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles* (New York: Vintage Books, 1992); Margaret Kohn, *Brave New Neighborhoods: The Privatization of Public Space* (New York: Routledge, 2004); Setha Low, *Behind the Gates: Life, Security, and the Pursuit of Happiness in Fortress America* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Don Mitchell, *The Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space* (New York: Guildford Press, 2003).

capacity to manage its “fears, anxieties, and insecurities.”²⁷ Isin terms this subject the “neurotic subject” and suggests that it emerges along side the neoliberal subject, indeed is mutually determining of it. Isin sketches the contours of a neurotic subject, and identifies the home-homeland relay as a particularly symptomatic domain for the cultivation of the “neurotic citizen.”

Being continuously neuroticized in other domains, the home perhaps becomes the last remaining domain in which the subject can manage and stabilize anxieties and insecurities cultivated in them [sic]. So the home is caught in a double movement of neuroticization: first, it gets constituted as a domain through which anxieties and insecurities are managed and stabilized; second, that it is constituted as a domain of stability and security generates increased anxieties about its creation and maintenance as such a domain. So, the very home that is constituted as a domain of serenity and stability also produces more anxieties that it was constituted to ameliorate in the first place. Out of this double movement emerges a subject whose conduct is governed through its neurosis: the target of government is not a reasonable and calculating subject but a neurotic citizen who invests itself in the production of a stable home in the service of his homeland (the nation).²⁸

My point here, in drawing on Isin, is to emphasize that the spatial practices of “home defense” cultivate a different subjective orientation than the entrepreneurialized, calculating subject of neoliberalist political rationality: these practices of “home defense” cultivate an anxious, insecure, and increasingly angry subject, a subject cultivated by what Isin terms “neuroliberalism” as mode of governmentality. The neurotic citizen demands “absolute security as a right,” even as it expects others to be responsible for themselves. This neuroticization furthers the shredding of the body politic as it cultivates a citizen who demands rights, but fears democracy.

Yet, if “home security” cultivates a neoconservative subject, the “home as security” is at the core of the neoliberal regime as it has been worked out over the last three decades. If the neoconservative subject is compelled to “invest in the stability of the home” as a hedge against psychological insecurities, the neoliberal subject is enjoined to invest in a house as a hedge against material insecurity—to use a house to purchase access to futurity itself, in the absence of any other social or collective guarantee of such. And thus we can amend the maxim of the form of governmentality inaugurated by the “roll-back” phase of neoliberalism to include “financialization,” in this sense: the dismantling of welfare statist structures of social support, which, as we have seen, constituted not the withdrawal of the state from the social but a technique of governance, also inaugurated a process of the intensification of the webs of finance capital over everyday urban life. The withdrawal of the state from the social provision of goods necessary to the maintenance of well-being—education, health care, shelter, caring for the elderly and children—meant that people were increasingly required to purchase these social goods on the private market—most often on credit.²⁹ Given that wages have remained largely stagnant in real dollars over the last decade while house prices have more than doubled, one can see that neoliberalization has meant more than merely the

²⁷ Engin Isin, “The Neurotic Citizen,” *Citizenship Studies* 8, no. 3 (September 2004): 217. Isin provides a sympathetic critique of the work of sociologist Ulrich Beck and others who have named the present a “risk society.” As Isin points out the risk society thesis cannot in itself be called upon to explain how some dangers come to be subjectively experienced or understood as risks.

²⁸ Isin, “The Neurotic Citizen,” 231. Isin argues that alongside the “neoliberal” subject (rationalized, calculating in an ever-increasing domain), is the anxious subject of a “neuropolitics.” Whereas the “bionic,” entrepreneurialized citizen is governed through its freedom, the “neurotic” citizen is governed through its anxieties. The work of neuroticization as a technique of governmentality, aims not for the elimination of neurosis (or neurotic fear) but for its management.

²⁹ For a full elaboration of this dynamic, see, for example, Randy Martin, *The Financialization of Daily Life* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2002).

