

Right to and on the City. The case of the American Indians of the San Francisco Bay Area

Benjamin Leclère

Translation

Laurent Chauvet

Abstract

This article concerns the struggles taken up by the American Indians of the San Francisco metropolitan area in California, which are underlain by two different approaches and aim at reaching distinct objectives. On the one hand, urbanised American Indians from various parts of the United States are claiming a right to the city, and on the other, American Indian tribes historically settled in the San Francisco Bay, are trying to “take over” territories in the city with a view to exercising their sovereignty. To this end, they rely on the rights given to them by the treaties signed with the Federal Government, to develop specific economic activities around gambling. The number of American Indian casino projects has in fact been on the increase in the San Francisco metropolitan area. Through this study, we will see that the claims expressed by tribes perceived as companies and turned towards implementing economic projects are more easily heard by the authorities than those expressed by groups asking, at first, to have their cultural specificity recognised and made visible in the urban space. This article examines the place of the American Indians in the city.

Key Words

Right to the city, nation, urban Indianness, urban Indigenous peoples, nation/minority, San Francisco, tribes, United States

Introduction

Although today the majority of the Indigenous population of the United States lives in cities, it still does not arouse much interest from researchers, journalists and politicians or from artistic circles, the general opinion being that “Indigenous identity” dissolves in the city. In addition, the few works dedicated to urban American Indian most often focus on social and identity issues. This article will analyse the claims of urban Indigenous peoples through the prism of spatial justice, i.e. it will use the spatial dimension of justice between people as a working framework (Bret, 2015).

The issue of spatial justice regarding the American Indians remains taboo in the United States, insofar as it involves thinking about the very essence of the country and the legitimacy of the current socio-spatial structures. Indeed, the progressive conquest of the American territory and its development by the European newcomers, have placed American Indians spatially on the margins, confining them to reserves¹ away from the cities, most often in rural areas with low fertility levels. From then on, urbanity, as the symbol of modernity and civilisation, has been perceived as foreign and incompatible with indigenusness. As a result, American Indians have found themselves outside the places of power of American society, and have been politically, economically as well as socially marginalised.

¹ Plots of land granted by a Federal State to certain tribes following agreements or treaties.

This heritage has had a long-lasting effect on the minds of people who, today, find it hard to imagine that one can be Indigenous and urban at the same time. Yet, in the United States, more than 60% of American Indians live in cities (Lobo, Peters, 2001), New York, Los Angeles and San Francisco being the first three. American Indians however do not form a homogeneous group. In San Francisco, one finds descendants of Indigenous tribes² that were living on the land before the city was built, as well as American Indians who used to live around the Bay and who were progressively “included” in the urban area during the 20th century, as a result of urban sprawling. But the largest number of American Indians concerns those who, during the 1950s in particular, migrated towards the city from other regions after they were encouraged to do so by a federal policy that aimed at diluting Indigenous identities in town, with a view to ensuring their disappearance.

Due to the cultural heterogeneity of the urban American Indians, spatial injustice was perceived differently according to groups, each having its own specific claim as a result. For the American Indians who migrated to San Francisco during the second half of the 20th century, the objective is to end the discrimination to which they are subjected and to access the resources of the city, while defending their right to fully express their identities in the urban space. Solving spatial injustice requires the establishment of a “distributive justice” written in a territorial framework leading to the “respect of individual and collective identities” (Bret, 2015). On the other hand, for autochthonous American Indians, i.e. for “those who are from here” and who still live today on the land of their ancestors, spatial injustice is more directly linked to colonisation, which was translated into the illegitimate appropriation of a territory that needs to be recovered, partly at least. As such, the issue of urban autochthony is expressed in terms of spatial justice, which is understood differently according to the actors and their own history.

A geographical analysis seems essential to (re)think the place of American Indians in the city, as shown for example by the works of Canadian geographers concerning city actors and urban Indigenous communities. Their studies reveal the existence of changing urban Indigenous identities, while emphasizing the spatial injustice to which these groups have been subjected, particularly as far as access to housing and education are concerned (Peters, Andersen, 2013). In the United States, the study of urban American Indians is often conducted by Indigenous researchers at the service of their community, or by politically committed anthropologists concerned about the social usefulness of their work and who, to be specific, turn towards supporting Indigenous causes³. While the input of this type of research is undeniable, its practical aim – supporting the protests of the groups being studied – limits the possibility of conducting a wider discussion on the link between the right to the city and spatial justice.

This article intends to deal with this discussion, by examining the relationship Indigenous people have with the city in the San Francisco Bay area, from a geographic perspective. We will examine what the different actors understand when they speak of “justice”, and show the existence of power rivalries where urban land appropriation is concerned. The Bay area constitutes a privileged place for the study of new Indigenous urban realities. The universities

² In the United States, the word “tribe” is neutral and is part of the official terminology designating the various Indigenous groups, and the American Indian nations in particular.

³ We think here of the work of Donald L. Fixico, *The Urban Indian Experience in America* (2000) or, still, that of Susan Lobo concerning the American Indian populations of Oakland (Lobo, 2002).

and towns of the Bay have been central in promoting the recognition of civil rights⁴ in the 1960s. The Bay is also where the rebirth of Indigenous policies took place, with the first large-scale interventions of Indigenous activists, and the occupation of Alcatraz Island in 1969 in particular. Today, the San Francisco Bay area has one of the largest and most heterogeneous Indigenous population in the country (48 469 people according to the US Census Bureau, 2010). It is the scene of many movements of territorial claims presented by various Ohlone groups (American Indians originating from the Bay) who are asking to be recognised as one of many Indigenous nations. In this light, stakes are high since Federal recognition opens the possibility to claim a plot of land in town, and open a casino⁵ on it.

In this article, we will examine the struggles of Indigenous peoples and what they reveal about the relationship urban American Indians have with their land. After making a rapid description of the methodology, our analysis will be developed into three sections. In the presentation of the Indigenous populations of the San Francisco metropolitan area, we will emphasise their heterogeneousness, then set out and explain the different strategies assumed by Indigenous actors in search of spatial justice. Finally, analysing the specific case of a tribe originating from the urban Bay area will be an opportunity to bring to light a new relationship with an urbanized territory, as well as an expression of indigeneness integrated into a flourishing gaming economy.

Methodological Precisions

This article draws its material from a doctoral thesis conducted at the beginning of the 2010s (Leclère, 2014). While our analysis relies partly on quantitative data (obtained from American censuses in particular), our discussion was fostered mainly by inputs from a qualitative survey, conducted *in situ* from October 2011 to August 2012⁶, and which led us to identify and understand actors' strategies and representations. The field work gave more than their due to semi-directive interviews. One of the main difficulties was to bring networks and interrelations between actors up to date, since the Indigenous populations of the Bay do not live all together in the same suburb but rather, are scattered throughout the urban area. In addition to formal interviews, there were also improvised informal discussions as encounters happened, for example during cultural and/or political events or demonstrations. While the Pan-Indian community⁷ was very open to my research, things were different with local tribes and, more often, with political actors. Several interlocutors told me that "What's happening in Indian Country is Indian business". The lack of trust can be explained by the economic and political stakes of the land claims of the tribes in urban areas, due to the flourishing – for over

⁴ This is about the civil rights movement led by the main minority groups in the United States, and which is mainly characterised by the mobilisation of the African-American community.

