Introduction

Deborah Martin and Mark Davidson

community [com-mu-ni-ty] ~ a social group of any size whose members reside in a physical or virtual locality, share government and/or often have a common cultural and historical heritage

In the final collection of chapters in the text, we explore the city as community. We use the term 'community' broadly here, since each author will offer a slightly different interpretation of community. If we take 'community' to mean some kind of social grouping, we can identify all types of community associations that any one individual might have in the city. For example, you might be a member of the female, working-class, ethnic minority who votes for green candidates in elections. Our entry point of 'community' there examines the city has a space that has, and indeed constructs, certain types of communities.

Marx famously described capitalist societies that were divided into social classes as alienated (*entfremdung*). Social relations between human beings had become structured in and through the capitalist economy. This alienation was three-fold, involving the work being alienated from the products of labour, the act of labour itself and, lastly, alienated from workers themselves. This type of commentary should not be unfamiliar by now. If we look back to the early urban sociologists, we find descriptions of the ways in which close social bond and associations had been

replaced by weak and strategic relations that were structured through the market place. So what does constitute community in this context?

Since the 1980s urban geographers, amongst others, have been much more concerned with this question. Feminist, postmodern and post-structuralist theory all helped bring attention to the various forms of identity and community that had remained overlooked by those focused on politico-economic approaches to the city. Rather than simply seeing alienated individuals and class divisions, the urban literature began to reflect a concern with gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality and so on. What these literatures have done is make urban scholarship much more cognisant of the numerous modes of community that go into making up the urban populace. In doing so we are now much more aware of the contestations and struggles that various social groups have undertaken in the city. Many of these struggles have taken place either outside or at an arms-length from the state. As such many traditional state-centric approaches to urban politics might miss them. The question of whether to focus upon urban politics as a state-based phenomenon is a contentious one.

If we follow the theory of politics that Jacque Rancière (1999) developed, then we find an emphasis upon 'the part of those who have no part'. These social groups, who are only defined by their unequal status in society, are by definition disconnected from institutional politics. The state is the site of policing and, as such, must be devoid of latent politics unless it is fully realizing its democratic status. If we approach urban politics from this perspective, we are pulled firmly from a focus on municipal and state institutions either on the scalar or relational basis. In some degree this is a function of Rancière's attempt to reformulate democracy into a certain logic of social change that cannot be viewed as derived from institutional arrangements (i.e.

parliamentary debate, free elections, majority voting, etc.). Simon Critchley (2007) outlines this relationship between state and politics as the following: 'If the activity of government continually risks pacification, order, security and what Rancière refers to as the "idyll of consensus", then politics consists in the manifestation of a dissensus that disturbs the order by which government wishes to depoliticize society' (129). For Critchley, politics therefore requires an anarchistic form and is, consequently, always at a distance from the formalities of state. Although Critchley takes this as a point of departure from Rancière in terms of viewing politics as multiple and everywhere, both view state policing as the reproduction of consensual logics that serves to mitigate dissensus.

Politics therefore emerges as a form of meta-theoretical imperative that diverts us from the visible workings of politics (i.e. state institutions, political parties). As such it dramatically repositions our perspective on the locale of politics. Specifically it draws our attention from the sites of policing (i.e. the state) and towards the multitude of equality claims. Critchley's (2007) 'democratic anarchism' certainly takes this position and withdraws from the state. Žižek presents the following criticism of such a withdrawal: '… if the space of democracy is defined by a distance toward the state, is Critchley not abandoning the field (of the state) all too easily to the enemy? That is to say: when Critchley defines today's constellation as one in which the state is here to stay, and in which we are caught in multiple displacements, and so on, the thesis is radically (and necessarily) ambiguous …' (2006: 333). Žižek's argument here is that if we look only to the radical margins for politics, we leave unchallenged the apparatus of the social. He continues by asking if Critchley's position does not unnecessarily evacuate the established means to generate radically different social relations:

195

Does not Critchley's position, then, function as a kind of ideal supplement to the Third Way Left: a 'revolt' which poses no effective threat, since it endorses in advance the logic of hysterical provocation, bombarding the Power with 'impossible' demands, demands which are not meant to be met? Critchley is therefore logical in his assertion of the primacy of the Ethical over the Political: the ultimate motivating force of the type of political interventions he advocates is the experience of injustice, of the ethical unacceptability of the state of things. (Žižek 2006: 333–334)

Žižek clearly views the state as the place where hands get dirty; where difficult choices are made; where the left has to confront a possible utilization of state power. Without this difficult embrace of state-based action, Žižek is arguing that demands from the radical margins ultimately amount to (political) demands presented to class interests that will never be met (i.e. the request of the dissolving of class relations to the capitalist class).

This question of distance to the state/policing is clearly of concern for a re-politicized urban politics. Previous iterations of radical urban scholarship sought close relations to state power in order to attempt to generate different social relations. Current urban politics literatures continue to be concerned with local state, but largely to understand its incapacities in the face of coercive competition. Rancière's post-democratic diagnosis is reflective of this literature, where he deems institutional politics to be a block on politics proper. Yet if we accept that politics only exists beyond the realms of the police, we are faced with the dilemma Žižek and Critchley have loudly debated. In particular, we must confront the question not only of where politics might emanate from, but also when these claims are evidenced what becomes of them once articulated and, specifically, what role the local/urban state has to play

in this. The challenge can be thought of as two-fold, involving (i) a reconsideration of the utility of state power to radical politics and (ii) a confrontation with the associated problematic questions of power and hegemony.

