

EXPLORING THE ABSTRACTIONS
WITHIN PLANNING DEBATE



THE WORK OF ROY

RECKONINGS & ENCOUNTERS

Ananya Roy in conversation with
Jennifer Tucker and Sara Hinkley

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AESOP Young Academics Booklet Project/Theme B
Exploring the Abstractions in the Planning Debate

Booklet 3

Jennifer Tucker, Sara Hinkley and Ananya Roy @ July 2018

ISBN: 9789082819113

Internal And Cover Design

Shaimaa Refaat, Piece Of Art

Proof reading

Stephen Murray

North East Proof reading, Durham, United Kingdom

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AESOP YA Booklet Project

Published by Association of European Schools of Planning (AESOP)

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PREFACE

We thank the creators and editors of the Conversations in Planning Theory and Practice booklet (AESOP-YA collaboration) for shepherding this piece to publication. As early career academics, we are grateful for the opportunity to grapple with the stakes and potential of planning theory in our own work, and we hope this booklet is provocative for other students and researchers. This is an exciting time to engage in debates about the importance of theory in planning, in part by insisting on asking questions of where and how theory is made.

We offer our interpretation of Ananya Roy's work in the spirit of lively debate with which she has approached the production of theory. Of course, we are forever grateful to Ananya Roy for her mentorship and her devotion to teaching, but especially for continually pushing the boundaries of planning theory. As early career academics, we are grateful for the opportunity to grapple with the stakes and potential of planning theory in our own work through our collaborative writing process during 2014 and 2015. We hope this booklet is provocative for other students and researchers.

Sara Hinkley

Jennifer Tucker



INTRODUCING YA BOOKLET Theme B

Exploring the abstractions in the Planning Debate

The booklets published under Theme B present conversations with influential planners in theory to reflect on the path of their career and discuss how they inspired and addressed the development of planning theory. These booklets aim to provide an introduction to their theories and ideas: what and how they contributed to the field of planning; what and who influenced the development of these theories; and how this implicated/reflected on planning debate in theory and/or practice. Accordingly, it focuses on their contribution to academic literature. At the same time, it considers significant people and events that have influenced the evolution of the planners' ideas and themes. Our effort has been to present the thoughts in their purest form and in a simple way, making it easy to follow for first-time readers, considering how difficult it is at times to transform ideas clearly clearly, specially in a different context and timeline.

The process of development of Theme B and of deciding on the content unfolded various ways of looking at "planning theory." Firstly, as the first booklet discussed, one way of understanding planning theory was to consider "procedural theory" as planning theory proper, as claimed by Andreas Faludi. Faludi's procedural theory was highly criticized as far from its original discipline of "Urban Planning." Secondly, there is at least a small group of scholars, who readily identify planning theory as literature published in journals such as Planning Theory. Thirdly, the other way of understanding planning theory is "abstractions in the planning debate." As also reflected in the above-mentioned description of the theme, we consider the third definition of planning theory for the purpose of theme B. However, readers can expect each booklet to be influenced by the particular scholars' school of thought.

The booklets are developed in two parts, Parts 1 and 2, each comprising 10,000 words. The YA author(s) develop a draft for Part 1, and Part 2 consists of interviews with other scholars. However, both the parts are graphically compiled together and presented as a whole document in this publication. One of the challenges with booklets under theme B is that, in particular, these are dedicated to a scholar and NOT to a theory. The challenging task is to summarize the eminent scholars' long academic life's contribution in 10,000 words and to decide on the content in terms of "planning theory." This is the third publication under theme B, with many more in the pipeline. We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the senior scholars of present and forthcoming booklets who have not only enthusiastically agreed to take part in the project but have also relentlessly supported our YA authors in spite of their very busy schedule.

With thanks and regards,
"Conversations in Planning" Booklet Team

FOREWORD

www.vimeo.com/166638576

Video by Hiba Bou Akar and Hun Kim



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INTRODUCTION

In just over 15 years, Ananya Roy has constructed a rich body of work exploring the politics and ethics of urban and planning theory, to which this booklet attempts to do justice. Throughout her career, she has steadily challenged the boundaries and foreclosures of planning theory, in particular through her engagement with the study of poverty. Roy has devoted much of her writing to provincializing what she sometimes calls “grand theory” by engaging in a growing effort by planning and urban theorists to defamiliarize the subjects, bounds, and origins of planning theory. She uses the complicated relationship between poverty and planning as a threshold for questioning how planning theory has been constructed, imagined, and defended. The challenges she poses through her research and writing offer an expansive vision of how theory can grapple with the histories, subjects, and intents of planning as a field of practice and study.

We focus in this book on four interrogations that Roy’s work poses to planning theory, each one relating to a core dimension along which planning theory is conceptualized, practiced, and circulated.

What is theory? Roy’s interdisciplinary approach and her bridging of critical urban theory and planning theory are defining features of her contribution to planning. Her disruption (Roy, 2002) of the artificial binary of method/theory (in which method is treated as a research technique that exists apart from any theoretical framework) is reflected in her insistence on ethnography as a method for producing theory as something inseparable from theory and its origin.

What is politics? Roy’s first book, *City Requiem* (2002), uses feminist theory to explore the everyday practices of power by women in Calcutta, to centralize the gendered dynamics of everyday life as a planning question. This book also marks the beginning of her ongoing explorations of the spaces of politics that are often left out of urban and planning theory, including territories of the informal and insurgent, ambivalent spaces of action, subversion, and complicity, as well as to grapple with the politics of representation inherent in research and writing.

What is space? The spatial politics of theory production and reproduction have been hotly debated in recent years, as the work of postcolonial theorists unnerved established understandings of how space is implicated in planning theory. What are the geographies from which theory emerges and which theory narrates? What are the spatial politics of knowledge production? How does the need for a coherent theory of the city foreclose a multitude of theoretical possibilities and lived realities? Roy calls on planning to make explicit the sites from which theory originates. Her work exposes the multiple ways that knowledge from the West holds fast not just to its own theories, but to its modes of reproducing those theories and its ways of thinking about difference, comparison, and coherence. Alternative notions of territory – emerging from studies of insurgency and informality, among others – have the potential to explode the notions of spatial organization on which much of the planning theory canon depends.

What is ethics? Roy's work on poverty generates a focus on the praxis that requires an engagement with the so-called "real world." That engagement must encompass the complex aspirations of the poor as well as those of the policymaker. How are the tenuous normative aspirations of planning implicated in scholarship and action on poverty? What does planning theory offer as a theory of ethical praxis? How do both postcolonial and feminist studies bring urgency and critique to the ethics of planning?

In posing these four questions, we center this piece on Roy's diverse focus on poverty, a concept upon which planning has hoisted itself more than once. Her expansive and provocative notion of what it means to study poverty is threaded throughout this book.

The title of this booklet draws on two concepts that bookend her work: *reckonings* and the *encounter*. If the planning praxis is to meet the daunting difficulties of our young urban century, there must be a series of reckonings. Roy's project in deconstructing¹ the well-worn path from research to theory is not simply to apply feminist and postcolonial theories to planning, pulling up a chair or two at an already crowded and raucous table. This additive approach would leave planning theory itself untroubled. Rather, Roy demands a reckoning. A provocateur in the classroom and on the page, Roy interrogates the foundational ideas and animating ethics of planning theory and praxis. Feminist and postcolonial scholarship act as hinges in her body of work, holding together the deconstructive project of dismantling hegemonic epistemologies with the necessity of reflexive, ethical action. Both intellectual traditions explode any lingering hopes of a space outside of the operations of power from which we can critique, create, engage, or act. But, within that space is the possibility of encounter, spaces from which Roy expresses hope for planning's future, which we take up in the conclusion.

¹See Roy (2016).

1. What Is Theory?

Ideas are also weapons. (Marcos, 2000)²

Implicit in a series on influential planning theorists are the sometimes fundamental differences in how each scholar defines *theory*. Roy's work begins from this fundamental question, and so do we, by not taking for granted a definition of planning theory. One of Roy's earliest interventions in planning theory has been to draw attention to how the theoretical landscape is constituted, and what voices and possibilities are foreclosed by its constitution. Ideas make the world; they have lives in the world; they can be weapons, and also mirrors. Several delineations are invoked in the distinction between theory and practice, separations that Roy's work seeks to blur and complicate.

