

BOOK REVIEWS

Leslie J. Bank (2011). *Home Spaces, Street Styles. Contesting Power and Identity in a South African City*.

London: Pluto Press and Johannesburg: Wits University Press.

This book consists of nine chapters (some of which are reworked from previously published material) and a conclusion. A number of older and more recent photographs are included depicting the area as well as life styles of the inhabitants.

Bank states that ‘This book revisits and updates the classic urban anthropological work of Philip and Iona Mayer and their colleagues in the South African city of East London in the 1950s.’ (p.viii), known as the ‘Xhosa in Town’ project Three monographs were published: Reader, D. 1960. *The Black Man’s Portion*; Mayer, P. (with contributions from Iona Mayer). 1971 (1961). *Townsmen or Tribesmen: Conservatism and the Process of Urbanisation in a South African City*; and Pauw, B.A. 1973 (1963). *The Second Generation: A Study of the Family among Urbanised Bantu in East London*. This project concentrated on what was known as the East Bank location which was later demolished and Duncan village was built in its place. Bank used the ‘Xhosa in Town’ project as the baseline and followed up on

key themes and topics discussed by the project but, at the same time also taking cognisance of new areas of social and cultural change through the apartheid and into the post-apartheid era. Thus, the continuities and change in social identities, power and everyday life, before and after apartheid, are also explored. The approach is an historical anthropology of urbanism rather than the older approach of the anthropology of urbanisation.

A central theme addressed by especially the book by the Mayers was the so-called Red (‘traditionalist’) – School (‘modernist’) divide found in the city but also in the hinterland. Bank, however, avoided that dichotomy and focused on the continuous changes taking place in the city but, at the same time, approaching the townships (term used in South Africa for suburbs occupied predominantly by Africans) as entities with their own creativity, social formation and struggles. Through life histories and newspapers a fairly different picture of the life in the area during the 1940s and 1950s emerged as compared to the findings of the Mayers and Bank ascribes this to the Mayers being too focused on domestic life and ignoring what happens on the streets and other public spaces. However, Bank does not discard the

role of Redness as a cultural style of adapting to city life during that time.

Bank went further and tried to ascertain whether ‘migrant cultures’ as described by the Mayers have changed due to the relocation to Duncan Village. The migrants were housed in single sex hostels and as a result the processes of social separation and encapsulation deepened among hostel migrants after the 1960s. Due to the political circumstances older migrants became isolated from the rural youth (many of whom joined the Comrades) as well as the countryside. However, identity wise they regarded themselves as ‘rural men in the city’ with individualised ideas of responsibility not linked to obligations in the rural areas. Thus, migrant consciousness should be seen as free-floating and imaginative narrative contrasts between urban and rural life worlds. Bank rightfully states that the relationship between rural and urban identities is far more complex than a mere ‘linear rise and fall’ as the migrants’ rural identities did not disappear when they were relocated or during the political upheavals of the 1980s. In fact, they were remade and reconstituted.

The apartheid government’s development of Duncan Village is described as ‘racial modernism’ also referred to as

‘middling modernism’ (domestic social engineering). The socio-spatial model used was to control the Africans and to contain unrest. Houses were preferably given to males and thereby the government tried to develop a notion of the nuclear family as the preferred family unit but at the same time reconstituted patriarchy. The numerous matrifocal families found in the area were thus disbanded with an accompanying lowering of the status of women as women up to that point played a key role in the political life of the area. Women reacted in their roles of housewives through their own decorative styles in their houses. During the political turmoil of the 1980s the African councillors were chased out of the area and the so-called ‘Comrades’ took over control. They allowed people to move into the area and to settle as squatters. The many fires in the squatter area lead to women even being accused of causing the fires by means of witchcraft – a further indication of their lowered status. However, in the post-apartheid era, women regained their independence of males through the control of housing space and participation in the informal economy, but many of them, due to welfare grants and foster care money, have now become ‘married to the state’.

The Comrades originated as a political formation against the apartheid government but Bank refers to the rise of the Comrades as more a cultural style than a political formation. 'Living together' as a domestic form in the squatter areas became the characteristic of what was regarded as generational freedom and social independence for young males. Through this the demand for patriarchal power and control became part of the politics of liberation.

