THE VANISHING POOR:

Frontier Narratives in New York City's Gentrification and Security Debates

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ABSTRACT: *This article uses the frontier narrative as an analytical category to examine socio-spatial changes on New York City's postindustrial waterfront, where discourses of new and superior land uses have legitimated the appropriation of land by new urban actors. We argue that this conceptualization of neoliberal spatial change helps to critically assess gentrification and post-9/11 securitization processes. We conclude that the frontier discourse has been used to harmonize the systematic creation and, after 9/11, the substantial reinforcement of social inequality. Due to the security regime and its reinforcement of neoliberal divisions of American society, the working poor of the waterfront have been turned into deterritorialized fragments of the wilderness, into un-American non-parts of the city.*

> **"They seem to have been placed by Providence amid the riches of the New World only to enjoy them for a season; they were there merely to wait till others came."**
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> **Alexis de Tocqueville, Democracy in America**

In the United States, the American frontier looms large as one of the most popular discursive reference points for urban development. Myriad city planners, ar-

chitects, branding coalitions, and urban researchers have used it as a metaphor for at least the last half-century. The frontier has been evoked to suggest the dawn of a new and better era in the history of the city, an era that is more modern, civilized, and peaceful than the past. This notion of the frontier, and the vocabulary employed in this discourse, allude to "unique opportunities" (Marshall 2007, 7) for the "pioneers" who settle in "new territories," to the "taming" of neighborhoods (Smith 2005, 13) and the pacification of "savage" sites (English 2011). Earlier analyses have examined the active use of the frontier in discourses of urban redevelopment (e.g., Smith 2005, Desfor, Goldrick, and Merrens 1989), but do not consider the security implications that have become central after the attacks of September 11, 2001 (9/11). In this paper, we therefore propose a critical analysis of frontier narratives in order to examine the specific forms of post-9/11 neoliberal securitization of urban spaces. In our discussion, we will focus particularly on the reconceptualization of New York City's waterfronts.

Over the decades since the mid-1970s, after the relocation of port functions to sites outside the inner city, urban planners and branding coalitions have reinvented postindustrial waterfronts as harbingers of a more sustainable, leisurely, and secure city, a prospect that was widely accepted and celebrated in New York City. For instance, in *Beyond the Edge: New York's New Water-*

front, Raymond W. Gastil, (2002) insists that the twenty-first-century inner-city waterfront is "the paradigmatic site for the future of public life" (19). This perception is embedded in a more general hope for the city to solve the problems of its industrial past. In a similar vein, Edward Glaeser (2011) proclaims the triumph of the twenty-first-century city. In his opinion, they are the "engines of innovation" which, according to the bold subtitle of his book, will "make us richer, smarter, greener, healthier, and happier" (1). The developed postindustrial waterfront, in short, has epitomized the promise of a bright future for the city, while a frontier-logic has frequently been used to argue this point.

Since the 9/11 attacks on the World Trade Center and the Pentagon, and the ensuing securitization of city spaces (Cowen and Bunce 2006; Graham 2006, 2011; Sorkin 2008), the use of the frontier discourse has taken an epistemological turn whose implications are at the heart of this paper. Rather than emphasizing the hopeful future of a hardboiled city, as the neoliberal restructuring discourse has it, the state of those urban areas that were being "replaced" in the inner city has now been demonized to legitimate harsher security measures. The frontier discourse in post-9/11 security debates has actively created a much more radical "wilderness" in urban spaces, one that does not require a policing of crime, but the waging of a War on Terror. These othered spaces, this discourse implies, must

be ordered, disciplined, securitized by any means possible, in order to create the utopian, peaceful civilization that will inevitably follow the frontier.

As is already indicated in this presentation of what we call the neoliberal discourse and the securitization discourse, these discourses by no means contradict each other in their uses of the frontier. Rather, they complement each other. While the neoliberal discourse envisions a future for spaces that tends to exclude those who are presently found in these spaces (in the case of the waterfront, industrial workers and their families), the securitization discourse targets precisely those excluded populations as a fundamental threat to the nation, and as a collective social breeding ground for terrorism. The securitization discourse thus stabilizes and reinforces precisely those aspects of the neoliberal discourse that are criticized as problematic about this economic regime. In our case, we focus on social segregation, manifested in the division of waterfronts into gentrified2 leisure spaces and "deterritorialized" working spaces (Desfor and Laidley 2011).

It is the frontier narrative that ties these two discourses together. The first part of this paper will thus problematize this narrative and carve out those elements most significant for our discussion of the city. We will then discuss, first, the transition between the industrial and the neoliberal waterfront, explaining the impact of the economic re-

gime change for urban populations and the representation of this regime change as a kind of frontier. We will then discuss these populations more closely within the securitization discourse after 9/11, and show the implication of a united neoliberal and securitized discourse as they take up the frontier narrative and revise it in order to substantiate threat scenarios within the city space. It will become apparent that the spaces of homeland and spaces of threat duplicate and reinforce the boundaries of social segregation previously inscribed by the neoliberal restructuring of the city. The waterfront space, with its central as well as extremely tangible functions within economic regimes, is a perfect space to demonstrate these dynamics.

