

Afghan Stability Powerpoint

## The Crisis of Visuality/Visualizing The Crisis

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### Abstract:

This essay examines the new formation of global visuality and argues that interactive modalities of the global and the local constitute this new crisis visuality. The essay counter-poses two representative examples from this field: the visuality of U.S. counterinsurgency and the geography of the Long Island town of Levittown, prototypical “American” suburb and site of recent anti-immigrant violence. At stake in both examples is the transformation in the policing of those who do not count, meaning those who are not considered worthy of account by authority, from the insurgent to the immigrant.

It is becoming clear that a new formation of global visuality is in the making. Visuality is the means by which authority claims to visualize the flows of history and thus validates itself. Since the eighteenth century, visualizing has been the means by which a general conceptualizes the battlefield that extends far beyond his ability to see: visualizing is a mental operation that organizes images, ideas and imagination into a pattern. Material visualizations (what we call images) can be produced when the visuality of authority, as represented by a leader or general, clashes with a countervisuality forged by those visuality considers a crowd or a mob. For us—that mob—visualizing ourselves as a collective subject that might be named the people, the nation or the multitude constitutes the very formation of a politics. If the police say to us “move

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on, there's nothing to see here," we know very well that there is, and so do they. The question is whether or not we claim the right to look at that which we are told not to see. These relations of authority and a politics that is either democratic or it will not be are not equivalent to the flows of capital, although they are interactive with them. Indeed the United States military has actively developed and promoted a global strategy of counterinsurgency since 2006, even as the neo-liberal market economics it intends to promote have seemed to be collapsing. Like other forms of visibility, the visibility of counterinsurgency classifies people as insurgent or not, separates those so classified—usually by material means such as walls—and then claims that this separation is right. Indeed, it is so right that it can become aesthetic. Precisely because this is the era of globalization, characterized by unprecedented transnational migration and electronic media, the digitized border fails to hold. In the present crisis, the very pattern that it is trying to resolve is unclear: a centralized nation or a global market? How are those consolidated in the era of the non-place? Despite, or perhaps because of, the rhetoric that “we” fight “them” over there to avoid fighting them here, the local is breaking down under the pressure of global flows into new configurations, whose existence provokes paranoia and violence. Increasingly, militarized visibility itself is in crisis. That crisis is one of ambition and one of resolution. The ambition of (g)local counterinsurgency is to control the global battlefield by means of intense localized interventions. The resolution of this project is highly unclear. Three possibilities seem open: the development of a new authoritarian global governance under U.S. hegemony; the perpetuation of crisis management as the new normal, as practised in Israel/Palestine; or just possibly, some alternate formation of the global-local relation, driven perhaps by the real exigencies of climate change.



Long Island

Image: Google Maps

The interactive modalities of the global and the local that constitute this crisis include: counterinsurgency, climate change, the global economic restructuring and the voluntary and forced migrations entailed by all three. In this interim effort to analyze the crisis as it happens,<sup>1</sup> I will highlight first the global counterinsurgency and then examine its asymmetric manifestation as a (g)local example in the Long Island suburb of Levittown. The example of Levittown was chosen because it was the archetypal American suburb; for the interaction with Teddy Cruz's remarkable work on the newly mobile Levittown-style tract housing that is crossing the US-Mexico border from North to South; and finally because Long Island has been the site of

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coordinated anti-immigrant violence. What is at stake in both examples is the transformation in the policing of those who do not count, meaning those who are not considered worthy of account by authority, from the insurgent to the immigrant.



Levittown, NY

Increasingly, it seems that militarized visibility does not distinguish between these groups but instead classifies them all as obstacles to circulation. Global counterinsurgency visualizes its tasks in three parts: “clear, hold and build.” clear an area of insurgents or sympathizers by the use of force; hold that gain by stationing troops locally and constructing barriers to movement, such as separation walls; and then begin to build a new form of governance. The last of the trilogy is by far the most problematic, even as it is held to be the key to the whole process. Domestic segregation is complexly and asymmetrically interactive with this process.

“Asymmetric warfare” is one of the military terms for insurgency: it means that relatively small-scale actions by insurgents can have far greater effects than large-scale military efforts. By the same token, local anti-immigration laws in Arizona or violence directed at immigrants in Long Island has had an asymmetric effect on the national political culture. It should be emphasized that such efforts can rebound on their instigators and the outcomes are far from certain at present in both domestic and international locations. Domestic segregation has nonetheless taken on the tactics of counterinsurgency. It classifies residents along similar lines (as insurgent or “legitimate” resident), clears the “illegals” by means of arrest, ejection, or deportation, holds the situation by physical means, and then seeks to build a new polity around that segregation. This rhetoric intensifies the racialized divide between the enfranchised citizenry and the undocumented migrant worker, best known to media discourse as the “illegal immigrant.”

