

Nancy Reagan in the ghetto

On space as a mediator between structure and event

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Introduction: A drug raid as a constitutive event

On May 4, 1989, the White House-sanctioned »Just Say No« anti-drug campaign arranged an event for schoolchildren in Los Angeles' Rose Bowl stadium. More than 20,000 children cheered as they watched performances by »Flintstone characters; the US Marine Band; McGruff, the Take a Bite Out of Crime Dog; drivers from the Mickey Thompson Off-Road Championship Gran [sic] Prix; and skits by Just Say No clubs.«¹ Nancy Reagan (former first lady since January of that year) gave the keynote speech. Amid vociferous shouts of »No!«, she echoed other speeches she had given in the past, calling for an all-out national boycott of drugs. She declared that »There's a big, bright world out there waiting for you!«, urging the children not to lose sight of real life and tangible experiences by experimenting with drugs. By way of illustration, she recalled a drug raid she had recently witnessed, saying how dearly she wished that those arrested on that day could have heard the »Just Say No« plea.

The drug raid in question is the subject of my paper. A recent article on American prohibitionist politics persuasively demonstrates the importance of space in motivating citizens to rally against perceived threats (Andrews and Seguin 2015). By analyzing quantitative data, the authors show that geography, and particularly the perceived proximity of a threatening group, plays a crucial role in encouraging communities to mobilize against drugs.

1 John Kendall, »This Is Our Future: Nancy Reagan Leads Youngsters in Pledge Against Drug Use,« *Los Angeles Times*, May 5, 1989, http://articles.latimes.com/1989-05-05/local/me-2190_1_drug-mrs-reagan-los-angeles-county.

I complement such readings by highlighting how discrete events, rather than diachronic demographic patterns, can focalize and frame social space.

By »space« and »spaces,« I mean those places and relations that form geographic reality. But »reality« does not here mean something that is »always-already there,« since the cultural imaginary plays just as big a role as physical landscapes in constituting space. Usefully, the adjective »spatial« often collocates with the noun »constellations,« producing the term »spatial constellations.« The term »constellation« particularly encapsulates my meaning. A »constellation,« after all, is a pattern we establish among any number of visible stars; the stars are really there, but the patterns we create are not automatic, natural, or self-evident. In a similar manner, spaces are concerned with the interplay between imagination and existence, as well as their mutual framing. As Susan Sontag writes in *Regarding the Pain of Others*, »to frame is to exclude« (2003, 46). In this dynamic of inclusion and exclusion, space tells stories—ones which depend on how spaces appear, what we ask from them, who the interlocutor is, and what we make of the answers that are given. In discourse about drugs, I claim, spaces have consistently contributed toward such meaning-making and the situation of agents.

Thus, rather than simply amounting to a necessary »setting« for what is ultimately a medical, social, or criminal issue, I claim that space has frequently come to act as a mediator between »events«—occurrences that appear to be situated specifically—and wider »structures,« understood as those sets of societal relations that help determine how reality is perceived and, in this case especially, what constitutes collective understanding. By »mediation,« I mean a process that reveals different characteristics and categories at once; through »mediation,« societal characteristics and categories are expressed, while they are also simultaneously (co-)produced in and through such »mediation.« When space acts as a »mediator,« then, it can highlight both the »exceptional« nature of an event (making the event interesting, compelling, etc.) and its context or structural »embeddedness.« In this way, space comes to both reflect and produce manifold patterns; spaces, Martina Löw writes, »point to the possibility of overlapping and reciprocal relations« (2006, 120) in society. It follows that the way in which

spaces are treated and believed to function matters a great deal in terms of how power relations are constituted, social arrangements are formed and dealt with, and—as is the case here—which policy measures are deemed appropriate for a given situation. It is precisely because spaces are apparently self-evident, real, and commonsensical, that they can mediate fitting responses; they do so by reflecting their structure in and through events, through which they make evident structurally contingent solutions to specific problems.

Space is not the only thing that mediates, mirrors, and produces structure through events relating to anti-drug efforts. For instance, the »reality« of the state is at least as spatial as it is ideational or legal—we encounter the state in post offices, through garbage disposal rituals, or at traffic lights—and similarly, society's relationship toward illegal or illicit drug use is frequently spatially mediated, even when it is nominally perceived as a medical or political issue. Because of the ubiquity of space, it makes sense to scrutinize relations between space, structure, and event on a broad, discursive plane. By analyzing social practices and societal iterations, or performances of constitutive knowledge, we can begin to approach the spatial dynamics of knowledge about drugs and drugs policy. As such, in this essay I rely on a wide pool of sources—including news reports, policy statements, and cultural productions—and focus especially on the tropes and themes—and effects of verisimilitude—that they collectively reproduce.²

2 To achieve this, I will not insist on or solidify the distinction between fictional and non-fictional material. This is partly owing to the broad range of sources I have selected, as noted above. Beyond this reason, and more so than might be the case in other historical instances, the 1980s war on drugs exhibited a symbiotic relationship between fact and fiction, in which »reality« greatly influenced »fiction« and vice versa. In part due to the war's long and comparatively low-intensity nature, policy measures and cultural productions alike informed people's perceptions of reality. Also, the Reagan administration and the Reaganite project, more so than other presidencies, were connected to Hollywood on both personal and policy levels. All these factors resulted in a cultural moment typified by »blurred lines.«

The drug raid described above is a good example of how space pervades issues—in this case, the fight against drugs—with diverse meanings that are inherently related to structural logics and how it can ultimately integrate singular events into a broader context. In this way, policy can itself become meaningful without the protagonists having to do much talking or give much in the way of explanation. This, in turn, normalizes a particular type of drug policy—a »war«—and neutralizes what might otherwise be considered a discriminatory, prejudiced, or even racist standpoint.

I demonstrate this by scrutinizing the event itself and drawing out the implicit spatial arrangements that would have been significant within the hegemonic imagination at that time. Space, I argue, played a determining role in defining cultural notions of inside and outside—understood as the parameters around which people assess values, identities, and concepts of community and belonging. (In terms of the American context, such practices are embedded within deeply-rooted racial and racist logics.³) Meaningful spatial categories—the *troika* of the »ghetto,« suburbia, and external foreign space—were expressed in and through the spatial dynamics of the event at hand.⁴ These *narvotopias* helped express and produce meaning, and space was mediated by framing the event and bringing forth structurally contingent, commonsensical solutions. Before expanding upon this idea, I offer some historical context below.