Bank concludes that the situation Duncan Village can best be described as 'fractured urbanism' where the infrastructure of the apartheid era still operates and through new state investment is periodically extended and upgraded. However, in spite of that, the area is still hopelessly over-extended in places due to the social life and economic need being more than what is provided. So much so that Duncan Village can be regarded as a 'hyper-ghetto' with poverty crime and violence escalating.

Henk Pauw

Nelson Mandela Metropolitan University
Henk.Pauw@nmmu.ac.za

Jerome Krase (2012) *Seeing Cities Change: Local Culture and Class*.
Farnham: Ashgate,

Seeing Cities Change analyzes social change in various neighborhoods in cities in the U.S.

and Europe. It focuses specifically on transitions of ethnicity and social class among residents. The uniqueness of this book is that it uses a visual approach; thus, there is an emphasis on 'seeing'. Vernacular landscapes are investigated in this way as empirical evidence of urban change brought about by ordinary people. Throughout the book are photographs taken by Krase personally, which serve as both documents and documentation of his findings. He states that he attempts to capture that which an ordinary person would see as one passes through. These photographs are interpreted in the same way as a social scientist would examine data from interviews, observations and demographic data. Krase also combines scholarly and media sources in each chapter's discussion.

In the Introduction, Krase presents various scholarly explanations of the visual approach in social science and cultural studies, as well as his own. For Krase, 'We can photograph, film, or video ethnic enclaves to both document and illustrate how their new occupants change particular spaces' (p. 10). A visual approach is appropriate and beneficial to urbanists attempting to study rapidly changing cities. It assists in noticing the power of ordinary people in creating change in the course of

their everyday lives. This, Krase notes involves observing cultural (vernacular) landscapes, cultural productions, practices, and influences that are always evolving as a result of urbanization, immigration, and globalization. The commodification of these landscapes creates urban spectacles which are a subject of Krase's later chapters. He also integrates 'new and old' urban theory, but recasts it within the context of a visual approach to urban studies. 'Visual sociology and attention to vernacular landscapes in the inner city allow us to see conflict, competition, and dominance at a level not usually noticed and that can easily be related to the theories and descriptions of Lefebvre and Bourdieu' (p. 22). Furthermore, a visual approach allows for triangulation with census data, as well as other quantitative and qualitative methodologies.

The rest of the book focuses on realizing local culture and class in neighborhoods in cities in the U.S. and Europe. Throughout the book Krase weaves together relevant social theory with the particular place under discussion. Chapter 1 addresses 'Seeing Diversity in New York City'. Although New York has never been an urban model for scholars, it represents the world in the U.S. Krase devotes a chapter to this diversity. He pays special attention to

Brooklyn with photographs and analyses of the multi-layers of ethnic groups that have lived there leaving their story through artifacts. The spaces and places sometimes, contested, are inhabited by an ongoing series of ethnic groups. Krase states, 'Visual and semiotic approaches can help in building bridges between various theoretical and applied disciplines that focus on the form and function of Brooklyn whose neighborhoods have been a virtual Roman fountain of ethnic transitions' (p. 55).

Chapter 2 deals with 'Seeing Little Italy Change'. Again, the focus is on New York which is used to illustrate the role of Little Italies in conveying the history of immigration and ethnicity. The chapter includes photographs of streetscapes and establishments of New York's many Little Italies. New York Italians, as an ethnic group created spaces with many social networks, and remained in places longer than other ethnic groups. In Manhattan, Little Italy was threatened by an increase of Asians in neighboring Chinatown and gentrification in SoHo. Manhattan's Little Italy continues as an ethnic theme park. Krase contends, 'Little Italies continue to be important places to study not only because they are venues for assimilation and acculturation, but also because they help us

to understand America's ethnic past, present, and indeed, its future' (p. 83).

