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Geographies of Globalization: *disClosure* Interviews Neil Smith

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Jamie Gillen, Ben Smith, and David Walker
**Geographies of Globalization:
disclosure Interviews Neil Smith**

Neil Smith is among the most prolific and visible critical geographers. He has written on a wide-variety of topics—such as gentrification, international capitalist development, the continuing importance of class, and the role of academics in public life—for which his texts are considered foundational, including *American Empire: Roosevelt's Geographer and the Prelude to Globalization* (2003), *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City* (1996), and *Uneven Development: Nature, Capital and the Production of Space* (1991). Smith received a Ph.D. in Geography from John Hopkins in 1982, and currently holds the position of distinguished professor at the City University of New York Graduate Center, where he teaches in the Anthropology Department and directs the Center for Place, Culture and Politics.

This interview with Neil Smith was conducted in late January 2003, by three University of Kentucky Geography graduate students—Jamie Gillen, Ben Smith and David Walker. Support for a then-possible invasion of Iraq was falling even among the American populace and Neil Smith's latest book, *American Empire*, was about to be released. In the interview, the topics covered included many of those central to Neil Smith's corpus: the assertion that foci traditionally associated with both Marxism—such as class and production—and the discipline of geography—such as space and scale—must not be written out of discussions of globalization; the changing role of the urban scale in terms of glo-

bal uneven development; the increasingly wide-spread phenomenon of gentrification; and the need for critical academics to be *internationally* active inside, across, and outside of academic disciplines.

dC: Since this is a theme issue on globalization, let's start with this question: does the current climate of globalization represent a paradigm shift in the nature of capital or is it merely an expansion of a much larger process?

NS: The classic answer is both. But what does that mean? Globalization is not new. Globalization is built into the project of capital from the start, so it is built into capitalism as a mode of production. Having said that, that's not enough because clearly things have changed since the 1970s. There has been a real shift, and the important point is to figure out what the basis of that shift is, how significant it is. So while globalization is not a paradigm shift that takes us out of capitalism, it certainly has changed the way that capital works.

I think for me what makes sense is to think of globalization in terms of production. A very powerful ideological notion is that finance capital is leading this globalization, and that's not true. Finance capital was already globalized, if not by the First World War—which JP Morgan was funding in Europe before the US was involved—then certainly by the Breton Woods agreement and by the IMF and by all those institutions. It is not commercial trade that is globalizing either, because that was already in place. Marx knew this. Adam Smith talked about the world market. And I don't accept the argument that globalization is led by a culture of globalization either, because I think that again, that's been a long process and there is no real break in the 1970s or 80s that leads to that.

The truth of what is going on is the globalization of the production process itself. It seems to me that instead of in the 1970's, when the model was that production occurred within a national economy—which certainly imported parts and exported goods and so on—now the model is much more that there is literal global production. Production places are all globally connected: parts come from multiple different places, with construction taking place somewhere else, usually close to the market. By 1991, 60% of trade was intra-company, and I'm sure the number has gone way up since then. Companies were sending bits and pieces of things to themselves in other countries and that's the best sign that the

globalization of production has taken place. It is happening in some industries more than others. It's highly uneven.

But that's a shift, and that's brought about a shift in financing. For example, any place where a company is, it wants a stock market where it can float its stocks. It's part of the advertising of the brand to have its stocks bought by people who want to make an investment locally. Say Ford is producing a car in Kuala Lumpur from parts made in sixteen different countries. It still wants a local stock market presence, to be able to have its stock out there, just to create a base for consumption. Additionally, you also need to have the currency exchanges organized when you've got parts coming from sixteen countries, and you need to be able to organize the translation between Thai bahts and dollars and euros and dinars. So that's created a sort of further globalization of the financial area, but I think the recent globalization of production beats the globalization of finance.