3 Following common usage, throughout the essay I will refer to the United States of America in the adjectival form: »American.«

4 From this point on, owing to its relatively frequent use, I will not place quotations marks around the term ghetto. It is a concept and socio-spatial category with a long history, one that is related especially to institutionalized slavery and segregation in the American context, and to anti-Semitism in Europe. Wherever it is used, it is associated with exclusion, discrimination, and poverty. As such, it is a highly political term but, I think, to opt for a more »neutrak« term would be misleading.

**»Spaced-out America«: The war on drugs, Reaganism, and
nostalgia**

Let's Make America Great Again.

—Reagan-Bush presidential campaign election slogan (1980)

I wish coke was still cola
and a joint was a bad place to be [. . .]
Is the best of the free life behind us now,
Are the good times really over for good?

—Merle Haggard, »Are the Good Times Really Over?« (1981)

Relating Reaganism to the ascent of the New Right is a standard approach to its historicization.⁵ By the mid-1960s, America's middle class felt disillusioned. Among the contributing factors to this malaise were the experience of waning influence abroad, a stagnant economy, and societal change—particularly related to civil rights. One phrase—»the silent majority«—encapsulates the group who shared this emerging sentiment. Popularized by President Richard Nixon in 1969, the term simultaneously described disillusionment and strength, maintaining that the majority of Americans—out of respect or due to factional divisions—had, despite shared attitudes, failed to mobilize and voice their concerns during the tumultuous 1960s (Perlstein 2008, 748). Activists, demonstrators, and the counterculture, indeed anyone who seemed to disrupt prevailing norms, formed the »vocal minority.« But this silent faction, who considered themselves to be victims of circumstance and aware of what their country really stood for, would not take it any longer.

This new conservatism can be traced back to a few years before the emergence of Reaganism, particularly to events such as Barry Goldwater's 1964 election campaign, which proved to be a foundational moment. It was as a supporter of Goldwater that Ronald Reagan delivered a pivotal speech, »A Time for Choosing,« which expressed concerns about America's prosperity, claiming that it was not »something on which we can base our

5 For a historiography of the New Right, see Strub 2008, 183–94.

hopes for the future.«⁶ America, the world's only bastion of freedom, was facing a fork in the road, and needed forceful steering in the right direction.⁷ Two years later, Reagan ran for California Governor, and one of his campaign's central themes was bemoaning »the mess at Berkeley,« which was then a locus of activism and counterculture. It was a place, Reagan propounded, where students held »sexual orgies so vile I cannot describe them to you«; as governor, he vowed to »investigate the charges of communism and blatant sexual misbehavior on the Berkeley campus« (deMause 1984, 43). In 1980, at a point when he was still championed by the conservative countermovement, Reagan became president.

Yet collective attitudes and political movements do not arise autonomously out of objective or predictable collective misgivings. Indeed, to understand the growth of Reaganism in that manner would simply perpetuate the ideology's own reification of individual choice and reason. Instead, politics is an affective field, and people do not always support policies because they have decided after some deliberation that they are the correct ones. Rhetoric, dress, spectacle, and space, among other things, all play crucial roles in establishing attitudes. So feelings play a significant role, and they need to be produced and repeatedly vocalized. As Reagan's denunciation of Berkeley indicates, people and spaces can come to represent shared bonds among politicians and constituents, and this often occurs on a visceral level.

The feelings I am singling out here are sentimentality and nostalgia. Of course, Reaganism's appeal lay in concrete policies: a strong military, economic revitalization, federal cuts, and so on. Its supporters saw

6 Ronald Reagan, »Address on Behalf of Senator Barry Goldwater: »A Time for Choosing,« October 27, 1964. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Wooley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/index.php?pid=76121>.

7 As an example of this, in his aforementioned speech, Reagan recalls two Americans listening to the hardships of a Cuban refugee. One commented, »We don't know how lucky we are.« The Cuban replied: »How lucky you are? I had someplace to go.«

Reaganism as the agent of a revival of America.⁸ But its narrative (and, it follows, its appeal) was heavily colored by emotion, and specifically by a sentimental *leitmotif*. James Combs writes that, before Reagan's presidency, there was a »creeping feeling that the American story was close to being over and that the enchantment the idea of America had once connoted was now irrevocably lost« (1993, 27). America's domestic stagnation and apparent loss of power abroad was explained by looking back on the 1960s. The decade, it was put forth, had proven deleterious, resulting in an overreaching state, a loss of work ethic, and a dilution of American values. The country had lost its way.

Reagan was charged with, and took on, the task of renormalization. I characterize the associated narrative as »sentimental« because it was widely premised upon a theme, widespread in sentimental literature, of virtuous sacrifice. But it was also sentimental in its manifestly »nostalgic« wish for not just *reform* but a *return* to a better past. This should not be read with a derisory subtext; nostalgia is a particularly useful term here (if we accept that etymology can tell us something about a word's »meaning«) because it is a modern Latin calque of the German word *Heimweh*, which neatly ties the word to a specific space.

The nostalgic focus, which brings the home into political discourse, is noteworthy because it is largely in conflict with the American ideal of a non-spatial political culture. This notion, in simplified form, holds that America's self-conception relates to *ideas* more than is the case for many other national narratives. The American story, politicians and constituents agree, is connected to the Enlightenment, liberalism, liberty, ambition, and (sometimes) its Puritan heritage. From early on, space was considered to be almost a void; as James A. Morone writes, many citizens imagine that »in the beginning, Americans sailed away from old world tyranny and settled a vast, unpopulated land—the place almost thrust freedom

8 Scholars who applaud Reagan generally follow similar lines, claiming that he reinvigorated the economy, restored the military, and so on. Detractors still tend to agree on Reaganism's powerful invocation of American strength, as well as its ideological longevity. For a recent historiographic account, see Charles L. Ponce de Leon 2008, 303–14.

upon them« (2003, 5). When spaces explicitly feature in this narrative, they tend to be secondary to ideals: manifest destiny, westward expansion, America's spheres of influence, and so forth have traditionally been explained as processes of spreading the aforementioned values. The idea of space as a void has been a useful myth in that it has, on one hand, served imperial ambitions of control and settlement and, on the other, delegitimized and undermined claims of exploitation and injustice voiced by colonized peoples or other actors.⁹

If, within this myth, ideas of space proved implicitly crucial in establishing hierarchies and social relations, in the 1980s space played an often explicit role. But just as was previously the case, I claim, space acted as a mediator, both reflecting and producing circumstances, while neutralizing protest by making ideas of space seem natural, innocent, and rigid. In addition, just as before, I will show that spaces helped facilitate and bring forth ideas of familiarity and strangeness necessary for control and colonization. In the evident identity crisis of the 1980s, spaces came to play a central role, with certain geographical entities functioning as ontological agents that helped frame the »right« course of action.

