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Elvin Wyly, The University of British Columbia

ewyly@geog.ubc.ca

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"Today, of course, there are no positivists. The positivist era is over, and everyone is a postpositivist. Yet, is it that easy?" Robert C. Scharff, "On Weak Postpositivism" (2007: 515).

"...most of the contemporary work on constructing new bases for social theory is not being carried out by self-described radicals .... For those of us who come from the Left, the bitter irony of our day is that self-described conservatives in some cases, and liberals (...in the continental sense) are probably now, on average, as effective at critical social science as are self-described radicals." Michael Storper, "The Poverty of Radical Theory Today" (2001: 159).

"...a certain form of critical spirit has sent us down the wrong path, encouraging us to fight the wrong enemies and, worst of all, to be considered as friends by the wrong sort of allies...." Bruno Latour, "Why Has Critique Run Out of Steam?" (2004: 231).

"Were this only a dispute about epistemology, I believe the debate would long since have ended and been declared a draw. But insofar as the quantitative-qualitative dichotomy is intertwined with the contest for disciplinary prestige and the relative valuation of different kinds of intellectual capital, the prospects for a negotiated truce are more

problematic." Val Burris, "Fordism and Positivism in U.S. Sociology"

(2007: 103).

The city is haunted. Urban studies shares the fate of so many other fields of inquiry

trapped by "a positivist 'haunting,'" reflecting "positivism's paradoxical power as a

zombie-like refusal to stay buried" (Steinmetz 2005a: 3, 37). It refuses to die, "[d]espite

repeated attempts by social theorists and researchers to drive a stake through the heart of

the vampire," George Steinmetz writes in his introduction to *The Politics of Method in*

the Human Sciences [*PoM*] (2005a: 3). Since positivism has come to be associated with

conservative hegemony and intellectual as well as geopolitical imperialism, its

persistence threatens the possibilities for a progressive or radical urbanism of social

justice. The "positivist demon advances and retreats unevenly within and across the

human science disciplines, discards one costume for another to elude detection, but

resists all efforts to exorcise it, once and for all, from the practice of social and historical

research." (Burris 2007: 93, commenting on Steinmetz 2005a, 2005b). Generations and

centuries after Hume, Descartes, Comte, Durkheim, and the Vienna Circle, "for every

observer who insists that renewing the positivism debate is beating a dead horse there is

another who identifies a resilient 'positivist empiricism.'" (Steinmetz 2005a: 30).

Urban studies seems to have been spared the most violent epistemological clashes

documented in *PoM*.[1] Even so, interdisciplinary community and a shared sense of

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[1] To consider one narrow indicator, a search for the term 'positivism' in *Urban Studies* yields a single
article with a passing mention (Snary 2004) while "positivist" yields eleven articles and one book review.
For the *Journal of Urban Affairs*, the same searches turn up four book reviews and one article (Swanstrom
1987), and (for 'positivist') four book reviews, one rejoinder (Fainstein 1991), and two articles. In *Urban*

purpose have not suppressed discussion of these important matters in relation to cities and urban research (Baeten 2001; Castells 2006; Fainstein 2005; Storper 2001; Markusen 1999; Vigar et al. 2005). The city of positivist hegemony has been challenged and transformed, with a radical pluralism of post-, anti-, and non-positivist[2] urbanists committed to a diverse, cosmopolitan metropolis of knowledge and action. Yet positivism remains at the city center in order to serve the oppositional constitution of all. Positivist hegemony enhances the prestige of scientists who never need to use words like "positivism" or "hegemony." And positivist hegemony is the only specter that can unite all of the diverse intellectual and political movements that have flourished over the past forty years: regardless of all of the profound differences among urbanisms of Marxism, feminism, humanism, phenomenology, postcolonialism, and poststructuralism, they all find common cause in the fact that none of them are positivist. Scattered across a large city of neighborhoods, nonpositivist epistemologies are forced to divide limited resources amongst divergent projects -- turning inward to build local community strength, forging cross-community alliances with other nonpositivist neighborhoods, or sustaining the long-running siege on Positivist City Hall.

