



- 4 By the time Mike Bloomberg became mayor in 2001, one might say that New York was pacified – crime and violence were down sharply and the global immigrant communities had proved to be an asset: populating once forsaken neighborhoods in the boroughs, especially Brooklyn and the Bronx, contributing to New York’s cultural diversity and its local economy with all kinds of businesses, small and large, that filled in the economic interstices where many white residents of the city, no matter how poor, would not enter. Nonetheless, though Bloomberg treated the new people – global immigrants – with respect that Giuliani would not afford them, the imperial mayor governed New York in his own image. As an efficient CEO, he did make some headway in rationalizing the management of city government. As a billionaire, he envisaged a city where people like himself, now that the city was safe, could both make business investments and live, with their corporate offices in swank commercial real estate and their families in even more luxurious apartments that were often mansions in the sky. Bloomberg’s aim, certainly somewhat better than Giuliani’s police state, was to undertake just enough reform to organize city government on a rational basis – meaning making it as much like a business as possible. To the extent that efficient government might make New York a better place for all its residents, Bloomberg served the common good. To the extent that he was especially concerned with public amenities that would help real estate developers create what Brash calls the luxury city, he also served the public generally because “improvements” like the celebrated High Line park (a park created out of an abandoned and elevated New York Central freight line which now runs from 14th Street to 34th Street on the far west side of Manhattan and which will add a third section, the freight yard spur to the old elevated railway, by 2014) have helped to create an image of New York as a city of public as well as private delights.
- 5 Bloomberg began his three-term mayoralty as a Republican, but soon began to call himself an Independent, because while he shared much with other big businessmen and some Wall Street moguls who voted Republican, as a New Yorker, particularly one who wanted to attract the rich to New York, the cultural conservatism of the national Republican party, with its rural fundamentalist base, hardly suited twenty-first century New York, which, without too much exaggeration, might be described as the global epicenter of cultural freedom and of a new permissive morality in which the old link between religion and capitalist productivity has been replaced by a new morality in which satisfaction of all human appetites is perfectly consistent with high productivity. Under Bloomberg, New York might be a city governed first and foremost from the perspective of the global upper class, but whatever his own ethics as a businessman and an individual (and these he managed to keep rather private for 12 years), Bloomberg knew that what made New York attractive to “top people” was wholly antithetical to the antiquated religious and moral values that many Republicans, on both the local and national level, continue to affirm.
- 6 Whoever wins the mayor’s race will have to be able to and indeed must move on from whatever Giuliani and Bloomberg did for the city. To put this differently, the new mayor will be able to build on what is now a safe city, with the lowest rate of crime and violence per capita of any major city in the United States (and with a relatively small proportion of its citizenry in prison), and he or she will have a city that is a global symbol for everything associated with urban glitter. New York, even without the great plazas and public squares of Europe (Times Square is unique, but not comparable), has had its own public spaces restored, improved and augmented, accompanied by commercial and residential luxury real estate development, including the new World Trade Center, in quantity and sometimes in quality (buildings by Richard Meier, Frank Gehry, Jean Nouvel) so as to reshape physically an already iconic skyline and, perhaps more important, it has also experienced the revitalization of all its boroughs – Queens, Brooklyn, even the Bronx, which in the seventies and eighties was once thought hopeless and beyond salvation. Big real estate developers, Friends of Bloomberg as it were, have invested in the boroughs to be sure, especially in already gentrified sections of Brooklyn – Park Slope, Williamsburg (Dumbo) – and in parts of Queens like Long Island City. Every day the entire city of New York, all five boroughs (add Staten Island) becomes more gentrified, in part driven by the investment needs of real-estate developers and in part propelled by the urgent need of newly-arrived cadres of the professional middle classes – New York is a hot city for comfortable young people without family burdens – to find residential areas in New York that are not as expensive as Manhattan. If all one means by New York being *back*, is the physical reshaping of the city, then the deed is done.
- 7 De Blasio is likely to be elected mayor in November 2013 because in order to be really “back” as a city true to its history and character, New York needs to be a city in which governance is democratic in form and substance. Giuliani was an authoritarian mayor who sometimes came close to seeming fascist: in his disregard for civil liberties, in his abuse of police power, in his contempt for any form of political opposition, and in the cultural norms – outdated inappropriate, racist in a way (meaning representative of an older European ethnic cohort that came to New York in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century) and, considering his own personal life, quite hypocritical – that he tried to impose on a New York which in the nineties was absorbing and gaining some of its old vitality from global immigrants, mostly people of color, who were the



finance, including insurance, and real estate or FIRE.