To be sure, this spatial-nostalgic focus was not a top-down development: broader American discourse reflected themes of loss and desire for renormalization. Economists talked about making »cuts« and »sacrifices,« and restoring America's work ethic. President Reagan, curiously mirroring drug terminology, talked about »curing« America's economy and avoiding previous »quick fixes« and »artificial stimulants.«¹⁰ On the popular-culture plane, Bruce Springsteen—hardly a figure associated with the New Right—remembered the »Glory Days« in a song of the same name

9 Elements of the motif of the void or savage space feature in the discourse of colonial conquest elsewhere. Anne McClintock (1995), for instance, shows the importance of this motif to British imperialism, stressing how assumptions about gender and class, and particularly the prevailing cult of domesticity, furthered the imperial project, abetted by a civilizing ideology.

10 Ronald Reagan, »Address Before a Joint Session of the Congress on the State of the Union,« January 25, 1983, Peters and Wooley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=41698>.

and lamented the state of his decaying hometown, while Merle Haggard complained that America's good times were over, remembering »when a girl could still cook / and still would« but also »when coke was still cola / and a joint was a bad place to be.«¹¹ The President—also conflating space, drugs, and decline—complained that Florida, America's »garden spot[,] had turned into a battlefield for competing drugpushers who were terrorizing Florida's citizens.«¹² These examples all share a common emphasis—sometimes explicit, sometimes implicit—on space. Whether it was decaying Main Street or the changing American home, America was clearly »spaced out,« as altered spaces and altered states metonymically represented an American identity that had changed. Now, how does this all relate to the war on drugs?

In the early 1980s, a number of »poison scares« made headlines across the country. In 1982, a series of articles reported that mass-produced painkillers had been laced with rat poison,¹³ chocolate milk powder fortified with sodium hydroxide, tap water infused with cyanide, and orange juice mixed with insecticide (deMause 1984, 123). Before Halloween, newspapers warned that sharp objects and dangerous substances had been placed clandestinely into candy and pleaded for parents to keep their children at

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- 11 Springsteen tied the fall from grace of his hometown, in part, to the racial strife of the 1960s. I am referring here to the songs »Glory Days« and »My Hometown,« both singles from the best-selling album *Born in the U.S.A.* (Columbia Records, 1984). The Merle Haggard song is the same one from which I quote in this chapter's epigraph: »Are the Good Times Really Over?,« a single from the album *Big City* (Epic Records, 1981).
- 12 Ronald Reagan, »Radio Address to the Nation on Federal Drug Policy,« October 2, 1982, Peters and Wooley, *The American Presidency Project*, <http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=43085>.
- 13 Most famously, the national media covered the so-called »Chicago Tylenol murders« of that same year, in which people died after ingesting pharmacy-bought painkillers.

home.¹⁴ *New York Times* journalist Russel Baker recounted his five-week journey across a »beautiful autumnal America«:

In Detroit they were finding razor blades in hot dogs sold at the grocery. In California somebody had laced eyewash with corrosive chemicals. In Chicago, capsules sold as headache remedies came packed with cyanide. In New York and its suburbs, not to be outdone, people spent the weekend inserting needles and pins into candy they planned to give children on Halloween.¹⁵

Most chillingly, in upscale Beverly Hills, front lawns were decorated with placards warning of an »armed response.« Worries about crime (shockingly, even President Reagan was shot in 1981) led many to advocate a stricter stance (Pratt, Franklin, and Gall 2011, 122–23). Many must have felt that America was losing its moral fiber or worse that America was losing its very *substance*—as illustrated by the poisoning of unsuspecting victims by foreign substances. That October, the President took to the radio waves to declare a war on drugs.

Actually, the war on drugs was not new. Richard Nixon first declared it in 1971, and his presidency was characterized by his personal zeal to combat drugs. Yet despite efforts to curb the amount of drugs flowing into the country—assisted by tougher policing and stricter sentencing—the war had little lasting power. Gerald Ford »simply did not share Nixon’s intense anger at drug users« (Musto 2003, 258). Eleven years later, under

14 DeMause uses the following as a representative example of a *New York Post* headline from the time: »Trick or Terror—Nationwide Poison Candy Alert: Keep Kids at Home.« Similar articles were published elsewhere. That same October, Ronald O’Byran, who was convicted of poisoning his son with Halloween treats, was set to be executed. In morbid irony, he was the first person in Texas to be sentenced to execution (or poisoning) by lethal injection. The execution was, however, delayed by two years, so the distinction would ultimately belong to someone else.

15 Russel Baker, »America and the Rush of Madness,« *New York Times*, republished in *The Age* (Melbourne, Australia), November 9, 1982, <http://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1300&dat=19821109&id=7DVVAAAIAIBAJ&sjid=hZQDAAAIAIBAJ&pg=5471,3771543>.

Reagan, it was declared anew; it would gain in force and enjoy more public exposure during his administration. Under Reagan, the drug war was part of the new direction of a resurgent America. His declaration was infused with action, boasting of current and future »dramatic [...] results,« a »planned, concerted campaign,« a »beef[ing] up« of »law enforcement,« the use of »military radar« and »intelligence.« A »hot pursuit« would commence, the drug war signalling that, at last, America had »taken down the surrender flag and run up the battle flag.«¹⁶

The »war« descriptor itself is telling. Wars, the dictionary explains, are a state of »armed conflict« involving states or, sometimes, non-state actors (*New Oxford American Dictionary*; sv »war«). Moreover, they are typically understood as the *culmination*—the final and desperate measure—of disputes about territory or sovereignty (McLean and McMillan; sv »war«). In English, however, »war« is sometimes an indirect designation that serves as a metaphor (for example, cold war, gang war, race war, or trade war), which plays on connotations of violence and intensity. It is nonetheless wise to remind ourselves here that calling a country's anti-drug policy a »war« is by no means self-evident. Instead, doing so can serve a clear purpose: it can place all anti-narcotics efforts within a story that conforms to America's self-conception. That is, wars are not just strategical or tactical—or political in any other sense—but they are also ontological.¹⁷ By establishing divisions between good and evil, us and them, wars can strengthen and form types of self-conception. Within the context of the 1980s war on drugs, these divisions would be inflected by ideas of space much more than other »wars as metaphor.«¹⁸ As is the case for »real« wars, the notion was that the war on drugs had to be about territory. It would be fought in foreign countries, in inner cities and suburbs, and America would win street by

16 Reagan, »Radio Address to the Nation on Federal Drug Policy.«

17 For more on war as ontological, see Michael J. Shapiro 1997.

18 Other metaphorical wars include the war on poverty, which certainly had spatial associations but was also heavily shaped by the economy and a renewed work ethic. The war on terror was definitely spatially conceived when it was fought abroad, but was not articulated in relation to domestic spaces to the same extent as the war on drugs.

street, neighborhood by neighborhood. But perhaps even more so than in »reak« wars, where battles are actually fought over territory, spaces here became about identity, about privileged, normative insiders who had to be protected against threatening and aggressive outsiders. How might we trace the origins of this spatial focus?