Patterns of circulation, whether of people, goods, or ideas, have already shifted. South-South flows have become a vital feature of the global, visible in the distribution of Tamil Nadu cinema and in the economic exchanges between Brazil, China, and India. South-North flows are dynamic, both in areas that are purportedly illegal (such as unskilled, low-wage undocumented

labor and recreational drugs), and now in highly skilled professional and scientific labor and specialized goods. Apple laptops and iPhones are all made in China, which is now the single largest consumer and constructor of solar panels. Such flows are uneven, unequally distributed, and actively disrupted by US and European Union interventions. Within the United States, the sites of asymmetric resolution of these flows and counterflows form borders, whether along national, urban-suburban, or, increasingly, property lines. Other pre-existing modes of separation and distinction such as the color line are also mobilized by this intensification. That is to say, the US-Mexico border is a racialized distinction; the “urban” is understood as meaning people of color, while the suburb is “white”; and residential housing has long been “red-lined” to ensure segregation (meaning the de facto exclusion of people of color from designated areas).

This dizzying, mutually reinforcing set of scenarios is what globalization looks like. It is what Achille Mbembe has called the “entanglement” (2001: 14–16) typical of this period in which nations have been decolonized and yet are subject to neo-colonial control, while the former colonizers have come to grasp that the global empire described by Hardt and Negri has authority over them rather than vice-versa. In order to find our way through the entanglement we need to start at a specific point: as visualization was originally a military tactic, let’s begin with counterinsurgency. For the conservative historian Thomas Carlyle, writing in 1840 just after the aftermath of the emancipation of the enslaved in the British Empire, visibility was the attribute of the hero (Mirzoeff 2006). Carlyle appropriated the idea by which a general was held to visualize a battlefield that had become too large to be seen by any one person.



Waterloo Battle Map

For military theorists like Karl von Clausewitz, this skill in visualization was the central requirement of the then-modern general. Carlyle simply transferred the project to the hero on the battlefield of History (as he always capitalized it). By virtue of his very qualities of heroism, the “inarticulate” crowds would grant the hero authority, meaning the ability to command consent. Carlyle never gave a name like the “people,” let alone the masses, to the middle and

working classes claiming representation, for to do so would have been to recognize their right to make such claims. This rather mystical theory ultimately became a practical means of imagining imperial governance in the mid-nineteenth century as discourses of imperial power changed. The emancipationist moment of the 1830s gave way to shocked reaction to the so-called Indian Mutiny of 1857, the Morant Bay rebellion in Jamaica in 1865, and the democratic revolution of post-emancipation Reconstruction in the United States. By the time Reconstruction had been suppressed in 1876, imperial governmentality across the Anglophone world was imagined as centralized in the metropole, enabled in the empire by the massed ranks of global missionaries, who imagined their role as bringing light to darkness and actively imagined themselves as Carlyle's hero. When David Livingstone summarized his mission as "commerce, Christianity and civilization," he was being entirely serious. Missionary administration sought first to create a generalized desire for consumer goods among subject populations accustomed to what anthropology was beginning to call "primitive communism." That sense of lack could then be used to recruit a minority to the Gospel, of whom the elite would become the indigenous priesthood. These mimic men would serve as the interface between empire and subject populations, communicating the modes of imperial conduct to their fellows and reporting on indigenous customs to curious anthropological inquiries. In short, visibility sutures authority to power so that the use of physical force becomes the exception rather than the rule as it might be in places where the state has failed, or is in danger of failing, such as in the Belgian Congo under Leopold II, or in parts of present-day Sudan, Greece and Mexico.

