DON MITCHELL

Landscape as basic structure

Towards a "concept of landscape that will assist the development of the very idea of social justice"

"Landscapes", the historian of technology David Nye has written, "are the infrastructure of collective existence."[1] This is a quite basic definition, but it is one that is nonetheless helpful for understanding the role landscape plays in processes and relations of social justice, or so I will argue in this chapter. Its value becomes doubly apparent when we pay attention to the context within which Nye deployed it. His particular interest was in understanding not landscape, but its opposite, what he called the "anti-landscape". Anti-landscape is "man-modified space that once served as infrastructure of collective existence but that has ceased to do so, whether temporarily or long-term. Human beings can inhabit landscapes for generations, even millennia, but they cannot inhabit anti-landscapes."[2]

I came across Nye's definitions of landscape and anti-landscape when I was helping to bring to completion a project close to the geographer Neil Smith's heart when he died in 2012: a big, sprawling historical geography of riots and uprisings over the length of New York City's European and American history. Written with a group of then-current and recently finished students at the Graduate Center of the City University of New York and eventually published as *Revolting New York: How 400 Years of Riot, Rebellion, Uprising, and Revolution Shaped a City*,[3] the book was not really about landscape (or anti-landscape), as such. But one chapter was about the famous 1977 blackout and attendant riots; Nye's "history of blackouts in America"[4] was par-

1 Nye 2010, p. 130.
2 Nye 2010, p. 131; Nye & Elkind 2014.
3 Smith & Mitchell 2018.
4 Nye 2010.

ticularly helpful as the chapter's author, Miguelina Rodriguez, and I fine-tuned the analysis of just how and why this technological failure became such a moment of intense social upheaval.[5] What was particularly interesting, to me at least, was Nye's argument that though archaeologists have long "documented that some regions have been abandoned after being stripped of trees, overgrazed, or too intensively irrigated and farmed"—transformed into anti-landscapes, in other words—"these were usually gradual processes." By contrast, "highly technological societies can create anti-landscapes quickly, even suddenly", such as when the lights go out.[6]

What was utterly apparent to me while working on the overall narrative of *Revolting New York*, however, was that the 1977 blackout created something like instantaneous anti-landscapes only because, and only insofar as, a long, slow, relentless process—decades of disinvestment and abandonment, planners' efforts to empty out whole neighborhoods and essentially cordon off others, politicians' willful, rather than benign, neglect of marginalized populations—had *already* created an anti-landscape, a landscape that no longer served as infrastructure of collective existence, that the blackout only intensified.[7]

In fits and starts, I have sought to develop and elaborate the anti-landscape concept in the years since.[8] But mostly both the concept of anti-landscape and Nye's straightforward definition of landscape have served as touchstones, reality checks, as, in the past few years, I have engaged in something of a project of self-re-education, namely a fairly deep dive into the extensive literature arising from the precincts of moral and political philosophy concerning the very idea of justice. My hope has been to finally rise to a challenge the geographer George Henderson set for landscape theorists 20 years ago. Writing in an edited collection dedicated to exploring the life and impact of the idiosyncratic and insightful landscape observer, J.B. Jackson (who was the inspiration for the definition of landscape as collective infrastructure that Nye advances), Henderson argued that it was high time for geographers and others to develop a "concept of landscape that will assist in the development of the very idea of social justice." He suggested that to do so, we really needed to engage with moral and political philosophy; we needed to find ways to show how landscape was vital to—central to—not only the *concept* of social justice, but its achievement.[9]

5 Rodriguez 2018.

6 Nye 2010, p. 131.

7 I discuss and document the *planned* disinvestment and abandonment, the *willful* making of an anti-landscape in Mitchell 2018.

8 Mitchell 2021; 2022.

9 Henderson 2003, p. 195.

What I have come to realize in the wake of this re-education—this extensive reading in moral and political theories of justice—is that a concept of landscape as (deceptively) simple as Nye's, especially when understood in relation to its opposite, the anti-landscape, *already* is a concept sufficient for the "development of the very idea of social justice." This is because Nye's definition is also (if unwittingly) the definition of what the indispensable (if not unreproachable) mid-20th-century liberal philosopher of justice John Rawls called the very "subject of justice": the *basic structure* of society.[10] The concept of "basic structure", I have now come to realize, is Rawls's most important contribution to justice theorizing. But it is a concept that has been ignored within geography discourses on social justice (including those to which I have contributed). This needs to be rectified.