- 11 Whether anybody can actually turn New York City away from gentrification and from becoming increasingly a city of radical social and economic polarization is another matter, because New York is in an endless competitive battle with other so-called global cities like London, Tokyo, Paris, Shanghai, Hong Kong, Mumbai, Sao Paulo, all of which have become places where the rich and their upper middle class minions live high, while the rest of the population struggle for survival. Ultimately, New York will suffer from its reliance on the financial service industry, even though it has a huge culture and entertainment economy, a healthcare economy, and ranks high globally in corporate services. It will always be large enough to maintain an economic life merely by creating businesses, small and large, to serve its own inhabitants. But though affordable housing will be talked about – five mayoral candidates – Quinn, De Blasio, Wiener, Thompson and Liu (the absence of any of the Republican candidates was conspicuous and shows why in 2013 none have the slightest chance of becoming mayor) recently spent the night in a public housing project in East Harlem, alert to cockroaches, rats, peeling paint, broken appliances and devoid of air conditioning. This was a symbolic exercise and is unlikely to result in anything near in quantity to what less than comfortable or less than affluent New Yorkers require. In New York City outside of Manhattan, affordable housing means apartments, depending on size, which rent for one thousand to two thousand a month. A miniscule amount of such apartments can be found in luxury buildings in Manhattan, where developers were allowed to build only by promising to provide one or two apartments below market rate. And if you go to the website of the New York Housing Authority (NYCHA), there is only one message: “we are not accepting applications at this time.” Underpaid and underemployed yet well-educated and “professional” millennials do live in New York, mostly in the outer boroughs or sometimes in Manhattan. They do so, however, only by sharing often small apartments with many others like themselves.
- 12 The politics of anti-gentrification would have to defy wholly the economic cycle of disinvestment and reinvestment that promotes gentrification. It may be true that New York is better than it was in the seventies. Marshall Berman, in his Mumford lecture at CUNY, recently argued that the city has “emerged from the ruins,” but failed to explain in his usual romantic fashion, why the city has gotten better and also why its current condition is a classic example of “the better being the enemy of the good.” New York’s mayors and its political class have taken the easy path: disinvestment. Bringing values to their lowest point results in luxury reinvestment unless vetoed by political leaders with a vision of a city in which politics does not simply follow the capitalist logic of real estate development.
- 13 Police profiling – or stop and frisk – will also continue in current or attenuated form, because a city that is endlessly gentrifying breeds fear of the few remaining residents who resist it. No one has a long-term plan for modulating polarization between rich and poor and middle classes will continue to leave the city as housing that is now rent-stabilized becomes market rate. Though the Democratic Party has more registered voters in the city than the Republican Party, there is no progressive coalition in New York – comprised of a rainbow of people of color, the educated, millennials, the poor, Hollywood moguls, unionized workers and officials and often many left-leaning high-tech, managers, CEOs and entrepreneurs – like the one that elects democratic mayors like Villaigarosa and Garcetti in Los Angeles.
- 14 New York may be the most important city in the United States, but its history resembles that of other cities, which have had to redesign themselves in relation to the loss of manufacturing, and the liberal politics that went along with the old industrial society. In the post-industrial city, the old white ethnic working class lost its clout. Many moved to the suburbs. Black immigrants from the South and Latinos from Puerto Rico took their place, followed by immigrants from all over the globe. Labor’s power diminished. And the city remade itself in order to serve a different clientele – business elites whose institutions were deeply invested in the built environment and professionals of all kinds who worked in education, medicine, the arts, finance, insurance and other service industries that defined the new economy. One might add that in reshaping itself, New York made good use of global immigrants. One of the things that distinguishes the great American ports of entry for immigrants in the late twentieth century – New York, Los Angeles, Chicago, Houston and Miami – is a kind of symbiosis between a restructuring in favor of elites and, at more or less the same historical moment, the arrival of an immense global immigrant labor force, all too willing – in fact needing – to do menial work in a variety of lower level service industries that supported remaking the city to serve the rich and their professional minions.