Perhaps the most elemental binary running through planning literature is the separation of theory from practice. Being a theorist/academic in a discipline that trains professionals forces researchers into the middle of a paradox: planning as a field of practice has often understated the role of theory or has focused its application on the proper role of planners in promoting a normative goal. In a practice-oriented discipline, theory is often dismissed as a luxury, unrelated to how planners go about engaging in "real life". In addition, theories of planning/practice are also separated from theories of the urban: a false divide is created between questions about how planners should behave and those about how cities function (similar to Faludi's "Theory of Planning" versus "Theory in Planning," as explained in Mukhopadhyay, 2015). Such a distinction, of course, presumes the ability to consider the planner separately from the terrain on which she works. In building a body of theoretical work, Roy is attentive to this framing of planning as, first, a discipline of intervention, a practice that produces the subjects and objects of planning.

Roy seeks to "stretch the familiar boundaries" (Roy, 2009a, p.7) of what is thus constituted as planning theory. Those boundaries are in part spatial/geographic, but also epistemological and procedural: the domains of planning are often implicitly limited to the realm of the formal, inscribed by legal boundaries and recognizable practices of planning and political procedure. Roy challenges these limitations in order to defamiliarize planning's coherence, its delineation of what constitutes politics, and to explore the spaces of possibility inherent in the incompleteness of planning (Roy, 2009a, p.9).

² Subcomandante Marcos.

Retrieved from www.thirdworldtraveler.com/Mexico/ideas_weapons.html (May 14th, 2018).

■ *What kind of theory is possible?*

Roy began asking this question as an undergraduate, while studying urban sociology at Mills College, and they followed her as she crafted her dissertation proposal. She struggled to relate the theories she was learning at Berkeley to Calcutta, the city she wanted to study, her hometown. An intimation of the limits of the urban theory canon was already taking hold (Roy, 2015c). *City Requiem* (2002), the book that emerged from her dissertation research, which reflects and makes explicit this self-conscious exploration of herself as a theorist.

Roy arrived at Berkeley at a time of significant experimentation and deconstruction by scholars of feminist, critical race, and postcolonial theory³. The late 1990s was an era of dismantling universals and the construction of new relational paradigms framing the West. In planning theory, prominent women academics welcomed newcomers and held space open for young theorists like her, who were exploring the conjunctures of urban and feminist theory. The explanatory power of the political economy of industrial society was being diminished as new forms of production and labor relations emerged. In this early phase of her career, Roy took on the question of whether urban theory can explain Calcutta, the “strange” place, and whether places like Calcutta could generate urban theory. These are the questions Roy has been asking (not incidentally but continually and firmly reworking the questions themselves) for years since (Roy, 2015b).

My interest in urban planning, and indeed my decision to study planning at UC Berkeley, was shaped by my fortuitous discovery, as an undergraduate at Mills College, of Manuel Castells’s *The City and the Grassroots*. At the end of my late-night work shifts in the library, I would sprawl out on the carpeted floor between the aisles and read this tome, trying to make sense of it in a notebook I came to treasure. That book, which is rarely seen to be an anchor of planning thought, is an incredible guide to social change, the role of the state, and the urban as a distinctive sphere of governance and politics.

(Ananya, interviewed on January 3, 2016)

³ A footnote is obviously inadequate to explain these three important areas of scholarship, but for students unfamiliar with these fields here is a brief summary: feminist theorists work to draw attention to the ways that gender operates as a means for distributing and exercising power, and treat gender not as a biological imperative, but as a social construct. Critical race scholars similarly draw attention to the operation of race as a social construct, as a means for exercising domination and for shaping perceptions of the world using racial categories. Postcolonial theorists examine how colonial relationships between places and between peoples are sustained not just by military power but by the politics of knowledge, cultural control, legal systems, and other social and political relationships, which may be maintained after formal colonization has ended (neocolonial or postcolonial) in order to perpetuate dominance and oppression.

Throughout her work, Roy challenges the presumption of theory's relationship to empirics. In recent debates about the contribution of postcolonial studies to urban theory (discussed in more detail in section 4), Roy argues that her critique is misunderstood as a demand that theory "get the empirical story right" (Roy, 2015b, p.5). Instead, she argues, the line between empirics and theory is a territory not worth defending. Theory, when defended as a coherent project, is not something derived from an expanding repertoire of research/stories but, instead, a foreclosed set of categories that reflects "the stories the West most often tells itself about itself" (Gregory, 2004, p.4; Roy, 2015b, p.6). To simply add stories to the repertoire from which capital-T Theory is derived fails to disturb the construction of the West that threads throughout the scholarship of planning theory.

■ *Ethnographic Mediations*

Roy eradicates the false distinction between the empirical and the theoretical in part by adopting and deconstructing the realm of ethnography. Janet Abu-Lughod, the late author of *New York, Chicago, Los Angeles* (1999), was a particularly influential theorist for Roy, who frequently refers to that book as an example of abolishing the theory/ethnography dualism through which urban studies is structured (Roy, 2014). Ethnography became Roy's center of research in Calcutta, as it allowed her to "see and name social relations of urban poverty" that were not explicable using the canon of planning theory (Roy, 2015b). For Roy, ethnography is not a method of application or simple immersion in the "local" (literature, maps, records, people, and so on) but a method for reshaping the social and spatial categories too often presented as intact in planning theory. In this entanglement of theory/ethnography/empirics, Roy frequently cites the influence of Abu-Lughod's broad comparative work and devotion to ethnography as the foundation of urban theory (Abu-Lughod, 2007). "All theory is provincial and parochial, and thus empirical. In turn, all empiricism contains within it organizing concepts and purposive norms" (Roy, 2014).

Roy positions ethnography as a crucial planning methodology and recenters critical politics of representation. Roy's approach is also anthropological, in the sense that her categories of analysis emerge from the field, or more specifically as the result of a "dialectical relation" between theoretical concepts and fieldwork (Roy, 2002). The feminist geographer Gillian Hart might call such categories "concrete-abstracts": flexible concepts useful to theorizing specific, emplaced historical conjunctures, changed by actually-existing social practices, and developed with the aim of radical transformation (G. Hart, 2007, p. 90). An example of such a category as defined by Roy in *City Requiem* (2002) is "working daughters," the young girls sent by their rural families to work in middle-class homes in Calcutta. The mobility of working daughters ties together the rural and the urban; their devalued labor enables middle-class wealth, whereas their own aspirations for stability through marriage refract through the socio-political practices of the patriarchal family. While the sociological category of "working daughters" is specific to urbanizing Calcutta, Roy argues that the embodied "socio-spatial relations" can indeed be generalized (Roy, 2002, p.72) to her call for ethnographic engagements aimed at producing generalizable theory from off-the-map cities as animated by feminist and postcolonial scholarship. In such endeavors, theories are tools, derived from specific conjunctures yet retaining the possibility of being deployed to analyze different problematics (Garland, 2014).

■ *The Different And The Familiar*

Roy also deploys feminist and postcolonial theory to challenge the idea of theory as coherent, while limiting empirical work, including ethnography, as representing variation or the idiosyncratic. She emphasizes the importance of the “idiosyncratic case study” as a potential model for theory; one that does not offer empirical variation but enables a “political economy attentive to historical difference as a fundamental and constitutive force in the making of global urbanization” (Roy, 2015b, p.13). In fact, ethnography can both disrupt and produce theory by acting as a method of “de-familiarization,” which is able to spark new, and better questions of the processes and rationalities in which we swim, like David Foster Wallace’s fish, unable to notice the water (Wallace, 2009). This practice of rendering the familiar strange invokes Rabinow’s ethnographies of reason that adopt a Foucaultian approach to interrogating the concepts, forms, and norms instantiated in urban space and social practice (Rainbow, 1996). Ethnography is often misunderstood within planning as a method of immersion; it remains a method slightly outside the bounds of planning, with its emphasis on comparison and bird’s-eye view. However, Roy calls for ethnographies operating beyond the bounds of “ontologies of immersion” that aim at conveying the complex life-worlds of our informants in their own terms (Roy, 2012b). Her notion of ethnographic subjects has evolved from the exploration of Calcutta to the boardrooms of foundations and global institutions in the United States. It is the rationalities of planners and development experts that come to draw Roy’s attention, particularly the “middling technocrats” consolidating the Washington consensus on poverty reduction through microfinance or circulating best-practice blueprints for a competitive world-class city. As “embodied subjects who must manage the manifest contradictions of market rule,” such interlocutors are a crucial means by which to see shifting constellations of rationalities and technologies of governance (Roy, 2012b, p.37).