The chapters in this section are all concerned with the constitution of community that comes before the state. That is to say, if we follow Rancière by understanding politics as emergent with unequal groups of people, then we first must be concerned with social groupings. With these identified, we hope the gap between community and state power that is evident in the urban politics literatures can be reduced. If our urban politics scholarship does not do this, then we risk re-inscribing those very exclusions that Rancière's theory of politics makes us attuned to. The community themes picked up on in the following chapters – sexuality, migrants, gender, class and environment – are far from exhaustive. Indeed we must leave for ever open our list of (potentially) marginalised social groups. Doing so is part of being attentive to the possibilities for dissensus.

In Chapter 8, Natalie Oswin describes the politics of sexuality that are a crucial part of Singapore's urban politics. Singapore has been held up around the globe as a hugely successful economic development story. In post-independence in 1965, Singapore has become a city with one of the highest per capita incomes in the world. Oswin describes how this story of economic success has contained by specific notions of 'sexual citizenship'. Drawing on queer theory, Oswin explains how the city-state has constructed various sexual norms as part of its social agenda. These social agenda go beyond a simple promotion of heteronormativity and repression of homosexuality, incorporating a whole host of norms in, for example, family structure and social class. This complex social engineering all takes place on a backdrop of intensive economic

strategising and policy-making. What the latter connection illuminates is how community and urban regime agenda intertwine close closely in Singapore.

In Jamie Winders' chapter our lens shifts towards immigrant communities in Nashville, Tennessee. Winders' concern with this the growth of immigrant neighbourhoods in the city and their (dis-)connection with institutional politics. Here again we see the limits of an institutionally focused approach to urban politics. The problem posed in the chapter relates to how these immigrant communities actually come into being. Immigrants concentrate in particular neighbourhoods, but how is it that this propinquity relates to the constitution of community and then, presumably, political force? What the chapter illustrates is how the development of community and the related incorporation of immigrant communities into the political process is reliant on a broader shift in the imagination of the broader metropolitan community. In this case the re-imagination of metropolitan community, Nashville, is bound up with a discourse of multiculturalism.

We switch location again in Susan Hanson's chapter on female entrepreneurs. We go to Worcester, Massachusetts and Colorado Springs, Colorado to deconstruct the notion of the entrepreneur. In David Harvey's (1989)[**S3Q1**] seminal commentary on the entrepreneurial city he describes 'entrepreneurialism' as a general ethos the shapes urban politics across much of the globe. For example he argues: 'Urban entrepreneurialism encourages the development of those kinds of activities and endeavours that have the strongest *localised* capacity to enhance property values, the tax base, the local circulation of revenues, and (most often as a hoped-for consequence of the preceding list) employment growth' (13). Whilst Harvey's (1989) reading of urban politics proved right, he does offer a sweeping notion of the

entrepreneurial actions and actors. In Hanson's chapter we find by simply dividing urban entrepreneurs between genders, what being entrepreneurial means actually changes. Drawing on empirical data, Hanson illustrates the varied ways in which female entrepreneurs constitute a particular constituency in urban politics.

The following chapter, written by Mark Davidson, focuses on the question of social class. While urban politics have long been understood as being dominated by politico-economic imperatives, in recent years we have been the declining relevance of class-based politics. Many of the working-class parties that once held local political power have now either disappeared or become much more centrist. Davidson explores this phenomena and asks whether social classes are a relevant community in urban politics today. By using examples drawn from the UK, Davidson claims social class remains important to urban politics but that this community needs rethinking in an era of globalization. Specifically he calls for us to think about the external relations of the city as things that might need politicizing within the city.

Then in the final chapter of the section we switch gears to consider a thematically based community. In this chapter Matthew Huber examines the environmental component of urban politics, or rather he examines the urban component of environmental politics. Through a historical overview of the US environmental movement, Huber looks at the various ways in which the city itself has been represented. He claims the city has often been excluded from environmental politics, the city an anathema to nature. As a result, we find an urban politics lacking a concern for environment and an environmental politics lacking a concern for cities. The solution Huber proposes is to rethinking both the urban and nature, seeing them as

mutually constituted. What this means for environmental movements and urban political communities is that their exclusion of each other's concerns cannot continue.

Collectively, then, the chapter in this section will take you across many different political terrains. To be sure they are not all connected. Rather the chapters all work to exposure the varied constituencies of the urban political community. For example we might imagine that city populations in London and New York elect their mayors, but this sweeping description sometimes hides the varied communities that make up the city. Here are some questions to consider as you read on:

- Should certain communities have their claims elevated over those of others? And how do we mediate between different sets of claims emanating from different communities?

- What communities do you belong to? Do any of your community affiliations define your political interests and positions more than others?

- Do we all, at some basic level, belong to the same community?

- Do we always chose our community memberships or are they sometimes imposed on us?

- Does where you live impact your political interests? How much in common do you have with other people living in your city?

References

Critchley, Simon (2007) *Infinitely Demanding: Ethics of Commitment, Politics of Resistance.* Verso: London.

Rancière, Jacques (1999) *Disagreement: Politics and Philosophy*. University of Minnesota Press: Minneapolis, MN.

Žižek, Slavoj (2006) *The Parallax View*. MIT Press: Cambridge, MA.