We have chosen New York City as an example because the core elements of our discussion —neoliberal gentrification and work relocation in waterfront spaces, a long and contested history of innovations in urban planning, and the urbanized War on Terror—are more closely linked here than in any other American city. New York City is situated at the intersection of a multitude of flows: flows of investor and tourist capital that are lured to waterfront sites, flows of cargo containers and cruise ship passengers, but also of drug traffickers and counterfeit smugglers. Insisting on New York City's function as an important logistics node and point of transition only points out the port city's particular role as a site for negotiating global forces and local condi-

tions, including the potential vulnerabilities that come with this position in "world city networks" (Taylor 2004; Derudder and Witlox 2010). Also, of course, New York City was one site of the 9/11 attacks that have spurred the very security debate whose impacts on urban space we discuss.

THE FRONTIER NARRATIVE

The American frontier as a specific narrative was first proposed by Frederick Jackson Turner in order to describe the westward expansion of European settlers into the American continent. From this settler colonialist perspective, the westward movement has been conceptualized as a spatial example of progress itself; it produces a narrative based on successive stages, the more civilized inevitably replacing the primitive (Pearce 1967). Amerindians, who initially occupied the land seized in this movement, are presented as neglectful of the land's potential, and as culturally alien and doomed to "vanish" (Slotkin 1973). It is this moment of active and fundamental replacement of one kind of space and spatial use with another that creates the frontier. Turner (1964) has notoriously connected this progressive construction with the birth of "the American" as a unique and novel actor.

In *Nomos of the Earth*, Carl Schmitt (1988) differentiates between two forms of land appropriation (*Landnahme*), which are help-

ful for us to conceptualize the frontier and the more specific role of Turner's American. Schmitt differentiates between a land appropriation of the inside, i.e., an appropriation of land that previously belonged to someone else, and a land appropriation of the outside, i.e., an appropriation of "free" land which does not have an owner, or at least none whose ownership is acknowledged. The American settler's westward movement is a paradoxical mixture of these two forms of appropriation (Dörr 1993; Washburn 1995). Indicative of an appropriation of the outside, Emer de Vattel argued in 1844 that Amerindians could not claim territorial possession. Put differently, the land was regarded as free and ownerless. On the other hand, the history of the frontier has primarily been one of contracts and treaties, which reflect an acknowledgement of Amerindians' land ownership by settler Americans.[3] Washburn concludes that the acknowledgement of land ownership existed only as long as Europeans were not strong enough to break the according agreements; only in a context of superior European strength did Amerindian land become *terra nullius* (1995). While this is an astute summary of the political situation, and was probably an insight shared by decision-makers in the nineteenth century, such a conclusion would not suffice as a theorization of the westward expansion. America needed more than a mere understanding of what it did; it needed a legitimation for it, all the more urgently in a matter which involved fundamental conceptualizations of

sovereignty and ownership.

In this situation, the creation of an American-breeding "frontier" has been an interesting solution to the basic paradox of different forms of land appropriation on the American continent. The American who is created by the frontier is *neither* European nor Amerindian; she is a third actor who is not an original party to these paradox-inflicting conflicts. The American is therefore the only one who legitimately occupies the contested space, as she is *both* a civilized actor and a native to the wild space. The American, created by the frontier, legitimately replaces both initial opponents. Any further "removal" can be considered a postscript to the basic replacement of both Amerindians and Europeans with Americans by which the frontier is defined.

This aspect of the frontier narrative is central to the creation of segregated spaces in the port city because it allows each urban actor to fill a slot in this narrative constellation. The conflict between Europeans and Amerindians becomes the classic Marxist struggle between industrial captains and industrial workers, the captains being the legitimate but hopelessly outdated European imperialists who were best advised to take their business elsewhere, and the workers the Amerindians. As Slotkin (1994) reminds us, workers in New York City have regularly been associated with Amerindians since the nineteenth century in order to marginalize their claims in the face of de-

pression and unemployment.

Industrial captains' and workers' collective replacement and their relocation from the inner city waterfront can thus be constructed as a move that signifies the triumph of the legitimate American. In our case, the legitimate American would be the neoliberal "new public"—tourists and white-collar workers in the finance, insurance, and real estate (FIRE) industries—which begins to occupy the waterfront space and which by definition cannot be expected to share it with representatives from the older order. In this way, exclusionist segregation can be narratively harmonized as a legitimate form of progress.