This chapter investigates the concept of "basic structure" in order to understand why it has so far had no place in geographical discussions in general and theories of landscape justice in particular (despite it being a central focus of debate within justice theory more generally); this includes my own oft-announced efforts to ground landscape theory as a theory of (or contribution to the achievement of) justice.[11] The chapter then goes on to make the case for understanding landscape—understood to be "infrastructure of collective existence"—as a central and indispensable part of the basic structure. With this understanding secured, the chapter suggests at least one way in which landscape theory can contribute not just to "the very idea of social justice", but instead to what might be called a "maximally just" society.

GEOGRAPHERS' VEIL OF IGNORANCE

I opened a 2003 progress report on landscape scholarship written for *Progress in Human Geography* by quoting Henderson's challenge and used the report to deepen that challenge, to demand that landscape studies help find ways to make the "landscape the groundwork—and the dreamwork—of justice."[12] I was fired up about justice. I had spent the previous summer finalizing the manuscript that became *The Right to*

10 Rawls 1999. Following Jaggar 2009, I prefer to think of the basic structure as the central *object* of justice theorizing (that which justice pertains to—the "what" of justice), reserving "subject of justice" for the "who" of justice: those who make claims of justice.

11 Frode Flemsæter's chapter in this volume is the only treatment of the basic structure idea within landscape studies that I am aware of. Mitchell 2008 represents my most straightforward effort to tightly bind landscape theory to struggles for social justice. But see Mitchell 2024.

12 Mitchell 2003a, p. 793.

the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space,[13] which represented my first sustained attempt to work out how homelessness, law, protest and public space shaped American urban space (a project that had been sparked by some of my earliest mentors in landscape thinking, Larry Ford and Deryck Holdsworth),[14] and to do so as a question of social justice. In the fall I moved to Norway to spend a term as a Fulbright Fellow at the University of Oslo. By happy coincidence, my time in Oslo overlapped with the start of the Center for Advanced Study's year-long symposium on Landscape, Law and Justice (that this present volume commemorates) and Gunhild Setten, with whom I had been corresponding in my role as an editor of the journal *Cultural Geographies*, invited me to sit in. It was an eye-opening several months for me, exposing me to quite different schools of landscape thought—and different ways of thinking about the law–justice–landscape entanglement—than I had grown accustomed to in my American education and through thorough reading of British "new cultural geographers" such as Denis Cosgrove and Stephen Daniels.[15]

My own contribution to the Oslo Landscape, Law and Justice seminars less concerned questions of justice or law than questions of political economy and through them questions of *injustice*.[16] I sought to show how injustices were built into landscapes—no matter how beautiful and comfortable or how obviously exploitative or dangerous. This was not an unusual endeavor. Ever since David Harvey's discipline-shifting introduction of justice-thinking, *Social Justice and the City*,[17] geographers have frequently declared their allegiance to theorizations of, and struggles for, social justice (as in Henderson's challenge and my progress report), while devoting their analytical energies to exposing and theorizing injustice.

I find this disciplinary predilection, which I have shared, to be quite interesting, and I think it can be traced, at least in part, to how we geographers have engaged with that monument of 20th-century justice theorizing, Rawls's *A Theory of Justice*. The form of this engagement, I now think, led to a missed opportunity to place landscape right at the center of theories of justice. Let me explain. Geographers were not slow to engage with Rawls's ideas. His basic conception of "justice as fairness" was highly attractive as geographers entered their "radical turn" at the end of the 1960s. Already at the Association of American Geographers annual meeting in 1971—the year *A Theory of Justice* was published—David Harvey had presented a "liberal" argument concerning the relationship between "social justice and spatial systems", which was published both as an

13 Mitchell 2003c.

14 For a discussion, see Mitchell 2020, Afterword, pp. 157–162.

15 Cosgrove 1984; 1985; Cosgrove & Daniels 1988; Daniels 1989; 1993.

16 The paper I presented at the seminar was published as Mitchell 2003b.

17 Harvey 2009.

article and (in revised form) as the third chapter of *Social Justice and the City*.[18] Even if his engagement with Rawls was not particularly deep, Harvey's melding of procedural with distributive justice—social justice defined as "a just distribution justly arrived at"[19]—owed much to Rawls's own, similar formulations. As is widely known, Harvey soon turned away from this liberal, distributive, Rawlsian form of justice theory, arguing that it could not account for the structural determinants of injustice; that is, it could not account for how the basic conditions for distribution were *produced*. Indeed, Harvey's turn to "socialist formulations" of justice in the early 1970s[20] led him largely away from justice theorizing itself in order to develop a geographical theory of the structures of capital accumulation rooted in the social relations of production (including, increasingly, the social production of space).[21] When he returned explicitly to questions of justice in the mid-1990s, Rawls only played a cameo role.[22]