In the 1970s, American attitudes toward drugs seemed to be at their most relaxed. Cocaine, widely considered harmless at the time, enjoyed an air of respectability and a certain glamor.¹⁹ In 1978, it was revealed that Peter Bourne, President Carter's adviser on drug policy (who four years earlier had called cocaine »benign«) had snorted cocaine at the annual meeting of the National Organization for the Reform of Drug Laws (Musto 2003, 263). Granting active users entry to the White House under Reagan would, by contrast, have been unthinkable and considered a sign of open collusion with America's enemies. Perhaps no public figure represents this change better than the director Dennis Hopper. His 1969 film *Easy Rider* features two young and handsome (white) drug dealers and users, modern-day bandits riding motorcycles down lonely highways in old cowboy country. The film skillfully captures the late-1960s attitude (albeit subcultural) that associated drugs with romance and freedom, a freedom that is largely conveyed spatially. With wide, open spaces and empty roads that positively oozed Americana, in the film, drug use was conflated with American freedom. After a hiatus from filmmaking—partly as a result of his own drug-taking—Hopper made a Hollywood comeback with the 1988 film *Colors*, a police drama that was also set in the American Southwest. But this time the audience is faced with dusty, depressing, impoverished, and frequently claustrophobic urban spaces that have neither a center nor a periphery. Here the borders between good and bad, sobriety and intoxication, criminals and the police, Mexico and America, and war

19 During the 1970s, cocaine enjoyed unprecedented cultural capital: The *New York Times Magazine* compared it to champagne in 1974; three years later, *Newsweek* equated it to caviar and Dom Pérignon; and in 1981, the front cover of *Time* pictured a martini glass full of cocaine powder. Even the Drug Abuse Council compared it to a fine wine or liqueur (Agar 2003, 13).

and peace are always shifting and slipping. Here is a country so constitutionally diseased by drugs that the center of one of its largest cities—and one that is synonymous with glitz, glamor, and the American dream—has been turned into a war zone. It was into this city that Nancy Reagan ventured in April 1989.

**»That these people have no lives«: Nancy Reagan in the ghetto,
continued**

At this juncture, let us return to the event at hand. As we have seen, speaking to a large crowd of children in Los Angeles, Reagan decided to relate an event she had recently been privy to that had apparently moved her deeply. About a month earlier—wearing sports shoes, blue jeans, and a jacket with the word »POLICE« written on the back and her first name printed on the front—Reagan had followed the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) into South Central Los Angeles. Department Chief Daryl Gates, a supporter of Just Say No and a founder of DARE (an anti-drug program through which officers teach schoolchildren abstention), had suggested that she should participate actively in anti-drug police actions, and so she personally accompanied them on the mission.

The event that she was about to witness was the storming, by LAPD's Special Weapons and Tactics (SWAT) team, of a known crack house (specifically, one in which the trade and use of crack cocaine occurs). The plan was for her to wait inside a local fire station during the action, but things were delayed and Reagan (who had »been on her feet all day«) ended up waiting in an air-conditioned motor home, which had »The Establishment« emblazoned on its hood.²⁰ As the storming took place, she and Gates were reportedly seen »munching« fruit salad, although they would later assert that she had watched the SWAT team enter the

20 Louis Sahagun and Carol McGraw, »Ex-First Lady Just Said Yes to Drug Raid: Nancy Reagan Regains Visibility as Crusader,« *Los Angeles Times*, April 8, 1989, http://articles.latimes.com/1989-04-08/local/me-1168_1_drug-raid.

building.²¹ When it was over, she retouched her makeup and emerged to survey the results, touring the house and talking to the press. Police confiscated one gram of crack and arrested 14 people in the house.²² They lay handcuffed on the floor as the former first lady walked around. She refrained from speaking to any of them, but as she passed by, one of them said »Hello, Mrs. Reagan.«²³ Reagan, who went on the raid because she wanted to see the conditions the users endured, said that »There were people on the floor. The rooms were unfurnished, small little rooms. It was very, very depressing. [...] It's awful to see when you think that these people have no lives.«²⁴ The people in the house, by her estimation, were »beyond the point of teaching and rehabilitating.«²⁵ A crowd of about fifty residents gathered outside, some of whom used gang gestures, while others yelled »Hey Nancy Reagan. She's over here in the ghetto!«²⁶

This coordinated event contains several »commonsensical« aspects. Reagan would have wanted to show her continued commitment to fighting drug

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- 21 Louis Sahagun, »Former First Lady, Gates on Scene as SWAT Team Carries Out Drug Raid,« *Los Angeles Times*, April 7, 1989, http://articles.latimes.com/1989-04-07/local/me-1163_1_drug-raid.
- 22 The Anti-Drug Abuse Act of 1986, enacted about a month after the televised address, introduced minimum penalties of ten years for possession of five grams of crack cocaine, while the same sentence applied to fifty grams of powdered cocaine. This sentencing disparity has been widely decried—while crack was mostly used in blighted urban areas, (expensive) powdered cocaine was mostly used by rich, white Americans. As Ronald signed the bill into law, Nancy stood beside him.
- 23 Bruce V. Bigelow, »Nancy Reagan Calls Raid on Cocaine »Rock House« a Real Downer,« *Associated Press*, April 7, 1989, <http://www.apnewsarchive.com/1989/Nancy-Reagan-Calls-Raid-on-Cocaine-Rock-House-a-Real-Downer/id-79be50abb626bfa2874bd1f8c229ddea>.
- 24 »Nancy Reagan Goes on a Drug Bust,« *Philadelphia Inquirer*, April 8, 1989, http://articles.philly.com/1989-04-08/news/26141510_1_nancy-reagan-drug-bust-movie-star.
- 25 »Nancy Reagan in on Bust,« *Greensboro News and Record*, April 8, 1989.
- 26 Sahagun, »Former First Lady, Gates on Scene.«