- 15 As Themis Chronopoulos shows in *Spatial Regulation in New York*, city governments ignored the real reasons for urban decay or decline in the fifty five years between 1945 and 2001 – namely deindustrialization and suburbanization – and instead focused on either physical or social “disorder.” The cure for physical disorder, slums and ghettos and decaying neighborhoods, was at first “urban renewal.” When urban renewal in and of itself didn’t manage to stem crime, violence and the deterioration of

neighborhoods, New York officials picked up an argument set forth by two Harvard professors, James Wilson and George Keiling, to blame disorder and decline on the behavior of individuals. Cities were undesirable because governments tolerated the existence of “disorder,” meaning they failed to deal with “disreputable and unpredictable people like panhandlers, prostitutes, addicts, rowdy teenagers, loiterers, drunks and the mentally disabled.”

- 16 Chronopoulos’ story is more complex than it looks. His book is full of detail and the overall conceptualization is adequate, but there is a back-story – in between the lines and implicit – that if briefly made overt might benefit readers. The postwar urban crisis in New York and in the United States as a whole is part of a larger history that reverberates and repeats itself like neurotic repetition through the history of modernity. In truth, modern advanced industrial societies, and in particular the United States, have not dealt very effectively with either urban crime or poverty and not that well, given the counter-cyclical crises of capitalism, with urban economic development. To understand what makes 1945 an important moment you need to discuss, however briefly what made for urban crises in the early twentieth century or even in the late eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.
- 17 Both urban renewal and the broken window theory are variations on still older urban themes that depicted cities generally as replete with neighborhoods that were overcrowded and therefore both lawless and in bad physical shape, full of drugs and alcoholism, crime and violence as well as deterioration of the built environment. English and European literature – Dickens, of course, but also Sue and Zola and in America in the early twentieth-century, especially Henry Roth in *Call It Sleep* – is full of descriptive and analytic attempts to grasp the abject physical as well as failed moral environment of slums and poverty-ridden ghettos; to understand both the human and geographic causes and effects of these “infernal wens.” Modernity has had a difficult time divorcing squalid places from the seamier aspects of human nature and official cures for physical and social disorder have often been combined, entailing brutal policing, blaming the victim, concerns about sociopathic behavior related to deplorable living conditions, arguments about the “culture of poverty” and the “underclass” vs. calls for reform that emphasize funding for new and affordable housing, open spaces and parks, better teachers and better schools, for keeping people and improving places or moving people and letting places “be greened over” or surrendered to a cycle of disinvestment and reinvestment.
- 18 Nor is there anything new about identifying the working classes with the “dangerous classes.” Urbanization and industrialization together – Manchester and the working class in England in 1844 – gave rise to the theory of social conflict, just as the Baron Haussmann rebuilding of Paris is in part conditioned by the need to create a beautiful city with many wide boulevards, fit for a new industrial bourgeoisie and at the same time destroying old narrow and seedy streets where poor workers might erect revolutionary barricades. Engels response to Haussmann came in an essay published two years after the defeat of the Second Empire in the Franco-Prussian War – “The Housing Question” of 1872 – in which “urban renewal” as the physical elimination of slums and ghettos is characterized and judged as nothing more than slum clearance. Slum clearance is not motivated by any real attempt to improve the condition of the poor and working classes and it cannot therefore succeed, because slums and ghettos merely shift elsewhere and the same physical environment as well as pathological human behavior reappears.
- 19 One need only recall Richard’s Wright’s larger than life Bigger Thomas and the socio-psychological tragedy recounted in *Native Son*, which of course is set in Chicago, to comprehend that in America the problem of slums and working class poverty is complicated by racism. Mention of Chicago recalls a few other things as well, that Wright was part of the Chicago Black Renaissance, and when he moved to New York (in 1937) had connections with the Harlem Renaissance. While in Chicago Wright got to know University of Chicago anthropologist and sociologist, W. Lloyd Warner, who studied the black community on Chicago’s Southside. Warner introduced Wright in 1941 to Robert E. Park, who is one of the fathers of modern American sociology and who for many years was Chairman of Chicago’s department of sociology, famous for its theory of city growth in concentric circles, with the first circle – the city center – inevitably being the location of urban pathology and decay.
- 20 To return to Chronopoulos, for whose book I have just provided a sorely-needed context, *Spatial Regulation in New York* suffers from two major faults apparent as the book begins and another that one can only discern after reading it through. Lack of larger context is one of the initial faults, because New York – great and global city that it may be – is still part of a larger society, the United States, which has rarely dealt well with its cities, and now deals equally poorly with its metropolitan areas, even though 75% of the American population is concentrated in these areas and even though our national politics, as the election of 2012 demonstrated, depends on the demographic destiny of cities and metropolitan areas. Unless one thinks that New York exists in a vacuum or that New York is model for the entire globe – both of which some New Yorkers, educated or uneducated, may believe.