The counterinsurgency strategy currently promoted by the United States military as the key to global governance in its Field Manual FM 3-24 Counterinsurgency demonstrates striking continuity with these tactics. As I have described at length elsewhere, the Field Manual was written at the behest of General David Petraeus to direct military "doctrine" (to use their term) in the conduct of counterinsurgency (COIN) for the first time since the Vietnam War (Mirzoeff 2009). In keeping with the concept of the "Revolution in Military Affairs" (RMA) since the 1980s, this is no mere revision of earlier policy, however, but a dramatic rethinking of the practice of soldiering. In order to emphasize the distinction the military refer to "global counterinsurgency," complete with its own acronym GCOIN. For my purposes, a key development is the insistence that the "commander's visualization" is (again) the key to success in the conflict against insurgents. Such visualization, however, involves all the cultural and historical elements of a particular place, imagined and accessed within a digital framework as a network. The strategy to be deployed is not just a military operation but a significant fraction of governmentality, as summarized in this diagram produced just before the "surge" in Iraq in 2005 to visualize counterinsurgency.

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39th Brigade, Operation Iraqi Freedom  
image: US Army

By combining military operations (top two arrows) with the goals of neo-liberal governance from services to representative democracy and free markets, this concept assumes that counterinsurgency wins by generating legitimacy in the minds of what it calls the “host population,” in this case Iraqis. Note they are described as “indigenous,” as if a tribal people, rather than a sophisticated, globalized modern nation. At the same time, the arrow recalls for soldiers the traditional mapping of an attack. The object of attack, or more precisely of control, has moved from being that of History in general, as it was in the case of Carlyle’s visualization of the nineteenth century, to the population as a whole. “Security” now comprehends the full range of social life from economics to politics and essential household services, to be ensured by means of a series of coordinated techniques. The outcome is imagined to be “legitimacy,” or what I have been calling “authority”—that moment when the government is simply obeyed because it is recognized as having legitimate authority. While the lower three categories of this Full Spectrum Operation were previously understood as part of governmentality in Western nations by Foucault, the introduction of military and police components within the context of an “information” war clearly represent a new formation. It is a localized operation to ensure the tactical success of the global strategy of GCOIN.

The conditions of permanent global counterinsurgency are intensifying the legacies of the Cold War military-industrial complex that are in turn interacting with the specificities of our own time in unpredictable ways. From the military-industrial complex, there comes an array of surveillance, foreign and domestic, and the resulting paranoia. The apparatus of satellites and spy-planes developed for use against the Soviet Union is still at work. Indeed, it was recently revealed that the U-2 high altitude spy plane, famous for Gary Powers’ crash in Soviet territory, has been flying extensive missions in Afghanistan. These “invisible” modes of visualizing have been multiplied and enhanced by digital technologies that allow for real-time remote surveillance that can be directed and used to launch attacks from the platform of the Unmanned Aerial Vehicle (UAV).

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Predator

In April 2010, The New York Times reported that UAVs launched at least 50 attacks in Pakistan last year resulting in at least 500 casualties. The UAV is emerging as the signature technology of the new crisis of visibility, even touted as environmentally friendly (relative to ground operations). On the one hand, it epitomizes what Derek Gregory has called the “visual economy” of the “American military imaginary” (2010: 68). At the same time, it is clearly a departure from conceiving counterinsurgency as “armed social work” (75). The operators of such attacks are not even in the same country as their targets, but instead work from trailers in Utah or Nevada via digital interface. Furthermore, the current results in Afghanistan and Pakistan are unclear even by counterinsurgency standards. In asymmetric warfare, how does one measure success? Recent military discussion, both official and unofficial, has raised this question in connection with the transformation of military life from a field-based set of activities into a permanently digital mission, not unlike the professional activities of a sales executive. In the eighteenth century, the newly invented lowest rank of officer, known (interestingly enough) as the subaltern, reported back to the general in person on the state of battle, thereby embodying visibility.



Unmanned Aerial Vehicle

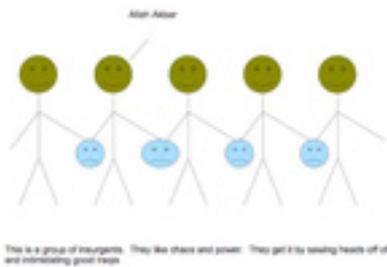
Image: Embryriddle Aeronautical University

Today’s junior officers spend much of their time compiling PowerPoint presentations that digitally render their visualizations. The advance on past modes of visualization has been noted in the pro-counterinsurgency blog Small Wars Journal: “The graphics used in PowerPoint replace the massive campaign maps and problematic acetate overlays which were used by armies for decades, allowing these documents to be easily produced and mass-distributed with

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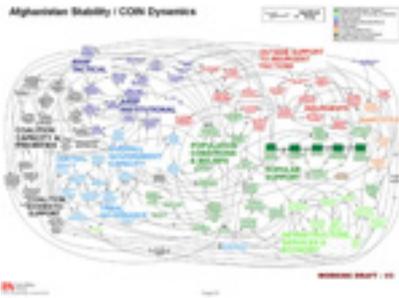
the click of a mouse.” On the other hand, an essay discussing the use of such presentations in the Armed Forces Journal has noted the “dumb down” effect of the bullet point process of PowerPoint, which often elides the key question as to who is actually going to carry out the listed tasks. If it seems odd that front-page essays in wartime military publications are debating visual presentation software, you are beginning to get the “feel” of the peculiarities of counterinsurgency.