While these statements are obviously rough generalizations to make a point about the logic of the frontier narrative *as a narrative*, we will demonstrate below that, especially in the wake of post-9/11 securitization, the segregating logic implied in the frontier narrative came rather close to "real life" in New York City.

THE PORT CITY FRONTIER— MAPPING *the* TERRITORY

In order to examine the impact of the frontier narrative in spatial terms, it is obviously necessary to discuss the actual space in question more extensively. We focus on the New York inner-city waterfront that has been gentrified and that stands in opposition

to the container port that has been relocated to Newark and Elizabeth, NJ, beginning in the 1970s. We will treat the container port and the adjunct quarters inhabited by workers and their families as parts of New York City, as they are intrinsically linked both economically and narratively.

The story of the neoliberal port city begins with a vexing dilemma that New York City planners and politicians had been facing for a long time (roughly from the late 1800s to the 1970s), and that the neoliberal turn offered to solve. The inner-city industrial ports on the shorelines of West Manhattan that epitomized industrial capitalism in the city had never been popular or unproblematic sites. A long-standing critical discourse of the waterfront as such rendered it an especially representative example of the pathologies of (Keynesian-)industrial capitalism; the inner-city industrial waterfront was tolerated as a necessity, but it was deeply unloved. Instead, the waterfront served as a symbol of industrial capitalism as a capitalism that tended to cross the line to criminality. According to Rutherford H. Platt (2009), "gentlefolk" of the nineteenth century "avoided the waterfront, which they characterized as dangerous, foul-smelling, and polluted by urban wastes and the occasional corpse" (52). This perception of a perilous and soiled shoreline persisted well into the twentieth century. Industrial capitalism, critics continuously argued, required taming; its unchecked, corrupt, and chaotic growth needed to be disciplined into a more transparent and orderly structure (e.g., Silzer 1928, 668).

The outlines of the gentrified waterfront were foreshadowed in early critiques of the industrial waterfront, and it is worthwhile to inspect these visions a little more closely. The model role that New York City could play for other maritime cities was being defined and articulated, in these early visions of a nonindustrial waterfront, as a stark antithesis of the industrial waterfront. A critique of industrial land use was combined with what was perceived as the detrimental repercussions of modern "progress": "Many a pleasant walk and water-side garden has disappeared under the heavy tread of what passes for progress in the metropolitan region," *New York Times* journalist R. L. Duffus argued in 1930, and asked: "Will the greater city undo some of the harm caused by its mighty growing pains?" (1930, 11f.)

Duffus's lament illustrates the whole dilemma faced by New York City when it came to the industrial waterfront. Everyone agreed it was a raw, polluted, and violent space—yet it was precisely this space that represented progress, and the beauty of gardens represented, at best, a vanishing nature. Despite his reservations, it was clearly unthinkable for Duffus not to side with progress whenever the best interest of the city was at stake. Even more tellingly, a similar *New York Times* article from the same year argues for a "combination of

the ornamental and the commercial," urging that "one likes to look forward to a day when all our shores that are not needed for economic [i.e., industrial] uses will be open to pleasure seekers" (*New York Times* 1930, 58). The use of the term "ornament" and the reference to "shores that are not needed" underline the dilemma faced by these authors: they clearly saw urban problems being created by the industrial waterfront, yet they also firmly believed that the city as well as the nation desperately depended on it. Their suggestions for a betterment of the waterfront space could thus only remain "ornamental," additional, cosmetic. As long as the industrial use of the waterfront was a centerpiece of the Fordist-Keynesian mode of accumulation, its land use was, albeit defiantly, accepted. At the same time, the general impulse to push the more tangible signs of capitalist accumulation, along with their working populations, out of the city center and thus out of what was deemed to be "the public sphere" is already very visible here.

The situation changed with the gradual disappearance of manufacturing jobs and the concentration of high-end service jobs in Manhattan during the 1960s and 1970s. Like many cities located on the Rust Belt, New York City, with approximately one million manufacturing jobs in 1950, witnessed a steep job decline in the industrial sector. In 1995, only roughly 216,000 workers were employed in this sector (Crahan & Vourvoulias-Bush 1997). From 1956 to 1980, growth in manufacturing occurred in the outer ring and suburban areas (Harris 1991)—one further reason for the flight of industries from inner cities. Yet, while the metropolitan region's share of manufacturing jobs remained equivalent to the national average (31 percent) in 1960, the region dropped well below the national share when it lost 800,000 manufacturing jobs by 1990 (Abu-Lughod 1999). Concurring with the flight of manufacturing jobs from the inner city, longshoremen and stevedores disappeared from Manhattan's shorelines. In 1950, 48,000 persons worked on the docks of Manhattan and Brooklyn (DiFazio 1985), living in tight-knit communities along the working waterfronts (Levinson 2008). As William DiFazio observed in 1985, "All this has changed since then." Instead, "work has now completely disappeared from the west side (Manhattan) piers, and there are 9,000 fewer workers on the Brooklyn docks. Business still uses the Brooklyn piers heavily, but with the increasing automation of the industry, the work is moving to the modern container facilities on Staten Island and New Jersey" (1985, 31).