- 21 By the 1930's and up until the seventies, in New York and elsewhere the usual – that is, conventionally liberal – answer to urban disorder, poverty, crime, and violence, was “urban renewal,” meaning the physical elimination of slums and ghettos and their replacement with new neighborhoods and better housing. In postwar New York, public housing built according to modernist specifications – huge and monotonously uniform apartment complexes devoid of stores and divorced from street life – often created disorder rather than curing it.
- 22 It would take New York City twenty-five years to move from the failure of urban renewal as a strategy of creating order through physical rehabilitation of the environment to the more radical strategy of policing slum and ghetto areas so as to remove “undesirable” individuals. In the interim period between the late sixties and the nineties, the city experienced increased crime, violence, urban riots, homelessness, and the deterioration of many neighborhoods. After the fiscal crisis of 1975, mayors reduced budgets and made economic development their primary goal. Edward Koch (1977-89) was a favorite of New York's business community because he lowered wages, engaged in tough negotiations with unions, and encouraged business expansion through a variety of means, including tax subsidies to retain or attract major corporations, as well as public-private partnerships to redevelop “disorderly” locations like Times Square. The burden of these policies fell on the poor; the poverty rate went from 15% in 1975 to 23.4% in 1983. Perhaps more important, corporate personnel and other professionals began to occupy the city via gentrification, transforming ordinary neighborhoods into chic enclaves. Gentrification and homelessness went hand in hand.
- 23 The best part of Chronopoulos' book is his account of the cultural protest that Koch's “reforms” evoked. Slum clearance in line with urban renewal was often racist in both intention and implementation. The objective was to warden off good neighborhoods from objectionable groups, notably Blacks and Latinos. However, the victims fought back. Just as elite institutions like Columbia University attempted to dominate space on Morningside Heights through urban renewal, minority youngsters found their own way to appropriate space – via hip-hop culture, or through rap music, brake dancing, “dj”ing and, especially, graffiti.
- 24 Hip-hop culture was a path to identity and self-affirmation both for impoverished young people and their communities. They adorned buildings in upper-class areas with their “tags” in order to get attention and they spread a political message: “Harlem is Mecca. Blood Brothers Only.” Instead of deploring blight, they claimed their slum neighborhoods for creative purposes. They turned seedy parks, empty buildings and lots, and rusting subway trains into performance spaces. They made art not war, rejecting gang violence. DJ's organized competitions to resolve differences between rival gangs. Graffiti artists met in coffee houses to compare their work. Break-dancers and hip-hop poets became public performers, taking over parks, street corners, subway stations, and shopping areas. Chronopoulos believes they built a “cultural infrastructure for inner-city youths who had very few outlets for entertainment.” One might add that they took what Genet or Hegel would call a negative identity and made it into something positive and culturally powerful.
- 25 It is telling that hip-hop culture was left out of the advertising created to promote New York after the fiscal crisis of 1975. The “I Love New York” marketing campaign focused on Broadway, Fifth Avenue shopping, the Manhattan skyline, Wall Street and the great New York museums. Hip-hop culture was seen as the antithesis of these mainstream symbols. Some New Yorkers of conservative bent analyzed graffiti writing in particular as the cultural production of the criminal underclass. *Fortune* magazine did not intend hyperbole when it stated that “the spectacle of an entire subway fleet awash in graffiti was an insistent reminder of the decline of law in New York.”
- 26 New York's condition worsened in the late 1970's and 1980's. Though the police came down heavily on drug dealers, the crack epidemic grew and contributed to the high homicide rate; in but a few years of the late eighties the number of cocaine addicts tripled and the murder rate increased by 10.4%. Physical disorder continued. The statistics for the Bronx are sufficiently dramatic to merit mention: between 1970 and 1975 fires destroyed 43,000 apartments in the South Bronx; in 1977 over 3,900 vacant lots covered more than 300 acres; 6,900 landlords failed to pay taxes for more than one year. The Bronx lost 40% of its manufacturing jobs; the unemployment rate exceeded 25%; and some sections lost 60% of their population. The homeless proliferated and their presence was felt in the city's commercial districts as well as Grand Central, Penn Station, the Port Authority, and the New York Public Library.