That role was defined—as it was in earlier geographic work—by Rawls's famous "thought experiment" that set the foundation for his distributive, contractarian theory of justice. This experiment asked us to imagine ourselves as something like a deliberative parliament that is required, more or less from scratch, to distribute among ourselves the goods and offices (positions of authority) necessary for a good life. As we begin the task, we find we are shrouded by a "veil of ignorance" such that none of us knows our "place in society, [...] class position or class status, [...] fortune in the distribution of natural assets and abilities, [...] intelligence and strength [...]." Even more, we do not yet have "a conception of the good, the particulars of [a] rational plan of life, or even the special features of [our] psychology."[23] Our ignorance goes even deeper: we do not know how developed or underdeveloped our society is, what our positions amongst the generations are, or anything about the political and economic structures that may exist. Under such an assumption of ignorance, Rawls argued, it was possible to "use the notion of pure procedural justice as the basis of [the] theory" of justice.[24] From this "original position" with its veil of ignorance, Rawls derived what he called a fully rational, but also highly "intuitive"[25] distributive theory of justice. By this theory, egalitarian distribution was an iron-clad rule: in the original position and behind the veil of ignorance, people should share out goods equally. But there was one exception.

18 Harvey 1972; 2009.
19 Harvey 2009, p. 98.
20 Harvey 2009, Part Two, pp. 120–284.
21 Harvey 1982.
22 Harvey 1996, pp. 397–398.
23 Rawls 1999, p. 118.
24 Rawls 1999, p. 118.
25 Rawls 1999, p. 7.

Rawls called this exception the "difference principle" and it held that an *unequal* distribution was permissible only if it benefited the least well-off in society. That is to say, once the veil of ignorance was lifted and the realities of an unequal society exposed, then unequal distribution or even redistribution was permissible if, and only if, it benefited the least well-off.[26]

While some geographers, like David M. Smith,[27] were generally positive towards the thought experiment and considered the general rules of distribution it licensed to be valuable for developing spatialized theories of social justice, many were skeptical. Gordon Clark, for example, argued that Rawls's experiment, and thus his theory as a whole, relied on an unrealistic model of the individual. "To make [the original position] work", Clark averred, "Rawls requires a disembodied individual consciousness which is very experienced but, at the same time, fundamentally ignorant." Perhaps worse:

> the formation of the original position remains a mystery. Possible modes of formation serve only to question the integrity of the whole enterprise. For example, if the original position is formed by the "players," this implies the existence of a social as opposed to individual consciousness. Alternatively, if it is formed by the state, then the implication is that Rawls depends on a Hobbesian elite who manipulate the consciousness of others.[28]

To a degree, Clark is here echoing a point made a dozen years earlier by Harvey, who argued that "from Rawls's initial position it is possible to arrive [...] at a Marx [of the dictatorship of the proletariat ilk] or a Milton Friedman, but in no way can we arrive at [...] liberal or socialist solutions" to distributive inequalities.[29] For both Clark and Harvey, Rawls's original position arguments smacked of an impossible utopianism (or, for Harvey, a dystopianism), the very idealism of which disqualified it as a serious foundation for (materialist) geographical enquiry and theoretical development. Later geographical analysts—including landscape geographers (that is, including myself)—have also tended to fixate on Rawls's original position arguments, sometimes finding them valuable for staking out starting points for considering distributive and procedural justice, but mostly dismissing them for reasons akin to those above.[30]

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26 Rawls 1999, pp. 65–68.
27 Smith 1994.
28 Clark 1986, p. 152.
29 Harvey 2009, p. 109.
30 Barnett 2017; Mels & Mitchell 2013.