Affairs Review, positivism makes appearances in two book reviews and three articles -- in 1975, 1998, and 2000 -- while 'positivist' yields four articles -- 1969, 1971, 1976, 2007 -- and two book reviews. Twenty-six items turn up with either 'positivism' or 'positivist' in the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*. The meaning of these figures (obtained from simple searches of publishers' journal sites in February 2008) obviously depends on the technical features of various collections, including the varied pace at which publishers scan old journal issues and make them searchable. One suspects, for instance, that the term must have appeared many time in *Urban Studies* since Volume 1 appeared in 1964. Still, these figures do give us a sense of what students will see (or not see) when they use typical quick searches study the relations between urban studies and positivism.

[2] I have chosen to use 'nonpositivism' rather than 'post-positivism,' to acknowledge many theorists' unease with the teleological notions of linear progress embedded in the post. Scharff (2007: 521) notes that postpositivism "is viewed as constituting a *fundamentally progressive* break with our Platonic past. ... not only has it followed positivism in freeing itself from the older traditions of theology and metaphysics, it has now 'got rid' of positivism as well."

When nonpositivists unite against the singular positivist hegemony, however, they confront (and create) several risky paradoxes. In this essay, I suggest that the specter of positivism that has energized so many oppositional movements is in fact a caricature of an historically contingent alignment of philosophy, methodology, politics, and practice. In the Fordist urbanism constructed across the American landscape from the late 1940s to the early 1970s, key developments in society, culture, technology, and the state did help to forge an organized nexus between positivist epistemology, integrated quantitative methodologies, and state-centric, conservative-leaning politics. This organized configuration, however, lasted only long enough to inspire the many diverse movements evident in today's pluralism of nonpositivisms. The tidy postwar nexus of epistemology, methodology, and politics came unhinged many years ago. Recognizing this collapse is essential if we are to grasp the opportunities to do important, worthwhile things in a genuinely rigorous, radical, and relevant urban studies.

Portrayals of Positivism

We must begin with clear definitions. Variations on the word "positivism" are widely used as a convenient shorthand -- as epithet noun and/or genealogical adjective -- but the term has at least three distinct meanings (Riley 2007). Positivism can denote a commitment to societal progress, evolution, and development in the spirit of Enlightenment modernity. It can refer to the philosophical heritage of logical positivism from Comte to the Vienna Circle. Or it can describe a particular ensemble of organized,

systematic research practices -- what Steinmetz (2005b) diagnoses as *methodological positivism*.

The distinction between the latter meaning and the first two is crucial, and often ignored. Histories of science emphasize that methodological positivist *practice* -- variations on the scientific method, the search for generalizable laws of causation, the stance of objectivity and fact/value neutrality -- was built on the *philosophical* foundations of logical positivism, and the *ontological*, Enlightenment faith in human reason and rationality. Challenges to the mundane daily activities of positivist analysis, therefore, are usually woven together with foundational critiques of modernity, metaphysical realism, and the possibility of objective, value-free knowledge claims. When nonpositivists identify specific procedural or political problems in methodological positivism, they usually diagnose the failures with reference to the long, rich intellectual heritage of philosophy and epistemology. Consider the typical nonpositivist's reaction when confronted with a conservative, equation-saturated econometric analysis of *laissez-faire* urban equilibrium, produced by a researcher using federal government or private, corporate funding; the usual response is to dismiss the research as "positivist," and to dispense with the need to disentangle the particular mix of explicit and implicit biases of politics, method, or research funding. For nonpositivists, the designation "positivism" has become so broad that it signals a nearly infinite array of concerns, preferences, and criticisms -- ranging all the way from a dislike of specialized or impenetrable mathematical formulae, to skepticism towards the corrosive effects of money on research priorities, to foundational,

ontological concerns over a hierarchical, heteropatriarchical rule of experts imposing the Western colonizer's worldview.

These moves put nonpositivists into intractable dilemmas. Deploying "positivism" and "positivist" as broad, multi-purpose epithets presumes a particular configuration of knowledge, method, and politics. It discourages potentially productive alliances with scholars who are not perfectly aligned with each particular nonpositivist critique on each of these three axes. Careless use of the p-word alienates potential allies, while offering an easy target for those hardcore protagonists who really do embody certain aspects of the conservative-positivist alignment (see Berry 2002 and Fotheringham 2006). Moreover, the shorthand use of positivism ignores the partial autonomy between contemporary methodological positivism and the centuries-long philosophical heritage of positivism. Positivists today do not describe themselves as such. While nonpositivists routinely use the term as a generalized critique of mainstream research, 'positivists' typically draw distinctions between good and bad science. 'Positivists' also tend to use simple words with seemingly clear connotations -- accuracy, precision, validity, reliability -- that infuriate critical nonpositivists while attracting a broader audience in the public realm. Nonpositivists must then confront insistent public demands to explain precisely what, in their view, 'counts' as worthwhile knowledge, and how we are to avoid the descent to infinite relativist uncertainty. Mainstream, accessible discourse also puts nonpositivists in the position of chasing a "phantom" (Burris 2007: 93); "One would look in vain for a positivist manifesto signed by a prominent list of sociologists," (ibid.: 97),