⁵ In the United States, tribes are considered as sovereign nations on their lands and, as such, can free themselves from the legislation of the States where these lands are situated. Since the end of the 1980s, certain tribes have authorised gambling on their lands in States where this practice is prohibited (Rossum, 2011).

⁶ I have been hosted as a Visiting Student Researcher at the Institute of Governmental Studies of the University of California Berkeley, during the 2011-2012 academic year.

⁷ As will be seen further on, this community is made up of American Indians who are not originally from the urban area of San Francisco. It was structured in the 1950s mainly, at a time when Federal States implemented policies encouraging the migration of American Indians from the reserves to the cities.

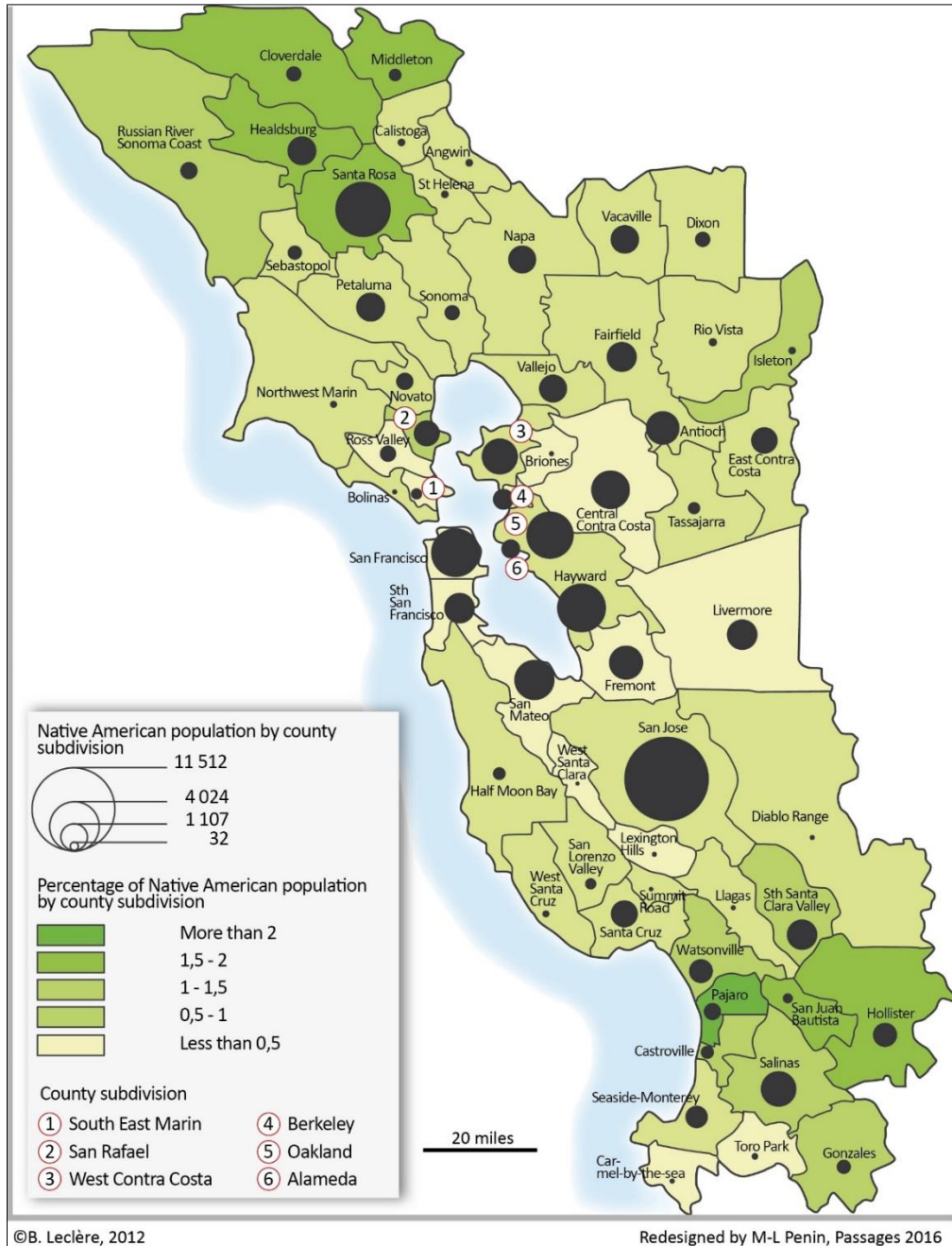
a decade – of what are known as “Indian casinos”⁸ on the lands allocated to one tribe or another, after long legal processes. The multiplication of gambling places is a very controversial subject, in that many Americans see the establishment of casinos near their own homes as a problem. As a result, tribes are very careful with the way they communicate with the outside, anxious as they are to project a positive image. They know that academic research can serve “the cause” of tribes, particularly as regards land claims, just as it can serve that of lobbies opposed to the creation of “Indian casinos”.

The Indigenous Peoples of the San Francisco Bay: Invisible Communities?

In the imagination of Europeans and North Americans in particular, the spaces associated with American Indians are the reserves, far from cities (Comat, 2012). In the collective unconscious, the city is the space of the settler and civilisation: therefore, Indigenous peoples have no place there, unless they adopt city codes and renounce their own identities. These representations are reinforced by the fact that Indigenous populations are not very visible in town, even though today the majority of American Indians live in urban areas country-wide. This lack of visibility results from a demographic relationship which is mainly unfavourable to American Indians in town. The presence of Indigenous peoples becomes diluted in multicultural American society, just like that of the American Indians of the San Francisco Bay who are often described by researchers as being “invisible” (Lobo, 2002). Indeed, although the Indigenous population of the Bay is one of the largest in the country, it still represents less than 1% of the total urban population, i.e. a few dozens of thousands of people (US Census Bureau, 2010), mainly American Indians from other places who settled there during the second half of the 20th century. As to the descendants of tribes originating from the Bay and still living there, they form a very small group of no more than a few thousand people. Invisibility also results from specific spatial distribution within the urban area. We can see on the map below (Map 1) a high tropism of American Indians towards the main urban centres of the Bay: San Jose, San Francisco, Oakland and Berkeley. However, in these towns, unlike Afro-American or Asian minorities, American Indians are scattered all over and are not concentrated in specific suburbs (Carocci, 2007). This is due to the federal policies of the 1950s that favoured the settlement of American Indians in town. The idea was to avoid gatherings in order to speed up assimilation to the majority society as well as the disappearance of cultures. Despite this strategy, neo-urban American Indians managed to organise themselves in the 1960s and exist as a united Indigenous community, beyond tribal memberships.