So going back to the original question, the short answer is that on the one hand, yes, capitalism is a global project and always has been. Globalization is not new in that respect. On the other hand, there are tremendous shifts since the economic restructurings of the 1970s and 80s that really make capitalism quite different than it was before.

dC: Can you draw on some concrete examples of how the current spatialization of capital adversely affects the working poor across the globe as well as allow for possibilities of resistance, which is the other part of that equation?

NS: Right. There are many different examples. One of the things that I work on is gentrification, and the extraordinary expansion of gentrification in the late 1990's has led to increased impoverization of many people in central cities in the US, and also in Europe, and actually outside the centers of what we used to call "advanced capitalism." That is one example. The level of homelessness in New York City is probably greater than it was in the 1980s. All of the homeless organizations will tell you that there are massive increases in the number of homeless people. The latest figures I heard were something like 30,000 families and 8,000 individuals seeking shelter on any given night. If you assume that each family has at least two people, let's assume an average of three people per family, plus 8,000, that's at least 98,000 people. In the 1980s,

you had a maximum of 100,000 people, and we are back to that level and likely more.

So in the United States itself, for all of the hype about the market and the stock market, the opposite end of prosperity is what is happening. Of course, there are the famous figures about the ratio of CEO's earnings to the worker's earnings—a gap that has exploded just in the last twenty years. CEO's are being compensated at levels of hundreds of millions of dollars. Wage rates have been kept down dramatically.

But it's more than that—that's the local, the US picture. A few months ago, the Bush government introduced extraordinary levels of farm subsidies. On the one hand it helped a particular class of people in the United States—a class usually put over in the media as small farmers, but who are actually corporations mostly, 95% of them. These "farmers" benefit disproportionately from these subsidies which keep revenues high; the adverse effect of that in the rest of the world is that market prices are kept low in ways that make it very difficult for people to compete. The farm subsidy in itself is an extraordinary act of global impoverization of farmers and farm workers. It is utter hypocrisy. The IMF tells everybody else to lower their subsidies and the US is building subsidies up to support their own capitalists.

This is national self-interest that disguises itself as global good. You've got the US government supporting neo-liberal policies pretending that this is the global universal good, but of course at the same time they are subsidizing farming corporations and putting 30% tariffs on steel and screwing the rest of the world.¹ However, this phenomenon of narrow interests masquerading as global interest is not just an American thing – the European ruling classes are every bit as implicit in this, as are the Japanese ruling classes. People in Harlem that are living in America are not going to benefit from these things while the British ruling class is going to benefit. That's the importance of a class argument across national boundaries.

dC: And as for the question about resistance, that capital always has to spatialize, that it must 'touch down'...

NS: That's the great thing. This is the delicious part of it. Precisely because capital has to touch down it becomes vulnerable; it becomes vulnerable in economic terms but also in political terms. There is a place, there is a building, there is a group of buildings, there is a meeting

spot, there is a parliament. I'm actually very heartened by the anti-globalization movement. I think this is one of the major forms of resistance we have. In the West we tend to be focused on what happened in say Seattle, what happened in Quebec, in Genoa—and that's not unreasonable—but those kinds of anti-globalization events are also taking place elsewhere, whether it's in Thailand and India, or the workers strikes in China, which are somewhat different.

Actually, the level of worker opposition in China is quite extraordinary. Tens of thousands of people are striking from factories. The interesting thing is why in the US news media—which in a different context you would expect to be anti-Chinese, to say the Chinese government is failing, to say China must be a rotten Communist society—why none of this news of all these workers revolting is coming through. Why is CNN basically in collaboration with the Chinese government in preventing news from coming out? The argument of course is that what the Chinese workers are doing is exactly what the rest of the world should be doing, and the last thing CNN wants to do is advertise that to workers in the United States or Europe or in Australia.