The reader is then brought to 'Chinatown: A Visual Approach to Ethnic Spectacles'" the focus of Chapter 3. Krase considers the ethnic spectacle 'another genre of ethnic theme park' (p. 28). Chinatowns 'appear' to be created for the tourist. This is visualized through the architecture as well as the use of colors, symbols and letters that are associated with Chinese culture. Krase's photographs include images from Australia, Canada, and the U.S. Chinatowns represent a leisure activity for the purpose of consumption.

'Visualizing American Cities' is the central point of Chapter 4. Here Krase analyzes the impact of ordinary people on places. For Krase, post 1965 immigration has had a tremendous effect on ethnic and class diversity in U.S. cities. He asserts, 'From a distance, it might appear that the new elements thrown into the assimilation cauldron of the American "melting pot" are blending together, but up close at the street level they appear more as pieces of a complex and rapidly changing multicultural mosaic' (p. 116). This is an outcome of globalization, the movement of people around the world. By their very presence, newer ethnic groups embark on creating

communities and changing the social and physical landscape of neighborhoods in cities. At the same time, they co-exist and compete with relatively more established ethnic groups. Krase's photographs point to these dynamics.

The visual exploration of ethnicity continues in Chapter 5 in which Krase compares Little Polands and Little Italies in Brooklyn. He notes some differences in cultural values which explain that which is seen as part of the vernacular landscape. He specifies, They prefer the looks of certain things, like certain colors, visual patterns, or designs more than others. 'These artifacts of ethnicity are most easily seen when they successfully clash with the cultural values of the dominant society' (p.154).

Krase then explores 'Seeing Ethnic Succession in Big Italy' in Chapter 6. Here he shows the increasing immigration and attendant multiculturalism of Rome. Most of his photographs are taken in the neighborhood of Esquilino.

In Chapter 7, Krase shifts to a discussion of social class by investigating 'Gentrification in Poland and Polonia'. Here he compares the gentrification process in Greenpoint, Brooklyn and Krakow, Poland. Krase is interested in gentrification as a 'visible vernacular style or perhaps as an

aesthetic taste' (p. 188). His analysis is informed by Bourdieu's notion of tastes of necessity and luxury. Krase asserts that the 'look' of gentrification is similar globally, which further suggests that the underlying forces of gentrification are the same.

The book then investigates 'Seeing Community in a Multicultural Society' in Chapter 8. This chapter brings together the concepts of community and multiculturalism. For Krase, 'community is presented, re-presented and represented' (p. 213). His photographs accomplish just that. In addition, according to Krase, most social processes are expressed in vernacular landscapes. Scholars need to take notice. Visual artifacts also offer teaching and learning moments in which various communities can learn about each other thereby supporting multiculturalism.

Seeing Cities Change ends with an extremely significant point for urban scholars. As we embark on our research studies, it is commonplace to look to census data and other demographics to learn about a space and place. Krase argues that these data are either out of date, missing populations and/or crucial social characteristics of residents. Krase brilliantly demonstrates throughout the book that 'seeing is the only way of knowing' (p. 249). It is clear from

this book that the life's work of a scholar, through its many versions and revisions spanning some forty years, culminates here.

Seeing Cities Change is a major contribution to urban and visual studies. It is a must read for urban social scientists or anyone interested in cities and a visual approach to studying them.

Judith N. DeSena,
St. John's University, New York City,
desenaj@stjohns.edu

Italo Pardo and Giuliana B. Prato eds.,
(2012) *Anthropology in the city. Methodology and theory*. Farnham: Ashgate.

It is as an attempt to answer some of the key questions arising in anthropology at the beginning of the twenty-first century that Italo Pardo and Giuliana Prato have released this collection of essays called *Anthropology in the city. Methodology and theory*. Here, they have enlisted senior as well as junior anthropologists in a bid to address a few of the most explosive and emotive issues facing the discipline today. Familiar names such as the editors, Pardo and Prato, established anthropologists trained in the British tradition, together with Jonathan Parry, Christian Giordano, Linda Seligman, Ilka Thiessen, Fernando Monge, Marcello Mollica, Henrike Donner, and Elizabeth Lund Engebretsen, tackle subjects including