⁸ During the 1980s, the United States was the stage of virulent legal battles opposing tribes and Federal States in casino matters. In 1988, the *Indian Gaming Regulatory Act* (IGRA) came to reaffirm tribal sovereignty while regulating gambling. This resulted in the multiplication of Indian casino projects in the following decades, particularly in California (Rossum, 2011).

Map 1: The American Indians of the San Francisco Urban Area: An Invisible Population? (US Census Bureau, 2010)



Constituting Urban Indianness in the Urban Area of the San Francisco Bay

Indigenous Migrations and the Weight of Federal Assimilation Policies

The American Indians began to migrate in town during the first half of the 20th century. Although the reasons for this were varied and specific to individual histories, generally, economic reasons represented a determining factor (Fixico, 2000). While a few Indigenous families settled in the urban area of San Francisco, as early as the beginning of the 20th

century, to look for work, it was mainly just after WWII that the movement intensified, leading to the constitution of a Pan-Indian community – i.e. made up of American Indians from various tribes and originating from different regions of the United States. In the 1950s, the Federal Government conducted an assimilation policy that concerned American Indians and that was translated into the establishment of relocation programmes. While the majority of American Indians lived in reserves, the idea was to promote their integration into the American melting pot, by encouraging them to settle in town. The Federal State undertook to help them settle, by giving them priority as far as employment, housing and financial assistance were concerned (Fixico, 2000). The very difficult living conditions in the reserves and the intense promotional campaign of the relocation programmes played a major role in urbanising American Indians in the 1950s. Little prepared as they were to face the shock of living in town, these neo-city dwellers felt themselves drowning in the middle of the other cultures and communities. It was in this context that many youth, who did not know life in the reserves or little of it, reacted by claiming their “Indianness”, a generic identity that went beyond membership to one tribe or another, which no longer made sense to these urban generations.

Youths became aware of the injustice suffered by their people (as regards access to health, justice, education and housing among others), and asked to be given the same rights as other city dwellers (Fixico, 2000). This quest for socio-spatial justice was not specific to the American Indians. Other groups, such as the African-Americans, were also the victims of discrimination in the San Francisco of the 1950s, and also decided to organise themselves to help their own community. But this commitment had a pernicious effect. Because the Indigenous populations, like other communities, denounced the socio-spatial injustice victimising them, they ended up being considered as a minority among others to be integrated into the city, and not as different nations with a specific relationship with the land that was rooted in a long history.

A Pan-Indian Community Asking for a Right to the City

Pro-Indigenous action progressively took its place in the urban landscape of the Bay, from the middle of the 1950s, with the opening in town of premises dedicated to social welfare for Indigenous peoples. Pan-Indian associations such as the Intertribal Friendship House, created in 1955 in Oakland, gave urban American Indians an opportunity to meet and celebrate their identities (Lobo, 2002). For young American Indians, one had to display Indigenous pride and plain city membership. Defending Indianness often went through activism, which was perceived as a means to support Indigenous culture and make it visible to the American public. In Oakland, young American Indians observed the interventions of other communities such as that of the African-Americans. The creation of the Black Panther Party⁹, in 1966, and the establishment of survival programmes gave Indigenous activists ideas, the latter being subsequently influenced by this model (Ogbar, 2005). They tried to unite through associations and welfare programmes built on the Black Panthers model. Networks were established thanks to the nodes or houses hosting these associations and welfare

⁹ Group of African-American activists created in 1966 in reaction to the abuse of the police to which the black populations of the city of Oakland were victim. Black Panther activists claimed the right to self-defense and established survival programmes for the African-American communities of the cities where the Party had a branch (Hilliard, 2008).

programmes. As such, Indian survival schools saw the light in the Bay and the American Indian Child Resource Center was created in 1972, in Oakland, not far from the Intertribal Friendship House. In San Francisco, it was in the Mission District (Image 1) where the majority of services were offered to Indigenous populations, with the Native American Health Center or, still, the International Indian Treaty Council. Social welfare was concentrated there because during the 1960s and the 1970s, property prices were cheaper than anywhere else. Moreover, Mission District was fairly central and was well served by public transport.

Image 1: Sweat lodges in front of the entrance of the American Indian detoxification centre of San Francisco, in Mission District (© B. Leclère, 2012)



A Pan-Indian Community Marked by the Fact That Past Struggles Have Run Out of Steam

Today, due to their age, these community places are integrated into the urban landscape. They are always visited by the local Pan-Indian community and by Indigenous immigrants from Latin America in particular. The latter increasingly attend organised cultural events or medical consultations offered by the Native American Health Center. These immigrants come mainly from Mexico or Central America, and are often in a precarious situation. For them, the help centres dedicated to American Indians represent one resource among others in the Mission District. For the Indigenous activists of the Bay (like those of the American Indian Movement¹⁰), these new immigrants are essential in giving a new lease of life to Pan-Indian

¹⁰ This group was created at the end of the 1960s in Minneapolis where an important American Indian community lived. Different branches were then set up throughout the country, including that of San Francisco which is very active. The American Indian Movement (AIM) is considered as one of the main groups of American Indian activists in the United States. It was inspired by the Black Panthers Party and did not hesitate to use violence, if necessary, to assert the rights of American Indians (Churchill, 2008). The 1970s were the golden age of the AIM that, thanks

activism, which seems to have been losing intensity for the past three decades, due to the progressive assimilation of American Indians who came as part of a relocation programme. As such, the injustice suffered by immigrants from Latin America has become the new main concern of the Indigenous community in general, these fights being also an occasion to continue to assert the presence of American Indians in town¹¹. As specified previously, the lack of visibility in town is a major issue for the American Indians. By progressively integrating part of the Latin American immigrants, the Pan-Indian community becomes demographically reinforced. However, this integration can also contribute to reinforcing the existing representations and opinions of the public, i.e. that the American Indians come from territories situated far away from cities and that their cultures are little compatible with urbanity. The photograph below illustrates this point (Image 2).

Image 2: Aztec dancers during the Sunrise ceremony, Alcatraz Island, on 10 October 2011 (© B. Leclère, 2011)



This photo was taken on the 10th of October 2011, on the occasion of the Sunrise ceremony in Alcatraz, which commemorates the occupation of the Island in 1969 by a collective of

to collective actions such as the Longest Walk in 1978 (walking from San Francisco to Washington DC to denounce laws considered as anti-Indigenous and to demand that all signed treaties be observed) or, still, the occupation of Wounded Knee in 1973, succeeded in bringing AIM issues to the forefront of American media attention.

¹¹ Activists often describe this rapprochement with a spiritual explanation, by invoking the prophecy of “the Eagle and the Condor”, which foretells the union of all the Indigenous peoples of the American continent.