"pacification through cappuccino" as Sharon Zukin has termed it; it was pacification through debt—as people increasingly began to "use their house as an ATM machine."³⁰ Thus "the private house" can be seen as a core spatial register within which neoconservatism and neoliberalism are powerfully conjoined in the United States: the house grounds the spatial practice of "home," and stands as a physical expression of family; it also is the seat of the autonomous entrepreneurial subject, and a core asset utilized to enable and promote individualized self-care through the debt-finance consumption of well-being. "The home" is thus a key to both the responsabilization and the "neuroticization" of the citizen. It is here, in the home—in the very heart (the factory) of modern privacy—that the spatial techniques and practices of neoliberalism and neoconservatism align. If Brown has described the "forces of de-democratization produced at the intersection of neoliberal and neoconservative rationalities,"³¹ it would seem that the house-as-home sits at—enabling?—that intersection.

But what is a house? A house is only phantasmatically de-linked from municipal scales that define the city, no matter how de-centralized, suburbanized or even ruralized the urban sub-strate yoking one "house" to Others.³² The "house" is thus both cipher and screen, at once concealing and revealing the forces of production and reproduction that produce the private "individual"—and vice versa. This was made astonishingly clear by the fact that it was "the house"—the securitization of non-prime loans in an over-valued housing market—that triggered the ongoing collapse in the global financial system, to reveal a structural crisis of global capital. While private home ownership emphatically is not the cause of the global financial implosion, it is a core instrument through which working and middle class people became entangled in—and put at risk by—the instruments of neoliberal finance.³³

At home in public

In this paper's final section I turn to ask: what are the implications of Brown's understanding of the political present for the practice of spatial justice, especially now that the present has revealed (itself as constituted by) a structural crisis in global capitalism? Brown's emphasis on neoliberalism and neoconservatism as contingently linked modes of political rationality refocuses spatial justice as the work to develop and promulgate a counter-rationality: spatial justice becomes the practice of cultivating subjects who resist entrepreneurialization, refuse moral authoritarianism, and re-politicize social inequality. Her focus on the techniques of responsabilization and de-democratization also prepares us to greet with deep skepticism the cries that neoliberalism is coming to an end—the confessions of Alan Greenspan notwithstanding. The processes and techniques improvised in the name of neoliberalism have been unleashed: bond rating agency powers, tax increment financing schemas, housing policy vouchers systems, public-private partnerships, and a host of ever-more inscrutable instruments (collateralized debt obligations, credit default

³⁰ Sharon Zukin, *The Culture of Cities* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1995), 28. Noriel Roubini reports that the debt to income ratio rose from 70% in the 1990s to 100% in 2000, to over 140% at the end of 2008. *GME Monitor*, December, 2008.

³¹ Brown, "American Nightmare," 691.

³² For a trenchant discussion of "isolation," see Mark Wigley's reading of the unabomber's isolated cabin, "Bloodstained Architecture," in *Post, Ex, Sub, Dis: Urban Fragmentations and Constructions*, edited by the Ghent Urban Studies Team (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2002). "Isolated" is an urban concept.

³³ Neoliberalism is driven by and is, in certain key ways another name for, financialization more generally. See John Bellamy Foster, "The financialization of capitalism and the crisis," *Monthly Review*, April 2008. More than 85 percent of the current oversupply of houses, part of the spiraling devaluation of the real estate bubble, are single-family structures. See Nouriel Roubini, *RGE Monitor's Newsletter*, January 7, 2009.

swaps) of neoliberal finance. The fiscal crisis alone will not retract the processes and institutions through which market-rationality increasingly permeates all domains of life. To the contrary, the deepening fiscal crisis will most certainly be invoked as a justification for the further entrenchment of neoliberal institutions, and the further responsabilization and entrepreneurialization of cities, regions, and citizens, as each is made to compete for increasingly scarce funds, disappearing jobs, and tightened credit. The practices and institutions—not simply the doxa—of neoliberalism have to be dismantled, and counter-institutions and counter-practices put in their place.