or scholars from any other social science.[3] Manifestos from previous generations are often used as surrogates for what today's positivists refuse to say.[4] When contemporary positivists place caveats and qualifications on a previous generation's bold, rigid axioms of objectivity and universality, nonpositivists resort to new labels such as "crypto-positivism" (Steinmetz 2005b: 276),[5] or they seize on incremental reforms as *prima facie* evidence of unapologetic hegemony: "...if there is a kind of modesty ... it is the kind of modesty characteristic of those whose preeminent power affords them the ability to reevaluate, revise, and 'reconcile alternatives' .... The diffuseness of the theoretical identity..." is "best read as a mark of hegemony ...." (Hauptmann 2005: 227). Even the opposition to positivist hegemony is said to strengthen the binary thinking at the heart of positivist power.[6]

Let me be absolutely clear: this is not a defense of the positivist firmament. There is ample evidence that certain privileged positions are able safely to ignore crucial, critical questions -- even to avoid entire vocabularies.[7] Nonpositivists have demonstrated the dangers of treating individuals and societies as if they behaved according to the mechanistic laws of Newtonian physics, the inescapable interplay and constitution of subjectivity, values, and purportedly objective maneuvers of observation and

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[3] Burris' use of the resonant Italian word is not as casual as it might seem. Compare the opening lines of Burris (2007: 93) and Marx and Engels (1998[1848]: 49).

[4] In an otherwise brilliant and valuable analysis of social-justice movements and standpoint epistemologies, Harding (2005) turns to a pair of short encyclopedia-of-philosophy entries, both published in 1967, to cite explicit methodological positivist commitments.

[5] To be fair, Steinmetz immediately adds, "if I can use that term without any conspiratorial connotations."

[6] "To be sure, in some social sciences phenomenological and hermeneutical frameworks are widely used. Yet these, too, have been influenced by positivism. For example, insofar as they take an oppositional stance to positivist tenets, they replicate binaries central to positivism's power." (Harding 2005: 363).

[7] A search of the publisher's site for the *Journal of Urban Economics* yields not a single mention of any of these terms anywhere in the text: positivism, positivist, epistemology, ontology, or subjectivity.

measurement, and the corrosive corruption of certain types of funding circuits and conservative ideological networks. These and many other considerations require constant vigilance, learning, and self-criticism in order to sustain scholarship that has ontological integrity, methodological rigor, and political relevance to the cause of human understanding and social justice. Especially in the human sciences, epistemological and methodological pluralism are essential, and must be strengthened throughout the intellectual-pedagogical infrastructure.

Yet pluralism also means that certain kinds of what is routinely dismissed as "positivism" must play a role too. When specific allegations of problems with knowledge, methods, and politics are replaced by the casual, generalized use of "positivism" as an epithet, the move risks "guilt by association, whereby signs of any one of these symptoms is taken as grounds for confirming the larger malady." (Burris 2007: 98). At the extreme is an "'explanation by association,' wherein the thing (positivism) explained is allowed to shift among different meanings during a very complex and overdetermined explanatory story." (Burris 2007: 98). Postpositivist critique also suffers its own Cartesian anxiety: "It is perfectly possible to oppose the View from Nowhere, and even to criticize others for failing to understand its impossibility, and still do so ... as if from Nowhere." (Scharff 2007: 509). If Comtean positivism is fatally compromised, so is what Scharff (2007) and Harding (2005) diagnose as *weak postpositivism*.