American Indians¹². In the foreground, we can see Aztec dancers with their impressive headdresses, who correspond to the idealised images of American Indians from Mexico. In the background, we can see a tipi, which was used by certain Indigenous tribes such as the Lakota of the Great Plains. American cinema contributed to spreading this stereotyped image of generic American Indians living inside tipis and hunting bisons, a representation which flouts the great diversity of tribes living in the United States, and elsewhere in the world (Mankiller, West, 2007). This type of staging of Indianness reinforces the dominant representations of American Indians in the United States, which is that they must come from elsewhere (the Great Plains and Mexico in this case) and that they can only express their identity in town in a specific and folkloric manner (during gatherings like this one in Alcatraz). During cultural events or collective actions, American Indians show what is expected of them for greater visibility and media coverage. For them, it is also of course about reasserting American Indian identity or identities in town. However, during the Sunrise ceremony on the 10th of October 2011, despite the high mobilisation of American Indians from the Bay, the media coverage of the event was almost non-existent. The photographers present were those of the American Indian and Indigenous associations, and no television crew had been sent on site. Where Alcatraz has become the site of ritualised and regular practices by Indigenous collectives (the ceremony takes place every year), it seems that the non-Indigenous media no longer takes an interest in it.

In the urban area of the San Francisco Bay, Indigenous struggles for more spatial justice seem to have become less important than in the past. It is true that for the Pan-Indian community, and for a large portion of the public living in the Bay, socio-spatial injustice is less blatant than before, and the American Indians can from now on express their Indianness in town during specific cultural events. However, this expression only seems possible insofar as Indigenous groups appear as minorities and not as nations having a territorial link with the city. While the right to the city of the Pan-Indian community of San Francisco appears today as less problematic than in the past, things are different for the few hundreds of American Indians descending from tribes originating from the Bay and who, to date, have not obtained federal recognition. For them, the city continues to be a space controlled by the dominant group.

People in Search of Recognition

Have the American Indians from the Bay Disappeared?

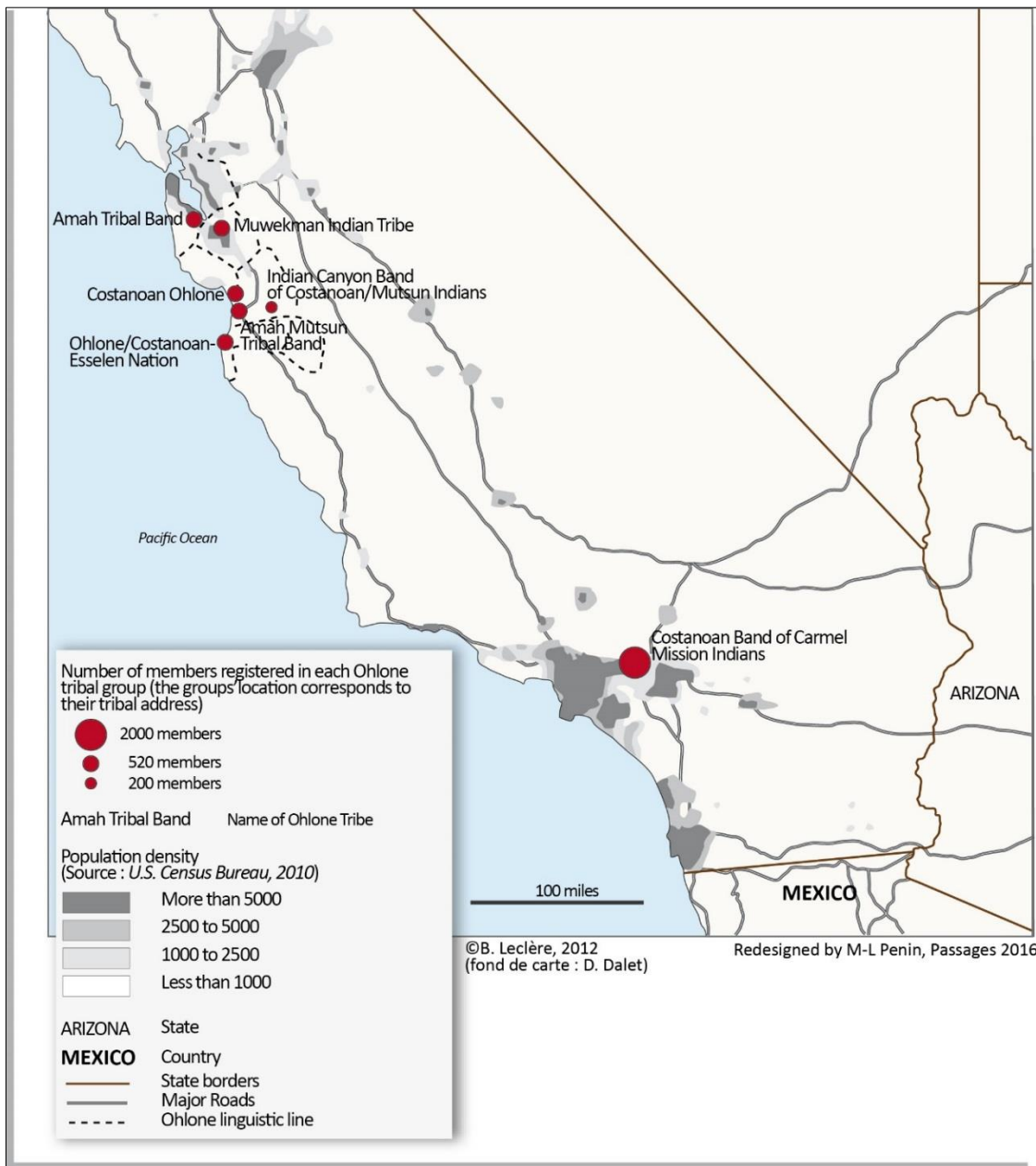
Official history says that the American Indians from the Bay were decimated by the settlers or assimilated by the catholic missions during the Spanish period. At the beginning of the 20th century, University of Berkeley anthropologist Alfred Kroeber, who for a long time was an authority on the subject, wrote that the Ohlone, who lived in the Bay of San Francisco when the Europeans arrived, are a tribe which is from now on "extinct" (Kroeber, 2012 [1925]; Ramirez, 2007). This idea that the Ohlone are extinct as a tribe, and which was officially

¹² The Island (which has been deserted since the federal prison was closed in 1963) has been occupied on several occasions by the AIM in 1969, in the name of all American Indians. The Indians of All Tribes collective was then created to insist on the Pan-Indian nature of the movement (Johnson, 1996).

validated at federal level, is widely spread in the public mind. Yet, we have been witnessing their rebirth since the 1980s.

Currently, seven tribal groups have asked to be recognised by the Federal State (Map 2). These are the Amah Band of Ohlone/Costanoan Indians (who became the Amah Mutsun Tribal Band and the Amah Tribal Band), the Costanoan Band of Carmel Mission Indians, the Indian Canyon Band of Costanoan/Mutsun Indians, the Muwekma Indian Tribe, the Costanoan Ohlone Rumsen-Mutsun Tribe and the Ohlone/Costanoan-Esselen Nation (Pritzker, 1999). Most Ohlone tribes have between 400 and 500 members and are all situated in the South of the Bay of San Francisco. The tribe of the Costanoan Band of Carmel Mission Indians is a special case, in that it is situated outside the Ohlone linguistic area, and most of its members reside in Pomona, East of Los Angeles. Moreover, this group has 2 000 members, which is much more than the other Ohlone tribes (each tribe establishes its own criteria for accepting new members, these rules being inscribed in what the tribes call their constitutions).

