

Ananya Roy and Emma Shaw Crane (eds), *Territories of Poverty: Rethinking North and South*, Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2015. ISBN: 978-0-8203-4842-1 (cloth); ISBN: 978-0-8203-4843-8 (paper); ISBN: 978-0-8203-4844-5 (ebook)

As I read this volume, I couldn't help but think how useful this resource would have been as one of the main texts for my undergraduate course on international development that I teach at Los Andes University in Colombia.

It was a significant challenge to design this class, being the only class I teach at Los Andes in English and the only class where I find myself constantly questioning the legitimacy of my words and the relevance of both the classic and critical texts referring to Latin American development as if it were something happening far away, removed from students' daily lives and realities in a country penetrated by many of the actors and poverty action programs problematized in this volume.

I found *Territories of Poverty* a refreshing collection in this sense, in that the global North, and North Atlantic in particular, are given a space in analyses of poverty and development and the editors call for a rethinking, "reterritorialization", and remapping of North-South, "the West and the rest" simplistic divisions, thus carving out a space for the collective rewriting of a "theory from the South ... the South not as stable geographic location but instead ... [regarded as] ... 'everywhere but always somewhere'" (p.17). The reterritorialization of poverty scholarship provides a tangible way for my students in Colombia to contextualize and problematize, through critical, relational analyses, the poverty action and other development programs they encounter, either as volunteers or beneficiaries, on a daily basis. Theoretical content that paves the way for pedagogical innovation on poverty and development and that feels relevant for students in the global South is scarce, and this volume makes an important contribution for our classrooms.

Territories of Poverty is an ambitious initiative that urges scholars, through the editors' radical compilation and writing practices, to rethink and problematize multiple divisions in poverty scholarship so often forged between the global South and North, between research assistants and faculty regarding co-authorship, between disciplines, and between critical poverty studies and the implementation-level politics of the development apparatus. This provocative volume edited by Ananya Roy and Emma Shaw Crane involves scholarship from a diverse group of contributors including development practitioners and academics ranging from undergraduate students to senior faculty and researchers across multiple disciplines including urban planning, anthropology, architecture, American studies, geography, history, and sociology.

The intergenerational aspect of the *Territories of Poverty* initiative is particularly inspiring as it places in practice the radical scholarship that both editors and many contributors repeatedly call for throughout the volume. By working to eliminate hierarchies in poverty knowledge production between students, junior and more senior scholars, *Territories of Poverty* enacts an ethics of encounter by creating spaces for new voices and visions to generate poverty knowledge and disrupt traditional knowledge production practices. I urge scholars to follow the example set by Roy and Shaw Crane and continue to push these boundaries, working beyond the limits of traditional academic publishing practices and taking on the complex obstacle of language barriers. We can start by including more scholarship from academics in the global South in our reviews of literature and bibliographies, which also play an important role in the (re)production of poverty knowledge hegemonies. Through these critical knowledge production practices, I imagine an academic community where, as suggested by Roy in the introduction to the volume, the "new and heterogenous cartographies of power and poverty" (p.12) are reinscribed through encounters between scholars, activists, and poverty action practitioners speaking from their experiences living and working within the multiple territories of poverty across the world.

Territories of Poverty presents this reterritorialization of critical poverty scholarship through 18 chapters divided into three sections on “Programs of Government”, “The Ethics of Encounter”, and “Geographies of Penalty and Risk”.

In Section 1, “Programs of Government”, the authors present a genealogy of poverty knowledge, historically situating the emergence of the idea and multiple framings of poverty as a problem, conceived of in some contexts as a global security threat and problematically intertwined with definitions and measures of human development. The authors also critically reflect on poverty action programs at both macro- and micro-economic scales ranging from conditional cash transfers to mobile money services. This section provides a critical reading of poverty action programs and how particular policy “models” are produced, evaluated, and then mobilized at the global scale as “proven” mechanisms for improving the lives of others.