political management, death and dying, élites, gender and femininity, street vendors, and fieldwork methods. At the outset, I must note *Anthropology in the city* is an apt name for this book. For as the editors argue in the Introduction, the concept urban anthropology should be simply understood – and the contributors of this edited collection share this view – as anthropology in the city. And they mean classical empirical observation and long-term participant observation in urban settings. At the same time, there is no ‘fetishism’ of the fieldwork here. The editors lament the fact that there have been few urban ethnographies from southern Europe, and that up to the 1980s there was almost none in eastern Europe save the only cited early work by Steven Sampson on Romania’ (*Planners and the peasants*, 1982). While it is true that most anthropologist studying Europe preferred village studies, they still do, the one-sided orientation has changed dramatically since the 1990s. A few anthropological ‘classics’ will prove: A. Lemon studied the Roma in Moscow (*Between two fires*, 2000), E. Ten Dyke wrote a marvellous monograph on families in Dresden (*Dresden, paradoxes of memory in history*, 2001), E. Dunn worked on Polish factory town (*Privatizing Poland*, 2004), B. Müller published on privatization

in East Berlin (*Disenchantment with market economics*, 2007), and A. Lipphardt studied Jewish life in Vilnius (*Vilna*, 2010). Even my own ethnographic fieldwork focused on young workers in an industrial suburb of Budapest (*Youth and the state*, 2002). I do see, the point stressed by Pardo and Prato, however: there is still not enough attention being paid by anthropologists to the cultural diversities *within* the European urban landscape. This is one more reason why I praise them for attempting to balance the picture with the regional and gender difference manifested by the authors and their chapters in *Anthropology in the city*.

The stage is set to *Anthropology in the city* by two chapters in the book written by two senior colleagues. The first of these is from Jonathan Parry, revisiting the themes of his landmark books *Caste and Kinship in Kangra* (Routledge, 1979), and *Death in Banaras* (Cambridge, 1994). Here Parry focuses on different aspects of conducting fieldwork in three different communities in India since the 1960s. The second of these chapters features Christian Giordano’s discussion of political unity and cultural diversity in a Malaysian city in the past ten years. Giordano suggests that there is something to be learned from the ‘rainbow nationhood’, making of the Malaysian ‘unity

in separation' which may appear paradoxical to some in Europe. Whether discussing areas of the elite participation in Naples (Pardo), contrasting fieldwork experiences in India (Parry), rapturous experience in a southern Italian town as Albanian migrants arrived (Prato), the global processes influencing the Macedonian capital Skopje as well as the anthropologist' state of mind (Thiessen), street vendors in Cusco (Seligmann), funerals and dying in Northern Ireland (Mollica), gender and fieldwork in India (Donner), same-sex experiences in Beijing (Engebretsen), or just issues concerning fieldwork in multi-sited port cities (Monge), the authors of this book seek to suggest complex levels of participation in the anthropology of and in the city which go well beyond the accepted topical norms. I found the book intriguing for there are much more gems here than the titles suggest. In theory, it is a highly interesting text and a timely contribution to the field of urban studies in general and anthropology in the city in particular. The collection is well-edited and structured, it is easy to read and with so many cultural differences as well as fieldwork experiences described it will appeal to graduate students in courses on urban history, politics, globalism and anthropology of urban life. The concluding

paragraph to each chapter dutifully explains that the multiplicity of experiences or identities feature clearly in the authors' fields of research. While to some this may exude little sense of creativity, I would argue that in today's image-driven world such a careful editorial presence allows for a much more involved reading and understanding. Individual chapters, in particular, will be of great use in discussions surrounding issues such as urban politics, role of elites, gender and sexuality and other topics which they deal with. Readers may find some criticism levelled at anthropologists who have tended to see research in urban settings or 'at home' not as proper anthropology per se, a point I have stressed elsewhere in a different context as well (*Postsocialist Europe*, 2009). Clearly, this volume brings new horizons to the discipline and hopefully more studies will emerge in the Ashgate series on urban anthropology edited by Pardo and Prato.