Map 2: Ohlone tribal groups situated in the South of the Bay of San Francisco



Each one of these tribes which are not recognised at federal level are developing a specific strategy to obtain recognition. More than an end in itself, recognition is a means, for in the end the objective is to open a casino in or near the urban area of San Francisco, which would be possible on the lands under American Indian sovereignty, thanks to the historical treaties signed with the Federal Government. Today these casinos are perceived by the tribes as the most likely activity to sustain their economic development and as such ensure their future, including culturally.

Obtaining federal recognition turns out to be a long and costly process. Indeed, tribal groups must gather documents that are recognised by the courts and can prove their continued presence, as a tribe, in the Bay area. To this end, the tribes call on anthropologists and ethno-historians who work in response to a specific request. Anthropologist Les Field worked for the Muwekma Ohlone Indian Tribe, as early as the end of the 1980s, to assist with the tribe's very

first request for federal recognition. In his research work, Field criticised or qualified (as the case may be) the studies of anthropologists formerly mobilised by the Federal Government, to justify its refusal to recognise certain Californian tribes, and insisted on the obligation Washington had to “right” the wrongs suffered by these tribes. Field assumed his position of reasearcher appointed by a tribe in reaching specific objectives, and justified this position in the name of the necessity anthropology had to repent for the role this science played in many tribes not being recognised at federal level during the 20th century. By chosing to work for a tribe, an anthropologist as such becomes an activist (Field, 1999).

While the costs inherent to compiling a dossier for federal recognition are considerable for the tribes, they are also due to the remuneration of the research team and that of financing lobbies tasked with influencing the decisions taken in Washington. For example, from 2010 to 2013, the Muwekma Ohlone Indian Tribe supposedly paid USD 60 000 to lobbyist Joseph Findaro¹³, who has been defending the interests of various tribes in Washington for over a decade already. Ohlone tribes seeking to obtain federal recognition need financial backers they can rely on. According to different sources¹⁴, the Muwekma Ohlone Indian Tribe was financed, for the two decades of the procedure, by wealthy Florida investor Alan Ginsburg, who was interested in tribes likely to open casinos in the main urban areas of the country. To date, none of the Ohlone tribes of the urban area of San Francisco managed to obtain federal recognition or ownership of a piece of land in the city on which they could exercise their sovereignty and open a casino. The Ohlone tribes ask that justice be done in the name of the prejudice suffered by the first inhabitants of the Bay, i.e. their ancestors. They consider the official recognition of their tribal status by the Federal Government as reparation. However, while such reparation aims at more social justice, it would not put an end to the spatial injustice suffered, i.e. the fact that tribes have been dispossessed of their lands. That is why the Ohlone tribes also ask for compensation, i.e. a piece of land within the city on which they can exercise their sovereignty. Yet, this is deemed unacceptable by some members of the public and certain elected representatives, such as Californian Senator Dianne Feinstein, who find it hard to imagine tribes exercising their sovereignty inside the urban area. As such, in order to assert themselves, tribes must be skilful in choosing the sites where they wish to settle. Spatial justice becomes possible for tribal groups investing the most in communication and lobbies. Close to San Francisco, only the tribe of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria succeeded in opening a casino. This special case deserves a closer look.

The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria: An American Indian Tribe that Succeeded in Asserting Itself North of the Bay

The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria: A Tribe Made Up of “Born Again Indians”¹⁵

¹³ Source: OpenSecrets.org. <https://www.opensecrets.org/lobby/clientlbs.php?id=D000054055&year=2013> (page consulted on 11/08/2016).

¹⁴ Source: Ron Russell du *SF weekly* <http://www.sfweekly.com/sanfrancisco/the-little-tribe-that-could/Content?oid=2162418> (page consulted on 11/08/2016) and the site downsizinggovernment.org, <http://www.downsizinggovernment.org/indian-gaming-lobbyists-always-win> (page consulted on 11/08/2016).

¹⁵ This expression was coined by Andrew Galvan, the Curator of the Mission Dolores in San Francisco. It means that some American Indians became aware of their Indianness later in life and had to build their Indigenous identity progressively, thanks to the research works of anthropologists in particular.

This tribe has been recognised at federal level since 2000, thanks to tribe Chief Greg Sarris, an academic originating from the region of Santa Rosa, North of the Bay. He studied at UCLA and Stanford in the 1980s, before becoming a lecturer in literature¹⁶. It was during his studies that he decided to know more about his American Indian origins. Although this piece of information might seem anecdotal, it needs to be taken into account, insofar as we are dealing here with a case of contemporary tribal construction. Indeed, in the 1980s, Greg Sarris discovered that his ancestors were American Indians. This personal identity search was rapidly transformed into a desire to create a tribe at the beginning of the 1990s, at the time when the first American Indian casinos flourished in the State. Greg Sarris then began, in the name of the tribe, procedures in Washington with a view to obtaining federal recognition, which had been lost in 1958. Only three solutions exist in seeking recognition: initiating a procedure via the Federal Court, obtaining an executive order from the President or getting a law to be passed by Congress¹⁷. It was the last option that was used and came to a successful end in 2000. At the time, the political context was favourable in that the Clinton administration wanted to settle various disputes with the tribes, before the end of the second presidential mandate, because tribes were increasingly perceived as political allies in view of the elections. However, although they were recognised, the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria did not have a territory on which to exercise their sovereignty.

To open a casino, the tribe must undertake procedures at two levels: first, at the federal level, where it must compile a dossier gathering enough scientific proof concerning its ancestral links to the land claimed, and secondly at the local level, where the project needs to be accepted by local residents and authorities.