- 27 In 1994, after the failure of several initiatives pursued by Koch and his African American Democratic successor, David Dinkins (whom, oddly, Chronopoulos scarcely mentions) – the war on drugs, “Safe Streets, Safe City” (a program which combined policing with other social services, in the attempt to attack the causes of disorder while identifying criminals) – Rudolph Giuliani (1994-2001) was elected mayor. He kept community policing (renamed “quality of life” policing) but did away with its social

services component. His police commissioner, William Bratton, was an adherent of the “broken windows” theory. Bratton targeted public schools in order to weed out young criminals; he cracked down on signs of disorder such as public urination, drunkenness, squeegee men, and marijuana possession. He created a database that allowed the police to identify quickly areas of high crime. These measures worked, but at a cost. The Giuliani era saw an alarming rise in police brutality (notably the Louima and Diallou incidents) and an assault on democracy, as the city government fought social protest in the streets and courts.

- 28 Chronopoulos concludes by remarking that the radicalization of the battle against “social disorder” under Giuliani was a precondition for what Michael Bloomberg (2001-13) would create, namely “the luxury city.” The former cleaned up the city; the latter made the sanitized product into a luxury brand. In *Bloomberg’s New York: Class and Governance in the Luxury City*, Julian Brash analyzes what he calls the Bloomberg Way, which amounts to a corporate vision of the city: “the mayor as CEO; government as a private corporation; desirable residents as customers and clients; and the city itself as a product marketed as a luxury good.”
- 29 Brash’s thesis is broadly Marxist. He argues that Bloomberg’s mayoralty had a decided class character, a City Hall both serving and populated by members of the corporate elite, which Brash designates as the transnational capitalist class (TCC) and their subordinates, the professional managerial class (PMC). Against the conventional view, which puts Bloomberg above politics – that is, party neutral and pragmatic – he sees the regime as highly ideological, shaped by class politics reflecting the preconceptions and attitudes of the corporate elites. The notion of the city as a luxury product entailed urban redevelopment in accordance with the brand, which in practice meant large-scale projects, understood as investments, in which upscale housing and shopping, parks, and stadia embodied the new luxury aesthetic. The new vision of the city likewise ignored any popular image, focusing instead on New York as depicted in *Vanity Fair* or *Vogue* – a “place of competition, elite sociality, cosmopolitanism, and luxury, populated by ambitious, creative, hardworking, and intelligent innovators.”
- 30 Brash paints a subtle picture, one full of paradoxes. He argues that after the fiscal crisis of 1975, New York underwent a neoliberal transformation in which the city became more “business friendly,” and where, because of reduced federal funding and competition from other cities, austerity and efficient fiscal management were encouraged. What Brash means by neoliberalism is that the city adopted and consciously affirmed policies that hewed closely to the logic of capitalism and market justice rather than the logic of moral order and social justice. Yet Brash is obliged to acknowledge that powerful constituencies from the liberal era and constituencies that have always been part of the layered character of a great city like New York – African Americans, the poor, labor – though much weakened, did not disappear. Moreover, austerity and lack of resources represented obstacles to a coherent and effective development strategy that might restore New York’s economic preeminence.
- 31 Bloomberg managed the complex reality that is New York in several ways. First, he took the marketing of the city seriously, aiming to attract only the very best corporations, those who ignored the high costs of New York because they prized its value – its immense talent pool, its importance as a global financial center, its reputation as “the best-known city on the planet.” Second, he ended the post-fiscal crisis policy of buying off corporations to stay in the city, even while proffering modest tax incentives for corporations who enlarged their workforce. He raised taxes to avoid the effects – fires, crime, streets littered with garbage – of tax cutting and diminution of services. Lastly, he devised a comprehensive economic development strategy that encouraged luxury housing, the creation of “urban parks” (e.g., the High Line) and special office development districts in all five boroughs. All these policies had a singular goal: to make New York a place where “the best and the brightest,” namely the professional and corporate elites, would feel at home.
- 32 One development project – Hudson Yards – was accorded priority. Hudson Yards was a 60-block area (from 28th St. to 43rd St, between 7th and 8th Avenues) on the far West Side bordering on the Hudson River. When built, the project would have the desired result of enlarging Manhattan’s central business district, with 25.8 million square foot of office space, 20,000 housing units, 1,000,000 square feet of retail and 2,000,000 square feet for hotels. Its construction would necessitate the extension of the No. 7 subway line as well as the expansion of the Javits Convention Center. Two office building would replace the existing Penn Station and initially the project included a new stadium for the New York Jets.