"how to win in anbar"

Image: blackfive

As has been widely commented in digerati circles, PowerPoint is a marketing tool, designed to sell products. The marketing of counterinsurgency as the “surge” in Iraq was sufficiently effective in reducing US casualties to the degree that counterinsurgency has been deemed a global success. While US forces have been able to clear insurgents from urban centers and hold them by a massive display of force and physical segregation, the vital third component of counterinsurgency is “build.” No serious building of civil society has taken place in Iraq, let alone in Afghanistan. The article in Small Wars Journal referenced a PowerPoint made just before the 2006 “surge” by the late Captain Travis Patriquin as an example of less sophisticated visual material that was nonetheless more effective on the ground. Although Patriquin was himself able to speak Arabic and advanced the reconciliation program of counterinsurgency, the slides evidence problematically reductive ideas. Insurgency here is reduced to an Islamic slasher movie in which the only extant motive is to cause chaos and gain power for oneself. Using the standard Muslim phrase “Allah akhbar” (God is great) as the catchphrase of these evildoers enhances and confuses the simplification. In contrast with the reduction of the slide above, a plan shown to General McChrystal in the summer of 2009, aiming to illustrate the flows of insurgency and counterinsurgency, manifested the reverse problem.



## afghanistan stability

The analysis presented here does not lack for sophistication; it would, however, be hard to tell what one was supposed to do next after examining it. The military slang acronym FUBAR (“f\*\*\*\*\* up beyond all recognition”), seems to apply. That is, in desiring to arrive at a more detailed analysis than that presented by the field officer in Iraq, the staff officer in Afghanistan becomes lost in the vortexes of connexity. The crisis in visualizing is that the first image is a reductive caricature whereas the second may well show a more exact rendition of Afghan political economy but offers no strategic solutions. Visualizing has thus failed to make “history” visible and instead shows only that there is no solution available. The intent behind the leak is precisely that: to show that Afghanistan remains in chaos and will need military presence for the foreseeable future. In a continuation of the same strategy, McChrystal leaked his request for 40,000 additional troops in Afghanistan in advance, leaving President Obama to choose between declaring his own general insubordinate and alienating his own supporters by sending more troops. The leak was the first shot in the campaign over Obama’s announced withdrawal date of July 2011. Using this image, McChrystal might claim either that conditions justify a longer mission or that he cannot be held responsible for any perceived failure of the mission. I suspect that this double strategy will accelerate as the putative withdrawal approaches.

The question arising is whether the intensification of the RMA represented by GCOIN is paradoxically destabilizing legitimacy in the domestic context. For if GCOIN is attempting to instill a certain constellation of neo-liberal market and governmental conditions “abroad,” changes in domestic policy that do not align with that constellation may be read as “illegitimate” in that they undermine the global policy. Precisely such a challenge to the “legitimacy” and authority of the Obama administration is in the process of cohering from a range of local imaginaries, in which parts of the United States conceive of themselves as under attack. In instances from recent newspaper articles requiring no particular research to discover, opponents of gay marriage refer to such couples as “domestic terrorists,” while a New York City high school principal describes his work in the Bronx as “classic counterinsurgency.” Border patrols in Nogales, Arizona follow the counterinsurgency mantra “clear, hold, build” as

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the guiding model for their enforcement of immigration law. In April 2010 a strikingly unconstitutional state law was passed in Arizona that requires police to pursue those who appear to be illegal immigrants and criminalizes any immigrant at large without documentation. While the law may well be invalidated in the future, it was widely agreed that it was passed for “domestic” political reasons within the state. These imbrications of classic population management discourses from sexuality to education and immigration with low-intensity asymmetric warfare both produce, and are a product of, the crisis in visibility. While most scholarly readings of these encounters have concentrated on the neo-imperial framework, it is now becoming clear that the local manifestation of what Deleuze and Guattari called microfascism is of equal importance, especially as it attempts to form a national politics.