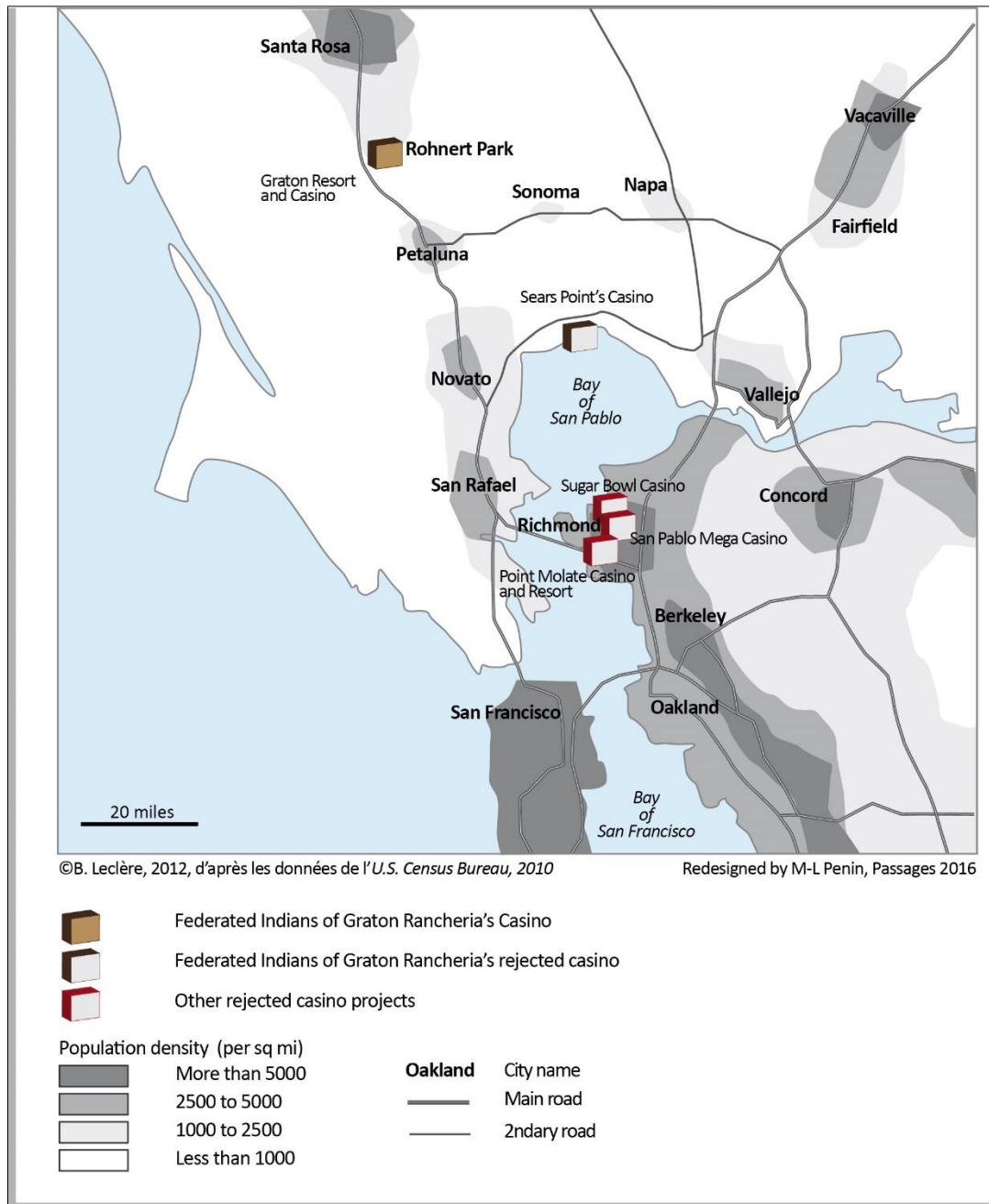
From Federal Recognition to Trust Land in Rohnert Park: An Efficient Tribal Strategy

The site of Sears Point was first considered when applying for a trust land to the Federal Government (these are lands entrusted by Washington to certain tribes, especially those with no more land, and on which the latter can exercise their sovereignty). This project was quickly questioned by opposing Senator Dianne Feinstein. The tribe then initiated procedures to obtain a trust land south of the Santa Rosa urban area, in the town of Rohnert Park (Map 3).

¹⁶ Source: Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, <http://www.gratonrancheria.com/tribal-government/> (page consulted on 11/08/2016).

¹⁷ Source: *govtrack.us*, <https://www.govtrack.us/congress/bills/106/hr946/text/ih>, (page consulted on 11/08/2016).

Map 3: The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria: A Successful Settlement North of the Bay of San Francisco



In October 2010, the Department of Interior decided to allocate around one hundred hectares to the tribe on the outskirts of Rohnert Park. This decision was the result of several years of work to gather as much scientific proof as possible, concerning their link to the land. The family archives of tribal descendants were dug up and genealogical research works were conducted to reconstitute the tribe. At the beginning of the 1990s, at the time when the tribe

wanted to obtain federal recognition, it had 152 members¹⁸. Today, it has more than 1 000 members who actually descend from two distinct tribal groups – the Coast Miwok and Southern Pomo Indian tribes – that used to live north of the Bay. This composite whole was more in response to an economic necessity than a cultural one, insofar as the objective was to obtain a trust land. Indeed, the objective was to create a tribe that, thanks to the great diversity of its members, could gather enough evidence of ancestral links to the land being claimed. As a result, some tribal members decided to focus on the vocational side of the research, and began studies in anthropology and archaeology. It was thanks to this research and to the lobbying carried out in Washington that the tribe managed to put together a very complete dossier that led, in 2010, to obtaining a trust land in Rohnert Park.

The Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria Confronted with the Nimby Phenomenon

An association called *Stop the casino 101* created by residents of Rohnert Park, opposed the casino project by questioning the legitimacy of the tribe and its members, and by requesting the cancellation of the federal recognition of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria. In the eyes of Rohnert Park residents, the land compensation granted to the tribe was an injustice. They protested against the potential nuisance a casino could cause in their suburb (increase in crime and road traffic). However, this association, deemed to result from the by now well-known “nimby” phenomenon, did not manage to obtain the project’s withdrawal (Subra, 2007). The first problem encountered by the opponents of the casino of Rohnert Park, was the little interest shown by the residents of the urban area of San Francisco to this little town. Although they are geographically close to each other, Rohnert Park is very distant in the representations of the San Francisco residents who, as such, did not view the creation of a casino in Rohnert Park as a threat.

With a view to convincing more people, the opponents of the project had to show that their claim was not only local, but that in fact it affected the entire country. The association then changed its tactic by using the legislation in place to slow down the tribe’s project. To build a casino, the tribe had to enter into negotiation with the State where it wished to settle, and supply a detailed plan of the project as well as an environmental impact study. With the support of local ecologists and politicians, the members of *Stop the casino 101* ended up suing the tribe, accusing it of not having sufficiently taken the site’s environmental data into account. The arguments put forward were, on the whole, fairly classic in urban development conflicts: the casino would cause a massive flow of cars, which are a source of pollution; the hotel complex would deplete local water resources; and finally, the creation of a casino would cause the disappearance of the tiger salamander, a protected species living on the site of the project¹⁹. Aware of the power association *Stop the casino 101* could have, the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria then took great care to build strong partnerships locally, in order to limit the opposition. As early as 2010, the tribe began a greenwashing strategy, by orienting a few of its young members towards university studies that would benefit the tribe

¹⁸ Source: Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, <http://www.gratonrancheria.com/culture/> (page consulted on 11/08/2016).