What is most interesting about this focus on the original position, however, is that it makes visible geographers' own "veil of ignorance", a veil that seems to have prevented us from seeing the wholeness of Rawls's theory, a theory that while idealist at its core, is also shot through with a strong dose of materialist reasoning that should have long been vital grist for our justice theorizing. It has taken me a long time to come to this conclusion. The prompt was being invited to take part in a large EU Horizon 2020 research project examining the role of justice in sustainable development in the Arctic.[31] My job was to lead a small interdisciplinary team of scholars charged with surveying the literatures in moral and political philosophy and to synthesize and translate this literature into a set of precepts for analyzing justice for social scientists across a range of disciplines who themselves have likely spent little time delving into justice literatures. We surveyed what we called the major "schools" of justice philosophy (liberalism, feminism, cosmopolitanism, various strains of radicalism, and so forth) as well as several "realms" of justice theorizing (environmental justice, climate justice, landscape justice, and more). I thus spent 2020–2021 reading and re-reading justice theory, almost none of it written by geographers, and discussing it with scholars trained in moral philosophy and ethics, sociological social theory and legal studies, as well as geography.

I learned to look at justice theory anew—to try to see past my own veil of ignorance—and what I saw was a quite different Rawls to the way he was depicted in geography and as I had learned to understand him. I saw a newly "materialist" Rawls, a Rawls for whom the concept of "basic structure" is as—or even more—important than his "original position" experiment. And what became even more clear was how, in Rawls, this basic structure was in so many ways equivalent to what, for Nye, is the infrastructure of collective existence: the landscape.

FROM BASIC STRUCTURE TO LANDSCAPE AND BACK AGAIN

As Rawls defined it, the basic structure of society was "the way in which major social institutions distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation. By major institutions, I understand the political constitution and principal economic and social relations."[32] For Rawls, these major institutions included legal protections of basic liberty rights (for example, of thought and consciousness), "private property in the means of production" (I'll come back to

31 JUSTNORTH: Toward Just, Ethical and Sustainable Arctic Economies, Environments and Societies, Horizon 2020 Grant Agreement 869327. This sections condenses arguments in Mitchell 2024.

32 Rawls 1999, p. 6.

this), markets, and (added in a later revision), "the monogamous family".[33] These and similar institutions are a basic structure because "taken together as one scheme [...] [they] define men's rights and duties and influence their prospects, what they can expect to be and how well they can hope to do. The basic structure is the primary subject of justice because its effects are so profound and present from the start."[34]

The basic structure is thus something like the material prism through which Rawls's idealist "original position" derivation of egalitarian distribution is refracted. This is so because:

> the cumulative effect of social and economic legislation is to specify the basic structure. Moreover, the social system shapes the wants and aspirations that its citizens will come to have. It determines in part the sorts of persons they want to be as well as the sorts of persons they are. Thus an economic system is not only an institutional device for satisfying wants and needs but a way of creating and fashioning wants in the future. How men work together now to satisfy their present desires affects the desires they will have later on, the kinds of persons they will be. These matters are, of course, perfectly obvious and have always been recognized. They were stressed by economists as different as Marshall and Marx.[35]

Given this definition, it is curious that Rawls's discussion of the basic structure and its position in his theory of justice has received next to no attention from geographers, geographers who pride themselves on working out how and why it is so important to understand how "major institutions fit together in one system" *spatially*. One would think that the basic structure would have been a key component of Harvey's liberal formulations—concerned as they were with systems and structures of spatial distribution—to say nothing of his socialist formulations which were aimed squarely at the basic institutions of society and how they produce wants and aspirations (while also instantiating exploitation and oppression). But they do not.

Such a critical silence has not been the case in other fields, where Rawls's conceptualization of the basic structure has been subject to sustained critique and development. Some of the earliest and sharpest critiques came from feminists. Prominent among these was Rawls's own student Susan Moller Okin. In a still eye-opening critique of the position of women in western, liberal philosophy, Okin showed that the question

33 Rawls 1999, p. 6.
34 Rawls 1999, pp. 6–7.
35 Rawls 1999, p. 229.

philosophers asked about men were quite different from those asked about women. Thinking about men, philosophers from Plato through Rousseau and Kant to Rawls himself asked: "What are men like?" "What is man's potential?" But in thinking about women, the question they asked was nearly invariably "What is woman *for*?"[36] This frequently unacknowledged ontological shift in Western philosophy from "what are men like" to "what are women for" is consequential for philosophers of justice for two reasons. First, if, as liberal philosophy holds, a primary basis for a just society is the Kantian imperative that individuals must be treated as ends in themselves and never as means for others' profit or enjoyment, then right at its heart liberal Western philosophy violates its most cherished principle.[37] Second, in the Western liberal tradition, including especially the tradition of 20th-century justice philosophizing of which Rawls was a key exemplar (and within which Okin placed herself), what always appears to be about *individuals* in a polity (for example, people in Rawls's original position) is really about the *patriarchal family* in society. Women are always subordinated—actively—and made to exist insofar as they are *for* their husbands, fathers, and sons. The assumption of individuality is always violated.[38] Indeed, Rawls is inadvertently explicit about this in his original formulation: those in the original position are "heads of families", not "individuals" as such.