What DiFazio describes are the dynamics of neoliberalism being introduced as the economic paradigm of the time. The industrial waterfront, once the dirty engine of progress, was increasingly considered an outdated model. Port functions were relocated and henceforward fulfilled by vast container terminals in Brooklyn and

especially in Elizabeth and Newark, New Jersey. The transition from the industrial to the neoliberal regime stripped inner-city entrepôts, piers, and docks of their intended economic and functional purpose. For the tightly knit waterfront worker communities, the increasing lack of work on their doorsteps meant a substantial disintegration of their communities, a disintegration that would be reinforced and eventually finalized with the extreme upgrading of waterfront real estate pushed by entrepreneurial waterfront restructuring. Now that their workforce was no longer needed or desired in Manhattan, waterfront worker communities seemed destined to vanish.

The replacement of waterfront worker communities with the neoliberal new public did not happen overnight. Although work and industries disappeared from New York's shorelines from the 1960s through the 1970s, the waterfront did not figure in the collective representation of the city, so that the revaluation of the waterfront did not follow suit upon its devaluation. As David Gordon (1997) has argued, "it was several years before planners and politicians noticed the eerie calm which had settled over the formerly busy waterscapes or the decline of the adjacent communities and port industrial areas" after "the new container and bulk cargo facilities were built at suburban or ex-urban locations during the 1960s and early 1970s" (91).

This "eerie calm" on the waterfront prob-ably triggered frontier analogies more than anything else, as it allowed the waterfront to be conceptualized as an unclaimed *terra nullius*. Furthermore, the waterfront was an especially suitable way to demonstrate the benevolent implications of the new paradigm in spatial terms because it could draw on long-existing social utopias of a postindustrial era in the city. Just like the lamented gardens industrial capitalism had consumed, the spatial and communal histories of industrial capitalism itself were now officially considered illegitimate and wasteful occupations of space, symbolically charged obstacles standing in the way of the city's economic and social future.

Indeed, at the same time that work on the inner-city waterfront declined, the rise of high-end service industries and the waterfront's proximity to the financial district put pressures on the real estate market and brought a wave of new and different residents. What had only sporadically been questioned during the industrial era—the right use of the waterfront—now became a political issue for local decision-makers who became aware of the increasingly "derelict" spaces on the shorelines (Gastil 2002) and existing "barriers" between residential and commercial spaces in Manhattan's core. In 1971, the New York City Planning Commission bluntly concluded that "riverview apartments, plazas, restaurants, quais [sic], office buildings, schools, and promenades belong to the waterfront too" (New York City Planning Commission

1971, 77).

Recall that de Vattel had determined that a superior, more effective use of the land was what rendered the American superior to the Amerindian, and made the appropriation of Amerindian land legitimate (de Vattel 1844, 35-36). The Planning Commission, with its emphasis of the "derelict," the "inefficient," and the "blighted" prevalent throughout the report, followed this argumentation almost to the letter. In New York City, new markets rather than new nations began to expand on the waterfront, which had, by then, assumed a central characteristic of frontier space: that of a radical as well as profitable reordering of space.

In the course of the 1970s, two specific narratives of legitimacy for the appropriation of waterfront spaces developed. One reconnected neoliberal innovation with older criticisms of the exclusion of the public from the "recreational" potential of the waterfront. As early as 1962, Robert L. Zion took up the lament that, "except for a narrow linear park along Riverside Drive and a grand bland bore at the Battery, we enjoy no social use of our waterfront; we have handed it over to commerce without a whimper" (1962, 11). The other discourse mapped the waterfront more explicitly and purposefully as a newly discovered virgin land. "Exclusion from the paper map of the city," Gordon (1997) stated in his book on Battery Park City, "was an indication of a larger problem—the waterfront was not on

the mental map of most residents," and proceeded to argue that "there was little history or tradition of access and an all-too-visible legacy of exclusion by walls and fences" (265). Gordon argued that the waterfront was a place that lacked a common public legacy, thus directly associating the urban waterfront with images of the ahistorical wilderness of the frontier.

It is in this frontier-like sense of "carrying history to these spaces" that these spaces had to be discovered. Manhattan turned its back on industrial workers—deemed ahistorical—and became "water-bound" in the spirit of neoliberal city planners and the creative classes (Buttenwieser 1987). In this process of neoliberal reconceptualization of the economy and the connected frontier-like conceptualization of the urban waterfront, the claims of a new public acquired the aura of universality while those pushed into invisibility started to become elements of the extrasocial.

WHO *is the* NEW PUBLIC?