¹⁹ Sources: *NBC Bay Area.com*, <http://www.nbcbayarea.com/news/local/Graton-Casino-Indian-Casino-Set-to-Open-in-Calif-Wine-Country-230581521.html>, (page consulted on 11/08/2016) and *Pressdemocrat.com* <http://www.pressdemocrat.com/csp/mediapool/sites/PressDemocrat/News/story.csp?cid=2291244&sid=555&fid=181>, (page consulted on 11/08/2016).

directly. The idea was to conduct research that could create a link between ecology and ancestral tribal culture. Simultaneously, the tribe adopted a stand in defense of the environment through partnerships, as with for example the California State Parks. It also donated USD 500 000 for restoring the prestige of the regional park of Tolay Lake, south of Rohnert Park. Finally, in addition to this strategy, the tribe was also concerned with being integrated locally via donations to the public services of the county and the town. Thus, in June 2009, the tribe gave USD 500 000 to the firestation and police station of the town of Rohnert Park, showing the local community its desire to maintain a high level of safety and security in town. Thanks to this strategy, the tribe was in a position to sign agreements with the town and county's political leaders. It then became possible to initiate negotiations with Governor Jerry Brown in 2011, with a view to opening a casino in Rohnert Park. Finally, in March 2012, the agreements between the tribe of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria and the State of California were finalised, giving the tribe the green light to begin with the construction of the casino.

In order to carry its projects at federal and local levels through to a successful conclusion, the tribe had to spend several millions of dollars in lobbying, in scientific research and in donations, in addition to the money required to build the casino, the concert hall and the hotel. The tribe called on private investor Station Casinos, a Nevada-based company that already owned several casinos in Las Vegas. In November 2013, the Graton Resort and Casino opened its doors, putting an end to the attacks of its detractors. This success, never seen before in the Bay area, has been the object of many people's desires. In this regard, the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria have received many requests for tribal affiliation since 2013, which have all practically been refused. Any additional member would have a negative economic impact on the current members of the tribe. Indeed, where part of the benefits of the casino is distributed among the members of the tribe, the more limited this number is, the greater the benefits for each individual. In this regard, as early as 2008, after obtaining a trust land, the tribe adopted modifications in its constitution with a view to limiting tribe membership. In addition, to avoid abuse within the tribe, current members cannot lose their tribal affiliation and are not subject to retroactive verifications of their affiliation.

An analysis of the politico-economic model developed by certain tribes, like the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, brings to light a redefinition of power relations between actors, particularly between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, as well as the significance taken on by the concept of sovereignty in these relations. Tribes make use of their specificities to obtain advantages, including the possibility of developing the games industry. Nonetheless, this example of search for spatial justice as carried out by the tribe of the Federated Indians of Graton Rancheria, raises questions on the current identity processes. It suggests, among other things, that exercising one's sovereignty on re-appropriated lands also means assimilating the values and practices of the dominant society. Indeed, by adopting entrepreneurial logics, the tribes become fully integrated into the rest of American society, and try to achieve their own American Dream.

Conclusion

Studies conducted on the struggles of Indigenous peoples often emphasise the legal dimension of the conflicts with, in the background, the idea of legal tools being appropriated by representatives of Indigenous organisations or communities. Few studies look at the

experienced and perceived spaces as many ways of living one's Indigenous identity and appropriating space.

For American Indians belonging to the Pan-Indian community, living one's Indianness in town takes on many and renewed forms. While collective media actions are less frequent than in the 1980s, fighting for Indianness today means new media usage, with the new generations claiming their American Indian urbanness fully. Urban music or murals become as many means of expression and sometimes spatial markers of American Indian identity. The city can then be experienced and perceived as an "urban rez", i.e. an urban reserve that makes it possible to get away from stereotypes, according to which American Indians can only live outside cities to maintain their ancestors' culture (Carocci, 2007). On the contrary, American Indian identities and cultures find in town new life by mixing with urban practices.

This is how, in the San Francisco urban area, the American Indian youth has been restructuring traditional networks via Internet and social networks. This appropriation of cyberspace is all the stronger since the San Francisco Bay area is one of the first territories in the world, where technological innovations and new practices of the digital era are spreading. Internet appears as a tool particularly well-adapted to the networking of Indigenous practices. It is possible to renew links with native territories left during the relocation programmes of the 1960s, but also to mobilise more people by linking American Indians from different towns who share similar experiences and who wish to continue the struggle. The example of the *Decolonize* movement in the fall of 2011, on the margin of the *Occupy*²⁰ movement, seems to illustrate this phenomenon. For the associations of American Indians formed in Oakland or Vancouver, the idea was mostly to denounce power relations stemming from colonisation, and to deconstruct the principles underlying Western thought. While, like the movement *Occupy, Decolonize* ran out of steam in 2012, these new dynamics suggest that the Pan-Indian communities of North American cities will continue to claim their right to the city.

For American Indian natives of the Bay, the quest for spatial justice also turns out to be difficult. The Ohlone groups' request for recognition has not yet succeeded, and American Indian casinos are only tolerated on the outskirts of towns, as seen in Rohnert Park. As such, it seems that tribes can only be accepted when they introduce themselves as companies, as economic partners offering jobs, and not when they ask that their nation status be recognised as a whole. In the urban area of Los Angeles, a few tribes are actually particularly well integrated, in that their casinos come up as resources in a position to generate direct and indirect profits benefiting the city. In Los Angeles – the archetype of the postmodern city –, American Indians have found their place in the urban landscape by integrating the codes of consumerism (Soja, 1989; Dear, Flusty, 2002). There, American Indian land has become a "shopping reservation" (Feinstein, 2010), to use the expression of Californian Senator Dianne Feinstein. As enclave and gaming temple, the casino enables American Indians to become part of the city, not as a sovereign nation but as the owners of a consumer space, which adds to the global offer of the city. In order to win the acceptance of city dwellers, American Indian nations developed an adapted communication strategy, by focusing only on the entrepreneurial aspect, and by leaving aside any claims of recognition of their sovereignty and/or their culture. We think of the different studies financed by the tribe of the Pechanga

²⁰ The *Occupy* movement was created as a popular reaction to the power of money. Through the slogan "we are the 99%", activists, who come to occupy the various places of economic power, ask for more social justice.

Band of Luiseno Indians, in showing the positive effect of their casino on the south of California (Brown, 2004).

In a way, American Indian nations that subscribe to capitalism have a right to the city. This fits with the urban analysis which has been developed for more than a decade by David Harvey (2009). The capital "surplus" cleared by the American Indian casinos somehow feeds the city and generates a form of urbanisation in conformity with the dominant norms. The tribes concerned do not question existing power relations but adapt to the rules of government (whether federal, state or local governments), lobbies and investors and play by those rules. As such, the original injustice of colonisation, which victimised tribes, is not going to find a solution in a type of justice shared by all but, rather, in a type of justice with variable geometry. The "compensation" as represented by casinos, in fact only concerns some tribes. Moreover, while the profits generated near large urban centres are sometimes huge, as in Southern California, they often remain limited for most casinos. As such, the gaming industry is increasingly being perceived as creating social injustice between and even within tribes. The phenomenon of tribal exclusion mentioned above, is indeed becoming increasingly frequent among tribes owning casinos: limiting the number of tribe members is limiting the number of people sharing casino profits. Confronted with this new injustice, American Indians who are excluded from their tribe have tried to organise themselves and demanded elected representatives to intervene. For the time being, their calls remain unheeded, with governments evoking the risk of interference and the impossibility of questioning the principle of American Indian sovereignty, as well as the tribes' right to decide how they should function internally. Therefore, US American Indians now turn to international organizations such as the UN to voice their claim for justice.

