CHAPTER ONE

The Rural is Nowhere

Bringing Indigeneity and Urbanism into Educational Research

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Although the term "urban" seems to be everywhere in educational policy and research, there is little interrogation into precisely what the term "urban" means. One thing that is apparently clear, according to common sense in education, is that the urban is *not* the rural. Rural education is thus defined in the negative sense that it is not urban education, and yet the positive referent here—urban education—is itself ill defined, is itself a victim of undertheorized in educational literature. In this chapter, we want to begin addressing this double-lack in educational research. We do this by weaving together two narratives about the historical production of space. One narrative is that constructed by Marx and critical geographers, which begins with the town/country dialectic inherited by capitalism and ends with a conception of urbanism that is not bound to any particular place or spatial arrangement. The other narrative is one lived by Indigenous peoples in the U.S., and this is a history that has always worked against the division between the town and country. These narratives come into agreement concluding: that there is no such ontological thing as the rural or the urban.

We begin the chapter with a brief orientation to urban educational research in the U.S., which prompts us to question what the urban in this research signifies. To answer this question, we call on Marx's and Engels' writing on the town/country dialectic, which gives a history of how and in what ways the urban and the rural have come to be thought of and lived as distinct entities with their own feel, their own speed, their own aura. For Marx and Engels, whom the dialectic was the operative force of history, nothing is ever fixed or permanent, including

the separation of town and country. Marx, for example, wrote about the "urbanization of the countryside, through the industrialization of agriculture" (Smith, 1984/2008, p. 148). Henri Lefebvre's book on the urban, to which we turn next, picks up where Marx left off. Lefebvre argues that the entirety of the globe has been urbanized, and that urbanism, which arose from the city, has escaped the city's confines. In order to understand this thesis, we recall Lefebvre's schematic history of the development of the city, from its first, political iteration, to its latest, urban iteration. At the end, this narrative gives us the insight that the urban isn't about a place today, it's rather about a set of social relations and a patterning of society, about form and not content. The urban is more of a distributed network of production and consumption, of play and work.

While the critical geographic narrative ends up with the overcoming of the urban/rural binary, there is another narrative that troubles and resists this binary from an even earlier historical point, through the lived reality of a different worldview. Indigenous peoples and societies in the U.S. both trouble and add to the urbanization story told by critical geography, and this is what we focus on next. For Indigenous peoples, the very notion of dividing land and space is foreign and destructive (Deloria, 1997; Goeman, 2013). Through Indigenous studies we learn that the urban/rural binary was a colonial construct imposed on Native peoples during the conquest of the Americas. Mapping was a central tool used for the violent expropriation of the land, which Native peoples did not view as a means of production to be owned. Through the creation of reservations and forced relocation programs, the process of settler colonialism works to impose an urban/rural binary on Native peoples and spaces.

WHAT IS RURAL AND WHAT IS NOT

The urban first became an object of educational inquiry with the 1965 Elementary and Secondary Education Act and the Equality of Educational Opportunity Study in 1966, which is commonly referred to as the Coleman Study (Buendía, 2011, p. 2). It seems, however, that the urban is rarely defined. Edward Buendía writes that the earliest urban education policy documents "constructed a population deemed as the urban that has been reduced to racial, economic, cultural and spatial attributes that are seen as corresponding to the totality of their aspirations, experiences and intellectual proclivities" (ibid.). This trend has continued, and Buendía's argument is that even today the urban refers more to populations than to actual places. While critical educational scholars have been doing important work to counter this trend, there is still quite a bit of confusion surrounding the "urban" as an educational and political signifier that arises from a particular worldview originating from a particular place.

For example, in Pauline Lipman's (2011) book, *The new political economy of urban education*, she uses the terms "urban" and "city" synonymously. Indeed, in common parlance one can slip easily between the two. Even in geography, the urban question has historically centered exclusively on the city (Brenner, 2014). But for over four decades now a hypothesis has been making appearances in academic research and social and political movements, a hypothesis that the city and the urban—while absolutely related—are distinct entities. In order to grasp the nuances of this discussion and to ask what it might mean for critical studies in rural education, we want to sketch the development of research on cities and urbanization.