As the neoliberal new public moved to assume an exclusivist perspective on the city's future, a clearer and more specific idea of what this new public constituted was developed along with a corresponding idea of the notion of "public space." This latter notion is particularly important for the later insertion of the post-9/11 securitization discourse into the neoliberal

construction of urban space, as the "public sphere" protected in the securitization discourse is fairly consistent with the spaces inhabited by the neoliberal new public.

The alleged "identity" of the neoliberal new public of New York City is, to a considerable extent, a product of marketing. After 1975 and New York City's fiscal crisis, when officials sought more market-led approaches to urban development in public-private partnerships, new branding coalitions formed to create a new image of New York City that left the city's labor and union history behind and turned toward postindustrial white-collar work and business-friendly growth strategies (Greenberg 2008).4 Pro-business restructuring as well as the growing importance of tourism and high-end service industries in Manhattan were as much reflected in recreational sites of (cultural) consumption as in the creation of upper-income residential housing and office buildings (Boyer 1996, 1997). The industrial waterfront, previously characterized by pollution, danger, and hard work, was now reimagined as a sustainable and secure place for the recreation and leisure of employees of the creative industries in the new knowledge-based service society.

In the midst of New York City's fiscal crisis, image-sensitive campaigns such as the 1976 hosting of the Democratic National Convention and New York City's celebration of the U.S. Bicentennial brought new attention to the waterfront. Operation

Sail—the "big photo-op…in which regattas of colonial-era tall-ships and modern luxury liners cruised New York Harbor past the Statue of Liberty and a downtown skyline crowned by the newly completed World Trade Center"—created a "visual montage" that conveyed the impression of a postindustrial New York City that had overcome problems attributed to the Fordist regime of accumulation and to its institutions (Greenberg 2008, 162). As Ann Buttenwieser (1987) states, events such as Operation Sail "provided the extra impetus needed to translate dozens of new waterfront visions into reality" because the "stench that still pervaded rivers and harbors was forgotten in 1976 as millions of people crowded at the Battery in New York" (204).

Both Battery Park City and South Street Seaport, development projects that were reinvigorated through this new public and political attention, catered to a new clientele that was recruited, as we have mentioned, both from the rising tourism industry and from the rising new middle and upper classes that worked in white-collar occupations. While Battery Park City was aimed quite specifically at residential and office development, South Street Seaport was more explicitly targeted at tourist industries.

The redevelopment of the South Street Historic District began in 1979 and was carried out by the Rouse Company, which had also developed the Quincy Market District in Boston (Brouwer 2010). This may serve

as an indication of the extremely conscious and strategic nature of neoliberal waterfront redevelopment. Since the district was seen as having "enormous tourist potential" it was redeveloped "as a leisure-time spectacle and sightseeing promenade" (Boyer 1992, 189, in Church 1996, 182). South Street Seaport, like Battery Park City, depended on public-private partnerships and on "major investment by the firm, support from the city and the state…and federal funding in the form of an Urban Development Action Grant" (Brouwer 2010, 1215). Like similar projects overseen by the Rouse Company, the South Street development turned the site into "culinary and ornamental landscapes through which the tourists—the new public of the late twentieth century—graze, celebrating the consumption of place and architecture, and the taste of history and food" (Boyer, 1992, 189, in Church 1996, 182). The section on Manhattan's mainland that opened in 1983 included revitalized old buildings that were turned into shopping centers. Opened two years later, Pier 17 was another redeveloped pier in the East River that was turned into a shopping mall (Brouwer 2010; see also Pries 2008, 171f.).

In this process of the waterfront's "rebirth" as a part of the city's landscape (Gordon 1997), a new type of citizen came to occupy the waterfront's virgin land: the white-collar worker, the tourist, the consumer of culture and commodities. Battery Park City, which consists "primarily of office space and luxury housing" today (Wise, Woods, and Bone 1997, 205) may serve as further example. The 4,800 middle- to upper-income apartment units as well as the 1.2-mile riverfront esplanade are inhabited by residents who often work in one of the four office towers of the World Financial Center (Wise et al. 1997), of whom 75 % are white and 17.9 % are Asian, and whose education is significantly above average (42 % have a graduate or professional degree), and who earn an income that is twice as high as Manhattan's already high average (Pries 2008). Local data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, based on samples from 2005 to 2009, shows that residents in Battery Park City (Census tract 31701) earned a median income of $134,464, while 36% of all households in this tract earned over $200,000 in these years (Bloch, Carter, and McLean 2010).

This new public, it seems, has overcome the ills of the waterfront's past; "the armies of ill-paid, ill-treated workers who once made their living loading and unloading ships in every port are no more" (Levinson 2008, 2). Indeed, Raymond W. Gastil (2002) insists that, because of these developments, the twenty-first-century inner-city waterfront—serving as "front yard and service alley, cultural stage and civic space, playground and profit center"—has become the "paradigmatic site for the future of public life" (19).