Thus, the practice of spatial justice must include—indeed begin by—cultivating a counter-rationality to that of the neoliberal and neoconservative projects; it must foster, in Brown's phrase, "a different figuration of human beings, citizens, economic life, and the political"³⁴—which is also to say, a fundamentally different figuration of the city. Such a practice cannot confine itself to "public space," but must be willing to trespass on the "private" in several senses. The ongoing force of neoliberalism has been to empower private and pseudo-public institutions with the work of regulating the social, the economic and political. The work of spatial justice must be to pry open these institutions to meaningful democratic accountability and decision-making, as well as to cultivate new modalities of social provision that can effectively challenge the dominance of finance capital over urban everyday life. Growth is the core justification as well as alibi of the neoliberal project; thus one critical locus of spatial justice practices must be to re-frame the question and content of growth, and to refute its apparent self-evidence in the built environment. Even or especially in the midst of financial crisis it is imperative to challenge the mechanisms by which neoliberal political rationality has been able to annex the built to support its further proliferation through the largely-unchallenged claim that the built represents "growth."³⁵ Throughout the last three decades, "growth" has been applied to describe transformations of the built environment no matter what sort or to what effect: shining towers, manicured parks, along with walled-off poverty and imprisoned despair, are critical parts of the mechanisms by which neoliberalism produces the reality it claims already exists. Will now the half-built skyscrapers and acres of single-family houses built "on spec" be enlisted as evidence that further concessions to neoliberal finance are required? Or will the claim that these represented growth in any meaningful sense finally be refuted, replaced with a more nuanced evaluation of the relationship between the transformations in the built environment and the enhanced capacity at the urban scale, and fuel the solid but under-represented efforts of "accountable development," and "smart growth" for working families.³⁶ A practice of spatial justice must also work to de-link the built not only from the mystifying discourse of growth, but also from its as-mystified antithesis, decay.

Just as neoliberalism's core lever at the urban scale has been to force cities to become ever-more entrepreneurial and to de-politicize and individualize inequity, the practice of spatial justice must work to resist entrepreneurialization's corrosive force, and to re-politicize social inequity by insisting on and demonstrating the collective origins of individual and social well-being, and by forging practices of solidarity between regions, between cities, and between neighborhoods in cities. The process of creating counter-institutions of trans-urban solidarity will no doubt become increasingly difficult as the deepening fiscal crisis pits region against region in competition for both federal funds and private investment. But it is

³⁴ Wendy Brown, "Neoliberalism and the End of Liberal Democracy," *Theory and Event* 7, no. 1 (2003).

³⁵ The practice of spatial justice must challenge not only the largely unchallenged axiom that "urban growth" axiomatically represents "economic growth" but also that "economic growth" (as measured by aggregate profit-generation) is axiomatically a measure of the public good.

³⁶ See Good Jobs First.

crucial to keep in mind that, as Jamie Peck et al. argue, neoliberalism's broad range of strategies did not emerge fully-formed, and neither are its processes complete:

Neoliberalism is a political project that is continually being made and remade. It didn't spring into life fully formed, some inevitable outgrowth of globalization. It is a work in progress—and a site of struggle. Cities are sites of experimentation, and they are the command centers of neoliberalism—the places where policy ideas come from. At the same time they are the places where the contradictions are most apparent, where the destructive tendencies are most visible, and where the everyday violence of neoliberalism is played out most vividly.³⁷

Just as the neoliberalization of the city is incomplete, and continually improvises urban policy and political institutions that work to produce the city it claims already exists—so too must the practice of spatial justice actively and unceasingly improvise a set of counter-institutions and counter-techniques that help structure everyday practices as if a meaningfully democratic city already exists—improvise a set of practices that enrich and expand the collective capacity to shape urban life by those who live there.