As a future-oriented discipline, planning must contend with the conditions of possibility for thinking and enacting alternative futures (Roy, 2011c). However, this also requires reckoning with the past, in the sense of Foucault’s genealogical emphasis on the “history of the present” as a key diagnostic (Foucault, 1977, p.31). Such present histories (Roy, 2002) are a means to grasp the complex specificity of an emplaced conjuncture with the aim of transforming it. Ultimately, her ethnographies produce theories that push the bounds of what constitutes the theoretical, and what constitutes planning and the city.

Oren Yiftachel



The field of planning theory has been very fortunate to have Ananya Roy's persistently high-quality contributions since she "stormed" into the field over a decade ago. In my eyes, Roy's main contributions can be summarized (and inevitably simplified) into three main dimensions:

1. Multidisciplinarity: Roy's work is one of the best examples of genuine inter- and multidisciplinary. Her approach draws on a variety of fields, including cultural and postcolonial studies, political economy, critical development studies, and various philosophical traditions, mainly continental and Indian. Her ability to draw on these foundations, while integrating them into a coherent, eye-opening, and novel contribution, is highly appreciated.

2. Substance: Unlike many theorists, Roy's work is highly engaged in "real-life" cases, cities, spaces, powers, and struggles. Her theorization draws on the inseparability and coproduction of discourse and materiality, while highlighting the centrality of space in meaningful planning theory. Her in-depth work on Calcutta⁴ was exemplary, and so were later grounded analyses of cities such as Beirut and Mumbai and, most recently, Chicago. Roy's work, together with scholars operating outside the global North, such as Vanessa Watson, Libby Porter, Guatam Bhan, Ayona Datta, and Oren Yiftachel, has formed an important foundation for the recent movement in planning theory of "seeing from the South."

3. Critical Perspectives: Roy's work adds a proud chapter to a proud tradition of critical theory, highlighting the concealed forces of oppression and marginalization, while stripping bare the seductive language of development, "progress," and growth that so conveniently wrap processes of dispossession and control. Roy powerfully draws on critical giants such as Marx, Gramsci, Foucault, Said, and other postcolonial and feminist scholars for her analysis of urban and regional change. As such, she has been one of the architects of new theoretical streams that challenge the main tenets of dominant "Northern" and "Western" bodies that continue to marginalize "Southern" and "Eastern" perspectives.

Critique:

While I have very high appreciation of Roy's work, I can note some problems. This is, of course, inevitable in any daring scholarship such as Roy's. Let me mention briefly two points. First, the modern nation-state is often underplayed. Roy's work is, of course, aware of the omnipower of the state, but it often appears as a (threatening) and often unidimensional "shadow," in the guise of a "neoliberal," "developmental," or "capitalist" state. The political reality and policy processes are of course far more complex, and their influence on cities and regions central and contested.

Second, while providing very important insights into urban governance and poverty in the global Southeast, Roy's work tends to overlook the immense power of collective (and often institutionalized and essentialized) identities. These, as we know, form a main bone of oppression and contention in most power struggles over space and development. Yet, race, ethnicity, caste, or nation (and to a lesser extent gender) are only occasional actors in Roy's work.

Oren Yiftachel - February 2016

⁴ Now known as Kolkata, which is the Bengali (local language) version of Calcutta.

2. What Is Politics?

The relationship between “Woman” (a cultural and ideological composite other constructed through diverse representational discourses—scientific literary, juridical, linguistic, cinematic, etc.) and “women” (real, material subjects of their collective histories) is one of the central questions the practice of feminist scholarship seeks to address (Mohanty, 1988).

In her interrogation of planning theory’s approach to politics, Roy focuses on questions of subject-hood and representation in order to emphasize the inescapable realm of the political. This broadening of the political is simultaneous with her (and others’) critique of planning’s delimited approach to politics versus practice (a foreclosure parallel to the false distinction between theory and ethnography). Many practicing planners still believe their authority derives from their neutrality and their technical knowledge, despite all of the theoretical work done on the politics of epistemology and the limits of the positivist model. The planner thus appears as a figure outside politics—while politics itself is narrowly framed as something that takes place “safely, within the formal planning process” (Roy, 2009a, p.9).

In order to disrupt these framings, Roy draws attention to the fundamentally political nature of planning (Yiftachel & Huxley, 2000). Her work integrating feminist and planning theory produces new ideas of the public, of what constitutes urban life, of how power is exercised, and of who practices development. One of Roy’s interventions has been to continually remind us of the many areas in which “planning” is practiced. Planning’s “failures” must also be understood as planning, even as they may simultaneously be acts of resistance to planners’ intentions; for example, the community organizing in “Model Cities” that revealed fissures in the commitment to community self-determination (Roy, Schrader, & Crane, 2015a). Turning her eye to such complex relationships between the planner and the planned, her notion of politics requires planners to be always and forever in the struggle, seeking neither resolution nor stability, but rather to dwell in the ever-moving realm of the political. Planning theory has dealt with these questions with a remarkable lack of sophistication, and accordingly brought about a multiculturalism that does not grapple with the inevitable “othering” or “constitutive outside” but instead aspires to encompass everyone and foreclose dissent. Politics in this view is instrumental—participation in the process becomes everything, and morals are relegated to the value systems of the individuals who participate. Roy obliterates the notion that the realm of the political is a space with which planners can choose how to interact.

■ *Everyday Practices*

One enduring problem strung throughout Roy's scholarship is the workings of everyday practices of power. Through daily practice, unstable hierarchies of power are shored up and their undergirding logics reiterated, contested, or subverted. Social categories like gender and race attain meaning only through ongoing daily reiteration, enactments in and through systems of meaning, and relational encounters, which mediate experience. Roy's approach brings together close attention to political-economic transformations while holding onto a Foucauldian analysis of the decentered workings of capillary power. This approach avoids the teleology and economism⁵ of orthodox Marxism by developing grounded accounts of what Sparke calls "market-mediated subjectivity formation (Sparke, 2006, p. 2)." Crucially, however, this commitment to the conjuncture, contingent, distinctive, and emplaced—what Donna Haraway calls "radical historical contingency" (Haraway, 1988, p. 579) does not negate the necessity of attending to continuity or political economy. In forwarding this balancing act, Jane M. Jacobs invokes the formidable Janet Abu-Lughod, and her insistence on foregrounding "nonteleological 'common processes'" (Jacobs, 2012, p.906).

In *City Requiem* (2002), Roy tackles the spatial basis of persistent poverty in Calcutta through the hegemonic forms of political party and family, both understood as spatialized, power-laden gendered relations (Roy, 2002). Masculinist patronage relations condition rural-urban migration, while Communist party brokers mediate land claims for the poor on the urban peripheries. Urbanization itself is structured by gendered mobility, an intense restless commuting by women living in the peripheries, and "working daughters" sent from villages as live-in servants for the urban middle class. The devalued labor of housecleaners and working daughters enables the urban existence of the middle class. These processes demonstrate the key social forms of Calcutta's ruling Communist regime and the family itself, both structured through patriarchal practices and imaginations, producing both the feminization of livelihood and a masculinization of politics (Roy, 2002, p.86). And so, rather than outlining a causal relationship between these social relations, Roy asks how the party regime and urbanization itself is shaped on the periurban periphery through "gendered practices of power" (Roy, 2002, p.73). Roy has called this approach "post-Marxist" and invoked scholars attentive to the "lived practice of domination and subordination" (Hall, 1988; Roy, 2002, p. 18; Williams, 1978; Willis, 1981). But, if attending to a Gramscian understanding of "lived hegemony"⁶ (Roy, 2002, p. 22) as the center of a certain genera of justice-oriented scholarship, Roy insists on centralizing the edges: poststructural feminist and postcolonial thought.

⁵ Economism is the reduction of social facts to their economic dimensions, placing economics at the center of social analysis.