Such altogether positive interpretations of waterfront developments only hold, of course, if they remain spatially limited to the old Manhattan waterfront. The armies of exploited workers whose rough-and-ready legacy is romanticized in the South Street Seaport or in Battery Park City, are not actually gone. The workers, as well as their deplorable living and working conditions, have simply been relocated to Newark and Elizabeth—and, beyond the United States, to the Export Processing Zones (EPZ) of South Asia and other "distant elsewheres" (Graham 2001). If anything, the enthusiastic evocation of the vanishing poor on the Manhattan waterfront forcefully demonstrates the frontier as a structuring narrative of neoliberal gentrification.

Indeed, the way the past is memorialized in spaces like South Street Seaport detaches the new public from the industrial past and its representatives, just as the American is detached from the conflict between Europeans and Amerindians. The original conflict is replaced with the harmony of a new homogeneity. Consistent with the ethnic and economic homogeneity considered integral to American community life ever since de Tocqueville (2003), the gentrified New York waterfront is "pacified" by the exclusionary homogeneity of white-collar wealth.5

Within this narrative logic, the working poor are delegitimized as the un-American domestic outsiders to America (or pre-American, as their romanticized image in Manhattan waterfront spaces suggests). Importantly, it is their poverty that makes them outsiders. While the cleavage between top income earners and poorer strata of society widens, the living conditions of the upper classes are being redefined as a universal reflection of what is normal and real. Tragically, this coincides with the historical moment in which 9/11 has triggered a security debate that fundamentally relies on the protection of that which is normal and real from that which is not.

SECURING *the* NEW PUBLIC SPHERE

It is the securitization discourse that is most influential in deriving a new understanding of the public sphere from the normalized new public. In the wake of protecting the (new) public, old prejudices against the worker as a deviant element became constitutive of national security, as well as the central reference point for defining entire urban spaces as threatened or threatening. Constructions of particularly chaotic, obscure, and inaccessible spaces became key to their assumed role as "terrorist havens." In other words, the spaces created by a neoliberal division of uses—in our case the postindustrial and the container port waterfront —have been driven further apart by their conceptualization as either worthy of protection from terror or vulnerable to terrorist infiltration.

After identifying the domestic sphere as a target as well as a potential source of terrorism, the United States set out to determine those domestic spaces most vulnerable to the establishment or undisturbed maintenance of terrorist networks. The prevailing reasoning was that the more inaccessible and untransparent a space was, the more likely it was to provide a haven for terrorist cells.6 In the international sphere, spatial assessments of (even potential) terrorist havens helped to redefine vast regions of a state as a radical outside space to sovereignty-based international law (Schillings 2011). In the domestic sphere, the construction of potential terrorist havens was oriented along the lines of existing neoliberal frontier discourses.

The container port, successor to the industrial waterfront and refuge of its population, was one obvious choice. Stephen Flynn, advisor on maritime and homeland security issues to the Bush Administration, bluntly admitted that the "ambitious approach" he deemed necessary "to securing the trade and transportation system would have been a nonstarter before 9/11" (2004, 104). Port security expert Kenneth Christopher called 9/11 a "paradigm-shifting event for transportation systems' security [that] prompted dramatic shifts in the focused perspectives on security now required by anyone even remotely affiliated with the management of port security" (2009, 3). Potential security loopholes that occurred in the aftermath of 9/11 had to serve as a "wake-up

call," argued Rep. Peter King, R-N.Y., who "strongly believe[d] that, from any number of levels, the ports are our greatest vulnerability" (cited in Thomas 2006).

The characterization of the port as a vulnerable space did not come out of nowhere. The ship is the classic vehicle to explore and to import the unknown and potentially dangerous (Dening 2001). The 9/11 attacks themselves suggested a maritime focus because of the conceptual proximity of ship and airplane (Cassese 1989) and because Al-Qaeda had bombed the United States Navy destroyer USS Cole only one year before 9/11. Moreover, government reports and security experts pointed to a long list of sources of maritime threat and port vulnerability (e.g., Sakhuja 2010).

In the spring of 2002, the specific vulnerability of New York City's ports gained public attention. New Jersey Democrat Robert Menendez "whose district includes the huge container ports and fuel tank farms of Port Newark and the Elizabeth Marine Terminal" (Smothers 2002, A12) warned that "the port represents a huge opportunity for those who would wish us harm….The superport of the East Coast has to be moved up on the list of security priorities because there is not a more vulnerable port in the nation" (Menendez, in Smothers 2002, A12). At a hearing of the subcommittee on Coast Guard and Maritime Transportation of the House Transportation Committee, experts underpinned this claim when they

argued that the Port of New York and New Jersey, being "the biggest container port on the East Coast," constituted "an appealing target for terrorists who might consider packing biological weapons or explosives into sealed shipping containers.…It is also the largest fuel depot in the nation, so any explosion would cause widespread destruction" (Smothers 2002, A12).