use, even after her husband's retirement, and going on a drug raid would certainly have been an gesture illustrating this intention. Moreover, it was already established practice for officials to personally follow officers on patrol.²⁷ Finally, Gates, who had helped found SWAT,²⁸ would have wanted to put a certain spin on the event. For years, his LAPD had battled drug peddlers and gang members with aggressive tactics, such as arresting nearly 1,500 people in a single weekend during the course of its notorious »Operation Hammer« (Klein 1997, 162). Exhibiting the necessity for SWAT's existence by emphasizing the risk involved in operations and the alien lives of the arrestees would have served him well, assuming the public would be spurred on to support increased funding through such a tactic. Additionally, it was rumored that Gates intended to run for Governor, and having Reagan advertise the merits of his initiative may have benefited that aspiration.²⁹ But beyond such machinations, the setting—and Reagan's characterization of it—shows that something else was occurring. An image of an outside space was being created, while simultaneously an inside space in need of protection was being realized. Through the use of space, appropriate measures for solving the drug problem could be established. I see Nancy Reagan's trip into the ghetto as a »constitutive event«—*namely* one that, by using space as a mediator, not only reflects a given set of circumstances but helps constitute both

27 For example, New York Governor Alfonse D'Amato and New York City mayor Rudolph Giuliani followed undercover New York Police Department (NYPD) operations in 1986 to highlight its work in relation to criminal trials; see »Top Officials Go Undercover to Underscore Drug Menace,« *Reading Eagle*, July 10, 1986, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?nid=1955&dat=19860710&id=yxsiAAAAIIBAJ&sjid=B6cFAAAAIBAJ&pg=5807,6177725&hl=en>.

28 LAPD's SWAT was considered so effective that in 1980 Gates offered its services to President Jimmy Carter, when the latter was grappling with the Tehran hostage crisis. (An element of boasting, however, should not be discounted on Gates' part.)

29 A number of newspaper reports mention this. After his poor handling of the 1992 LA riots, however, Gates chose to retire, by which time a governorship must have seemed out of reach.

these circumstances and the actors—the insiders and outsiders—that give rise to the problem and solution. I explain this idea in further detail below.

The ghetto, heterotopia, and *narcotopia*: Or letting space express societal fault lines

Introduction—Definitions

Socio-spatial categories are often understood as natural. The distinction between public and private spheres, for instance—one which was realized in particular by the rise of the bourgeois order in Europe—is widely considered natural and innocent, despite having a clearly traceable history and despite being suffused with power relations. It is precisely their naturalized characteristics and apparent innocence that makes spaces ripe for analysis; through space, we may glance a society's ideological makeup and, especially, ideas and practices that relate to distinction, difference, and otherness. To this end, analyzing how a society distinguishes between and divides spaces may prove fruitful. Spaces, through the way in which they are constituted and function as mediators, both mirror and produce wider dividing practices.

A *heterotopia*—a concept conceived by Michel Foucault—is a space in which hegemonic conditions do not apply in the same way as they do in general society (1986, 22–27). Unlike utopias, which are imagined perfect spaces, *heterotopias* are simultaneously imagined and actually existing spaces that run counter to wider norms. For example, a graveyard is *heterotopic*: in this space, time apparently stands still and the behaviors that are commonly adhered to or performed lose their primacy (for example, it is acceptable for people to cry or act hysterically in graveyards). Foucault distinguishes between two types of *heterotopia*: those of crisis and those of deviation. The first refers to spaces that are occupied by people in crisis or in a position of liminality (such as military barracks or seclusion rooms for menstruating women). The second encompasses spaces that house deviant persons (such as prisons or psychiatric hospitals). (This distinction should best be seen as a generalized duality, which accommodates for a great deal of overlap.) Crucially, Foucault imbues space with specific forms

of behavior and, therefore, also with figures. To enter a *heterotopia* is to enter a space with predictable and specific character types. This matters a great deal, since *heterotopias* can thus function to stabilize identity—by situating victims and aggressors, insiders and outsiders, the normal and the deviant. It follows that *heterotopias* are not just geographical phenomena but are also largely about social roles, spatially contingent performances, and identities.

South Central Los Angeles can be configured as a *heterotopia* of both crisis and deviance. Many Americans would have recognized it as the location of the Watts riots or associated it with black militancy and gangsta rap.³⁰ Some would have taken the space as a byword for drug use and gang violence. Those unfamiliar with the crack house at the time of Nancy Reagan's visit were introduced to it by the Associated Press: »[t]he raid took place in the city's beleaguered south central section, where gangs such as the Crips and Bloods wage war on each other, often using semi-automatic weapons such as the AK-47 to carry out their vendettas.«³¹ Here is a space in severe crisis, even in outright war. (The AK-47, surely the most iconic rifle in the world, is itself a symbol for unrest, rebellion, gangsterism, and communism.) Describing the area as »beleaguered,«

30 Gangsta rap, a subgenre of hip-hop, largely grew out of the ghettos in and around Los Angeles. During the latter half of the 1980s, vehement debates raged about the corrupting influence that gangsta rap might have on listeners, and South Central Los Angeles was put in the spotlight. A longer history of hip-hop would trace it back to New York and especially to the Bronx, where it often functioned—aside from entertainment—as a means of protest against urban decay and harrowing social conditions, conditions that continued with, and in many respects were exacerbated by, the regime of social cuts implemented by the Reagan administration. A compelling narrated history of hip-hop is provided by Nelson George (2005). For an account of hip-hop's place in broader discourses on the options for cultural resistance and the meaning of black authenticity, see Japtok and Jenkins (2011).

31 Bruce V. Bigelow, »Nancy Reagan Calls Raid on Cocaine »Rock House« a Real Downer,« *Associated Press*, April 7, 1989, <http://www.apnewsarchive.com/1989/Nancy-Reagan-Calls-Raid-on-Cocaine-Rock-House-a-Real-Downer/id-79be50abb626bfa2874bd1f8c229d8ea>.

moreover, established it as simultaneously troubled and under siege or, in other words, as a *heterotopia* of both crisis and deviance.

I view the ghetto here as coming to form part of a social imaginary pertaining to drugs, one which I call—in a nod to Foucault—the *narcotopia*. The *narcotopia*, as is the case for *heterotopias*, is a space that helps situate the borders of normality and deviance, virtue and vice, and the proper course of action in dealing with drugs. It may take shape in manifold ways; a rough *troika* can be identified in the event I focus on here, which consists of the inside space of suburbia, the foreign space of the ghetto (in the domestic context), and the outside space of foreign countries. I explain this constellation below. As expressed through the event, space mediates carefully framed structural characteristics that help prescribe a very particular response to the drug problem.