As Okin later showed, such patriarchal assumptions, which also defined libertarian and communitarian varieties of liberalism, were centrally important for how Rawls (and his followers and many of his critics) understood the basic structure. Western liberal philosophy assumed that the family was either "beyond justice"—simply not part of the basic structure and thus not worthy of justice theorizing—or was always-already just. There were exceptions, of course, perhaps most prominently J.S. Mill who declared the family to be a "school of despotism"[39] (while never really questioning the division of labor within it).[40] But this was a minority position, and, Okin argued, a just society would only be possible if it was rooted in just families (of whatever configuration), families—or households—in which a just division of labor, rather than an exploitative one obtained: "Until there is justice in the family, women will not be able to gain equality in politics, at work, or in any other sphere."[41] Taking gender seriously, Okin made clear, required a thorough reconceptualization of the subject ("who") and the object ("what") of justice and therefore a transformation of the *most basic* struc-

36 Okin 1980, p. 10.
37 What is true for gender is also true for race: Mills 2017.
38 Okin 1980, p. 202.
39 Mill 1869, p. 81.
40 Okin 1989, pp. 20–21.
41 Okin 1989, p. 4.

tures of society, like the family, a position to which she eventually recruited Rawls, at least partially. By the time he revised his *Theory*, Rawls had at least started including "the monogamous family" as part of the basic structure (and only a few years later had revised this again to incorporate "the family in some form").[42]

For some theorists, Rawls's only gradual acknowledgment of gender and the family as part of the basic structure (and at that in a rather idealized and unexamined form) was enough to disqualify the concept of the basic structure as the primary object of justice theorizing.[43] For Iris Marion Young, however, it was a primary reason why the basic structure needed to be subjected to much more thorough critical scrutiny. A full theory of justice had to take the basic structure seriously. "Theorizing justice", Young held, "should focus primarily on the basic structure, because the degree of justice or injustice in the basic structure conditions the way we should evaluate individual interactions or rules and distributions within particular institutions."[44] Noting that this position was central to Rawls's whole theory, Young also argued that it "stands in some tension with Rawls's emphasis on distributions—of rights and liberties, offices and positions, income and wealth, and so on."[45] In common with many Marxists,[46] Young held that a primary focus on distribution tended "to pay too little attention to the processes that produce distributions"—that is, the means and relations of production—as well as obscure the vitally important role in shaping justice played by "the social division of labor, structures of decision-making power, and processes that normalize the behaviors and attributes of persons."[47] For Young, an adequate theory of justice "will require a more developed account of what the basic structure includes and how structural processes produce injustices than Rawls's theory offers."[48]

One way to construct a "more developed account" of the basic structure would be to understand landscape's role in it, and it is rather surprising that such an understanding has heretofore not been attempted, by either landscape scholars or by philosophers of justice. Like Okin's incredulity at Rawls's failure to include the family as part of the basic structure, it is also fairly incredible that a fully worked out theory of justice could pay so little attention to the material substrate—the "infrastructure of collective existence"—upon which life is lived (and neither Rawls nor his advocates and critics have paid this any mind at all). And just as Young is incredulous before those

42 Rawls 1999, p. 6; 2001, p. 10; discussed further in Young 2006.
43 Though never explicitly stated, this was clearly the position of Nancy Fraser 1997.
44 Young 2006, p. 91.
45 Young 2006, p. 91.
46 Geras 1985; 1992; Harvey 2009 [1973]; 1996.
47 Young 2006, p. 91.
48 Young 2006, p. 92.

aspects of Rawls's theory which "assume people who are normal" in the sense of being "normal fully cooperating members of society over a complete life", without considering how that "usual sense" "presupposes contingent physical structures and social expectations that make some people appear less capable than they would appear within altered structures and expectations",[49] it remains remarkable that the built form of the land tends *not* to be a primary focus of justice theorizing within political philosophy. Young is the great exception, and as she makes plain, landscapes can produce "an oppressive normalization of particular life situations" reinforcing structural injustices in innumerable ways.[50]