These counter-practices must be calibrated to the scalar logics of neoliberalism, and the socio-spatial patterns of hyper-valorization and disinvestment that neoliberalism produces: the revalorization of center-cities and outer-ring suburbs and the devalorization and impoverishment of already poor neighborhoods as well as inner-ring or first tier suburbs. Projects that target the already re-invested urban core or enrich the already valorized neighborhoods may work to support not oppose neoliberalism spatial logics, and thus extend neoliberalism's vaunting of the apparent efficiencies of a market-rationalized civic realm.

This is also to re-orient spatial justice away from a concern with "public space," and toward the work of forging democracy out of the core structures that regulate and finance collective urban life—especially those that have been allowed up to now to lurk largely in the shadows, beyond meaningful scrutiny under the guise of private institutions. These must no longer be allowed merely to (claim to) serve the public; these must be made meaningfully over into modern-day "town squares." A crucial step in this process is to de-mystify and democratize the institutions of "development finance" at the urban scale—the work of bond rating agencies, tax increment finance schemes, transnational development firms, and finally banks themselves—and to challenge their power to shape local urban processes.³⁸ This is to democratize financial institutions, rather than merely to nationalize them—as has so far been the direction of the \$700 billion under-writing of the faltering U.S. financial system.³⁹

³⁷ Jamie Peck et al., "City as a Policy Lab."

³⁸ This has been the focus of the critical work of Good Jobs First, and the long-standing, but recently defunct, Neighborhood Capital Budget Group.

³⁹ On the need to de-mystify tax-increment financing, bond-rating agencies and other key institutions of neoliberal finance, see especially Greg LeRoy, *The Great American Job Scam: Corporate Tax Dodging and the Myth of Job Creation* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler Publishers, 2005) and Jason Hackworth, *The Neoliberal City: Governance, Ideology and Development in American Urbanism* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2006); David Harvey and others have called, for example, for "much of the \$700 billion bail-out for financial institutions to be diverted into a Reconstruction Bank, which would help prevent foreclosures and fund efforts at neighborhood revitalization and infrastructural renewal at municipal level" (39). See Harvey, "The Right to the City," *New Left Review* 53 (September October 2008): 23-40. Leo Panitch and Sam Gindin report, "Even the Financial Times now warns in its editorials that it may not be possible to avoid much longer the issue of really taking the whole banking system into public ownership, given its current disfunctionality. Indeed, there has long been a strong case for turning the banks into a public utility, given that they can't exist in complex modern society without states guaranteeing their deposits and central banks constantly acting as lenders of last resort."

Yet not only growth but also fear and a cultivated insecurity animate and legitimate the extension of the de-democratizing structures that the conjoining of neoliberalism and neoconservatism enable. Thus the practice of spatial justice must also work to de-link neoliberal from neoconservative political rationalities, to exploit the tension between them, and to counter the latter on its own terms. The practice of spatial justice must be to effectively counter the fortressing of America as productive of insecurity not a remedy for it. This involves not only active resistance and de-naturalization of the many forms of wall-building, border-fortifying and prison-making, but also attending to the meaning and practices of home as the core domain within which de-democratization gets produced. One must work to challenge and refuse—on every available ground—the structures and strictures through which house-based and residence-based urbanisms seek to phantasmatically, juridically, and economically de-link from the broader urban-scale and region-wide networks that enable and sustain them.