Narcotopias hard and soft: Foreign countries, the ghetto, and suburbia

If the ghetto was beleaguered and under siege, it is telling that the AK-47 was used as a metonym for that situation. The rifle could bring an entire web of signification into the narrative, helping frame the ghetto's *narcotopian* qualities and those of the raid itself. The logic of the narrative was that drug-peddling gangsters were apparently roaming and controlling the streets of South Central, therefore suggesting that the war on drugs waged in response was a direct struggle for legitimacy and a monopoly of violence. Furthermore, it furnished the space with a strange interstitial quality, evoking associations that were simultaneously inside and outside of America (or an America turned inside out). A space on American soil had been taken over, enclosed, and besieged by outside forces. But what and who were these outside forces? (This is where drug-war spaces begin to express characters and identities.) To recycle a term from the (counter-)civil-rights struggle, »outside agitators« were frequently—implicitly or explicitly—identified as fomenting crisis by peddling drugs in occupied spaces. Such exteriorization directly relates to drugs' supposed foreignness (and their foreign trade routes) but also indicates a threat to the very foundation and spatial ordering of the state (and in American discourse, notions of exteriority are hardly innocent of racial difference). Debates concerning

whom neighborhoods belonged to, and who belonged in neighborhoods, appeared in several contemporary anti-drug cultural productions.

In an episode of *21 Jump Street* (a TV cop show), a group of youths, protesting the LAPD's inability to defeat the drug crisis, form a community watch organization named Street Rangers, an allusion to New York's Guardian Angels.³² On patrol, the leader lectures the members that »These guys, the dealers, the buyers, they move in. A little or a lot, it doesn't matter—it takes the neighborhood away from the people. And pretty soon we've got graffiti, dopers hanging out, cars driving by all night, shootings, people afraid to come out of their own homes.« A black gangster confronts the group, nearly causing a disturbance: »You are the problem here,« he says. A Ranger objects, »The community is sick of...« but the gangster interrupts: »I am the community! Everybody on this street is the community. So you all are outsiders here. And that is where we want you—out!« In a terrible twist, the well-intentioned but frustrated activists end up resorting to the enemy's tactics, kidnapping someone they accuse of having murdered their leader Steve. The tied-up hostage is put on mock trial. Steve's brother speaks:

»What kind of world do we live in? My brother gives his life protecting the people and these [...] animals are selling dope and getting protected by the law? It's up to us to say no! We have to give some meaning to the sacrifices Steve made, which my family has to live with forever.«

A fixation on meaningful retribution starts to pervade the Rangers' activism, and their insistence on flaunting their »colors« begins to mirror a similar gang practice (in the same year, the gangster film *Colors* was released). These activists, fighting against drugs and a dangerous outside space, begin to adopt similar tactics and characteristics to the drug users and dealers. The threat the outside space poses here is evidently both spatial and foundational. In the ghetto, a parastate has apparently been established,

32 »Slippin' Into Darkness/Date with an Angel,« *21 Jump Street*, season 3, episode 2, originally aired November 6, 1988.

in defiance of government legitimacy and order, and the risk was that it would spread.

That the ghetto was continuously depicted in this way suggests that it was considered to be a space that was colluding with concrete outside forces, namely those foreign countries, often in Latin America, which largely supplied America with its drugs. In the 1980s, many cultural productions, especially films, imagined America undergoing an invasion. Most frequently, the invading party was the Soviet Union.³³ But in a number of cases, drug-peddling terrorists or organized cartels were shown subverting and attacking the country. To show that it is not a tenuous link I am making here—between the foreign and domestic drug war, foreign terrorists and the domestic ghetto—by way of illustration I offer an example from *48 Hours on Crack Street*, a CBS documentary that afforded television viewers a *vérité* look at the contemporary drug problem.³⁴ A concerned mother describes the situation in her neighborhood: »Noone in the neighborhood wants to live like this, and yet we find ourselves at the mercy of them. It's almost like the park is an armed camp and these are guerrillas or terrorists making these forays from the park in the neighborhood« says one. Another continues,

The criminal elements, whoever they are, have taken over the neighborhood, and there doesn't seem to be a way [...] of getting them out. [...] Absolutely being overwhelmed, you know, these rats [from

33 Some examples include: the 1983 film *The Day After*, in which residents of Missouri and Kansas are subjected to a nuclear attack after a NATO-Warsaw Pact war breaks out; the 1984 film *Red Dawn*, where Soviet and Cuban armies take over the country, and a group of Colorado teenagers take up arms in response; or the 1987 TV miniseries *Amerika* in which the Red Army, following a bloodless takeover, occupies the United States for over a decade.

34 *48 Hours on Crack Street*, produced by *CBS News*, originally aired September 18, 1986, <http://www.cbsnews.com/videos/48-hours-on-crack-street/>.

at least 1986 the drug problem was described as a »plague«³⁵—[FN] have come in through the pipes, and I'm sure there is the leader who is leading them, and our children are following them out.

As if to ensure that viewers realize the invasion is coming from the outside, another interviewee interjects that »It's not our children!« Apparently spontaneously, these interviewees draw parallels between drugs, foreign elements, guerilla warfare, and their own neighborhood. In Los Angeles, when the drug panic was at its peak, citizens were warned about Latin Americans stealthily invading the country. Absurdly, citizens were told to be on the lookout for »suspicious« Latin Americans, especially »polite, well-dressed« families or individuals with penchants for quiet suburban neighborhoods« (Davis 1990, 312). A strange invasion had taken place, with American streets now at the mercy of a complex combination of otherness, dangerous characters, and suddenly changing spaces.