An antagonism has historically existed between the town and the country, or the city and the rural. In a famous section of *The German Ideology*, Marx and Engels (1945/1970) write that this antagonism is fundamental to capitalism for a host of reasons. In the town "individuals must be brought together" to interact with instruments of production "created by civilisation," while in the country individuals "find themselves alongside the given instruments of production as instruments of production themselves," instruments which are "natural" (p. 68). Thus, the difference between the town and the country, for Marx and Engels, related directly to the general division of labor between industry (town) and agriculture (country). This spatial division of labor has important consequences. In the country "property (landed property) appears as direct natural domination," while in the town property appears as the "domination of labour, particularly of accumulated labour, capital." People in the country are "united by some bond" while those in the town "are only held together by exchange." In the country "the domination of the proprietor over the propertyless may be based on a personal relation, on a kind of community," while in the town this domination is maintained through money and exchange. In the country there may still be a unity of physical and mental activity, while in the town there is a division between the two. In other words, the spatial differentiation between town and country signals a differentiation of nature and production, social relations, forms of community and belonging, and subjectivity—or the division of the self into mind and body. This division is previously articulated in science and religion by Descartes—a notion we will see heavily critiqued by Indigenous scholars.

WHITHER THE RURAL?

The relationship between capitalism and the town and country antagonism, argues Neil Smith (1984/2008), is often cited yet seldom deeply understood. He clarifies that capitalism didn't produce the separation between town and country, but rather inherited it from previous modes of production. Further, Smith insists that it is incorrect to read the town and country antagonism as fixed. Rather than being

fixed, the separation between town and country actually *erodes* under capitalism, and this is exactly where the distinction between the city and the urban comes into play. Some have even gone so far as to claim that there is no longer any contradiction between the two socio-spatial formations and that urbanization has ushered in a new reality.

Henri Lefebvre begins his 1970 book, *The urban revolution* with this hypothesis. "Society," he writes, "has been completely urbanized" (Lefebvre, 1970/2003, p. 1). Lefebvre quickly follows up with the fact that this urbanization is not yet actual; it is only virtual at the present moment (1970), but it will soon be actual, an accomplished fact. There is a stultifying confusion resulting from not only the conflation of the urban with *the* city, but also from the homogenizing term "*the* city" itself. To correct this, Lefebvre takes us through the history of the production of the contemporary city and, along the way, teases out the distinctions between different phases of urbanization as well as the differing relations between the country and the town, or the rural and the city.

The first iteration of the city is the political city, which could also be referred to as the administrative city. The political city organized political, military, and economic matters, and it was a place of administration, consumption, and exchange. Religious, military, and "noble" leaders are at the helm of this built-form. The political city builds infrastructure—like dams—but production is not a central component of the political city. As a result, the city itself and its populations are produced and reproduced through surpluses extracted from the countryside, and this was accomplished most often through force and ideological persuasion (i.e., religious doctrine). The next form of the city is the mercantile city, and in this iteration the marketplace enters and exchange comes to dominate the city and its functions. This, of course, does not happen at once or without a struggle between the Church and the nascent bourgeoisie. The town-country relationship changes with this transition, as surplus-product from the countryside enters the town voluntarily via the marketplace, and not through coercion. The city gained prominence in economic life as it became a crucial site for the realization of value. Thus, the mercantile city accompanied the rise of ever-increasing networks of places connected through trade. No longer was the city "an urban island in a rural ocean;" instead, it was the country that was "now no more than—nothing more than—the town's 'environment,' its horizon, its limit" (p. 11).

Yet it is with the entrance of production into the city through the emergence of the industrial city that urbanization as it is commonly understood really takes off. The bourgeoisie asserts its domination more completely in this phase of urbanization and the city-form itself becomes subjected to the logic of capital accumulation. Lefebvre referred to this process as an "implosion-explosion." All aspects of social reproduction—communication, transportation, housing, play, and so on—are subjected to the needs and logic of capital accumulation. This is the aspect of

implosion: the transformation of the city itself. Yet the search for exchange-value that transforms the city space also transforms spaces outside the city, and this is the explosion. This explosion includes both a transformation in the countryside and the town-country relation as well as a transformation in colonialism. Regarding the former, the city began to totally dominate the countryside which, had hiterhto been "predominately isolated and self-sufficient," but which "now began to depend on urban-industrial production for basic foodstuffs and consumer goods" (Monte-Mór, 2014, p. 263). At the same time, the process of colonialism undergoes a rapid acceleration, as the bourgeoisie seeks ever-cheaper sources of labor-power and raw materials, and new markets for its products.