Most importantly for the conceptualization of spaces and their populations, a central fear after 9/11 was that organized crime might assist the cause of terrorism, for instance by smuggling dangerous persons or goods into the country (Vormann 2011). The United States sought to increase port security by intensified security inspections of containers worldwide, and by increasing domestic surveillance of port personnel (Flynn 2004; Christopher 2009). While the United States pressured other states to help securitize international trade flows on the high seas and at foreign ports, the domestic realm was inflicted with a whole gamut of U.S. initiatives and programs for ports and transportation industries, such as the TWIC-card (Transportation Worker Identification Credential) and the Customs-Trade Partnership Against Terrorism (C-TPAT). The fact that most workers in home ports were immigrants allowed forms of domestic surveillance and disciplining that exceeded possible treatments of "actual" citizens (Smith, Bensman, and Marvy 2011; Bonacich and Wilson 2008).

Socio-demographic statistics of those who live and work in the spaces adjacent to the container port waterfront offer us a relatively clear picture of those who became subject to the securitization of these waterfront spaces. Based on data from the Census Bureau's American Community Survey, inhabitants of Newark and Elizabeth, NJ, who lived in census tracts directly next to the port, earned an average median household income of $26,771 per year in the period from 2005 to 2009. Most of these communities have had a high percentage of non-white populations. In overall average, directly port-adjacent census tracts were constituted by 42.9% Hispanics and 26.2% African Americans (Bloch et al. 2010). Given the "sweatshop" conditions (Belzer 2000) in the port-trucking industry—a crucial sector of port logistics—it is hardly surprising that the main share "of the drivers (83.3%) live in New Jersey, most in northern Jersey not far from the ports" (Bensman & Bromberg 2009, 7).

The conceptualization of the waterfront as an unchecked wilderness legitimated the subsequent securitization of port spaces and the disciplining of workers in the port, and completed the disconnection of the port-city interface, hence completing the spatial division and functionalization of neoliberal port city spaces in the spirit of the frontier narrative. Port employees, as inhabitants and workers of these spaces, officially became a potential security risk. Port truckers, to remain with this example,

had to obtain a TWIC-card in order to be granted access to port facilities. "Interim" offenses (such as drug dealing and weapons possession) that dated back up to seven years from the date of the application for the TWIC-card disqualified port truckers from obtaining a security clearance (Moskowitz 2008).

Transportation workers became potential terrorists by definition, and legal offenses unrelated to terrorist activity turned into general grounds for suspicion. A 2006 report by the Department of Homeland Security found that "of the 9,000 truckers checked, nearly half had evidence of criminal records. More than 500 held bogus driver's licenses, leaving officials unsure of their real identities" (cited in Bensman and Bromberg 2009, 4). The report found that drayage drivers had been "convicted of homicide, assault, weapons charges, sex offenses, arson, drug dealing, identity theft and cargo theft" (Thomas 2006) As Stephen Flynn argued, "We have no idea who's in the ports. And many of the folks who come in to service the ports, that drive the trucks back and forth, are people who don't have very distinguished backgrounds" (Flynn quoted in Thomas 2006). The waterfront criminals who had produced the stereotypical "occasional corpse" and the contagious "pollution" of the rest of the city have thus been replaced by the terrorist "sleeper cell" that threatens to produce thousands of corpses, even though the actual crime seems to remain the less-than-distinguished background. The waterfront space is, again, conceptualized as dangerous, subversive, chaotic, and in need of civilizing intervention.

The terrorist-inspired attention paid to the externalized space of the container port waterfront and the subsequent securitization "closed the frontier," so to speak. Just as the industrial waterfront was both visible as a polluted and criminal underside of industrial capitalism, yet invisible as a part of the city, the container port waterfront is visible as a breeding ground for terrorism and international crime, yet invisible as a part of the nation. Port space and population merged to represent a featureless site for the terrorist to originate from, a site which could, at the same time, be associated with the abstract idea of an economy that represented progress in America. The terrorist in the space of the port became the hypervisible marker of the underside of neoliberal globalization and interconnectedness. Because this threat was not associated with a specific group on the waterfront, but with the entire space of the waterfront, regular police work could not lessen the danger. Surveillance, mass screenings, mandatory background checks and related measures offered themselves as the more suitable way to tackle this symbol cast in space. The problem is, of course, that this strategy may be "ornamental" for the actual defense against terrorism, but a far-reaching intervention for those subjected to such measures.