At the same time, landscapes can open up opportunities for less exploitative or oppressive social relations. As Shelley Egoz emphasizes, landscape "comprises an underpinning component for ensuring the well-being and dignity of communities and individuals."[51] If early geographical work on the morphological landscape rested on an overly simple model in which a rather undifferentiated "culture" went to work on nature to produce a cultural landscape that reflected its needs, interests and sensibilities,[52] later work sought to more specifically determine the forces and relations of production that construct the ordinary landscape, in all their uneven and exploitative guises,[53] as well as to better understand the role that the built landscape plays in shaping and directing social life.[54]

I have argued that the built landscape in capitalism has to be understood as primarily (though never exclusively) produced through the relations of, and struggles over, commodity production.[55] The social relations of production of the landscape are based in the exploitative transformation of living labor (workers' labor power) into "dead labor" (the ossified form of the landscape). These relations of production are shaped at the site of landscape production itself (the roads, fields, housing estates, commercial districts, national parks ...), as well as in the place where the landscape components themselves are produced (the copper, iron, and rare-earth mines, the sawmills, power plants, concrete factories ...), wherever they may be found. But they are also shaped at the borders (and through border policy), and in the migrant camps, jails, housing markets, and parliaments, among so many places that have a role to play in setting wage and

49 Both quotations from Rawls 2005, p. 20 and quoted in Young 2006, p. 95.
50 Young 2006, p. 96.
51 Egoz 2011, p. 530.
52 Sauer 1963 [1925]; Meinig 1979.
53 Breitbach 2009; Mitchell, D. 1994; 1996.
54 Schein 1997; Fields 2017; Wall & Waterman 2018.
55 Mitchell 1996; 2003b; 2008; 2009.

work conditions under which labor is exploited, however relatively just or unjust that exploitation may be. This is a first way in which landscape is basic structure.

If landscape is dead labor, it is also the substrate upon which other production takes place. The *arrangement* of things on the land—factories, forests, farms, mines, refineries, houses, schools, stores, transportation networks, and so forth—is, as has long been discussed by geographers, a fundamental matter of justice. Such arrangement is the traditional focus of spatialized accounts of distributive justice. Here lies also a traditional focus of much environmental justice scholarship, scholarship concerned with environmental "goods" and "bads", which itself has come under increasing critical scrutiny because it focuses more on the effects (unequal distribution of environmental burdens and benefits) rather than causes (the production of pollutants of all manner; the reasons for their production; the relations of their production, etc.).[56] Such critique is echoed and advanced by feminist political theorists like Young, who argue for a keener focus on the "processes that produce distributions."[57] Young's critique "derives in the first place from Marx's criticism of liberal conceptions of justice. Claims of distributive fairness, in his opinion, frequently presuppose institutions of private property, wage labor, and credit, when these might come into question for a more critical conception of justice."[58] Indeed, Marx's *criticism* is exactly Rawls's *definition* of the basic structure, which, as we saw, presupposed "private property in the means of production", markets, and all the rest. By contrast, and following Young, a central matter of justice must be both the specific and the total relations of production that the extant landscape (and its constant restructuring) makes possible. This indicates a second way that landscape is basic structure: not only is it basic structure because it shapes how life can be lived (and wants can be formed), but it is basic structure because it shapes (and is shaped by) how the things that make life livable (and for some not- or less-livable) are themselves produced.

Yet, third, if these aspects of the landscape help make the case for it being a key component of the basic structure, if they turn our attention to how the "infrastructure of collective existence" is *produced*, they hardly exhaust what landscape is or does (much less what it means). Landscape is not only the home of production, of course, but also social reproduction, however attenuated the possibilities for that may be. As feminist geographers have long argued (and feminist political theorists have more recently begun to notice),[59] the crises and contradictions of social reproduction are both a site of