The industrial city thus propels the city beyond its own limits, casting a net, or an "urban fabric" outward (Lefebvre, 1996). Different territories and socio-spatial formations are woven together, and the boundaries between them are eroded. To take just one "concrete" example, David Harvey (2012) provides a helpful example of the ways in which the industrial city weaves workers from disparate regions together, writing that

> there is a seamless connection between those who mine the iron ore that goes into the steel that goes into the construction of the bridges across which the trucks carrying commodities travel to their final destinations of factories and homes for consumption. (p. 130)

At the same time as the rural is urbanized—through the industrialization of agriculture, the application of advanced science and technology to crop production, the installation of communication networks, the construction of schools, and so on—the urban is ruralized, becomes subject to the dictates of agricultural production writ large.

The urban, then, isn't about a form; it's about a set of social relations, subjectivities, and possibilities. And it is this way of being that has transcended the city as a built-form. Indeed, while it is quite difficult to empirically delineate precisely where the city ends and something else begins (see Brenner & Schmid, 2014), it is impossible to state where the urban ends and begins. This is because, as Andy Merrifield aptly puts it, "the urban is nothing in itself, nothing outside dynamic social relations, nothing outside of a coming together of people" (2013, p. 37). The city is anywhere that differences encounter one another, anywhere that work, play, and desire flower.

INDIGENEITY, BINARIES, AND MAPPING

The story that Marx and Engels and their kin in critical geography tell us about urbanization is important, we believe, for understanding contemporary socio-spatial relations. In particular, the breaking down of the binary between the urban and the rural helps us to grasp the ways in which social patterning occurs today.

Yet there are also crucial historical and theoretical limitations to the critical geographic story as told by Lefebvre and his later companions, for this story, in the end, represents but one worldview, one that arose predominantly from the study of European society. We have to be careful, then, not to transpose that story onto other spaces, histories, and peoples. What we want to do now is turn to another worldview that both challenges and articulates a similar conclusion as critical geography's theory of urbanism. To adequately interrogate urban/rural binary and to uncover the spatial dynamics of the present moment, we believe that we need to turn to Indigenous knowledges. Such a move is necessary because Indigenous peoples have been troubling, interrogating, and resisting divisions of space since European contact. The United States is a settler colonial society, and any discussion of space must first look to settler colonial studies as a way to understand the organization, naming, and claiming of space.

Settler colonial studies addresses issues and ideologies in settler colonial nations, specifically issues of land accumulation and the harmful effects on peoples and society that continue to systematically operate from a colonial ideology. Settler conceptions of space require the "need to turn land into property" (Goeman, 2013 p. 104). Goeman (2013) writes about colonial cartographic ideology saying, "Maps, in their most traditional sense as a representation of authority, have incredible power and have been essential to colonial and imperial projects" (p. 16) where land was turned to property.

For Native communities, maps have always been a tool of colonization for both the physical and metaphorical mapping of lands and bodies (Goeman, 2013). From the first major mapping expedition conducted by Lewis and Clark to the Dawes Act (which marked and divided communal Native lands into propertied containers belonging to individual families) Natives have had maps forced upon them and their communities. In the age of exploration, expeditions for map making provided the tools and knowledge necessary for economic expansion through domination. As a result of these practices and the capitalist need to accumulate land, ways of knowing became institutionalized and normative through the systematic reproduction of settler colonial expansion and its accompanying ideology (Harley, 1989; Pickles, 1992). Designations of "town" and "country" were not native to the territory known today as the United States prior to European contact; they were only made by other nations who violently seized spaces from Indigenous peoples, settled on these spaces, and instituted the authority to name and develop them. John Mohawk (2000) writes that excess wealth concentrated in urban centers lead to colonization as a necessity in order to maintain wealth as populations grew. He says, "excess population provided both motive and opportunity for unleashing colonizers on distant lands" (p. 32).

The driving force of settler colonialism is the material and ideological. There is, in other words, an ideology about the inferiority of some peoples and the superiority

of other peoples that is irretrievably tied up with the question of land acquisition, which was central to the formation of the U.S. As Marx (1867/1967) writes toward the end of the first volume of *Capital*, "the expropriation of the mass of the people from the soil forms the basis of the capitalist mode of production" (p. 719), what Marx referred to as "so-called primitive/primary accumulation." Marx here is critiquing the story the narrative that bourgeois political economy tells about the origins of capitalism, which is roughly as follows: Once upon a time there existed two kinds of people. One type was "diligent, intelligent, and, above all, frugal" and the other type were "lazy rascals, spending their substance, and more, in riotous living" (p. 667). At a certain moment in time, the political economist says, it came to be that the latter type had nothing left to sell except their own labor. In radical contrast to this origin story, Marx demonstrates that it was actually "conquest, enslavement, robbery, murder, briefly force" (p. 668) that were the primary mechanisms through which the initial capital—and the conditions necessary for capitalist production—were produced and accumulated. In the U.S., settler-colonialism was part and parcel of this strategy. And mapping—the drawing of boundaries—was absolutely central to this iteration of primitive accumulation, for it went hand in hand with the forced and murderous expropriation of Native peoples from their land. Inferiority was solidified with the designation of cities as areas of "civilization" for Europeans and "rural" areas inhabited by Indigenous peoples as "uncivilized." Only after land was labeled and borders were drawn could it be stolen and then codified, so that the one with the map was the one who was able to lay claim to the land.