As Jamie Peck and Nik Theodore’s contribution explains, these “fast policies” are legitimized through “an international infrastructure of purposive experimentation and technocratic persuasion, buttressed by the favored evaluation technology of the randomized-control trial [RCT], and brokered to increasingly receptive nation-states ... as programs ‘that work’” (p.121). The power dynamics and contradictions of poverty research implicit in the proliferation of RCTs as the principal approach to determining policy impact is necessary, urgent terrain for critical poverty scholars, as millions of international aid resources are allocated to parachute researchers from the global North who drop in to conduct experiments and then quickly leave for the next project. This extractive research logic has been confronted extensively in postcolonial critiques of classic qualitative and ethnographic approaches for decades, but is rarely questioned regarding the research and fieldwork practices of those running RCT after RCT in different countries throughout the global South.

The critique of parachute researchers should therefore be applied to the mainly quantitative approaches that dominate poverty policy design and high-level decision-making at the scale of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), for example. These kinds of development indicators and benchmarks are frequently the subject of critical poverty analyses that don't hold accountable the researchers who shape them. This lack of researcher accountability is troubling given that the SDGs, and other measurement mechanisms such as the Human Development Index (HDI), contribute to the collective imaginations and understandings of poverty that many contributors to this volume problematize. Through the creation of spaces for ethical reflections in domains where we have traditionally been given no authority as qualitative and critical social scientists, we begin to push the limits of poverty research toward an ethics of accountability to the marginalized communities occupying the territories we study. If we must parachute in and out to advance poverty studies, what are we leaving behind in the territories of poverty we visit? If the answer is nothing, perhaps we should rethink our research questions and purpose and reframe toward a social justice-oriented poverty research practice.

In Section 2, "The Ethics of Encounter", the authors decenter the traditional focus of poverty research from the gaze on poor bodies and ethnographic accounts of poor people's daily lives to middle-class, technocratic, and bureaucratic actors in the complex terrains of non-profit and government poverty action programs. The authors engage with these actors of poverty action in multiple contexts, from market-based strategies and the mobilization of volunteerism in disaster settings to mission and volunteer trips in East Africa and India. As Anh-Thi Le argues, "[f]or some, ... [volunteering and service in other parts of the world] was about gaining professional experience, contributing expertise, or adding a service experience to their resume. And for others, it was much more nuanced and about empowering their own local communities or reengaging and giving back to their parents' home country" (p.196-197). Through such reflections on researcher and volunteer

positionalities and motivations, this contextualizes the role of affect and affective economies in driving many individuals to action through an ethical commitment to catalyzing change. Activist and social justice movements in North American contexts are also explored through the historical struggles and legal battles surrounding the dispossession of Native Americans and African American farmers and the farm worker movement in California as a means of questioning the duration of inequality and exploring what Alyosha Goldstein calls the “tension between demands for the redress of historical injustice and the genealogies of dispossession that are ongoing but that exceed the conventional terms of the ‘persistence of poverty’” (p.198).

In Section 3, “Geographies of Penalty and Risk”, the authors draw from cases in multiple territories of poverty ranging from the North American ghetto and the urban peripheries of Western Europe to Tijuana borderlands and postwar Beirut in order to contextualize “how practices of security normalize and reproduce the ways in which poverty is spatialized and bordered” (p.245). In this section, Loïc Wacquant places the concept of territory in the context of a process he refers to as “urban relegation”, defined as the act of sending an “individual, population, or category to an obscure or inferior position, condition, or location ... [which] takes the form of real or imaginary consignment to distinctive sociospatial formations variously and vaguely referred to as inner cities, ghettos, enclaves, no-go areas, problem districts, or simply rough neighborhoods” (p.247). Wacquant calls for an analytical shift from “the place itself and its residents” to “the multilevel structural processes whereby persons are selected, thrust, and maintained in marginal locations” (p.247). In a contribution on poverty action in the post-disaster greater New Orleans region, Stephanie Ullrich asks an important question for consideration in future critical poverty research on how the framing of neighborhoods of relegation “help shape the creative and collective imaginations of poverty actors, organizers, activists, and scholars” (p.260).