Reagan's comments on the poor living conditions of the inhabitants of the crack house point to another idea. »The rooms were unfurnished,« she said, concluding that »these people have no lives.« To be sure, she was describing their living conditions honestly, but this fear of the disordered, chaotic domestic space also borrowed on a trope in which drugs debase the very idea of American life, which obviously relates to America's postwar »suburban moment« and what Robert Fishman in a 1987 book termed »bourgeois utopia«: the quiet, homogeneous, single-family house neighborhood. In a 1980 Pulitzer Prize-winning *Washington Post* article entitled »Jimmy's World« (which, it later emerged, was a fabrication), journalist Janet Cooke followed Jimmy, an eight-year-old heroin addict living in similar conditions to those Reagan had witnessed (had the piece been written some years later, the house would undoubtedly have been labelled a crack house; Jimmy's home is described as a »shooting gallery,«

35 In its March 17, 1986 issue, *Newsweek* seems to have been the first outlet to use the term. It featured a graph, entitled »A Coke Plague,« detailing American drug-use patterns over time. In June 1986, *Newsweek's* editor-in-chief wrote an editorial entitled »The Plague Among Us,« furthering the drugs-as-disease topos. For a discussion of general news coverage on the crack scare, see James D. Orcutt and J. Blake Turner 1993, 190–206.

heroin's equivalent space).³⁶ Jimmy's world is one where faceless and nameless vagrants buy and inject heroin, and strangers help Jimmy to »get off« on a daily basis. But most terrifyingly of all, perhaps: it is Jimmy's stepfather who first introduced the little boy to heroin. At one point, after injecting Jimmy with heroin, the stepfather says—expressing his warped intentions—»Pretty soon, man, you got to learn how to do this for yourself.« Cooke further explains how this corruption began. It is not just drugs (although Jimmy's laconic mother admits that »Drugs and black folk been together for a very long time«) or economic deprivation but, as an expert informs,

A lot of these parents (of children involved with drugs) are the unwed mothers of the 1960s, and they are bringing up their children by trial and error. [...] The family structure is not there so [the children] establish a relationship with their peers. If the peers are into drugs, it won't be very long before the kids are, too.

Conditions, quite clearly, were bad. But where before these horrific spaces were imagined to be thoroughly *outré*, by the 1980s Americans were fretting that the drug scourge might spread.³⁷ Drugs were apparently becoming all too familiar and all too common. The outside spaces—the foreign countries and the ghettos that colluded with them—had ambitions of conquest.

Much like the guerilla warfare portrayed by the mothers in *48 Hours on Crack Street*, cultural productions continuously repeated the line that threats to the suburbs were being fended off. In an episode of the animated series

36 Janet Cooke, »Jimmy's World,« *Washington Post*, September 28, 1980, *The Washington Post Archives*, https://www.washingtonpost.com/archive/politics/1980/09/28/jimmys-world/605f237a-7330-4a69-8433-b6da4c519120/?utm_term=.a74c0ed8cf02.

37 For drug use as an *outré* phenomenon, think, for instance, of Jack Gerber's 1959 play *The Connection*, in which a group of users lie about in an apartment, waiting for a drug dealer to come, always remaining cut off from the »reak« world. Think also of the 1971 movie *The Panic in Needle Park*, in which the drug scene was portrayed as subcultural, contained, and secretive, so cut off from the mainstream.

Rambo: The Force of Freedom (hereafter shortened to *Rambo*), Rambo visits Chopper, his suburban friend.³⁸ To Rambo's disappointment, Chopper's son Johnny is not there when he arrives; instead, the teenager, chased by a black sports car, comes racing down the street on his bicycle. Despite everyone's serious shock, Johnny refuses to divulge what had precipitated the chase. Later, when leaving the house, Rambo and Johnny take cover as the same car charges toward them, with one passenger firing a shotgun at them. It turns out that Johnny has a drug habit and owes his dealers money. This explains why valuables have recently been disappearing from Chopper's house; the home, in more than one material sense, has begun to disintegrate. Dismayed, Chopper says, »Why didn't I pay attention? This is my fault!« Rambo, with his hand on Chopper's shoulder, answers, »We're all at fault—all of us. We tolerate drugs, we put up with drug dealers. We've got to stop it.« Turning to Johnny, he adds »You can help me find the pushers selling dope to the kids. And you can tell your friends they don't have to do drugs—they can Just Say No.«

The pilot of *21 Jump Street*—the aforementioned detective series—has a strikingly similar opening, showing a family enjoying breakfast around their kitchen table.³⁹ They talk about mundane things (that serve as clear indicators of their class), such as the son's fledgling interest in playing the clarinet (in *Rambo*, Johnny has recently given up learning the guitar). Then comes the *coup de théâtre*: two black hoodlums suddenly burst through the kitchen's glass door, shattering the pane and startling the family. They are menacingly dressed, both sporting sunglasses, black leather gloves and, suggestive of their criminality, gold jewelry hangs from their necks; one wears a hooded sweatshirt, the other a red bomber jacket.⁴⁰ The latter, brandishing a shotgun, proclaims, »Stay quiet, stay alive!«

38 »Just Say No,« *Rambo: The Force of Freedom*, episode 58, originally aired December 8, 1986.

39 »Pilot,« *21 Jump Street*, season 1, episode 1, originally aired April 12, 1987.

40 While fashionable at the time, the bomber jacket would have stirred up associations of crime and, especially, racial strife: it was worn by some members of the Black Panther Party and, more notoriously, by neo-Nazis. The hooded sweater has long been associated with crime and

It turns out that the son owes them \$6,000 worth of drug money and »Time's up.« To demonstrate the gravity of the situation, the hoodlum brandishing the gun shoots the living-room TV set. They demand that the father hands them the keys to the »Jag in the driveway ... or we take li'l sister here to the prom.« After the two depart, the son pleads with his father not to call the police. (Explicitly here, a »vocal minority« attempts to convince the majority to stay silent.) But in all of these examples, the police and the adults do their job—they remember their roles once again—while the children learn to »Say No.« Finally, then, fears concerning space help to implement a general response, which I discuss in more detail below.

»What is to be done?«: Drugs, space, and the banal colonial response

As mentioned above, the ghetto's drug dealers and gangsters, whom Reagan wanted to see with her own eyes, were often framed as posing a direct challenge to state legitimacy. During the funeral of Oakland »drug king« Felix »The Cat« Mitchell, a television reporter lamented the fact that locals, including children, had come out to cheer on his procession and to give Mitchell a last goodbye, calling it a clear »advertisement for the other side.«⁴¹ This »other side,« it was clear to many, needed containing, lest it spread and wholly undermine what America stood for. The response, again, would be largely spatial.

In the 1980s, the idea that drug use had become prevalent among all segments of society was continuously expressed. As such, to explicitly base policy or activism around class-based or racial logics and solutions would have proven contradictory and contentious. But through space, as I have tried to show, differences could be insisted upon without recourse

antisocial behavior, and it is an item of clothing that has deep racial connotations, as the controversy around the 2012 killing of Trayvon Martin—and the fact that he was wearing a hoodie—reminds us.