⁶ "Lived hegemony" is the idea that people are shaped by and also shape an ongoing set of social processes, meanings, and values in relation to the operation of power and influence; it represents an expansive and fluid interpretation of Gramscian hegemony, first introduced by Raymond Williams, moving beyond the notion that hegemony is enacted by ideology and culture (Williams, 1978).

■ *Ambiguities Of Power*

These practices of power are also ambiguous, as Roy brings feminist scholarship to bear on the complexity of ascribing actors as either holding or lacking power. For decades, poststructural feminists⁷ have insisted on the critical importance of seeing both difference and domination through the analytic of gender (Fraser, 1990; Kabeer, 1994; Mohanty, 1988). In the late 1980s, Joan Scott argued that gender is not a biological condition but rather a critical analytic, a “constitutive element of social relationships” (Scott, 1986, p. 1067) and a “primary way of signifying relationships of power.” Post-structuralism insists we rethink power, not as coherent, centralized, and emanating from above, but rather as constantly enacted “dispersed constellations of unequal relationships.” The feminist injunction also occupies the both/and; to definitively ditch the ontological and epistemological modes (i.e., the approaches to knowing) that structure consciousness and social science categories into binary oppositions: male/female, rationality/emotion, mind/body, public/private, urban/rural. The long list of “constructs of dichotomous oppositional difference” (Collins, 1986, p. 29) and “either or dualist thinking” (hooks, 1984, p. 29) enable social practices that produce patterns of valorization and devalorization, enacted on bodies and through spatial practice. Black feminists like bell hooks and Patricia Hill Collins exhorted a shift to thinking through co-constitution for three decades, long before the “relation turn” took hold in geography (Boggs & Rantisi, 2003; Massey, 1994). Gramsci (1971) and others (Mouffe, 1988; Willis, 1981) see agency as a “contradictory interpellation”—there is no dividing line between those who have power and those who do not; identity is constituted through numerous lines of power and powerlessness, privilege and lack of privilege—and reject the idea of class as a politics in itself (or even a bounded identity).

Roy’s work articulates these ambiguities, deploying an understanding of power that defies the dualisms of dominance/agency or compliance/resistance, instead drawing our attention to the “ambiguous forms of political agency that reveal fissures in the dominant apparatus but that may also strengthen existing hierarchies” (Roy, 2012a, p. 548). This nuanced understanding of power also makes visible the multiple constructions of power at work in daily life: race, gender, class. Roy insists that theory is produced through the lived experience of these edges. In *Praxis in the Time of Empire* (2006), Roy draws from the theme of “doubleness” (drawing heavily from black cultural studies) as a conceptual tool for thinking through “the simultaneity of complicity and subversion.” Doubleness was used by Du Bois (1903) to mean the double consciousness of the black subject (Du Bois, 1903) that can split apart people’s lived experience. Through invoking Henry Louis Gates (1988), Roy suggests doubleness can be a terrain of meaning-making, enabling a subversive praxis that necessarily operates through complicity (Gates Jr., 1988). Centering black cultural studies is also a means to demystify the construction and performance of whiteness, a crucial political project in times of routinized racialized state violence. In a purportedly “post-racial” Obama era, foregrounding whiteness is a means to see how power operates through rendering invisible the conditions of its own making—i.e., by denying the existence of race as a category through which power is exercised.

⁷ Poststructural feminist theorists emphasize both the social construction of gender and the intersectionality of gender with other dimensions of social power: race, class, sexuality, and so on, as well as the idea that language and knowledge construct reality rather than reflecting it. They deny the possibility of universality or neutrality.

Her later work on the role of poor women in the Millennial Development⁸ project draws on these complex ideas of power and agency, through her discussion of how planning (in this case in the form of microcredit programs and discourse) creates subjects of entrepreneurial risk (Roy, 2012c). The global woman is framed as an agent of development transformation, part of a long lineage of planning's constructions of subjects needing improvement; of poor women, in particular, as targets and vectors for achieving change. Specific planning interventions are enabled by, and also help constitute, technologies of gender, race, and class. Further, Roy insists that the legitimate terrain of contestation extends into the halls of power and World Bank microfinance summits, through the dreamworlds of hegemonic rationalities and down the middle of technocratic hearts.

⁸ Her term echoes the dominant discourse of the "Millennial Development Goals"—a set of eight international development goals adopted by the United Nations—to invoke the widespread ambition to end global poverty that emerged around the turn of the century.

■ *The Double Agent*

The concept of double agents, as I have articulated in my work, is also a way of paying homage to the various intellectual traditions on which I depend: postcolonial feminism (Spivak), Marxist urban theory (Harvey), cultural studies (Willis, Hall), and black thought (Du Bois, Gilroy, Fanon, Mbembe). In the last few months, I have been immersing myself in rereadings of black thought. In my scholarship and in the conceptual work of launching the new institute at UCLA, I have been returning to classics such as *Black Reconstruction* and *Black Atlantic* to think about doubleness. In particular, I am taken with the idea of an “ethics of freedom” (especially since the poor people’s movements I study and hope to journey with insist on such an imagination) that must be understood from the standpoint of the slave.

This right here is doubleness—how does the subject who is necessarily dispossessed, in fact dispossessed of humanity and personhood, come to be the pivot of freedom? You will notice that this is a different take on doubleness (a more optimistic one?) than my previous work. But it is simply the companion to my earlier arguments about complicity/subversion. It is also an attempt to respond to the extraordinary moment that is unfolding in the United States, one that reminds us of the unfinished work of black power and black liberation, which in turn echoes with worldwide struggles for decolonization. It is time for urban planning to participate, in serious and sustained fashion, in this work.

(Ananya, interviewed on January 3, 2016)

This more generous distribution of the possibilities of subversion and critique opens up new lines of inquiry and action. It stands as a challenge to hydraulic models of repression/resistance, in which oppressions are imagined to call forth an oppositional force of resistance. What is resistance when complicities are unavoidable and the battleground includes the terrain of subjectivity formation and the boundaries of legitimate knowledge production practices? On the one hand, by foregrounding middling bureaucrats and subversive “double agents,” Roy fractures any lingering Marxist sureties of the historical subject (Roy, 2010, 2012b). In his response to *Poverty Capital*, Michael Watts wonders how to differentiate between Roy’s double agents and what Gramsci (1971) calls “minor politics”: the “partial and daily issues taken up within an already established structure for the struggle for primacy among different factions of the same political class” (Santucci, 2010, p. 173; Watts, 2012, p. 540). Here, the provocation is to use ethnography as a means to disentangle situated complexity and retain the simultaneity of critique and consent, of subversion and subsumption.

Roy insists on agonistic politics, in contrast to the ideas of consensus, and communicates action that has characterized much of planning theory in recent years (Mouffe, 2005; Roy, 2001). As a direct challenge to Habermassian ideals of consensus through procedural protection of ideal speech conditions, foregrounding agonism is also an intervention into planning theory's oversubscription to communicative action (as discussed in Judith Innes' booklet on communicative theory: Machler & Miltz [2015]). However, this move also retains an objection to the easy bifurcation between the programmer and critic in which only the latter is inscribed with incisive political capacity (Li, 2007). The ground on which the critic stands (read: ethnographer; left intellectual) is revealed as shaky and troubled, decidedly outside innocence.

■ *The Politics Of Representation*

The question of politics must also encompass the question of representation: who speaks in planning? For whom do planners speak? The politics inherent in all projects of representation trouble our narrations of contingency, unintelligibility, and unresolvable internal contradiction. Roy often turns to the postcolonial theorist Gayatri Spivak and her overarching concern with the impossibility of representing the subaltern through the logics and hegemonic practices of the Western academy (Spivak, 1999); the construction of the "poor woman" as a gendered and often racialized subject at the heart of planning, as planning conceives of its interventions through the relations between its interlocutors and the subjects it constructs as in need of planning (Roy, 2002). "Under conditions of crisis, the subaltern subject is simultaneously strategic and self-exploitative, simultaneously a political agent and a subject of the neoliberal grand slam" (Roy, 2009b, p. 827).

Inciting further complication, the subaltern Other unavoidably transmutes into commodity in any "political economy of academic production" (Roy, 2002, p. 231). Both Spivak and Roy are committed to a nonparalytic deconstruction, rejecting an ethics of "disavowal and refusal," and engaging critique to open up new possibilities for imagination and action (Roy, 2006, p. 23). In this, Roy cites Jane M. Jacobs and calls for the spatial sciences of geography and planning to move toward productive post-colonial spatial narratives (Jacobs, 2012). She holds the planner/academic/ethnographer responsible and accountable not just for unlearning the histories of representation and power, but for what comes after the critique.