Naive, uninformed empiricism should be held accountable. Orthodox methodological rules should be challenged when they leave no room for valuable, rigorous qualitative

and interpretive methods. Compromised funding dependencies and biased definitions of what counts as policy 'relevance' should be exposed, dismantled, and re-constructed (Slater 2006). But each of these radical projects should be pursued with clear, specific language documenting particular problems and (wherever possible) proposing specific suggestions for analysis, advocacy, and organizing. Using "positivism" as a banner to unite the diverse alliances and tensions of the nonpositivist movements of the social sciences and humanities made sense forty years ago. Today it is counterproductive.

Urbanus Unhinged

Contemporary debates among what the historian Peter Novick (1991: 703) calls the "epistemological left" took shape in the geographical and historical contingencies of the postwar United States, from the late 1940s to the early 1970s. During this period the epistemological left could be considered synonymous with the historical/political left. New social movements and intellectual dissidents challenged a positivism that seemed to have achieved a formal, institutional hegemony in the social sciences precisely at the moment when it died within philosophy itself, to be marginalized as "only a subsection of a subfield of a discipline." (Steinmetz 2005a: 31). For Steinmetz (2005b), postwar U.S. Fordism explains why positivism triumphed as an institutional apparatus despite "the long-term decline of positivism as a vital position in philosophy." (2005b: 276). Through its far-reaching effects in organizing various realms of economy, society, and culture, Fordism helped to privilege and apparently validate a kind of social science that was "acultural, ahistorical, and individualistic with respect to its basic units of analysis

and oriented towards general laws, replication, prediction, and value-freedom."
(Steinmetz 2005b: 309). Meanwhile, the "Fordist security state" provided an enormous
reservoir of funding, and an eager policy audience, for social science that was "packaged
in a positivist format." (ibid.)

PoM includes not a single mention of urban studies. Nevertheless, the bold theses of
Steinmetz and many of the other contributors provide a valuable conceptual lens through
which to gain a new perspective on the positivist debates that are so widely remembered
and rehearsed within urban studies and urban planning. The basic story line goes
something like this. By the mid-1960s it had become clear that urban research had
moved decisively towards various incarnations of general-systems theory, neoclassical
economics, and a search for universal laws of urban structure and urban process.
Research practices were premised on rational-planning assumptions, detached objectivity,
and privileged, hard-earned expertise. Great emphasis was placed on formal
mathematical models, systematic urban inventories and social surveys, and quantitative
measurement. Given the considerable expense of the new mainframe computer
infrastructure required, the new wave of urban inquiry came to be closely associated with
long-term state funding and certain types of policy-oriented research questions.

This brutal summary distorts and oversimplifies a very complex, turbulent period with its
own conceptual ironies, currents of resistance and creative dissent, and shifting alliances
among and within urban-oriented disciplines (for a small sample, see Hall 2002: 359-
363; Harvey 1973 vs. Harvey 1969; and Berry 1972 vs. Harvey 1972, cf. Berry, 2002).

Oversimplification is the point: *complex histories and contingencies from four decades ago are now remembered (or described in written histories) in simplified, ideal-typical form.* Complexity is distilled to a concise collective memory that implies ontological essence and necessity. Consider the concise and eloquent urban historiographies that telescope through one contemporary urban analysis (Vigar et al. 2005: 1395) of today's intricate multicultural cities undergoing repeated rounds of destabilizing changes:

> "Such transformations challenge the modernist principles at the heart of urban planning that tend to favour acting in a definable singular 'public interest,' with rational 'coherence' and urban public order imposed on the city 'from above' through the expert powers of the usually White, middle-class, middle-aged and heterosexual men who, invariably, were the planning 'experts' [Holston 1998]. Such traditions of modern city planning tended to favour
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> > rationality, comprehensiveness, planning hierarchy, positivist science with its propensity for quantitative modeling and analysis, belief in state-directed futures and in the existence of a single 'public interest' that can be identified by planners and is gender and race neutral [Baeten 2001: 57].