László Kürti

University of Miskolc, Hungary
kurti1953@gmail.com

Davide Torsello (2012) *The New Environmentalism? Civil Society and Corruption in the Enlarged EU*
Farnham: Ashgate.

In this book Davide Torsello examines environmentalist social movements as they

respond to two deeply problematic economic sectors – the construction of large-scale development projects and the disposal of industrial waste. Not only do both of these sectors have potentially threatening environmental impacts; both are also highly susceptible to corruption. A strength of the book is that it brings together in a single framework environmentalist activism and corruption, analyzing their entanglements.

The context is the enlarged European Union that, after the ‘fall’ of Communism, launched an accession process designed to integrate former Soviet bloc countries into what had originated as a Western institution. EU planners, centered in Brussels, promoted and partially funded the infrastructure on which integration depended; major new arteries of transport and communication would link East to West. Concurrently, environmentalist movements arose to limit the anticipated damage and challenge the power arrangements that underlay the projects. An aerial photograph on the cover of the book hints at the drama of this confrontation. It depicts the intersection of two super-highways whose rolled-out clover-leaf connectors occupy a vast stretch of roughly cleared, glaringly barren land.

European Union enlargement also reconfigured industrial waste disposal.

Former Soviet bloc countries in the East offered promising dump sites: defunct and abandoned factories, barracks, and military bases in out-of-the-way locations. Such facilities, together with Eastern governments’ eagerness to encourage new businesses and regulate them lightly, resulted in costs of waste disposal up to ten times less in the East than in the West. Of course industries in Germany, Austria, Italy, Belgium and the Netherlands contracted with firms that took their effluents eastward, the more so in the wake of the EU’s transformative legislation – the 1993 ratification of the Maastricht Treaty establishing a single market and currency, and the extension, after 2004, of the Schengen Agreement eliminating internal border controls to ten, and then to more, new members. Meanwhile, and in tension with this stimulation to cross-border flows, the Union imposed on each admitted state its stringent and costly protocols regarding waste and recycling, striving for an eventual standardized outcome notwithstanding occasional country-level amendments. As Torsello shows with admirable clarity, the contradiction drove waste produced in the West into illegal channels, and further east. Once trucked to Hungary, for example, it might simply be stored for transshipment to

Ukraine or Bulgaria. Anti-dumping activism has correspondingly assumed a wider geographical range, not to mention confronting obstacles that go beyond bribe-taking local and regional officials to include organized crime.

Torsello introduces these complexities in three thematic chapters that, following an introduction, take up, respectively, environmentalism, civil society, and corruption. Each constitutes a useful review of relevant literatures. Anthropology figures importantly in the reviews, but it does not stand alone; on the contrary, its contributions are assessed in relation to those of economics, sociology, political science, and geography – an interdisciplinary tour-de-force. Ethnographically grounded case studies make up the rest of the book, with four chapters devoted to road and railroad transportation projects in Slovakia, the Czech Republic, Italy and Hungary, and one to the export of illegal waste from Western to Central Eastern Europe. There is also a conclusion.

In the literature on environmentalism, Torsello finds, particularly among anthropologists, an emphasis on grassroots movements that are set in motion by the felt need to protect a

natural resource. Perhaps activists hope to ‘conserve’ the resource for on-going, if restricted, use by humans; perhaps they hope to ‘preserve’ it from human intervention altogether. Either way, the movements come across as parochial, disconnected from wider structures of power and trans-local environmentalist organizations. This approach, Torsello, argues, is limiting – too likely to devolve into a simplified local versus global dichotomy. Drawing on his case studies, he shifts our attention to an ‘in-between’ arena in which localized activists deal with policy planners, markets, investors, NGOs and fund raisers at multiple levels of power. Regional and state authorities are part of this picture; so too are global umbrella organizations like Greenpeace, the World Wildlife Fund, and Friends of the Earth. As it turns out, some environmentalist responses to threats originate in the distant headquarters of a well-funded NGO whose specialized staff reaches ‘down’ to engage an affected, if apathetic or reticent, local population. Others, conversely, reveal the leaders of spontaneous grassroots initiatives reaching ‘up’ to gain support and money from an umbrella NGO. Ultimately, it may not be easy to sort out the difference.