But returning to the question, I'm more optimistic than I was in the 1990s, especially after October 7th, which is the crucial date—and it's not September 11th—because it's the date that the United States started bombing Afghanistan, which, when looked at from some angles, was an act of desperation. A hegemonic power doesn't have to bomb anybody. A hegemonic power rules—and Gramsci was great on this – by powerful, often largely unspoken consent. The United States has lost the ability to rule in that consensual way and the final result is military bombing. People are coming around to the fact that there is going to be a lot of bloodshed in the realization of this experience. So I think late 2001 is going to be seen as signaling the downfall of the third moment of US globalization. Quite where it goes from there I don't know, and I may be stupidly optimistic, but I'm optimistic. If we were able to stop the US government from spearheading an attack on Iraq, that would be a victory. And it's happening! Even the third week of January 2003 with Bush saying we are going in...they are really boxed in and their options are narrowing dramatically. The opposition is working.

dC: Part of your book, *American Empire* (2003), is about moments, failed moments actually, where American foreign policy has been used to try and create this global climate under the auspices of an American

Empire. We were wondering if you could talk a little bit about these imperial ambitions and perhaps relate your position to those other authors whose book has “empire” in its title—Hardt and Negri. What do you believe to be the same and different in your respective uses of the term “empire.”

NS: One of the central arguments in Hardt and Negri’s book is that there is no outside anymore, that the empire has now taken over. And I think that on historical grounds they are completely wrong. They are right that there is no outside anymore, but this didn’t just happen in the last twenty years with so-called globalization. This happened at the turn of the 19th into the 20th century. That’s what all the language at the beginning of the 20th century was about in terms of the end of frontier. People with politics as diverse as Lenin, Harold Mackinder, Isaiah Bowman—the geographer who is the central figure in my book—and Cecil Rhodes, a good old British imperialist, all understood that there was no outside anymore in geographical terms. So, Hardt and Negri get the history wrong.

They also get the geography wrong, because their argument is very much one that argues for a deterritorialization of empire. They use a language of ‘non-place’ spaces or the ‘non-place’ of empire. In fact, the whole argument about ‘non-place’ urban realms came from Melvin Webber in 1964,² and it was a very powerful argument. But it was shot down then, not by Marxists or radicals so much as by geographers of the period.

I don’t buy that part of their argument. Power is always located somewhere. The question of empire is not one of how power has become deterritorialized; the question concerns the re-territorialization of the power. Especially since September 2001, you have to say that there has been an extraordinary re-territorialization of power. But I don’t think it’s just September 11th that did this because we were making critiques of the Hardt and Negri book on these grounds since it came out. But after September 2001, you look at what the United States has done, the extraordinary power that has been gathered inside the United States by the U.S. government, both over its own citizens and over the rest of the world, and there is no way you can’t see how power is thoroughly being re-territorialized. The level of U.S. global blackmail, which none of us have ever seen—whether it is issuing demands to the UN or whether it is bribing other nations to join a coalition to bomb Iraq—

that’s a very place-based power. You never let go of the connection between the geography of power and the social content of the power, whether its class questions or race questions. That would be my critique.

The broader question of empire is really interesting because why did the issue of empire disappear? Empire was a bad word for most of the 20th century. The argument my book tries to make is that empire disappeared precisely because it told too much of the truth. Empire was the right word for what the United States was trying to do; empire was what was happening in the first moment of US global ambition in the period from 1898 to 1920. Empire was what the United States was about when Franklin Roosevelt talked about new world order, empire is exactly what the United States, the ruling class, a particular faction of the ruling class actually, is about right now. The interesting question is how did empire get lost?

I think the language of empire and how it got lost is very political. It connects to geography as inherently political. So the shift from talking about American empire in the early 20th century, as Brooks Adams (1902) and many others unabashedly did, to talking about an “American Century” in 1941 is a shift not just from a spatial language to a historical language, but actually it’s a shift from a highly politicized target—an empire—to an historical language that is utterly depoliticized. How do you fight a century? And I think that’s part of the crucial point. For us in geography, part of the question is if this despatialization was partly a depoliticization or at least a shift of the political grounds or a hiding of the target of our politics globally, how do we make the target more visible again? Part of that is respatialization. And in a weird way, the right wing of today, of 2003, is doing us a favor by talking about American empire. There is an honesty to American empire that the right agrees with and the left needs to take up.

dC: Do you have an idea of what a good example of a globalized city is in this era when American Empire is reasserting itself?