Finally, the practice of spatial justice must be grounded in—and make central—the cultivation of a different figuration of the citizen. As we have seen, neoliberalism and neoconservatism are profoundly de-democratizing, and not primarily in the policing of downtowns or the privatization of public squares, but because these (and other) spatially-embedded practices cultivate a de-democratized citizen and a tolerance for ever-more-intensified forms of moral, state and economic authoritarianism. The de-democratic constitution of citizens is not somehow prior to, outside of, or otherwise immune to the radical spatial restructuring we analyze: “Democratic politics is not out there, in the public sphere or in a realm, but in here, at the very soul of subjectivity.”⁴⁰ The spatial production of the de-democratized citizen is not merely epiphenomenal to the re-organization of capital and U.S. imperial ambition but is rather one of its central modalities. Unless it is actively opposed by a counter-figuration of the citizen, the financial crisis will only heighten the de-democracy taking shape at the intersection of neoliberalism and neoconservatism. Having debt-financed their way into a precarious socio-economic well being, an increasing number of people in the U.S. find that they owe the bank more than their houses are worth, that their access to credit is blocked, and their jobs are threatened or gone. If they demand rights, will they also hate democracy? Thus the practice of spatial justice must be to cultivate a different figuration of political belonging and human collectivity than that offered by both the neoliberal and neoconservative projects; a citizen who not only expects but also practices democracy as constituted through embodied spatial practices of shared power and collective freedom, and who will challenge not only the legitimacy of the neoliberalizing project, but also the extension of authoritarian power. This is to cultivate a citizen who demands a freedom that can only be collectively maintained and a security that is visibly and explicitly understood as socially produced—a citizen who is only fully “at home” in public.⁴¹

Conclusion

To conclude, I titled this essay “the practice of spatial justice after liberal democracy” to underscore that justice (like democracy) is a practice, not a “thing” and also to name the challenges to that practice by the

⁴⁰ Cruikshank, *The Will to Empower*, 124.

⁴¹ I invoke here the work of political theorist Thomas Dumm, who asks about the connection between democracy and homelessness: “For many people, fear of democracy is associated with a desire for home. . . Democracy is connected to a form of homelessness, in that it requires that one overcome the desire to be at home. Home, in our contemporary democracy, is comprehended as a private place, a place of withdrawal from the demands of common life, a place of fixed meaning where one is protected from disorientation, but also from the possibility of democratic involvement.” Thomas Dumm, *United States (Contestations)* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1994), 155.

radical foreclosure of the institutions of liberal democracy being accomplished by the effective conjoining of neoliberalism and neoconservatism. Writing in the immediate run-up to the ongoing financial crisis, Brown argued that, as “the institutions as well as the political culture comprising liberal democracy are passing into history, the left is faced both with the project of mourning what it never wholly loved and with the task of dramatically resetting its critique and vision in terms of the historical supersession of liberal democracy.”⁴² She urges an understanding of political praxis that does not hinge on a (tacit) expectation that neoliberalism’s excesses will encounter their limits in a crisis of legitimacy for the state. A practice of spatial justice must move decisively and emphatically beyond a “politics of awareness” calibrated to expose as illegitimate in (liberal democratic terms) the use of state and economic power: denouncing the use of urban surveillance, documenting a growing socio-spatial segregation, revealing the scope of the private acquisition of public infrastructure, outlining the proliferation of gated communities, or deploring the mounting militarization of national and municipal borders; as important as these are, if they do not also address the de-democratization of the subject, these strategies remain ones which seek to provoke a no-longer liberal democracy into keeping promises it no longer recognizes as such, and to engage de-democratized citizens into demanding an accountability of political power that they no longer expect. As I have hoped to make clear, practices of justice cannot assume a public that will be scandalized and spurred to action, even or especially in a time of financial crisis and extreme fiscal restraint. Instead, the practice of spatial justice must be to cultivate such a public, understood not as a space, but a people. This is to work within what remains of political liberalism, to “grasp the implications of its waning” not in order shore up its abstract promises—of rights without capacity—but to work in the waning of liberal democracy and in the turmoil of a wounded neoliberalism, to shape what will come after. This is to use the language of the right to the city, as Lefebvre understood it: the right to the city must be more than the right merely to inhabit a pre-made city—to choose between the gated enclave, the barricaded citadel—but the right to the capacity to shape the habitations of our collective life.⁴³

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⁴² Brown, “American Nightmare,” 691.

⁴³ The growing “right to the city” movement is another powerful location for this work. See the U.S.-based Right to the City Alliance, and the Habitat International Coalition’s Right to the City campaign. See also David Harvey, “The Right to the City,” *New Left Review*. *New Left Review* 53 (September-October 2008): 23-40.

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