56 Barkan & Pulido 2017.
57 Young 2006, p. 91.
58 Young 2006, p. 91.
59 Katz 2001; 2004; Fraser 2016.

intense social struggle and a driving force of historical transformation. Social reproduction is inextricably entangled with the landscape, from workers seeking to remake landscapes in ways favorable to their own interests, within a political economy where "the maintenance and reproduction of the working class is, and ever must be, a necessary condition for the reproduction of capital",[60] to the way that capital's "orientation to unlimited accumulation tends to destabilize the very processes of social reproduction on which it relies",[61] thus creating not only "crises of care" but fundamental mismatches between the systems and geographical topologies of reproduction and the fundamental needs of capital.[62] "Geography", as Trevor Paglen has written, "sculpts the future."[63] The geographies—the landscapes—we inherit and reproduce (with whatever modifications) "place possibilities and constraints on what is yet to come" and thus to "change the future", including any future possibilities for a just social reproduction, "means changing the material spaces of the present."[64] These spaces of the present are gendered and raced, of course, just as the care work of social reproduction is gendered and raced, and thus the spaces that comprise the landscapes of social reproduction must necessarily be part of the basic structure: they shape and are shaped by the complex relations not only of production but also of social reproduction.

As material substrate, as infrastructure, as that which we "see when we go outside", to appropriate Peirce Lewis's definition of landscape,[65] the fact that landscape is basic structure seems obvious enough. But as nearly 50 years of landscape research has shown, the landscape is never only what we see, no matter how attentive and critical we may be. It is also what we do not or cannot see,[66] what we choose not to see or to obscure,[67] and how we go about seeing it.[68] There is a "landscape way of seeing" that is ineluctably ideological and an exercise of power.[69] As Tom Mels has argued, this turn to questions of power and structured forms of seeing in landscape studies opened up the possibility for a deeper engagement with landscape's "politics of representation": "Representation was indispensable from any understanding of: the maneuvers of dis-

60 Marx 1987, p. 537.
61 Fraser 2016, p. 100.
62 Katz 2001.
63 Paglen 2009, p. 208.
64 Paglen 2009, p. 208.
65 Lewis 1979, p. 11.
66 Williams 1973; Mitchell 2008.
67 Mitchell, W.J.T. 1994.
68 Berger 1972; Cosgrove & Daniels 1988.
69 Cosgrove 1985; Mitchell, W.J.T. 1994; Olwig 2019.

cursive power, hegemonic ways of seeing, identity formation and modernity, etc."[70] For Mels, since representation is a "core concept of justice", any thorough accounting of the landscape/justice nexus has to account for the "logics of representation" that landscape incorporates and by which they are known. "For both Fraser and Young", according to Mels, "modes of representation (interest, opinions, and lived experience) are linked to the sites (spaces) of representation", and are particularly valuable for that reason, but their "theorisations of the spatialities of justice leave in abeyance the concrete geographies and historical forms of oppression, misrecognition, cultural imperialism, or violence."[71] Not just landscape studies, but the landscape itself affords no such abeyance, since landscape actively incorporates these and is thus "part of the very condition of justice."[72] In Mels's theory, struggles over representation, in this case what he calls "political representation", become "entrenched in the material landscape", and thus recursively create the conditions of possibility to represent and be represented, since "representation, whether of oneself or of a group, demands space."[73]

Rawls's difference principle (which states that any inequalities must be to the advantage of the least advantaged) "insists that each person must benefit from permissible inequalities in the basic structure. This means that it must be reasonable for each relevant man defined by this structure, when he views it as a going concern, to prefer his prospects with the inequality to his prospects without it."[74] Note the language: human beings are *defined* by the basic structure; they structure their preferences in relation to it. They engage politically as a consequence of it. How, then, can a theory of representation *not* be vital to theorizing the object of justice, how can it not be vital to theorizing landscape as a central component of the object of justice—the basic structure—especially when one remembers, along with Okin, that substitution of "man" for "human being" in the work of philosophers like Rawls is never innocent.[75] Right from the start, in Rawls's theory, the basic structure is patriarchal, likely nationalistic (whatever his later concerns for a more cosmopolitan or internationalist justice), and *exclusionary*. Landscape is what we fight over, not in any original position, but in the here and now (just as we did there and then), and at no point is that "we" given. Who counts now, and how, necessarily gets entangled in the landscape, breathing life into its dead labor, *making* it the infrastructure of our collective existence. Or not.

70 Mels 2016, p. 417.
71 Mels 2016, p. 419.
72 Mels 2016, p. 419.
73 Mels 2016, p. 420, quoting Mitchell 2003c, p. 33.
74 Rawls 1999, p. 56.
75 Okin 1980.