NS: Bangkok is up there. Mexico City. These are extraordinary global cities. I guess if you believe that globalization is about globalization of finance, then it makes sense to think of the global city as a place where financial control and a broader level of command control operates. That’s the argument that brings you New York, Tokyo, London as global cities. But actually, if you think globalization is not the globalization of

finance, and that the issues are not just the issues of top-down control, and you think that issues are actually about the globalization of production, as well as daily life and the connections that people have with the rest of the world, then your vision of what a global city is changes dramatically. It is not that New York, London, and Tokyo are not global cities—because they are globalized centers of production—but it also means that you must think seriously about Baghdad—oh, that was a slip—Bangkok, Bombay, Sao Paulo, Mexico City, Shanghai. If we are thinking about what cities are going to look like in twenty years, these are the cities that are laying out the models. New York is becoming more like Shanghai, rather than the other way around. New York is becoming more like Mexico City, rather than the other way around. There is an American sense in which we can see that. We need to shift the whole argument about global cities. It is not that the financial activities in the New Yorks, Londons, and Tokyos are not important. Giuliani stood on the stage when he was elected and, it was almost Nixon-esque, he put his hands up and said, “I am the king of the world!” because he was the mayor of New York. But here, once again, more attention needs to be paid to production.

dC: Can you expand more on gentrification and its links to neo-liberalism and globalization?

NS: When I started looking at it in the 1970s, gentrification was an isolated anomaly. It shouldn't have been happening and that is what excited me about the process. I was only an undergraduate, but I had read some urban stuff. Everything I read said this should not be happening. But what has happened since then is that gentrification has gone from being anomalous to a marginal process to becoming a generalized global strategy. Gentrification has become part of the process of the competition between cities. It becomes the housing policy. Even under Koch [in New York City] it was the housing policy; they were done with public housing. In the 1980s, we thought it was a North America, Europe, Oceania thing. Now we see gentrification as major urban strategy not only in Mexico City, but also Sao Paulo, Seoul, Tokyo. It is very early days for something like gentrification in these places, but it is jumping in a way beyond what it was like in the 1970s in London. It is already corporately controlled and funded and the culture of the kind of place they create is already going to have that sort of global patina. As

opposed to the early gentrification projects which were relatively funky, and as much as we reeled against them and for all the right reasons in terms of class and race in particular and who got displaced, there was that funky side. And now it is just utterly corporate. I now think it is a concerted class strategy to retake urban centers and that holds not just for residential but recreational stuff, restaurants—the very same restaurants we all love—marketplaces and transportation. It has become virtually global. Models of gentrification in London—actually there is more gentrification in London than New York City, it is very extraordinary—these are becoming the models for Shanghai.

dC: Do you believe this is being exported, and is not just a process of maximizing capital.

NS: I had never thought about referring to it as the export of gentrification, but it makes sense. It is certainly a process where the folks in Mexico City or Shanghai are looking at what is happening in New York or Tokyo or Vancouver and saying, “Hey, we can do that here, why not. We have a lot of crappy housing and poor people live in right next to the urban center and why don't we just move them out and build Vancouver-style housing.” I think that is the level on which it happens. Again, it all has to do with city-to-city competition. Thirty years ago, almost no cities in the world had offices designed to attract funding and investment. They had tourism offices, but not industrial investments. Now every city, even cities of 50,000 people, will have an office designed to send groups of business people, academics and government people to Taipei to get people to invest money in buildings, in race horses, in universities, in cultural facilities, in factories, in anything that produces jobs. That is such an extraordinary side of interurban competition. Somebody should go back and look at the figures, of how these cities developed offices of “money grubbing” as I like to call them.

dC: Shifting scales for a moment, where do you see the ‘region’ and where do you see the role of the ‘region’ in the latest round of globalization?