At stake is how the counterinsurgency-inflected global network of visibility can continue to sustain the “imagined” content of the nation-state as an “imagined community.” The phrase was coined by the anthropologist Benedict Anderson, who conceived of people’s imaginary relation to the nation as being constituted by what he called “print-capitalism,” especially the newspaper. Anderson adopted Hegel’s suggestion that the morning reading of the newspaper was the modern form of prayer in which each reader was alone but aware of others performing the same reading at the same time: “What more vivid figure for the secular, historically clocked, imagined community can be envisioned?” (2006: 35) For Anderson the new national imagination was above all a temporal relationship in which a “dynastic realm” gave way to the “homogeneous, empty time” perceived by Benjamin as being critical to the emergence of modern capitalism. These conditions all now seem to be under erasure. The image of the solitary bourgeois patriarch communing with his newsprint seems archaic in the age of instant online and cable news. Many American cities lack a substantial newspaper at all and the three nationally circulated newspapers (New York Times, Wall Street Journal and USA Today) now have a combined circulation of just under 17 million. Setting the raw numbers aside, it is clear that news gathering has dispersed first to television and now to the internet, where blogs and social network sites have radically decentered information. Finally, print culture as a temporal signifier seems in contradiction with global time as a complex entanglement of decolonial, imperial, religious and secular temporalities (Puar 2007: xvi-xxii) that are notably “out of joint,” to use Hamlet’s phrase appropriated by Derrida. If we don’t know what time it is, it is still harder to determine where we are in relation to national and international structures of politics and finance that manifest themselves where we happen to be as anthropogenic catastrophes without remedy.

The Levittown Complex

GCOIN is a “top-down” view of globalization enacted on the local. Let’s reverse the point of view. What is the “place” of the citizen—we are all citizens in this view—in the permeable global-local economy? How can it be imagined and visualized? Who belongs and who is out of place? What circulation can be allowed, now that the static investment known as real estate (in contrast to virtual speculation) has failed to keep appreciating? As we all know, the

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consequences have been dramatic. The pure non-places of America/are going crazy (with apologies to William Carlos Williams). The white-flight suburbs are up in arms, states from Florida to Massachusetts are rewriting their political geographies, and a highly networked media interface of blogs, listservs, and cable news both mobilizes and reports it all. The boundaries and borders of local imaginaries, uncertain in their relation to the dissolving nation-state, are both under erasure and being violently defended. The present discontent evidences the crisis of the non-places of globalization—even the economic crisis that brought this tension into focus came seemingly from “nowhere”—from the arcane realm of credit derivatives, a non-place of the economy. The global economic crisis is centered on the newly unaffordable domestic house itself, the most local of locales, with the areas of greatest expansion like Florida, Nevada, Arizona, and California watching their mansions mutate into slums. Other than Goldman Sachs, the only people being publicly blamed are the legal “non-persons” who were the “domestics,” or servants, of the equity boom of the last decade. These “out of place” migrants from Central and Latin America were eagerly recruited to do the manual labor that the netizens of the immaterial economy felt to be beneath them. Now they are just as vehemently being targeted by means of a spectacular displacement as if they were the cause of the collapse. The border itself has become confused. Teddy Cruz has shown that Levittown itself, the original tract housing, is now wandering. The dream houses of the 1950s are being unceremoniously trucked over the US-Mexico border to restart another cycle of domestic growth. The same credit that brought global capital into crisis was originally advanced in part so that those potential homeowners who were previously “red-lined” outside the mortgage-able segment of US society could move into the housing market (Sugrue 1996). The domestic crisis is, as it always has been in these United States, refracted as one of “race.” Where there is race, there is violence because it is inherently a mode of separation. What happens when the separated refuse to stay where they are supposed to be? The contradiction in this complexity is that it produces the very migration and displacement that it seeks to exclude by means of racialized segregation and compulsory immobility.