CONCLUSION

Using the concept of the frontier as an analytical tool helps to grasp societal dynamics that, sometimes unwittingly but nonetheless systematically, delegitimate some of the least-advantaged American voices as un-American by adding political to spatial segregation. These segregated spaces are primarily determined by economic status. This article has shown that under neoliberalism, the working waterfront has been spatially relocated from central spaces of the city; after 9/11, it was additionally stigmatized as a national security threat that culturally and politically removed it from the sphere of the domestic, and later stabilized the port as an outside space symbolizing the securitized economic regime as an engine of ugly but necessary progress. The frontier narrative was the cultural framework that made this development as well as its legitimation seem, on the whole, rational and consistent. It has been used to harmonize the systematic creation and, after 9/11, the political intensification of social inequality. Due to the post-9/11 security regime and its reinforcement of neoliberal divisions of American society, the working poor of the waterfront have been even more fully rendered deterritorialized fragments of the wilderness, un-American non-parts of the city that need to be disciplined and controlled. The security discourse, which had put the waterfront back on the map, has externalized its inhabitants even more strongly than neoliberal urban development alone had.

The "new public's" homogeneous privilege to be acknowledged as Americans is based on its wealth; this is consistent with concepts of the "market state," whose central claim to legitimacy is "to facilitate prosperity for its citizens" (Gray 2003, 95; see also Harvey 2005). This is, arguably, what the neoliberal regime is about; it is also arguable that the citizen, identified in such neoliberal terms, cannot by definition be poor, uneducated, or a non-participant in the market. It is in this sense that the reworking of urban spaces has also renegotiated questions of citizenship and of participation in U.S. American society in quite antidemocratic ways.

It is worth noting that the anticipation of the terrorist is not the only anticipation the container waterfront excites now that it has returned to its old, problematic visibility. The criminal industrial waterfront had symbolized the dark side of industrial capitalism; the container waterfront has begun to stand for the chaotic, violent effects of opening America to trade flows that may bring cheap goods as well as anti-American terrorists. The neoliberal frontier is now closed; the regime is in place and has stabilized itself.

At the same time, a growing number of U.S. Americans attempt to reclaim their citizenship as a constitutional right rather than a mere market privilege, and thus signal a potentially fundamental challenge to the neoliberal regime. Their rejection of

neoliberalism is, however, often substantiated by the frontier-based understanding that it should be "overcome," like industrialism before it. This renewed interrogation may very well fundamentally challenge the exuberant inequalities that neoliberalism has produced—but it must be careful not to push the exclusionist frontier even further.

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[2] The concept of gentrification, which describes the process in which a given neighborhood's population of poorer inhabitants is replaced by wealthier strata of society, has been examined extensively by a long list of urban researchers (e.g., Smith 2008; Lees, Slater, and Wyly 2008). Ruth Glass, the first author to define gentrification, has described this process as follows: "One by one, many of the working-class quarters of London have been invaded by the middle classes—upper and lower. Shabby, modest mews and cottages—two rooms up and two down—have been taken over, when their leases have expired, and have become elegant, expensive residences.…Once this process of 'gentrification' starts in a district it goes on rapidly until all or most of the original working-class occupiers are displaced and the whole social character of the district is changed" (Glass 1964 in Smith 2008, 91).

[3] For example, the contractual history between settler Americans and Amerindians was the U.S. Supreme Court's main reason to deny legitimacy to the Cherokee removal from Georgia in 1851 (PBS 2011).

[4] These entrepreneurial strategies were employed in earlier developments such as Battery Park City and the South Street Seaport in the 1970s and 1980s as much as in more recent developments on the New Jersey (Weehawken, Jersey City, Hoboken) and Brooklyn waterfront (most notably DUMBO and Brooklyn Bridge Park). Importantly, Schaller and Novy (2011) have pointed to differences in the 'Bloomberg Way' of developing waterfronts in New York City: "Whereas previous administrations primarily sought to provide incentives for private-sector development through opportunistic modes of planning, tax breaks, and direct financial incentives, the Bloomberg administration has been differentiated by a far more comprehensive urban planning and economic development agenda, aimed at providing the spatial requirements for capital accumulation through property-led regeneration and place-making" (Schaller and Novy 2011, 170).t

[5] Because of the anti-democratic practices that are apparent in this strictly wealth-based homogeneity, the "new public" has often been constructed as a mere replacement of industrial elites in gentrifi-

cation narratives, a new "rich" to the old "poor." However, it is difficult to draw direct causal connections between the "new public" and "the waterfront working poor" beyond one group's simple ability to pay more rent than the other. The discourse of urban gentrification has therefore always lacked the persuasive political force of class struggle discourses that had been evoked with the industrial elites.

[6] This reasoning is well established in U.S. foreign policy. In particular, failed states are still conceptualized as ideal terrorist havens even though this has long been criticized as a dysfunctional approach (Menkhaus 2006, 7–13, Murphy 2009). In other words, there exists a very influential, continuously reinforced discourse in U.S. foreign policy that is prepared to conceptualize a space as a wilderness if a terrorist threat exists there, even potentially.

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