Roy's call engages an ethnographic ethic of feminist self-reflexivity, a challenge that is, to the suppositions that easy bonds of solidarity can be drawn between researcher and informant (Stacey, 1988). Roy's notion of ethics implicates herself as a researcher and writer. She follows Spivak's caution in always making the subject explicit; writing against the vanishing transparency of the Western subject, her own voice and presence trace throughout her work, so that we do not lose sight of her as a researcher. Spivak's work makes explicit this moral "responsibility" that she and Roy internalize in their work as writers and teachers. Roy draws on Foucault's discussions of the "constitution of oneself as a moral subject"; practices of the self are how we come to know ourselves as ethical subjects (Roy, 2015a, p. 25).

For me, the most important aspect of a postcolonial approach is its critique of our tools of representation, of our archives, of our frames, of our vocabulary. The point is not to represent the authentic subaltern accurately. This is impossible. Instead it is to think from that impossibility about how we constitute power through our systems of knowledge. For me, that auto-critique is political potentiality because it challenges us to remake what we are most complicit in—the coloniality of thought.

(Ananya Roy, interviewed on January 3, 2016)

3. What Is Space?

I promised to show you a map you say but this is a mural then yes let it be these are small distinctions where do we see it from is the question. Adrienne Rich, “Here is a map of our country” (Rich, 1991).

Roy calls for rethinking the geographies of urban and planning theory, in particular by interrogating the relationship between theory, space, and place. This interrogation draws attention to the relationship between the places we study and the generation of theory; it frames theories as irretrievably linked to the places in which they are produced. These are not abstract questions but embodied, political ones: “Politics and space are inextricably linked” (Roy, 2009a, p. 9). Roy uses postcolonial theory to demand this reckoning on epistemological terrain: offering a spatial ethicopolitics for the production of knowledge. Roy invokes the feminist poet Adrienne Rich to engage the problematics of the “politics of location” (Rich, 1994; Roy, 2002, p. 22). *City Requiem* (2002) was the product of Roy’s early disorientation with planning and urban theory, derived from the predominance of planning theories based on studies of Western cities. If the theories she learned were useless in Calcutta, what theories could emerge from such a place? Roy teases out these potentials for exposing and disrupting the spatial politics of knowledge production. Can places like Calcutta generate urban theory? It is not just the places themselves left “off the map” that diminish our knowledge (Robinson, 2002), but our attachment to particular conceptions of space that fail to reflect the world. A conception of the metropolis as politically coherent, as having a “universal” shape, which can be applied with variations to any place, forecloses our understanding rather than expanding it.

■ *Locating Knowledge, Provincializing Theory*

What can we see and *from where* is no small question. To claim that the ground from which we speak matters is to stake out crucial political territory in longstanding battles over the boundaries of authorized knowing and practices of truth-speaking. Feminist and postcolonial theory reject the pretense that dis-interested, dis-embodied, “dis-located” knowledge is desirable or possible (Roy, 2009b, p. 822). Archimedes was wrong: there is no “god’s eye view” from which to view the world “objectively,” and our thorough imbrication in our projects of producing knowledge must therefore reckon with the predicament (Haraway, 1988).

Both feminist and postcolonial literatures unmask the ethical projects and epistemological pretensions of liberalism and its variants as Trojan horses, smuggling in predefined universalisms, hegemonic sense-making categories, and constrained visions of possible urban futures. These projects of epistemological domination must be unmasked as such. Edward Said’s “traveling theory” is a crucial antecedent, considering the embodied movement, situated appropriations, and transmutations of ideas as they move. Said suggests that theories can travel, without becoming rigid ideology, only when they remain answerable to situated histories and the specificities of place, contingencies he calls “the essential untidiness” of all social processes (Said, 2007, p. 210)."

■ *The Spatial Politics Of Knowledge Production*

In Roy's influential call for "new geographies of theory" (2009), she argues that the center of gravity for 21st century urbanization has shifted. The geographic locus of urban theory's production must be dislocated and reemplaced in the global South, allowing for "multiple forms of metropolitan modernities" (Roy, 2009b, p. 819). However, this multiplicity of non-Western urbanity must be thought outside the rubric of "big but powerless"; moving beyond the frame of such cities as home to population growth and not generators of contemporary urban processes (Roy, 2011b, p. 308). Beyond a mere demographic imperative, studying cities of the South enables us to understand "radically new assemblages of capital and labor" (Comaroff & Comaroff, 2012, p. 10).

Roy's deconstruction of the divisions between what is considered "practice" or "empirics" versus "Theory" comes full circle when what we take for granted about the "developed" world is dismantled using knowledge and theory produced in "other" places. Recently, Roy has turned her attention to the era of 1960s U.S. community development, and to the production of dominant narratives about progress, dependency, and freedom in the United States. The possibilities of reading Detroit and Philadelphia from Santiago, Cape Town, and Dublin are enormously productive. Roy's work grounds Western theory in place, dismantles the notion of "placeless" theory, making new approaches to comparison and critique possible.

■ *Coherence And Difference*

In 2015, this debate gained renewed traction in a series of articles in *IJURR*, reflecting the work done by postcolonial theorists to push new conceptions of space. This debate can be characterized in part as a contrast between those wedded to the idea of "coherence" of the city versus those seeking to bring an expansive notion of *difference* that necessarily disrupts that conceptual coherence. In this exchange, Roy writes, "what is of concern to me here is the stakes of this type of a coherent concept of the city" (Roy, 2015b, p. 12). If a coherent theory claims to define the political economy of all cities (Roy, 2015b, p. 11); and yet there remain places that it does not explain, what remains of the theory? The ambition toward a coherent concept of any city is a "fiction of power" (Roy, 2015b, p. 12) positioned against the implicitly parochial stories of places that lie outside. The defense of these coherent theories of the urban reflects an anxiety, Roy argues, that provokes yet a further attempt at coherence, at stabilizing an idea of the urban that her work, among that of many others, seeks to dissolve. What is at stake in defending a stable concept of the urban; what is lost to our understanding of global capitalism (Roy, 2015b)? The alternative to coherence is not idiosyncrasy or particularism, but *difference*. The work of those seeking to make theory from the global South interrogates the "idea" of Europe, bringing to light the "historical difference through which that particular place on the map has been produced" (Roy, 2015b, p. 14). Thus, the work of theorists writing from the global South is not simply a project of expansion but one of destabilization.

Accordingly, new geographies of theory push beyond the compilation of empirical material from diverse Third World locales to be absorbed into bodies of theory that remain unperturbed by the encounter. Rather, urban theory itself must be transformed through the reckoning. To do this, Roy calls for a “paradoxical combination of specificity and generalizability” (Roy, 2009b, p. 820) in which located theories of socio-spatial relations, always produced from somewhere, can be strategically appropriated to explain processes elsewhere. This approach troubles the common and erroneous conflation of the concrete with the local, a move which Doreen Massey explains “[confuses] geographical scale with processes of abstraction in thought” (Massey, 1994, p. 129). How can we reconcile the necessity of emplaced theory with the danger of reifying contemporary spatial categories, like world regions or Westphalian nation-states? Here, Roy emphasizes Appadurai’s “process geographies” (Appadurai, 2000; Roy, 2009b, p. 821) as a means of simultaneously emplacing theory-making while underscoring contemporary territorial containers as “problematic heuristic devices ... [not] permanent geographic facts” (Olds, 2001, p. 129; Roy, 2009b, p. 822). Roy draws on Appadurai’s analytic metaphor of “scapes” (Appadurai, 1990) and “overlapping disjunctive orders” (Roy, 2009b, p. 825). But, while Appadurai and others overemphasize flows, circulation, and deterritorialization, Roy highlights the spaces and moments of reterritorialization.