- 33 Brash uses the Hudson Yards project to show how the Bloomberg Way worked and to highlight both its virtues and its defects. The project and the image of the city as a luxury product were inextricably related; the former was the embodiment of the latter. The Jets stadium was part of an effort to bring the Olympics to New York in 2012; winning the Olympic competition against sister global cities like Paris and London would confirm New York as the greatest city in the world. Plans for the project were developed in private, away from the glare of publicity and the public. The

project was marketed in two ways: as “an icon of urbanism,” providing public transportation sustainability, good design, mixed-use development, parks and street life; and as a source of revenue and employment. Financing for the project was partly public, but the bulk of funds were to come from self-generated income.

- 34 The project had many critics as well as many critiques: there was too much office space and insufficient housing; the stadium would preclude the area’s natural development as a residential area; it was cut off from the waterfront; there was too much density for its far West Side locale; the plans for financing the project were bogus and unrealistic. Brash takes note of the fact that all these criticisms missed the essential point, namely the project’s class basis. It was a development for upper-class New Yorkers that largely ignored the needs of both middle and lower classes. He also underscores the fact that the Bloomberg Way was successful in one important regard. The apolitical stance of the mayor and his administration deflected class-based criticism and created a situation where critics were obliged to agree with the project’s goals while finding fault with it on technical grounds alone. The stadium was rejected because its financing was unsure and because powerful people in the state legislature did not like it. The remainder of the plan is now under construction, yet somewhat slowed by the financial crisis and an overstock of New York office space.
- 35 Though Brash is critical of the class dimension of the Bloomberg Way, he nonetheless admits that it transformed New York politics – politicians used to be bought by special interests, whereas Bloomberg bought the very same interests. He shows that Bloomberg combined elite acquisition of power with an activist state that was ultimately obliged, in order to quell opposition, to consider the needs of a variety of interests, including minorities and the poor. The Hudson Yards plan would create a construction boom, which provided the mayor with union support. He held weekly meetings with African-American and Latino leaders. In addition, he focused, although without much success, on affordable housing so as to secure the backing of middle and working classes, community activists, progressives, and urban policy organizations.
- 36 However, Bloomberg did not improve the city’s political economy. It remained unbalanced, with far too much reliance on finance and related corporate service industries. Housing was unaffordable even for some relatively wealthy New Yorkers. Food, utilities, taxes, and childcare went up in cost. And while post-industrial jobs for the educated expanded in Manhattan, low-wage service jobs proliferated in the outer boroughs. After the 2008 financial crisis, real estate values fell, employment evaporated, and the city’s treasury was depleted.
- 37 Both Chronopoulos and Brash have a lot to say, and much of what they say is on the mark – fifty or more years of conscious urban economic development and social policy aimed at making New York a suitable environment for the rich, come whatever may happen to the middle classes and the poor. Nevertheless, both books also suffer from a kind of negativity that fails to grasp what continues to make New York a place of possibility and an experiment in how to govern a global city in a fashion consistent with democratic values. For example, though Chronopoulos rightly accuses Ed Koch of courting business and attempting to establish a favorable “business climate” – in short, conventional urban economic development baloney of the 1980’s – it is nonetheless true that Koch’s involvement with the Nehemiah Project produced affordable housing in the Bronx and elsewhere that, combined with the influx of new immigrant populations, helped to turn the Bronx and some of the outer boroughs around for ordinary folk as well as for the rich. It’s also true whether or not one likes Giuliani’s neo-conservative methods and his exploitation of lower-middle class white resentment against people of color, New York no longer has the crime problem of other great American cities and, whatever the ethnic composition of its prisons – as elsewhere in the United States, predominantly blacks and Latinos and other people of color – the number of people incarcerated in them is way below the national average.
- 38 The virtue of Chronopoulos’ analysis is its strong animus: real empathy for poor people and people of color combined with historical perspective and quantitative evidence that, whether things have changed for the better or not, is still damning because people suffered while politicians carried favor with the rich and based their policies and urban planning strategies on specious theories that blamed the victims instead of the planners whose miscalculations about the effects of both suburbanization and de-industrialization resulted in urban decline not only in New York but all over America. I need not discuss the planners – Robert Moses or Roger Starr, for example – but it is worth noting one great historical irony that Chronopoulos does not himself grapple with. Part of Chronopoulos’ quiet rage has to do with his love for the same city that Jane Jacobs wanted to preserve. But Jane Jacob’s New York, its mix of old buildings and vibrant street life along with gleaming new buildings of idiosyncratic modernist or post-modernist design and parks, large and small, is inextricably connected to gentrification. As an historian rather than a geographer, I simply do not believe in any kind of inevitability. But narratives that seek truth have to confront the patterns set forth by social science. I have lots of beefs with the work of David Harvey and Neil Smith, but there is one truth about gentrification that has to be grasped in order to overcome its inevitability: in matters of land rent massive

disinvestment gives rise to extremely inexpensive but ultimately highly profitable reinvestment. The rest, transcending land rent, is politics.