I do not believe that this example is an unfair characterization (or a non-representative sample) of scores of contemporary nonpositivist accounts. It is brutally efficient.[8] It neatly wraps up the enterprise of positivist urbanism into a tightly-packed container of a) *epistemological* objectivity, rationality, universality, and incontrovertible certainty, b) *methodological* worship of mathematical reasoning and quantification, and c) *political* compromises that condone or actively support conservative, hierarchical state authority. Much of the contemporary science-studies literature is devoted to rich historiographies, genealogies, and oral histories that narrate various sites, circumstances, and performances of this interlocking triumvirate. My argument is that this unholy trinity of a mid-century American urbanism was an overgeneralized guilt by association that mistook contingency for essence. The "conjuncture of logical positivism ... and the advance of mathematical and statistical techniques," for example, "was historically specific: it was by no means a sign that the one is irrevocably shackled to the other. By extension, therefore, attacks on the one need not entail attacks on the other." (Gregory 1986: 359-360; cf. Johnston 1986: 49-50). In any event, the attacks and counterattacks proliferated: the significant alignments of epistemology, methodology, and politics became a site of struggle as soon as they became clear. Since many nonpositivists define their philosophy, methods and politics in relation to memories and/or written histories of 1945-1973, however, the organized configuration of that era serves as the template for how urbanists make sense of today's disagreements.

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[8] The passage measures quite well on a words-per-concept benchmark: 106 words that tie together more than a dozen fundamental themes of social inquiry and philosophy: modernism, rationality, expertise, race, class, age, gender, sexuality, hierarchy, epistemology, methodology, the state, the public interest, and neutrality.

An explicitly urban perspective illuminates the productive tensions and risks in Steinmetz's (2005b) ambitious regulation-theory linkage between Fordism and methodological positivism. Central to this link, Steinmetz (2005b: 298) argues, was the integration of the social sciences into the Fordist national security state through funding given to a purportedly autonomous academy -- creating a dependency that "seemed paradoxically to validate the claim that science was 'value-free.'" Social scientists' economic security allowed an illusory sense of detached autonomy and objectivity.

Yet the urbanization of this link was no simple, monotonic function. As a response to the crisis of accumulation in the Depression, Fordist state intervention was highly specific, "informed by social struggles and class conflicts in the major cities where capital and people were already concentrated." (Florida and Jonas 1991: 350). To be sure, the late 1940s and 1950s brought the closest alignment between positivist currents in urban research and American urban Fordism, with the simultaneous 'closure' and narrowing of the social-democratic elements of the New Deal amidst an expansive "spatial fix" explosion of suburbanization, sunbelt-gunbelt growth, and interstate highway construction (Florida and Jonas 1991; Walker 1981). But nearly every major federal intervention today associated with any kind of mildly progressive urbanism comes not from a stable, status-quo Fordism but from its crisis and its insurgent Others -- the flowering and sometimes militant new social movements of the 1960s. Perhaps the "social ontology of the Fordist subject was aligned with security" (Steinmetz 2005b: 299) in the 1950s. But in the 1960s, it was spreading uncertainty, insecurity, and quite a lot of contingency that helped to create the 'urban' that we now take for granted. At the

federal level, the civil rights movement and the urban crisis destabilized the status quo, such that periodic doses of the Johnson Treatment could deliver responses like the Civil Rights Acts of 1964 and 1968, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Fair Housing Act of 1968, the Office of Economic Opportunity, Model Cities, and the 1965 creation of the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development. In the academy, the ferment of new social movements and the glimpse of new possibilities -- at least in "the brief political space before the escalation in Vietnam" -- drew a new generation to a nascent field of urban studies devoted to "the task of rebuilding the cities and fighting poverty and racial inequality ...." (Judd 2005: 121).

Clearly, it would be a mistake to ignore the Janus faces of the Great Society, with its limited domestic war on poverty chained to a genocidal war in Vietnam. The 1960s failed to deliver a thorough restructuring of society. Nevertheless, it is dangerous and disempowering to remember the postwar era as nothing more than an age of a flawed, conservative positivist urbanism. Many of the scholars working with social statistics who are now caricatured as unrepentant conservative positivists "were not infrequently of an actively leftist orientation" (Livingston 1992: 325) -- continuing the dissident heritage of the Vienna Circle itself (cf. Mirowski 2005). Some of the most reactionary urbanism emerged not from quantitative-positivist research, but from explicitly qualitative ethnographic work on the culture of poverty (e.g., Banfield 1968). Even the state-funded research of that era that is now recalled as the pinnacle of positivist urbanism (e.g., National Academy of Sciences 1973) looks downright radical when viewed from the vantage point of today's political climate. If positivism was tainted by its enrollment in