In making the case that we cannot understand environmental activism without

analyzing the politics of the ‘in-between,’ Torsello brings to light the complex layers of decision making that preceded each of the large-scale projects discussed. This means enumerating the constraints on EU policy makers imposed by the Union’s doctrine of ‘subsidiarity,’ and presenting the multiple national, regional and local players who shape how EU policy gets implemented. It also means documenting interactions between locally based activists and large-scale environmentalist organizations. Interviews with a broad range of officials, as well as with movement participants, and observations of meetings and encounters, enhance Torsello’s account. To his credit, he presents the mind-boggling intricacies of in-between politics through a clear and accessible narrative, leaving us in a position to better appreciate what environmentalists are actually up against as they attempt to limit the impact of major new construction behemoths and illegal dumping.

One query: why the question mark after ‘new environmentalism’ in the title of his book? As Torsello shows, social scientists from a range of disciplines use the word ‘new’ to refer to all manner of social movements that, with the end of the Cold War, became more global. Inter-connections among actors and convergence in the

problems being addressed constitute evidence. But the word ‘new’ also references improved ways of analyzing movements. Torsello’s advance, with its emphasis on in-between political processes, could fruitfully be applied retrospectively to social movements predating the 1980s. They too struggled to be heard in complicated and messy political arenas, raising that proverbial doubt: how ‘new’ is new.

Davide Torsello is fully conversant with the many debates that have surrounded the concept ‘civil society.’ From Aristotle to Gramsci to Foucault, its definitions have been vague and contradictory. And yet, the concept seems necessary, not least because it is so widely used by a great variety of activists seeking to enlarge the spaces of civic engagement outside of state control. The recent accession of Eastern European countries to the European Union has only intensified the arguments. Having studied social movements that must address a supra-state institution, the EU, as well as engage with globally organized NGOs, Torsello rightfully challenges the usual gloss: civil society as socio-cultural formations that arise between the state and localized families, neighborhoods, communities. In addition, he offers a critical overview of the literatures contrasting civil society in ‘east’

and ‘west.’ With the ever more globalized reach and connections of ‘new’ social movements, environmentalism among them, the presumed divergence of ‘civic traditions’ is being erased.

The theme of corruption is particularly thorny, thanks to the writings of anthropologists who, not uncommonly, offer sympathetic accounts of *guanxi*, *clientelismo*, informal economies, gift-giving and reciprocity. Demonstrating that such practices ‘grease the wheels’ of everyday life for millions around the world, these scholars challenge the *discourse* of corruption that ‘outside,’ non-local power-holders iterate, in part to marginalize or denigrate, or portray as pre-modern, those involved. Ironically, anthropologists point out, extra-local power-holders may themselves be mired in corrupt practices – and on a vastly greater scale. In other words, what we call corruption is partly in the eye of the beholder, and more than that, can take quite different forms. (In a benign variant, corruption can be redistributive – a way for the have-nots to obtain something from the haves. A more malign variant facilitates accumulation while causing the powerless great harm.) For reasons that Torsello analyzes, mammoth construction projects are particularly marked by harm-inducing practices -- in contract

bidding, in evading environmental impact reviews, in manipulating insider information regarding the eventual inflation or deflation of land values, and so on.

That the European Union is a powerful source of policy and funding for just such mammoth projects is a provocation to both increased corruption and increased environmentalist activism. By studying these provocations in tandem, Torsello has arrived at an original discovery. Based on interviews and participant observation, he proposes that environmentalist activists have much to gain from raising corruption as an issue. Discursive strategies that expose corrupt practices are often more compelling than appeals to environmental degradation when it comes to mobilizing a wide public, politicizing citizens’ demands for ‘sustainable’ development, and forcing politicians, otherwise pressured by the hegemony of neo-liberal capitalism, to take notice. Why this is, and what it means, are among the fascinating questions this book engages; its author is correct to position himself as introducing a ‘new perspective’ on environmentalism.

Jane Schneider
City University of New York
JSchneider@gc.cuny.edu