Following Cruz, I examine this domestic manifestation of the crisis in Levittown and its surrounding suburbs on Long Island: let’s call it the Levittown complex. The complex centers around the non-place of the suburban house, which is the emblem of “whiteness,” heteronormativity, circulation, consumption and communications. I call this space “the domestic non-place,” appropriating Marc Augé’s concept of transitional spaces like airports or shopping malls as non-places. He has recently redefined the concept in the light of what he calls a “triple decentering” of urban space, first by the exteriorization of the urban (what is known as the ex-urb); the displacement of the “hearth” as the center of the house by first the television and now the computer screen; and “the individual is, finally, decentered from himself [sic].” By this last, Augé means that our electronic communications allow and increasingly require us to be in contact with physically remote locations at all times. The result has been the proliferation of “empirical” non-places, meaning spaces of circulation, consumption and communication” (Augé 2008: VIII). One such non-place is the suburban house, with its 1000+ television channels, broad-band internet, and land and cell phones as standard equipment. It is the space

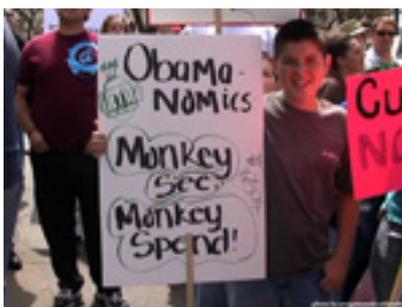
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of consumption of food, media, and products of all kinds, as well as being an object requiring intense consumption to maintain. The suburban house is void unless one can circulate to it by car. Those people who are increasingly seen walking away from the few public transport routes available are almost always domestic employees of one kind or another—unless the walk is for “exercise” in which case it is intended as a form of non place-specific consumption. The sub-divisions, as the mass-produced suburban superhouses are called, are well-named, for they sub-divide the sensible that visibility seeks to organize, producing a newly mediated interface with that which is not domestic—the foreign, the stranger, the migrant. This complex, then, has dimensions that are psychoanalytic, digital, and military-industrial. It is the domestic manifestation of counterinsurgency.

“Levittown” represents a transformation in the policing of those who do not count. In disciplinary society, state agents such as the police, the welfare state, and education structures enacted a set of separations and distinctions in the effort to “reform” those monitored by visibility. As is all too clear, schools, prisons and the welfare system are in crisis, mutating from a system of enclosure to one of control (Deleuze 1992). The “docile body” that Foucault saw being produced by the institutions of the disciplinary society is now on permanent alert. Enjoined to “see something, say something,” watching 24/7 cable news with its constant “breaking news,” the permanently mediated local subject is unable to remain docile. Once again, the (white) citizen is mobilized against mobility. I say once again because in a now-archaic usage the “mobility” was, in the nineteenth century, the mob itself, the rabble: those who were excluded from visibility and whose job it was to move on. British radicals and Chartists took on the name with pride (Thompson 1964: 73), an early example of the reverse appropriation of derogatory names that has given us “queer” and “crip” more recently. Those who move are again suspects: the foreclosed, the unemployed, the homeless, the migrant, and the undocumented. In an updating of the old Platonic orthodoxy, everyone is to stay where they are supposed to be and nowhere else.

In the context of the United States, anxieties over mobility in both senses have a long history that is interfaced with that of slavery in a nation built on slavery and in good part built by slaves. As the ongoing contestation of the election of Barack Obama as President has reminded us, there is a segment of the population that continues to see the descendants of the enslaved as non-citizens of the United States.



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"obamanomics: Monkey see, monkey spend"

The original Levittown on Long Island, New York, which has given its name to the idea of the faceless tract-house suburb, was built over the remains of plantations that used to supply New York City's "West India trade" (Mirzoeff 2005). Just as Cruz has highlighted the migration of Levittown houses south of the U.S. border, the Cuban historian of slavery Manuel Moreno Fraginals reminds us that the plantation itself was "nomad entity." He estimated that it had no more than a forty-year lifespan before exhausting soils with its monoculture of cash crops in a period before chemical fertilizer made permanent monoculture the feature of agri-business. The need for wood in the sugar burners also led to drastic deforestation. Barbados was deforested in the eighteenth century, as was Reunion in the Indian Ocean, leading the British naturalist Joseph Banks to begin the botanical collections at Kew Gardens as an archive of threatened flora. In 1800, roughly one in three residents of King's County, now Brooklyn, were African American. Slavery in New York was not abolished until 1827 and African Americans continued to work in the plantations even after abolition. Long Island's nineteenth-century master painter Ferdinand Mount is known for his nineteenth-century scenes of rural life that often featured African Americans.