American Fordism and the military-industrial complex -- and in some ways it was -- there was never any guarantee that a post-industrial, post-Fordist, post-positivist era would deliver us from the evils of militarism, inequality, racism, and all the other manifestations of social injustice. Indeed, the Right has been all too quick to hijack the theoretical and tactical weapons traditionally associated with the Left. The entire documentary history of the Bush Administration -- from Karl Rove's scorched-earth election strategies to the infamous torture memos deconstructing the contextual meanings of pain and organ failure while divining the torturer's intentions and human agency -- provides a horribly perverted course syllabus on poststructuralist, postpositivist imperialism (Greenberg and Dratel 2005; Latour 2004). Any epistemology, and any methodology, can be co-opted and abused to serve the cause of violence, destruction, and inequality. Conversely, all methodologies and epistemologies can be mobilized for social justice (Klinkenberg 2007; Lake 2002; Plummer and Sheppard 2001; Sheppard 2001; Wolch 2003).

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Urban studies is a critical catalyst for progressive knowledge nurtured by a situated, standpoint position in the city, and strategic action with and on behalf of urbanites mobilizing for social justice. As we consider the prospects for critical urban studies, we could choose from among many thoughtful recommendations *on what we should do* (see Fainstein 2005; Judd 2005; Storper 2001). I would like to take a different approach, to simply describe *what people are actually doing*, and to draw analytical and strategic connections that are often overlooked. A growing number of analysts and advocates,

students and citizens, organizers and attorneys are doing work that constitutes a collective project of critical urbanism. The individual efforts are not always coordinated -- and indeed the critical heritage of intense disagreement continues to thrive -- but anyone who wishes to build a critical urban research and action agenda can choose from an expanding array of analytical resources and strategic possibilities. Three trends are most encouraging.

First, a revived spirit of critical, constructive theory is encouraging important work that is unburdened by the old dichotomies. It may never be possible to determine 'the urban reality' with any timeless, universal certainty after the devastating assault on the four corners of old-school positivism (empiricism, exclusivity, autonomy, and universality) (Gregory 2000). But we need not attain epistemological consensus to recognize that work needs to be done, right now, with our necessarily limited, partial, and situated knowledges (Harding 2005). This recognition is most sensitive for anyone working with activists and organizers in urban social justice organizations, but it also seems to be part of a broader pragmatic turn that seeks to reconcile the long-term strategies of pure inquiry and organizing with the urgent tactical imperative to fight the latest innovations of inequality, oppression, and injustice. Moreover, not everyone is a postpositivist: in an essay on a classic text of urban social movements, the third most prominent living social scientist in the world[9] reflected:

[9] Excluding economists, and based on Social Science Citation Index references for the previous five years. See Castells (2006).

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"Is this discussion, and my approach in *The City and the Grassroots*, an indicator of positivism? Probably yes. Because I am a positivist, I have never had anything against positivism, and I was always focused on doing empirical research, as coded and formal as possible, while trying to make sense of it. ... I never considered myself a theorist; I am a researcher, and I am only interested in theory as a useful tool for research. ... I always tried to understand the world, not the books, and then to use books, method and observation to actually do research that could be trusted. Trusted by at least some in the scholarly community, and trusted by enough of us to tell people our sense of what was making their lives one way or another. In my romantic period of studying social movements from the trenches, I always told the militants that in exchange for their help in my research, I would give back some level of knowledge and consciousness of their actions. ... By the time I finished my careful research they were usually too tired to reflect on their struggles." (Castells 2006: 220).

Second, a new analytical infrastructure is under construction. Its foundation is built from the best of old and new components, strengthened by what John Forester describes as "critical pragmatism," and what Michael Storper calls a "proceduralist revolution" of "dialogue and transparency and true attentiveness to different voices...." (Storper 2001: 173). If we wish to reconcile the possibilities of quantitative analysis with the "tempered naturalism" of a critical-realist approach recognizing that "the causal mechanisms of the social exist only within relational and meaningful ('concept dependent') human practice,"

(Burris 2007: 131), then we have a clear outline of how to do so from Jones and Hanham's (1995) valuable fusion of depth-realist *epistemolog*y with an expansion-technique *methodology* for disentangling necessary and contingent relations. Other powerful theoretical frameworks -- summarized by metaphors of methodological legislation (Poon 2003), statistical citizenship (Hannah 2001), quantitative methods narratives (Poon 2003), and insurgent quantitative practices (Sheppard 2001) -- are inspiring critical, rigorous work that mobilizes a simple yet incendiary realization: to show that a particular theory/method/policy/practice is socially constructed is the *beginning* and not the *end* of social inquiry. Mobilization is the medium and the message in a growing gathering of organic intellectuals, activists, and allies.