Thus, the very notion of the urban/rural divide is a colonial concept, one that originated with colonial and capitalist thinking about and relation to land, the land seen purely as a means of production to be exploited for profit. This divide was imposed on Indigenous communities through colonization. Prior to this, Indigenous communities had complex systems of trade, governance, and production that did not map onto any rural/urban or country/town binary (Forbes, 2001). Though Indigenous peoples may have had separate spaces for growing and trading crops, separating the spaces was not the primary framework for understanding the relationship to the land or the production. The relationship instead centers stewardship, the sacred, and connection. Dunbar-Ortiz (2014) gives several examples of Indigenous peoples' systems of corn production pre-contact to show that North America was a thriving network organized through a radically different world view. She writes that the main source of trade was corn—which was believed to be a sacred gift from God which was meant to be stewarded by people on Earth. She gives one example of the Haudenosaunee Confederacy, which "avoided centralized power by means of a clan-village system of democracy based on collective stewardship of the land" (p. 24). From this system, corn was dispersed evenly throughout clans, eliminating a system of commerce in which production and distribution took place in distinct and separate, opposed spaces.

THE RESERVATION

Newcomb (2008) writes that the relationship between Indigenous peoples and the U.S. (including the establishment of reservations) has always been puzzling and unclear. Scholars who work on issues of Indian law and policy write extensively on structures of *power* that underlie policies of subjugation for Indigenous peoples. The processes of colonization are not logically straightforward but, as indicated earlier, are intertwined with religion, ideology, science, and industrialization. Central to the discussion of power is the taking, settling, and naming of Indian reservations—areas of land that the United States marked off and reserved for Native communities through the practice of mapping. Reservations were established to ease conflicts between settlers and Indigenous peoples in "rural" areas and were upheld through treaties with the U.S. government's Bureau of Indian Affairs (Dunbar-Ortiz, 2014). The process of marking and maintaining reservation spaces is inseparably linked to modes of control and separation in settler colonial societies. Two major Acts in particular—the 1830 Indian Removal Act and the 1887 General Allotment Act—officially remove, rename, and designate spaces for Indigenous peoples by way of domination of the U.S. government. However negatively purposed reservation spaces are, Indigenous peoples have resisted by making these areas of empowerment, survival, and resistance. The reservation has, by necessity, always betrayed any town/country dialectic, for although reservations are never in or too close to city centers, they themselves are centers of culture, language, spirituality, commerce, and all of those things that hold Indigenous social formations together.

After the creation of reservation spaces, relocation programs started in 1950s, further creating and complicating separations for Native peoples by splitting up peoples in already separate spaces, adding another fold to the history of urbanism. Relocation programs were introduced to purposefully separate Native families and clans (Goeman, 2013, p. 94). Goeman points to this division as significant because not only was it a spatial separation but a cultural separation aimed at dismantling traditions, languages, and spiritual practices. Instead of practicing their traditional ways, Native peoples who were forcibly relocated to cities to become "productive" members of the working class and were then forcibly assimilated as urban Indians (Twiss, 2015, p. 66). This would follow Native peoples and create a binary within Indian identity, which Goeman calls the "urban/reservation Native" (p. 7). This dichotomy has fractured solidarity among Indigenous communities by designating reservation Indians as more Native than urban Indians. This rez/urban dichotomy is a primary example of how fracturing the notion of Indian identity can fracture unified resistance from Indigenous peoples by eroding solidarity.