The first Levittown houses were built in 1948 using pacified Second World War construction technology. As the photographs from the period show, the tract house was already a new modality of plantation: environmentally destructive and forming a carefully designed non-place. Any trace of local vegetation has been expunged to prepare for the necessary abstract "yard" composed of robust grasses and acid-tolerant flowering shrubs that could tolerate Long Island's sandy soil. To present-day eyes, the houses look small at 800 square feet but each was a separate house, all situated on carefully curving streets named "lanes" to create an illusion of tradition. The lanes led to the parkway, a four-lane freeway to New York City, but there was no close railroad or subway so as to discourage low-income residents. As a commuter town, Levittown was nonetheless symbiotically linked with the city. It was, however, rigorously segregated by "race," excluding all people of color as sternly as any Southern town, for both were locations in the plantation complex of the Atlantic world. This "dream house" architecture is actively and passively racialized. Simply by virtue of being suburban, the domestic house is coded as non-white, regardless of the ethnicity of its inhabitants. As late as 1960, Levittown was all "white" and it was 94% white in 2000. In 2008, the New York Times undertook an anniversary survey of Levittown. The houses have all been extended with additions in the hybrid style I call New England Victorian.

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Levittown, ny

Such accumulative buildings have had mock fan-windows, clapboard siding made from plastic, concrete or occasionally wood, and “architectural” mock-slate roofs added to their exteriors, while expanding their living space has expanded to accommodate more bedrooms, bathrooms, and the recent desire for media rooms. The whole is designed to evoke the colonial past of Long Island, without forcing people to live in the small rooms of the Puritan salt-box house. In the dream-house imaginary, this hybrid style evokes a time before visible hybridity, the wholly imaginary “white” America of the Founders that has so exercised the so-called Tea Party activists.

The domestic non-space exists in contradiction with the exceptional non-space. In such non-spaces, no consumption, circulation, or communication is allowed without the direct consent of those militarizing the situation. Such was long the condition of the disciplined subject described by Foucault from prisoners to patients in hospitals and asylums. Increasingly, the person whose citizenship is under erasure is subject to the same limitations. At the Visual Citizenship conference held in New York in April 2010, both W.J.T. Mitchell and Ariella Azoulay insisted that the Israel/Palestine situation of permanent exception and imbrication had become paradigmatic for the present crisis.



gaza wall

Mitchell highlighted the shifting parameters of identification that can apply to the Palestinian in

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Israel, the “Mexican” (quotation marks to imply the reduction of all Central and Latin American nationals to “Mexicans” in Arizona or the “Muslim” in Britain or France. The conceptual violence of rendering Palestinians into a legal situation analogous to that of migrants while residing in their own country adds to the physical violences of separation and segregation. In locating the mobility and defending against them, the house is thus both a target and a weapon. The Israeli Defense Force has used the nomadic theories of Deleuze and Guattari to revisualize their strategies in the Occupied Territories. In order to gain surprise, the IDF frequently attacks through the walls of houses, whether looking for someone in a particular location or as a form of short cut (Gregory 2004: 112). By the same token, the architect Eyal Weizman has shown that on the West Bank suburban housing is a weapon: “The small red-roofed single family home replaced the tank as the smallest fighting unit.” The red-roofed “Mediterranean” houses of the settlements identify the buildings from the air as “Israeli,” while also creating strategic “facts on the ground” and controlling the high points of the Occupied Territories. Just as American suburbia grew up around the military-inspired Interstate system of highways, so have these militarized Israeli suburbs integrated with a segregated road network for Israeli drivers. Research by the Israeli architectural group Multiplicity has shown that it takes an Israeli driver “ninety minutes to cross the West Bank from North to South, while the same journey takes a Palestinian driver eight hours and this only on condition that the roads are open to Palestinian traffic.” Since the IDF incursion into Gaza in 2009, the nominally independent territory has become little short of an extended prison camp, with the inhabitants being forced to break out into Egypt to obtain basic consumer goods. Being of the general “mobility-as-mob” restricts all mobility-as-movement in the counterinsurgency of everyday existence. Classification is now reduced to one class: being of or in Gaza, which leads to definitive separation. Increasingly, efforts to claim that this separation is right have tended toward claims of necessity, recognizing the exceptional character of this non-space (for details of the above, see Weizman 2007).