The postcolonial reframing that Roy advocates exceeds what Mignolo (2005) calls excavations of the “colonial wound” (Mignolo, 2005, p. xii; Roy, 2011b, p. 308), the sedimentary layering of economic exploitation and epistemic violence animated by the legacies of empire, imperialism, and ritualized brutality underwriting the “civilizing” process. Rather, it is a productive deconstruction of the dominant rationalities and practices of scholarships which undergird the “hegemonic territorial imaginary of the world” (Amin, 2004, p. 33); “To see from the South is not to replace one location of theory with another but instead to rethink the territory of thought itself” (Roy, 2015a, p. 16). The coherent concept of the city as itself misrepresents the operation of margins in the city as outside liberalism or modernity. These same margins are the places from which Roy and many others are asserting the right to make theory (Roy, 2015b). These margins are a plural and diverse set of places—both the American suburb and the ghetto, the global derivatives market and Calcutta—and we must challenge the notions of such places as ungoverned territories (Roy & Crane, 2015, p. 10).

■ *Critical Transnationalism And Worlding*

Roy’s work is also a call for new imaginations of globalized interconnection. The current moment, what Roy calls “millennial development,” promises the “end of poverty” yet operates through liberal spatial categories of Westphalian states, territorial citizenship, and militarized borders, differentially transversed by global flows of migrants, money, and merchandise. Roy asks what new spatial imaginations might provoke emancipatory imaginations of space, subjectivity, and power while still seeing political-economic unevenness and “politically organized subjection” (Abrams, 1988, p. 63). Rather than thinking through the term “global,” which calls forth a sense of a flattening world of globalization moving toward equalization of access to economic opportunity, the frame “critical transnationalism” directs attention toward uneven geographies and enables different ways of thinking.

One aspect of this postcolonial move within urban theory is to challenge the world cities approach (Sassen, 2001; Taylor, 2000), which Roy does with alternative theories of transnationalism and worlding. The world cities typology imagines a small number of North Atlantic city regions as avatars of late capitalism, command and control centers of a new territorial organization of the globalized economy. Inside such an imagination, there is a tendency to transpose “spatial difference into historical sequence” (Robinson, 2006, p. 4) and a consequent relegation of Southern cities to the lower rungs of a developmentalist ladder. Most cities of the world simply fall “off the map” or are reduced to sites of interesting empirical evidence, but not sites productive of generalizable theory (Robinson, 2002).

Roy’s wager displaces imaginations of a global urban ecology with “dynamic topologies and deep relationalities” (Roy, 2009b, p. 821). On the one hand, Roy stages a departure from neo-Marxists and the regulation school with their focus on urban accumulation, uneven development, the spatial fix (Harvey, 1989; Smith, 1996), and modes of regulation in the context of capitalism’s cyclical crises (Brenner & Theodore, 2002; Jessop, 1994). Roy makes this call in her ongoing work with Aihwa Ong using the analytic of worlding (Ong & Roy, 2011). Rather than seeing local instantiations of global dynamics or a universal postcolonial historical trajectory, worlding is more attentive to conjuncture, mutation, assemblage, and contingency. It is a means to analyze “a multitude of performative and speculative enterprises” animated and interconnected by “geographic references” and “forms of coloniality,” but which is simultaneously provincial and global, interconnected across geographic distance and emplaced (Roy, 2011b, p. 311). The city then becomes understood as “a field of intervention” (Ong, 2011, p. 3) and “a milieu of experimentation” for an array of worlding practices (Ong, 2011, p. 23).

■ *Territories And Informality*

A final space of counterpolitics and incompleteness in planning theory’s conceptions of space is in the relationship between legality and illegality (Roy, 2009a, p. 9). Roy understands informality to be set of practices that have not just been overlooked by planning’s canon but territories that are vital to understanding planning itself, that represent “the failure of planning to regulate, manage, map, and control the ‘other’ that eludes planning” (Roy, 2009a, p. 9). There is no “outside planning”; these spaces that planning deems unfamiliar are constituted by the very interventions that define planning’s ambitions (Roy, 2005). Informality has a “territorial logic”; it is a form of spatial governance, not an ungoverned space. Roy uses the idea of territory to mean space as a political category, rather than space as a container (Roy, 2012c, p. 138). She invokes both Elden and Foucault by framing territory as a “political technology,” involving both techniques and ways of conceiving of the world (Roy & Crane, 2015).

Space is “an ever-shifting social geometry of power and signification” (Massey, 1994, p. 3) and, throughout her work, Roy asks after the spatiality of power. In this vein, Roy exacts a shift in the sprawling literature on urban informality toward the grounded interrogation of specific exercises of territorialized power that produce urban environments that are (mis)read as informal or unplanned. In such zones, state authorities can gain maximum flexibility to extract value from land through territorial hedging, leaving land-use classifications open, and contingently authorizing development based on the relative power of political alliances rather than adherence to the law or a master plan (Holston, 2008). Rather than seeing informality as a sphere of activity operating outside and against the state, Roy demonstrates how it is, instead, “a key socio-spatial technique of regime power” (Roy, 2002, p. 144, 2005). And so, state actors purposively produce “gray” space (Yiftachel, 2009) and engage in projects of “unmapping” (Roy, 2002, p. 135), which hegemony is enacted through “unceasing negotiability” (Roy, 2002, p. 18). In one register, the state operates through its capacities to enact a sort of state of exception (Agamben, 2005), that is “the capacity to construct and reconstruct categories of legitimacy and illegitimacy” (Roy, 2005, p. 149). But in another, urban informality becomes a mode of the production of urban space. Such practices contribute to the active production of “an uneven geography of spatial value,” shifting terrains of accumulation that state actors both actively shape and benefit from (Roy, 2007, p. xx). And so, we see Calcutta as a material instantiation of everyday socio-spatial relations of power, as the “city is itself produced through the politics of poverty” (Roy, 2002, p. 21). Roy’s notion of informality is written against the popularizing of “informality” as an organizing concept for developmentalist intervention and a politics of entrepreneurialism. Thus, the ways in which we explain alternative spatialities of governance circle us back to the objects of planning intervention; there is no conception of space separate from how we theorize the people who occupy it.

I am interested not in whether De Soto is right or wrong in his interpretation of the informal economy. Instead, I am interested in why his ideas are so seductive at this particular historical conjuncture. Similarly, I think the seduction of the “informal” is that it allows a romanticization of the subaltern. It becomes possible to celebrate the valiant practices of the urban poor, their self-help techniques, the aesthetics of their urbanism. Most important, it makes possible our role as what Spivak would dub the “card-carrying listeners,” giving voice to the subaltern, representing their informality, valorizing their informality through our academic and professional practices. Needless to say all of this fits nicely with a neoliberal moment (did I really use this term?), one in which the role of the state continues to be denigrated and one in which ideologies of self-responsibility are preserved and perpetuated, often in novel guises. [Ananya]

4. What Is Ethics?

... Ethics is the experience of the impossible. (Spivak, 1996, p. 270)

Planning theory has always been concerned with ethical questions, as a professional practice and in more complex ways as a moral project, with aspirations of justice. Many planning theorists grapple with the question of which metrics of justice to use, what tests of equity, and the planner's role in weighing the scales of justice at stake in a policy, or in remedying injustices. Roy's work challenges the framing of planning as an ethical practice while the motivating definitions of justice often go unexamined.

■ *Feminist Praxis And Postcolonial Ethics*

The discipline of planning carries many milestones—colonial legacies of the exclusionary dual city, racist projects of urban renewal, and contemporary urban enclaving. Planners can and do act as “handmaidens of state repression” (Kamete, 2009, p. 897) or as key agents legitimizing projects of producing space for capital (Castells, 1977). Planning must reckon with its “duplicitous relationship to processes of capitalist accumulation and liberal notions of benevolent trusteeship.” (K. N. Rankin, 2009, p. 219). Yet, the discipline also has a long history of striving to be a force for good, as shown by impulses evident in the paradigm shifts from planning as rational comprehensive endeavor to advocacy to communicative practice; efforts, albeit incomplete, to internalize an ethical responsibility into planning theory itself. Unlike most social science disciplines, planning is uniquely committed to both analyzing and intervening in the social world, and the planning academy to training professional planners (Roy, 2011c). So, what are we to make of an ethics of planning?