- 39 Not coincidentally, Brash is Harvey's and Smith's student, like them a geographer, and his book is a well-revised version of a dissertation that they supervised. The "luxury city" notion in his book's subtitle reflects Bloomberg's self-description of his own urban vision, but at the same time, a better subtitle might have been "the politics of gentrification." The problem with Brash's book is that he grasps only one side of Bloomberg, the CEO mayor impatient with democracy and obsessed with efficient corporate management, all of which derives in part as a long term response to a faulty view of New York as an "ungovernable" city which required neo-conservative force and neo-liberal market efficiencies for governance. Bloomberg is not exculpated from the charge that his three-term administration has continued under the direction of Police Commissioner Ray Kelly of the neoconservative practice of stop and frisk, applied with much more regularity for racial profiling of people of color than for whites.
- 40 There is, however, another side to Bloomberg. He is a man who understands what many of the old elites in the city understood, that their own power rested on – was indeed legitimized by – how well they cared for the people whom they governed. If Bloomberg is somehow not quite up to this particular task, it's because there is an enormous difference between the global elites of the contemporary world and the national elites that used to think they owned the city and often (stymied by Tammany) would try to run it whilst "reforming" it (a mayoral line that goes from Abram Hewitt and Seth Low to John Lindsay). A ruling class in formation in the midst of what John Teaford has called the "era of urban triumph" (correlating with Beaux Arts architecture, monumental buildings to house monumental cultural institutions, and all kinds of public-private partnerships sponsoring projects that without their support – consider the elites of the old New York Chamber of Commerce and the creation of the New York subway system as one example – would have never come into existence) is very different from a ruling class that, caught up in a global chaos of its own making and selfishly focused on its own interests, is really a ruling class that does not know how to rule and is incapable of governance in the larger sense of concern with public responsibility and some sense of the common good.
- 41 The Bloomberg that Brash doesn't get is the mayor who can see beyond his global capitalist nose, except for the fact that the material he has to work with, many other global elites who want to live in New York and make their "deals" out of posh offices and even swankier apartments in Manhattan, can't and won't see or act beyond their nose. They are too busy with their own self-interested affairs to take on the burdens of moral and social responsibility that elite governance actually demands. Fractured, self-concerned global elites and many of their professional minions have neither time nor interest in pursuits that do not keep them ahead of the rest of their self-serving meritocratic pack. New York has become a haven for such global elites, but not because they are the best and the brightest, but precisely because they look to the great city and its well-trained police to protect them from the global capitalist chaos that they, aided by new technologies, create, exploit, and hope to survive.
- 42 Which is to say this: I would take Brash's thesis further than he takes it, arguing that Bloomberg used luxury branding to veil not only inegalitarian motives but also an extremely inadequate understanding of what makes great cities places of vitality. Hudson Yards and even Atlantic Yards in Brooklyn (where there is a stadium for the Jets) – are clichés, urban renewal by another name and in actuality upscale residences that are better designed than public housing divorced from the life of the street. Sanitized planned developments and twenty-four hour surveillance do not urban environments make, and especially not in New York City, where the urban landscape is vital to the extent that it is necessarily "messy" – with people, with public life, with hustle and bustle, with places for escape from its tumult, and places as well where people can gather and be noisy and argumentative. If New York ceases to be messy, then it is somehow not New York.
- 43 One can feel the mess and the vitality in places where the vast numbers of global immigrants have settled, in old neighborhoods in Brooklyn, Queens, and the Bronx and in the upper parts of Manhattan – Atlantic Avenue, Fordham Road, Flushing, Washington Heights, and Inwood and, in spite of gentrification, especially in Astoria. What both Chronopoulos and Brash forget to mention, and what is overwhelmingly the true source of New York's comeback from decline, has little to do with broken window theory, so-called community policing or luxury branding: it is the revitalization of New York via immigration. New York has been and will, I hope, remain a "global city" because it is perhaps the most startling example in global history of a successful process via urban democracy and public life for the integration of immigrants into democratic modernity. Immigration of this glorious sort, from which New York has always gained, comes in waves: 1880-1920 and again 1965-2010. Unfortunately, the great late twentieth century wave of immigration is almost at an end, so that New York must now rethink the sources of its future vitality.