By the same token, separation remains a fundamental principle of American life. In the New York City suburb of Westchester, the “nice” suburb to which families traditionally moved, residential housing has been subject to a desegregation order since 2008. In the words of Queens College sociologist Andrew A. Beveridge: “Residential segregation underlies virtually every racial disparity in America, from education to jobs to the delivery of health care. Racial isolation is increasing for blacks, falling slightly for whites.” Most surprisingly perhaps, and in contrast to arguments that class predominates race, “income level has very little impact on the degree of residential racial segregation experienced by African-Americans.” If this degree of separation is clear to the sociologist, it does not seem to be so to the (white) consumer. The counternarrative is one of revolution: an overweening centralizing power has caused the people to revolt against communism, fascism or both. The inconsistencies are so obvious that it seems remarkable that even its own proponents are convinced. Nonetheless, the assertion that President Obama was not born in the United States, or that the health care bill was a Nazi idea, go beyond the usual political mudslinging to manifest a return of what Richard Hofstadter famously called the “paranoid style in American politics.” In this account, the “enemy is on many counts the projection of the self” (1964: 85) leading to even greater repudiation and

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hostility. Writing about cinema, Dana Polan has argued: “Paranoia here will be first the fear of narrative, and the particular social representations it works to uphold, against all that threatens the unity of its logical framework” (1986: 12). The fear of the multicultural narrative is visited on the people who cleaned the houses, looked after the kids mowed the grass, indeed built the structures themselves. Lacking a target in the non-spaces of local capital, the domestic house, those feeling that their place was most at risk, directed their anger at the most visible group of “others” available, now held metonymically responsible for the collapse of the security that the non-spaces of circulation were designed to ensure.

The violence that has captured national attention in recent years has been present on Long Island since at least 2000, when two men posing as contractors kidnapped two Latino day laborers in Farmingville and beat them with a crowbar. In July 2003, a group of teenagers set fire to the house of a Mexican family, also in Farmingville, which was at that time a center for the recruitment of day labor, as documented in the film *Farmingville* (2003, dir. Carlos Sandoval and Catherine Tambini). When Suffolk County prosecutors charged seven teenagers in the deadly assault on Marcelo Lucero, an Ecuadorean immigrant in Patchogue, Long Island last November, one of the more disturbing accusations was that they engaged in a regular and violent pastime: looking for Latinos to attack, which they called “Mexican hopping.” Jeffrey Conroy, the teenager responsible for the killing was convicted only of manslaughter, rather than murder, after there had been difficulty forming a jury because many in the potential pool admitted to being prejudiced against immigrants. By coincidence, the trial of murderers of José Sucuzhañay, an Ecuadorean immigrant, who was killed because the attacker believed that he had tried to kick their car and that he and his brother were a gay couple also ended with a manslaughter conviction. Anti-Latino violence on Long Island is an acting out via symptomatic displacement of the fear that the car, house, TV culture of suburban America is in crisis or decline. That is to say, the disaggregation of white U.S. living standards by the economic logics of globalization produces a sense of helplessness. The resulting anger manifests as hostility directed at the most visible local “symptom” of globalization, meaning the most-recently arrived immigrants. Reinforced by nativist media discourse like that of Lou Dobbs on CNN (now an aspirant political candidate), or the injunctions by demagogues like Sarah Palin to “reload” to protect “America,” it has come to seem right to act out the hostility as physical violence.

This violence responds to and feels authorized by the new forms of racialized segregation. Together, this complex interaction against mobility of counterinsurgency and nativism is key to contemporary strategies of sovereignty in over-developed nations, not “only” at international but also localized borders. As Etienne Balibar has argued, “the more we reduce border externalities, the closer we are to a border operating as a grid...ranging over the new social space” (2002: 84). This grid is forming a pattern of remaking race over the segregation of residences exported as counterinsurgency and domesticated as racialized violence. Race operates here as a technology to suture the gap between body and population, but even so, it is coming undone. Like every emergency, this is a time of danger and opportunity. The crisis in

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visuality may resolve itself into a highly controlled “regime of separation,” to use Hilla Dayan’s powerful term. Such a regime seeks to “develop unprecedented mechanisms of containment, with forcible separation and isolation of masses trapped in their overextended political space” (2009: 285). The regime of separation was the operating principle of the “surge” in Iraq and of the border as a grid. Separating the “good” house from the “bad” in domestic or counterinsurgent situations is an almost impossible task, however, and leads to an opportunity for a different configuration of space. Such a politics has to find a different narrative to tell. It is no longer possible to reclaim the figure of “culture” that is so dominant in counterinsurgency narratives, for example, while visuality is something that subaltern and decolonial politics have already opposed for two centuries. In countering visuality and counterinsurgency, therefore, the task confronting the critical field known as visual culture is paradoxically to delegitimize its own terms of operation.

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## Notes

<sup>1</sup> Please note that I have not linked to every piece of data gathered from newspapers and magazines precisely because of the rapidly-changing situation.

<sup>2</sup> A similar argument has been made more recently by Anne McClintock.

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