Roy first draws our attention to how the subjects of planning intervention—the residents of the tenements, for example—are viewed as moral actors. These moral framings fit within a vision of developmentalism (the notion that developing countries will be best served by pursuing a development path modeled on the capitalist economies of the West) that rests on a modern project of creating the liberal subject. Roy (2012c), following Hart (1986) and Rankin (2001), applies feminist theory to the question of how women are enlisted in developmentalism, how poor women are made and remade as subjects necessary to the workings of the millennial development project (G. P. Hart, 1986; K. N. Rankin, 2001; Roy, 2012c). This work seeks to invert the imaginations of planners and planning theorists, redirecting attention away from the prototypical “objects” of development—the Third World Woman, informal settlements, the ghetto—toward the ethics, practices, and rationalities of experts and planners. This is, first, a project of unlearning: deep listening, reflexivity, and action calls for the “decolonization of the planner's imagination” (Miraftab, 2009, p. 45).

These understandings of ethics also mandate a theory of the relationship between ethics and space: “The spatial is social relations ‘stretched out’” (Massey, 1994, p. 2). Perhaps, Roy suggests, “new spatial imaginations may lead us to new ethical frameworks” (Roy, 2011c, p. 7). Here Roy deploys a Lefebvrian understanding of the production of space (Lefebvre, 1974), including the everyday, counterhegemonic practices of representing, imagining, and occupying space as a means to link ethics and place. However, the demanding right to the city framework may exclude important ethical and ontological modalities of praxis. And so, Roy draws on Rancière, who links dwelling, modes of being, and forms of action: “Ethics, then is the kind of thinking in which an identity is established between an environment, a way of being, and a principle of action” (Rancière, 2009, p.109; Roy, 2011a). It is this inseparability between action, being, and spatiality that demands critical reflection and engagement (Roy, 2011a).

■ *Ethics As Accountability*

This engagement contains within it accountability, something different from the responsibility that often characterizes planners’ explorations of ethical obligation. This literature refuses the commonplace conceptualization of time and space that allows the abrogation of responsibility: “that is over there where they are still catching up to us over here and therefore their poverty is not our fault” (Sparke, 2006, p. 399). However, this does not then collapse into consolidating the impetus and agency for responsible action into the figure of the powerful (Massey, 1994, p. 194). But can the notion of responsibility be reclaimed? Spivak (2008) notes that the project of international development claims for itself “the dominant global denomination of Responsibility” (Spivak, 2008, p. 85). Rather than repurposing the term, postcolonial scholars suggest the need for a new frame focused on shared, violent histories and the multiple forms of enabling complicities that undergird contemporary distributions of vulnerability. Roy follows Spivak in calling for accountability or answerability. Accountability invokes a more reciprocal engagement, underscores the need for avenues of redress, and insists on carving out discursive space for the Other to exist and engage, even if this task can only cite the impossibility of representation. Spivak states, “If deconstruction comes tangled with responsibility to the trace of the other, the reader(s) stand(s) in here as the indefinite narrow sense of that radically other which cannot even (have or) be a face” (Spivak, 2008, p. 85). And so, accountability commits to relationships and writing that prioritize answering back, while foregrounding the constraints inherent in their production.

I am struck by the deafening silence of the discipline on some of the momentous protests and processes unfolding around us—be it austerity protests in Europe or racial justice struggles in the United States.

When Occupy Wall Street took place, and when the movement started crafting a politics of horizontal democracy, experimenting with an ambitious form of the general assembly, I had hoped that planning theory (in its obsession with democratic process and communicative action) would have something interesting and useful to say.

When #BlackLivesMatter challenged us all to think about racial terror, when it foregrounded the long histories of spatialized exclusion in cities like Baltimore and Ferguson, I thought planning theory would have something interesting and useful to say.

But very little has been said by urban planning as a discipline on these matters. Even less has been said by urban planning departments, schools, and journals.

(Ananya Roy, interviewed on January 3, 2016)

■ Liberalism And The Encounter

One of planning's bogeymen is the liberal modernity that continues to frame ideas of intervention and morality; the construction of poverty, for example, as a problem to be solved. Roy invokes Patrick Joyce: the "agonism of liberalism—its definition of itself as a moral struggle" (Joyce, 2003, p. 261; Roy, 2012c, p. 132). The moral promise of liberalism is embodied in many responses to poverty, and even to its responses to critique—Roy highlights the quick adoption of "ethics principles" by the global microfinance community in response to concerns about the possibilities of exploitation and subjugation embodied in the microfinance approach (Roy, 2012a). This layering on of ethical impulse—the delineation of behaviors rather than deep engagement with the political tensions embodied in the policy approach itself—is reflective of the liberal project (Roy, 2012c, p.136). Roy engages black cultural studies as a means to interrogate "the limits of the liberal moral order ... [where] Benjamin's 'hellish Modernity' is revealed" (Roy, 2006, p. 21).

The encounter is an essential part of the story we tell ourselves about what it means to be modern—the ability to see poverty, to map it, produces a "consciousness" of moral failing and the simultaneous creation of a moral obligation (Roy, 2012c, p. 146). This attention to poverty is also a striving for social order; one that requires managing the disorder inevitably described along with poverty. Concepts do not have their own nature separate from their association with poverty. Welfare. Disorder. Informality. The who and the where are essential aspects of the what.

Roy confronts this simple frame in her *Praxis in the Time of Empire* (2006), a discussion of the ethical responsibilities facing planning at a time of war. The multiple ethical dilemmas facing planning in the face of the U.S. invasion of Iraq, she argues, are understandable only by defining the time of Empire as planning's "present history," understanding the possibilities of action as "structured by imperial practices" (Roy, 2006, p. 8). The observed practices of "everyday resistance" that she is attentive to in her work are a means to see the "complex interworkings of historically changing structures of power" (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 53).

Patsy Healey



Ananya Roy connects broad issues about poverty and injustice to how this is experienced in the daily lives of people who have to navigate so many challenges—economic, social, and political—to find a way of surviving. It demonstrates rich ethnographic research and a fine grasp of the theoretical and political issues at stake. The result is an analysis that interweaves structural dynamics and agency initiative in a way not dissimilar to my own empirical work.

It is also interesting that Ananya shifts the focus of her work from the daily life of poor women in Calcutta to the way global “development and aid” institutions try to exert a hegemonic reach across the development field, coopting and crowding out local initiative.

While Ananya is more identified with “urban studies” than I am, we both seem to share a deep normative commitment to challenging and seeking to change regressive forces when we come across them, and to recognize the way such forces are inscribed, but also subverted, in people’s daily life experiences.

Despite the different trajectories of our empirical work, I found it very stimulating to work with Ananya when she contributed a chapter to our “Crossing Borders” collection, on the transnational flow of planning ideas. It was clear to me then that she was among the best scholars of what, for me, is the “next generation” of planning academics, and I know she has inspired many with her work on poverty in its many manifestations in urban contexts. She has also played a key role in bringing the experiences of Asian cities into the center of urban and planning academic discourse, thereby challenging many of the established modes of thought and analysis in our fields.

Patsy Healey

School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape
Newcastle University. December 2015

Conclusion

Territories Of Poverty And The Encounter

Planning theory, of course, is circulated and reproduced not just through books and journal articles, but through other forms of engagement, including the classroom. Roy sees her classroom as a space of encounter: the hundreds of well-intentioned “millennial” students that have walked into her Global Poverty classroom at UC Berkeley find themselves being lectured about the advent of European modernity. Their early readings include a tale of the encounter between the modern urban dweller, strolling in the evening, and the figure of the poor. This space of encounter—characterized by a modern self-consciousness of inequality—sets the tone for an investigation that is as much about the student as it is about poverty.

This emphasis on the encounter implicates students in various territories of poverty. Their own position—as students at an elite research university; as children of lawyers, farmworkers, professors, waiters; as residents of the most powerful nation in the world; as skeptics and idealists—becomes central to the question of poverty, not ancillary to it. Roy begins her class with this literature to convince her students that poverty and inequality are not unfortunate byproducts of modern liberalism, or unintended failures of planning processes. The very notion of ending poverty is intertwined with the project of modernity and, subsequently, part of a colonial project and then a millennial one.

Roy’s work began by exploring poverty as a lived experience with complex relationships to planning and urban theory. She interrogates poverty in multiple ways: as a form of governance, an object of intervention, a vehicle for creating global subjects. Most recently, she asks: what is the story planning tells itself about the war on poverty? Most often, we read stories of policy failures in the ghetto, of legacies of discrimination relegated to history’s dustbin; as stories of the failure of the liberal ideal; we witness ongoing revision and hand-wringing over slow progress toward the Millennium Development Goals. By examining these stories, Roy’s ongoing focus on poverty reveals the ways in which planning constructs an image of itself, in which urban modernity’s aspiration is continually reimagined as the consequences of history follow us (Buck-Morss & Benjamin, 1989).