RESISTING SPATIAL BINARIES THROUGH INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE

Indigenous knowledges teach us that the use of the terms urban/rural, insofar as they denote a binary, are inherently colonial terms for colonial ideas and practices of separation Along with sectioning off land, settler colonial societies employ divisions in epistemology, methodology, and knowledge making. Most Indigenous scholars trace the institution of binaries in academic work to Descartes' famous lines that separate body and mind in his *Discourse on Method*. Linda Tuhiwai Smith (2012), for example, writes a map she names *decolonizing methodologies* for Indigenous scholars and communities who intersect the research university. She addresses the separation of self and knowledge that permeates academic research. Another prominent Indigenous scholar, Vine Deloria (1997), writes extensively on resisting colonial divisions which separate space/land from its existence as a living entity in scientific research. This separation has historically dis-credited any knowledges or worldviews that do not fit in the dominant colonial paradigm—where space is non-living and external to human existence. Indigenous scholars contest these divisions in all areas of academic research by resisting this type of binary thinking.

Mishuana Goeman, an Indigenous geographer, troubles the binary of on/off reservation (Goeman, 2013) in a text committed to re-mapping space using Indigenous cartography. The urban/reservation binary is a primary representation of how space connects to a colonial understanding of what it means to have legitimate Indian identity and connection to land. She writes about her experience with the dichotomy of reservation/urban Native identity both literally and figuratively as a way to reconcile her movements from place to place as a child. Her family members were neither fully urban nor fully reservation Natives, yet she embraces this contradiction as a way to challenge colonial binaries in full. She says,

> who is actually a "real" Indian, is often motivated by the spatial politics. I confront in this project. Critical scholars, until the last decade had divided up American Indians into two categories: traditionalists and progressives. In many ways this split is also spatial, as supposedly progressives leave the rez and traditionalists stay at home. (Goeman 2013, 103)

She goes on to argue that a "Native" identity is one that creates culture and community even outside the boundaries of the reservation. Finally, she also argues that the on/off reservation distinction is a colonial notion because the boundaries of the reservation were created by the U.S. as a tool of control over Natives. Therefore, adapting one's identity as either authentic or inauthentic based on their spatial relationship to the settler state's establishment of reservation lands is a colonial practice. This distinction becomes especially important for the large

number of urban Indians who were relocated from reservations into cities where they formed their own Native communities in urban spaces far away from their perspective reservations. Just as it is impossible to name a space as "urban," it is equally impossible to designate a legitimate Native identity using settler colonial spatial relations. Today Native peoples hold on to their identity, languages, and world views even if they are forcibly separated from their land. This dis-connection with land is not condoned, but enforced by a permeating settler colonial relationship to land. Today Natives leave reservation spaces for a number of reasons while at the same time utilize the borders of the reservation to protection lands and members.[1]

WHAT, AND WHERE, IS RURAL EDUCATION?

The urban/reservation dichotomy is a distinction that is important to understand because community identity is wrapped up with the space in which the people constituting that community live. Most reservation communities are thought of as "rural" spaces in the American imaginary, but these spaces serve as epicenters for Indigenous resistance and collective being, while at the same time being separate to the space of the "urban Indian." Indigenous peoples have used their anti-colonial worldviews to resist these divisions in space and identity by arguing that the reservation/urban Native is a dualism brought about by settler colonialism. The process of dichotomizing spaces breaks down with the institution of reservations in "rural" areas. Furthermore, Indigenous communities resist by making "rural" reservations their epicenters, further troubling this binary. The dichotomy breaks down a second time with the institution of relocation programs, which further troubles the urban/reservation dichotomy by creating a division within a division. The American Indian experience is not necessarily diasporic but draws a unique parallel between what it means to occupy a specific space, when that space has been demarcated as a tool for social, cultural, and spatial control. Indigenous peoples, using their anti-colonial worldviews, have resisted these divisions.

There is no doubt that the place in which one engages in the educational relationship and process impacts the educational experience. Thus, we believe that it is absolutely imperative that we think not only about the relations between place, space, and education, but also that we think deeply about how to conceptualize each of those terms. Our intention in this paper has not been to argue that, because the urban/rural binary doesn't hold, that all space is smooth and undifferentiated. On the contrary. There are problems, issues, possibilities, and constraints that are specific to particular places and to particular types of places and the power relationships represented by naming and claiming these spaces. At the end, then, the call in this paper is to reject the urban/rural divide as something that has been

complicit in the settler colonial project and as a binary that itself has been challenged by both critical geographers and Indigenous peoples. Instead of thinking about places as fixed and static entities, defined in opposition to other fixed and static entities, we should turn our attention to *social processes*, to the ways in which we live, work, play, desire, and, hopefully, cooperate.

NOTE

1. It is important to note that reservations, borders, and binaries are not totally permeable in Indigenous worldviews. Many Indigenous nations have utilized frameworks of sovereignty, nations, and borders for greater survival and self-determination. See Barker (2005) for more discussion on the complexity of sovereignty and borders.

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