41 John Blackstone, *CBS News*, August 29, 1986. Retrieved from *YouTube.com*, »Felix Mitchell Junior: Drug Lord of East Oakland,« <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sDe2mlMJ95E>.

to the specter of race. In addition, people and populations could, without a direct pronouncement, be categorized as either assailant or victim, in control or disoriented. To further emphasize this point, I briefly tackle the spatial aspects of the supposed solution to the drug crisis. Roughly speaking, and I am ignoring foreign battlegrounds here, the response was bifurcated, divided into a suburban response and another answer for the ghetto.

When the drugs scourge was fought in the suburbs, the official and grassroots reply was to take immediate and collective action. Parent groups were formed, policemen came to advocate DARE in schools, and students and teachers banded together behind the »Just Say No« slogan. Many teenagers themselves would have spontaneously begun to support abstinence, inspired by, say, the budding straight-edge punk scene (and the emergence of straight edge can hardly be read completely separately from growing mainstream intolerance). But ultimately, as the many television shows and films that tackled suburban drug problems show, solutions would be communal, voluntary, and iterative. The narrative was that, in the suburbs, drugs would force Americans to confront themselves, and demand for drugs would wither as soon as Americans remembered their true selves. Whether they had been exposed to drugs (yet) or not, citizens would ultimately prevail, fighting off the evil drugs represented, and reclaiming their bodies and neighborhoods.

Certainly, similar trends, particularly grassroots ones, can be found in the ghetto. (The »Crack is whack« slogan and the numerous rap artists who denounced drugs are indicative of this.) But in the hegemonic imagination, fighting the ghetto's drug problem required a wholly different approach. Unlike in the suburbs, where the American citizen knew deep down what was best for them, in the ghetto, a harder character type prevailed. Suburban characters, America's insiders, wouldn't, or couldn't, become one another's enemies; they were terrorized, victims of strange circumstances. By contrast, ghetto dwellers, like Jimmy's father, were considered to be agents of their own destruction. Here it is useful to recall our earlier discussion of war, since it is typically understood as a natural outcome of events, as the last but necessary resort. That white America repeatedly told itself that ghetto conditions resembled those experienced

in wartime served clear purposes. It was a comparison that enabled white America to rid itself of responsibility for the ghetto's troubles, while making warlike actions and tough punishments seem like the only moral policy that could most effectively reduce the harm drugs cause.

It is in this area that a colonialist gaze is in effect, through which the ghetto and blackness are viewed as a particular form of (domestic) otherness that must be liberated through violence. Just as was the case for drug-producing countries, the ghetto's homes and inhabitants needed to be saved from themselves through a determined offensive. When works from the time imagined America battling drug-producing countries, standard operating procedures were often ignored and it was thought that an increased use of force—unbound by threats or condemnations from local officials or the international community—would always lead to success. In the ghetto's drug war, standard operating procedures would also be sidestepped, ostensibly for the population's own good.

The focus on policing space could thus equip drug policy with a productive »banal colonialism.« I use the term »colonialism« because this space was, like the European model, couched in notions of liberation and uplift. And like Michael Billig's concept of »banal nationalism,« which comprises those habits, ideas, and forgotten reminders that sustain imagined communities (*nationalismproject.org* 2004), banal colonialism would tap into notions of foreignness already present in America. As was the case for foreign countries, the ghetto proved to be a legitimate target for intervention and pacification. As such, it was possible to talk about tougher policing and »liberation,« and drug-taking ghetto dwellers were not seen as innocent victims but instead as agents of their own destruction. Furthermore, banal colonialism, like its nationalist counterpart, legitimized and reinforced the systemic status quo. By spatially intervening in the ghetto and in foreign countries, suburban identity—as a stand in for American identity—would be reinforced and American space fortified.

Finally, the story, of course, returns to American insiders. The visit to the crack house could become part of that period's broader sentimental narrative and thus help spur America's identity-building anti-drug efforts. In the ghetto, there were no clear solutions that could be repeatedly

applied, but what the first lady had seen there was recounted to a stadium full of enthusiastic children. Just Say No's visit to the ghetto would establish meaning for the insiders as well, one that would further strengthen their foundations. And for the insiders, the formula would still stand: if the children would only hear the campaign's message, they would never end up like those docile bodies on that floor that were likely destined for prison. As before, the government would continue to do its job—hopefully with the ultimate result of bringing the outside within the inside's fold—but individuals had to support this activity through continued activism and permanent drug abstention.

Conclusion

Without doubt, the Reagan-era war on drugs had pernicious results. Tougher attitudes toward policing, combined with the enactment of sentencing disparities for crack and powdered cocaine, disproportionately and adversely affected African Americans and other minorities. Minimum sentencing laws and calls for judicial intolerance fortified the growth of a prison-industrial complex, the malignancy of which America is still experiencing today. The crackdown on drugs in the ghetto largely helped to establish what Loïc Wacquant (2000) terms a »new peculiar institution,« with the ghetto acting as a »social prison« and the prison as a »judicial ghetto.« When viewed through a spatial prism, however, I have argued that it is possible to measure how policies and societal attitudes function in the hegemonic subconscious. Assumptions about togetherness and otherness, which have a long pedigree in America, could be recruited and mobilized through ideas about space, helping to establish an effective narrative that pitted a moral inside and an immoral outside against one another. The Reagan administration cut federal drug-treatment expenditure, making many addicts more vulnerable in the process. The consequent ability to deliberately »other« groups of people, pinning responsibility for a malaise onto an outside or foreign body, could have partly led to the exoneration of officials. The administration's direct or indirect role in the production and trade of illegal drugs in and from Latin America, as well as its support of dictatorships who profited from this trade, may effectively have been concealed through the dissemination of a vocal, moralistic

anti-drug message. But a spatial focus shows how much policy acted within and through pre-established frameworks: what drugs came to express was already a story that had implicit beginnings and outcomes, and had been one long before Nancy Reagan entered the crack house.

Ultimately, I have intended to show that focusing on the spatial aspects of 1980s anti-drug discourse is worthwhile because—while it is possible to distinguish framing and performance from reception and dissemination—a study of spaces helps scholars to engage with the underlying premises and attitudes of policy and broader discourse. Moreover, while my paper has focused on the 1980s, I am partial to a »predictive« reading: that is, in some form, spaces, in particular *narcotopias*, will play a role in other periods and contexts of (anti-)drugs policy, and in drugs history in general. Focusing on such spaces allows scholars to move beyond assessments of cause and effect, and intentions *versus* results, permitting an interrogation of the culturally specific »ideological scaffolding« that has given meaning to drugs and made anti-drug efforts appear so commonsensical in nature.

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