- 44 Here is where the negativity of these two books can be put to good dialectical use, for they are particularly important insofar as they raise questions, overtly or by implication, about New York's future. Many economists have begun to argue that the postwar era of growth will never resume and, in any case, New York is the sourcing site for what we now know to be something other than growth of a productive kind, but rather an entire world living off "asset bubbles" (or what some neo-Marxists would call "fictitious capital"). A gentrified New York dependent on asset bubbles for its tax revenues and yet lacking the necessary funds for urgently needed public and social investment – of which hurricane Sandy is a good reminder, even perhaps an omen – might yet experience another and different kind of decline in the twenty-first century than in the mid- and late twentieth century.
- 45 One might well ask if these policies – the politics of disorder and the politics of rampant gentrification without regard for the poor or middle classes – will be replicated should the city again experience decline. One hopes not, because if they were good for the corporate elites and their entourage of professional assistants, they otherwise failed miserably. Back in the 1960's Jane Jacobs assumed that newly-arrived Puerto Ricans would one day turn into "a fine middle class." Today, the Bronx has more Latinos than any place in America, but one out of three live in poverty. New York in 2012 belies the American dream of social mobility and family aspiration. It has all but lost its middle class. Due to gentrification and diminution of employment, roughly 150,000 native out-migrants have left New York annually over the last two decades. A Brookings Institution study puts middle-income residents at only 16% of the city population. Notwithstanding the war against disorder, or perhaps precisely because of it, 82% of New York City's prison population is either Black or Latino.
- 46 It is also possible to see Bloomberg's aggressive attempt to market the city as a luxury product as an act of desperation. For example, the financial industry has been shedding New York jobs for at least ten years and rapidly since the financial crisis. These lost jobs used to be in second tier or back office functions, but they are beginning to be front office jobs in investment banking, trading and the sale of derivatives. The key factor is the move to electronic trading, which has to some extent obviated the need for face-to-face contact and which has caused the center of banking power to move away from New York and onto the web. The Intercontinental Exchange (ICE), headquartered in Atlanta, has recently bought the New York Stock Exchange, and there is some question as to whether the NYSE's trading floor will remain open. Important New York banks have transferred substantial numbers of employees to remote outposts like Salt Lake City (Goldman), Jacksonville (Deutsche Bank), Cape May, North Carolina (Bank of New York) and Durham and Raleigh (Credit Suisse). Recently, Goldman Sachs cut the number of partners that it names annually and has announced that it aims to become "the Walmart of investment brokers." All of this is part of the collapse or hollowing out of the corporation as we used to know it, and is surely a phenomenon of which New York must be cognizant.
- 47 All of the above suggest another strategy for the city. If, as both Chronopoulos and Brash argue, the remedy adopted for New York's late twentieth century decline was a special kind of economic development policy complemented by rigorous policing – a neoliberalism that relied on the logic of capitalism and market justice while largely ignoring social justice and which used neoconservative force on those who needed or demanded social justice, then it is time, given that New York via immigration is close to becoming a majority-minority city, for a rebalancing of the equation between market justice and social justice, or, put another way, for resolving the inevitable tension between capitalism and democracy.
- 48 Competition, ambition, "the best and the brightest" as well as wealth have always been prized in New York, but ordinary people are the lifeblood of the place. As Thomas McCraw has shown in *The Founders and Finance*, immigrants (like Hamilton and Gallatin) with different ideas, special skills and new talents have been improving New York and the nation throughout its history. The new immigrants who have transformed New York in the last fifty years deserve more and as much as the city can give them; they, not the police, are the city's saviors. Hip-hop music and art, the work of "disorderly" folk, is a far more important global product than the hotels, luxury apartments, and office buildings of Hudson Yards or Atlantic Yards. The other four boroughs and ordinary citizens need more attention than global Manhattan, where real estate interests can or at least should be able to manage on their own. New York thrives when it attends to the needs of its people; it is, for example, no accident that CUNY is the largest public urban university in America. New York is nothing if it is not endlessly concerned with being and making democracy better.

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