About the author

Benjamin Leclère (PhD) teaches geography to advanced students at the lycée Pontus de Tyard, Chalon-sur-Saône (France).

To quote this paper: Benjamin Leclère, « Droit à la ville et droits sur la ville. Le cas des Amérindiens de la baie de San Francisco », ["Right to and on the City. The case of the American Indians of the San Francisco Bay Area", translation: Laurent CHAUVET], *justice spatiale | spatial justice*, n° 11 mars 2017 | march 2017, <http://www.jssj.org>

References

- BRENNETOT, Arnaud**, 2004, "Justice spatiale", *Hypergéométrie*, <http://www.hypergeo.eu/spip.php?article535#>.
- BRET, Bernard**, 2015, "Notion à la une : justice spatiale", *Géococonfluences*, <http://geoconfluences.ens-lyon.fr/informations-scientifiques/a-la-une/notion-a-la-une/notion-a-la-une-justice-spatiale>.
- BROWN, William O. Jr.**, 2004, *The Economic Impact of the Pechanga Band of Luiseno Indians*, Claremont (CA): The Rose Institute of State and Local Government, Claremont McKenna College, http://www.pechanga-nsn.gov/images/EconomyImpactPDF/economic_impact_full3.pdf.
- CAROCCI, Max**, 2007, "Living in an Urban Rez : Constructing San Francisco as Indian Land", in Porter, J., (ed.), *Place and Native American Indian History and Culture*, 263-282. Bern: Peter Lang.
- CHURCHILL, Ward**, 2008, "The American Indian Movement", in Johansen, B. E., Pritzker B. M. (eds), *Encyclopedia of American Indian History*, vol. 1, 638-646. Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO.
- COLLIGNON, Béatrice**, 2001, "La géographie et les minorités. Déconstruire et dénoncer les discours dominants", in Staszak, J.-F., Collignon, B., Chivallon, Ch., Debarbieux, B., Géneau de Lamarlière, I., Hancock, C. (eds), *Géographies anglo-saxonnes*, 23-28. Paris : Belin.

- COMAT, Ioana**, 2012, "Sortir de l'invisibilité : Comprendre la place de la ville dans les territoires autochtones contemporains sous l'angle juridique ", *Géographie et cultures*, n° 81, 59-76.
- DEAR Michael, FLUSTY Steven**, 2002, *The Spaces of Postmodernity*, Oxford/Malden: Blackwell.
- ELLISALDE, Bernard**, 2004, "Postmodernisme", *Hypergé*, <http://www.hypergeo.eu/spip.php?article204#>.
- FEINSTEIN, Dianne**, 2010, "It's time to say 'enough is enough' to reservation shopping - Contra Costa Times", *United States Senator for California Dianne Feinstein*, 27 November, 2010, <http://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/index.cfm/op-eds?ID=9dbbd6a6-5056-8059-7697-2f70fdb3ea5e>.
- FIELD, Les**, 1999, "Complicities and collaboration: anthropologists and the 'unacknowledged tribes' of California", *Current anthropology*, vol. 40, n° 2, 193-210.
- FIXICO, Donald L.**, 2000, *The Urban Indian Experience in America*, Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press.
- HARVEY, David**, 2009, "Le droit à la ville", *Revue Internationale des Livres et des Idées*, n° 9, <http://www.revuedeslivres.net/articles.php?idArt=307>.
- HILLIARD, David**, 2008, *The Black Panther Party : Service to the People Programs*, Albuquerque: Dr. Huey P. Newton Foundation, University of New Mexico Press.
- JACOBS, Jane**, 1996, *Edge of Empire: Postcolonialism and the city*, London, New York: Routledge.
- JACOBS, Sue-Ellen, THOMAS, Wesley, LANG, Sabine**, 1997, *Two-Spirit People. Native American Gender Identity, Sexuality, and Spirituality*, Illinois: University of Illinois Press.
- JOHNSON, Troy R.**, *The Occupation of Alcatraz Island. Indian self-determination and the rise of indian activism*, University of Illinois Press, 1996.
- JOHNSON, Troy R.**, 1999, *Contemporary Native American Political Issues*, Walnut Creek: Altamira Press.
- KROEBER, Alfred**, 2012 [1925], *Handbook of the Indians of California*, Mineola (NY): Dover Publications.
- LAWSON, Russell M.**, 2013, *Encyclopedia of American Indian Issues Today*, Santa Barbara: Greenwood.
- LECLÈRE, Benjamin**, 2014, *Géopolitique des peuples autochtones : le cas des Amérindiens de la baie de San Francisco et des Noongar de la région de Perth (Australie-Occidentale)*, Thèse de doctorat/PhD dissertation, Université Paris 8.
- LOBO, Susan, PETERS, Kurt**, 2001, *American Indians and the urban experience*, Walnut Creek: Altamira Press.
- LOBO, Susan**, 2002, *Urban Voices: The Bay Area American Indian Community*, Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- MANKILLER, Wilma, WEST, Rick**, 2007, *Do All Indians Live In Tipis? Questions and Answers from the National Museum of the American Indian*, New York: NMAI, Harper Collins.
- OGBAR, Jeffrey O. G.**, 2005, *Black Power. Radical Politics and African American Identity*, Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press.
- PETERS, Evelyn, ANDERSEN, Chris**, 2013, *Indigenous in the City. Contemporary Identities and Cultural Innovation*, Vancouver: UBC Press.
- PRITZER, Barry**, 1999, *Native America Today. A Guide to Community Politics and Culture*, Santa Barbara: ABC-CLIO.
- RAMIREZ, Renya K.**, 2007, *Native hubs: culture, community, and belonging in Silicon Valley and beyond*, Durham (NC): Duke University Press.
- ROSSUM, Ralph A.**, 2011, *The Supreme Court and Tribal Gaming. California v. Cabazon Band of Mission Indians*, Lawrence: University Press of Kansas.
- SOJA, Edward**, 1989, *Postmodern Geographies: The Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, New York: Verso.
- SUBRA, Philippe**, 2007, *Géopolitique de l'aménagement du territoire*, Paris : Armand Colin.
- US CENSUS BUREAU**, 2010, *United States Census 2010*, <http://www.census.gov/2010census/>.
- WALKER, Ryan, BARCHAM Manuhua**, 2010, "Indigenous-Inclusive Citizenship: The City and Social Housing in Canada, New Zealand, and Australia", *Environment and Planning*, vol. 42, n° 2, 314-331.