This question is explored through an analysis of the Ford Foundation program “Gray Areas”—which approaches poverty action through the targeting of juvenile delinquency in multiple cities in the United States—by Roy, Stuart Schrader, and Shaw Crane that illustrates the “interconnections between the wars on poverty at home and abroad” (p.290). Furthermore, a contribution by Teddy Cruz on borderland politics and the consequences of heightened surveillance policies in the Tijuana-San Diego region urges scholars to reconsider and reterritorialize our examination and critique of the development apparatus, from the bodies and neighborhoods that are targeted by poverty action experiments, to the security practices and institutional politics that determine and shape the war(s) on poverty in multiple contexts.

Territories of Poverty is presented by the editors as “unapologetically concerned with theory”, which Roy and Shaw Crane define as both a site of politics and “... an argument about the world, ... a concern with the epistemology of power, ... a collective imagination” (p.ix). The contributors work toward unsettling dominant poverty discourse, producing a collection of reflections and problematizations of the development apparatus that, as discussed by Shaw Crane in the conclusion, “can have meaning beyond the policed boundaries of academic community and must be useful as a strategy for representing and engaging complex realities” (p.344).

For Shaw Crane, “theory must ride the bus” (p.344). Through this idea of riding the bus, borrowed from a poem by Ruth Forman, Shaw Crane invites us to shift the focus from the traditional subjects of development, from poor people’s contexts, bodies, and representations of need and suffering, to the politics of poverty and the generation of critical reflection about our roles in the process of producing poverty knowledge, which is fraught with hierarchies and hero complexes. As Shaw Crane argues, “[w]hat stories are celebrated and what stories are silenced tells us a great deal about the present moment ... The stakes are high because, as [Michael] Katz and [Luis] Flores remind us, poverty

knowledge is also and always an exercise in social and political power, historically unaccountable to those it theorizes and represents” (p.345).

How, then, can we take this critical scrutiny of development practices and the politics of poverty to spaces of encounter and direct confrontation with actors immersed in the development apparatus? Where can we situate the ethics of encounter discussed in this volume? Should we start with structures and policy processes? Should we engage with global development policy decision makers? Interrupt the often irrelevant, superficial, and contextually distant dinner conversations of development workers while they are in the “field”? Should we think through ways to promote critical reflections in the daily work spaces of poverty action workers, policy makers, and technocrats, and catalyze a practice-driven reframing of their positionalities within the politics of poverty programming? How can we start from structures without muting our participation in social movements? As Shaw Crane (p.352) states in her concluding words:

When theory rides the bus it is made and remade by these devastating questions, these impossibilities and borders, these passages refused... When theory rides the bus it invites us to critically engage our lives and to make theory... When theory rides the bus it is made in and through praxis, the things we’ve been taught are undone by doing...

I interpret riding the bus as the invitation to make people uncomfortable, to ask the questions our colleagues conveniently avoid or skip over at faculty and ethics committee meetings, and to engage students’ social justice consciousness through encounters with injustice in the streets. Riding the bus, for me, means enacting an ethics of encounter in the spaces and moments that aren’t already expected of me as a participatory researcher, in the

spaces where encounter and intimacy are deemed as inappropriate, out-of-place, or undesired.

Riding the bus, as suggested by Shaw Crane, is about bringing “hope to your blood” in order to imagine “what is possible, and what is just” (p.344), through an intimate, affective politics, both in the field and at our desks, that pushes us, everyday, to make our writing and theories “accountable beyond academic community” (p. 352). As we reach out to, analyze, and work from within social movements in different territories of poverty throughout the world, we must forge constant, everyday contact with those who have no other choice but to ride the bus to get where they need to be day after day.

Beyond our engagement with social justice movements, we must commit to sharing our failures and reflecting on our contradictory research praxis with students through creative and challenging pedagogies that prepare them for the “small battles” and “troubling questions” they will inevitably face as poverty action workers, researchers, activists, and volunteers. *Territories of Poverty* places these small battles at the center of critical poverty studies and guides us through an uncomfortable self-interrogation of how to place the small battles, contradictions, and troubling questions at the center of our teaching and research practices.

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January 2017