Finally, there is a resurgent, recombinant synthesis of radical scholarship, progressive policy analysis, and community organizing on particular issues. Much of this work is rooted in established traditions from earlier generations, updated for contemporary circumstances, and in many cases the urban focus remains latent or neglected. But the urban potential is there. Since 1975, the U.K.-based Radical Statistics Group (2008) has developed wide-ranging, interdisciplinary challenges to repressive state-driven calculative practices; most of the group's urban work is a byproduct of the centralization of statistical decisionmaking in London. The influential post-autistic economics movement (Fullbrook 2003) includes no explicit urban component, but the urban specialization of several heterodox economics departments (see Lee et al. 2005) hints at the possibilities for a critical new urban economics.

In several domains, 'the urban' does provide a crucible for radical social justice campaigns built on rigorous, critical, pluralist social science. Harvey's (2000: Chapter 7) theorization of the living-wage movement provides a foundation for strategic and tactical maneuvers, even as theory is animated and energized by the rich critical empirics of Pollin's (2002) wage-rate calculations, Arvidson's (2000) intra-metropolitan cartographies of class, Dalmat's (2005/6) analyses of the legal viability of municipal living-wage ordinances, and Martin's (2001) measurement of the political and economic dimensions of the movement's success in various parts of America's devolutionary federalism. Rich policy ethnographies of the injustices of simplistic poverty-deconcentration programs (Crump 2002; Goetz 2003) allow an even more potent challenge when integrated with the precise mappings of the fine-grained geographies of so-called 'underclass' neighborhoods (Grengs 2007; Sessoms and Wolch 2008; Small 2007). Feminist perspectives on urban structure and policy (Hayden 1981; Markusen 1980) catalyze new possibilities when used to transform conventional analytical technologies and practices (McLafferty 2002; Schuurman and Pratt 2002; Ellwood 2006; Gilbert and Masucci 2006). Progressives' frustrations with the mundane, hidden biases of mainstream urban public finance suddenly shift from reactive defense to proactive offense when the prevailing practices of accounting and fiscal analysis are used to create a public, community balance sheet to measure the social economy of urban economic development (Imbroscio 2004). And diagnoses of the roots of the crisis of capital and credit spreading throughout American cities and suburbs into the transnational financial system need not be limited to theoretical analysis of the laws and injustices of capital accumulation (Aalbers 2008; Gotham 2006; Harvey 1974); it is also possible to push

aside the physics-envy connotations of "laws" (Steinmetz 2005b) in favor of aggressive methodological legislation, statistical citizenship, and strategic litigation -- all nourished by radical, rigorous scholarship. This work has helped to establish the connections between thousands of exploited Cleveland homeowners and the intricate web of local and global financial institutions, and to use litigation in an attempt to hold these institutions accountable (City of Cleveland 2008). Cartographies, quantitative descriptions, and quantitative analyses forge a new alloy from the best elements of Harvey (1969) and Harvey (1974) at the heart of John P. Relman's use of the Fair Housing Act to challenge the abusive racial and class exploitation of predatory lending in Baltimore (Mayor and City Council of Baltimore 2008; Relman 2003).

All of these radical urban projects include appeals to the possibility of generalization, the importance of careful observation and measurement, the integrity of methods that can be replicated by others to yield similar results, and the metaphysical-ontological commitment that there is an external reality that we can know and do something about. Yet these radical urbanisms are situated, modest, and partial rather than arrogant, hierarchical, and universalizing; they are enriched by pluralist counterworlds (cf. Steinmetz 2005a: 26) built on the recognition of the negotiated, contested processes defining so many of the social categories involved in urban studies -- including, of course, the urban itself. These projects include many elements of what has typically been caricatured as 'positivist'; but the casual use of this shorthand epithet is inaccurate and destructive. The "pluralist postpositivist counterworld" (Steinmetz 2005a: 26) will always include elements of positivism as well, creating a complex and confusing

landscape. It defies the old, clear divisions that separated different regions of epistemology, methodology, and politics. We must navigate this terrain. We need to search for progressive urbanisms and to build radical cities of social justice, working with allies to mobilize all of the tools of exploration, analysis, negotiation, interpretation, and construction. The radical city awaits.

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