INJUSTICE, MAXIMAL LANDSCAPE JUSTICE, AND THE VERY IDEA OF SOCIAL JUSTICE

I have written a bit about justice, and a lot about injustice, over my career, but the re-education the EU Horizon project induced has reoriented my thinking. Clive Barnett argued that geographers have never really developed a "positive" conception of injustice, arguing that we just assume that injustice is the absence of justice. This, he averred, would be like medical researchers assuming that ill-health is simply the absence of health, rather than something in and of itself (like a disease).[76] I think he was wrong; geographers have been extraordinarily good at diagnosing injustice—in the forms of powerlessness, exploitation, marginalization, imperialism and violence, to appropriate Young's five faces of oppression.[77] Our bookshelves and journals are full of examples.[78] But that is the less important point. The more important point is that with scant exceptions we have devoted very little energy to developing positive theories of *justice*. Barnett is a case in point: as valuable as his work on the "priority of injustice" is, he mostly assumed that justice was simply the absence of injustice. He walked into his own trap—and he is not alone (with the exception of a quite thin rendering of Young's theory of justice in my *Right to the City: Social Justice and the Fight for Public Space*, which also entailed a defense of rights as essential in any just society, for example, I have done little to theorize the *content* and *concept* of justice itself).[79]

Among those my colleagues in the Horizon project pointed my attention towards was the Frankfurt School heir-apparent (and former student of both Rawls and Jürgen Habermas), Rainer Forst, a theorist who thus far has attracted little attention in geography (and none in landscape studies).[80] This is not the place to go into his work (which is rich) in any depth,[81] but instead, apropos the forgoing discussions, it is enough to point to his main definition of justice. For Forst, *minimal* justice consists in a basic structure of justification, which is to say a set of institutional arrangements

76 Barnett 2018.

77 Young 1990.

78 To take just one example, this is precisely what at least 24 of the 27 articles in the special issue of the *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* on 'Social justice and the city' (Heynen *et al*. 2018)—the very issue in which Barnett published his worries—do: they diagnose the very ills of the society we live in and trace their root causes, even as they also devote considerable energy to understanding how they are contested by sundry social movements. With the partial exceptions of Barnett 2018 and Lake 2018, none positively theorizes justice.

79 Mitchell 2003c.

80 Barnett 2017 cites Forst, but mostly in passing, and without really dwelling on his theories in depth.

81 Much more is said in Mitchell & Ohlsson 2023.

that allow for procedural justice. Maximal justice—substantive justice—consists, on the other hand, in a fully justified basic structure, which is a basic structure—hence a landscape—that fully supports life *and can be shown to do so*.[82]

My re-reading of Rawls, my exposure to Okin, further studies of Young's work, my deeper dive into Marxist debates over the theoretical validity of concepts of justice in any historical-materialist project, and innumerable seminar discussions and conversations, have revealed the absence of a positive, geographical theory of justice. This is particularly a problem for any geographical studies seeking to ground research on *injustice* in the material realities of (past and present) existing societies. The concept of *basic structure* seems to be a valuable foundation for such a positive theory. And understanding landscape—the infrastructure of our collective existence, historically produced and struggled-over, always-already entangled with intense and complex politics of representation—as basic structure goes quite a long way to answering Henderson's challenge to develop "a concept of landscape that will assist the development of the very idea of social justice."

CONCLUSION

A fully justified basic structure—a landscape that fully supports life through substantive justice—is not the world we live in. We live in a world more resembling a series of overlapping anti-landscapes, at least for many, and certainly for many of those living in the neighborhoods most ravaged in the 1977 New York City blackout. Making landscapes, and anti-landscapes, we showed in *Revolting New York*, is a power-laden process, which David Nye must have intuited when he defined landscape as *man-modified* space. The very absence of women from this formulation reminds us of the question that is always asked about women in the mainstreams of philosophy: what are women *for*? One thing they might be *for*, whether they want to be or not, is making it possible for "human beings" to "inhabit" the very landscapes that men have made impossible for life. People live in anti-landscapes all the time (this is another thing *Revolting New York* showed). The anti-landscape is just another name for a fully unjust (and unjustified) basic structure, and its deadliness (and the struggle to live that it necessarily requires) makes plain that the landscape *must* be understood as one of *the* "major social institutions that distribute fundamental rights and duties and determine the division of advantages from social cooperation."[83] Landscape, as basic structure is, and must be, understood to be the very foundation of what justice is

82 Forst 2012; 2014; 2017.

83 Rawls 1999, p. 6.

and, to the degree we constantly rework these "material spaces of the present",[84] what justice in the future can possibly be.

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84 Paglen 2009, p. 208.

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