In *Gray Areas* (Roy et al., 2015a) and “The Anti-Poverty Hoax” (Roy, Schrader, and Crane, 2015b), Emma Shaw Crane and Stuart Schrader and I try to rethink the history of community development in the United States, linking the war on poverty at home with imperialism abroad. This has been important research for me, especially because so many brilliant young people are drawn to urban planning because they see it as a space of community organizing. A postcolonial approach to the history of community action/development allows us to see the entanglement of self-help and self-determination, of bureaucracies of poverty and poor people’s movements. It allows us to recognize limits but also to find political potentiality.

(Ananya, interviewed on January 3, 2016)

The actual identity of a place, a construct such as Europe, as poverty, as the global, cannot be “wrenched apart” from the idea of the thing (Roy, 2015b, p. 6). The construction of Western poverty versus global South poverty, important at a time when debates over the differentiated nature and experience of U.S. poverty—black poverty versus white poverty—have become central to the growing chorus of debate about racial politics. The management and regulation of poverty is itself a social problem, one of many possible answers to a book that asks, “What kind of a problem is poverty?” (Katz, 2015; Roy & Crane, 2015, p. 12). The reemergence of poverty, especially “global poverty” as a public concern, an “emergent field of practice and intervention” as well as a field of knowledge, brings urgency to this critique (Roy & Crane, 2015, p. 11). The production of poverty knowledge occurs in the midst of millennial engagement, a time when an ethics of “global citizenship” is being articulated and explored. In response, Roy (2012a, p. 547), seeks to “redefine the terrain of poverty ethnography” from the fields and huts of the poor to the places where poverty truths are told and circulate.

We need theories that interrogate not just how and why poverty emerges but “how poverty is governed as a problem” (Roy & Crane, 2015, p. 2). Beginning with her exploration of the world of microfinance, Roy has been curious about the rationalities of poverty alleviation that emerge from within neoliberalism. In her most recent work, Roy and Crane call into question the normalization of places like the American foreclosed suburb, the spaces of “racialized and financialized impoverishment” that come to define American narratives of poverty (Roy & Crane, 2015). These spaces require attention to the present history of U.S. poverty, and so she turns her gaze back to the era of great policy expansion, using the war on poverty to build on connections between American and Third World poverty scholarship (Roy & Crane, 2015, p. 9).

Roy's approach to the classroom highlights the importance she gives to the work of defamiliarizing planning, countering the dominant regimes of theory, and understanding the ways in which planning itself is implicated in the crises it then sets out to solve (Roy, 2009a, p. 9). All planners are drawn to a normative, even moral project; perhaps the most surprising thing to come out of Roy's reckonings with planning theory is something that could be described as hope.

At Berkeley, undergraduate students flocked to Roy's course on Global Poverty, "grappling with the allure and the contradictions of liberal benevolence" (Rankin, 2012, p. 522). Roy takes undergraduates—and planners—at their word and examines the implications of their well-intentioned complicity. She offers an informed political economy that takes genuine interest in the limits of hegemony to explain people's own understandings of themselves and their commitment to address, among other things, poverty. Her emerging project at UCLA to connect poor people's movements with the planning academy is a new space of encounter that takes all that benevolence, complicity, hegemony, and self-reflexivity and uses it to tell us something about planning, and about hope.

My commitment to urban planning is rooted in how I view the history of the discipline and profession. This is why conceptualizing and teaching CP 200 (History of City Planning) at UC Berkeley mattered so much to me. I would argue that the history of Anglo-American urban planning is shaped as much by anarchism as by bureaucratic centralism, as much as by the efforts to rethink property as the institutions that defend property, as much by social movements as by social engineering. This is the inherent agonism in urban planning. It is similar to the agonism within liberalism itself. And this intrigues me. It makes me hopeful about urban planning. But it also indicates the work that must be done to seize and broaden political openings. I rely on feminist and postcolonial thought because they make possible the attention to radical politics. I also rely on them because they reveal how urban planning has been constituted through a set of violences and silences, such as racialized exclusion and colonialism.

With this in mind, here is one opening I am hopeful about:

The Southern debates about urban planning (by which I mean debates informed by intellectual traditions of the South) challenge liberal traditions and boldly articulate planning's relationship to social change. This might very well make space for "decolonizing" planning or a version of "insurgent" planning, those that can use the "master's tools" to occupy the master's house, if not dismantle it.

Perhaps this is best reflected in the practices of poor people's movements, whether they are in the global South or North. My current research is on some of these movements, including the Chicago Anti-Eviction Campaign. I am struck by how such movements both contest and deploy the tools of planning.

(Ananya, interviewed on January 3, 2016)

Important Works Of Ananya Roy

City Requiem, Calcutta: Gender and the Politics of Poverty (2002)

“Urban informality: Toward an epistemology of planning”, *Journal of the American Planning Association*, 71(2), 147–158. (2005)

“The 21st century metropolis: New geographies of theory”, *Regional Studies*, 43(6) 819–830. (2009)

Poverty Capital: Microfinance and the Making of Development (2010)

Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global (2011), co-edited with Aihwa Ong (2011)

“Slumdog cities: Rethinking subaltern urbanism”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 35(2), 223–238. (2011)

“Slum-free cities of the Asian century: Postcolonial government and the project of inclusive growth”, *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography*, 35(1), 136–150. (2014)

Territories of Poverty: Rethinking North and South (2015), co-edited with Emma Shaw Crane
Encountering Poverty (2016), co-authored with Genevieve Negron-Gonzales, Kweku Opoku-Agyemang, Clare Talwalker

“Who is afraid of postcolonial theory?”, *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 40(1), 200–209. (2016)

“What is urban about critical urban theory?”, *Urban Geography*, 37(6), 810–823. (2016)

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Appendix

PATSY HEALEY

Patsy Healey is Professor Emeritus in the School of Architecture, Planning and Landscape at Newcastle University. She has qualifications in Geography and Planning and is a specialist in planning theory and practice, with a particular interest in strategic spatial planning for city regions and in urban regeneration policies. She is also known for her work on planning theory.

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Yiftachel teaches urban studies and political geography at Ben-Gurion University, Beersheba. His research has focused on critical understandings of the relations between space, power, and conflict. Yiftachel holds the Lloyd Hurst Family Chair in Urban Studies. He is an activist who has worked with a range of human rights and civil society organizations, including the RCUV (Council for Unrecognized Bedouin Villages), Adva (Center for Social Equality), and as the chair of B'Tselem, monitoring human rights violations in the Palestinian Territories. Recently, he founded with colleagues a new decolonizing peace movement for Israel/Palestine: "Two states, one homeland."

Exploring Abstractions in the Planning Debate

Reckonings and Encounters: The work of Ananya Roy

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ISBN/EAN: 9789082819113

Final draft submitted in February 2017

Ananya Roy is Professor of Urban Planning, Social Welfare and Geography and inaugural Director of the Institute on Inequality and Democracy at UCLA Luskin. She holds The Meyer and Renee Luskin Chair in Inequality and Democracy. Previously she was on the faculty at the University of California, Berkeley, where she founded and played a leadership role in several academic programs including those concerned with poverty research and poverty action. Ananya's research and scholarship has a determined focus on poverty and inequality and lies in four domains: how the urban poor in cities from Kolkata to Chicago face and fight eviction, foreclosure, and displacement; how global financialization, working in varied realms from microfinance to real-estate speculation, creates new markets in debt and risk; how the efforts to manage and govern the problem of poverty reveal the contradictions and limits of liberal democracy; how economic prosperity and aspiration in the global South is creating new potentialities for programs of human development and social welfare. Ananya is the recipient of several awards including the Paul Davidoff book award, which recognizes scholarship that advances social justice, for *Poverty Capital: Microfinance and the Making of Development* (Routledge, 2010); the Distinguished Teaching Award, the highest teaching recognition that the University of California, Berkeley bestows on its faculty; and the Excellence in Achievement award of the Cal Alumni Association, a lifetime achievement award which celebrates her contributions to the University of California and public sphere.

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