NS: That's a wonderful question because I think the state of the region is fairly unclear. One thing I'm clear about is that it, to quote the title of a book, “It is not a regional world we live in anymore.” The idea of it

being a regional world is in part a leftover of a certain sort of American conservative nostalgia for the old regional geographies and it gets replayed through a certain kind of contemporary economic geography, an economic geography that is influenced even by Marx's work. The argument I'd want to make is that focusing on regions is particularly American, because America was the largest economy and it could sustain its regions longer than anyone else. Glasgow, Scotland, is a city that was de-industrializing in 1918 and nobody cared. It didn't matter until suddenly in the 1970s America discovered deindustrialization. Part of the reason we didn't discover it until the 1970s is because most of industrial England and the US didn't de-industrialize until the post-war period.

Deindustrialization has been a long-term process. The destruction and the disintegration of the region has been a long-term process. Instead of regions being the production platforms – this is the politics of steel relations—instead of the region being the production platform for the nation (which was reasonable until the 1970's), what we are now looking at is urban economies as the production platform for the global economy. In saying that it's urban, I'm still saying there are connections that take place. So it's not just Bangkok; it's who is supplying Bangkok with electronic goods, textile goods, automotive goods. Of course, these suppliers are often the much smaller villages in its hinterland. It's not just the city but it's the metropolitan arena that is crucial, and that is what I mean by urban production platforms. We've got to be much sharper in scale politics and its urban focus even though that incorporates rural production units.

Now that's a very important part of the story, but it's not the whole story. If you shift to an empirical focus, certainly in the United States, in Latin America, in Australia you are seeing the disintegration of these regional complexes very much as part of the deindustrialization process. In Europe it's different. It's different for very particular reasons. Yes, there is a disintegration of the old economic industrial regions, whether central Scotland or Lancashire or Yorkshire or the Rhine region. But there is also something else going on.

There is a politically-based attempt to reconstruct regional identities in Europe at the behest of the European Union. So what is that about? It is not a response to economic change, so much as it's a response to political change. The EU is reconstructing a regionalized world in Europe in order to combat nationalism. They are trying to man-

age regional identity by constructing a European identity rather than fragmented national identities. That's the argument. The regional identity is being constructed to offset older nationalisms and they are doing a very good job of it and they are throwing a lot of money at it. I can't remember the exact figures now, but something like 60% of the European Union's budget is aimed at constructing these regional/economic/cultural/political identities. That is not divorced from economic issues either, because of course tourism is one of central ways in which these identities get constructed.

dC: How does the introduction of the Euro play into that?

NS: I'm from Britain, and I can't believe the small-minded idiocy of the British Labour Party in not joining the Euro. The Euro is a smart political move. The Euro is designed to compete with US capital; it's designed to create a market and a currency regime that will be big enough to take on the United States. That gives the European Union a problem: on the one hand [they are] trying to unify Europe in a denationalized kind of way through the currency and on the other hand they are pushing for narrow regional identities, but what gets missed in that whole equation is the national scale. So you see the shift that has taken place. There is the international that is being emphasized, the Euro, and there is the sub-national in which they emphasize the regions.

The result of this is that there is much more of a pro-European feeling in Scotland and in Wales and of course in Ireland, which of course isn't a part of Britain and the northern part shouldn't be a part of Britain. These have always been much more cosmopolitan places. In something like 1899 there was a supposed headline in the London Times that read "Fog in Channel, Continent Isolated" and that is exactly the feeling in England at large, especially southern England today.

dC: While on the subject of insularity, what needs to be done to change the culture of the academy? In one of your articles you noted that for tenure in the US what is emphasized are national conferences and national journals. How do we begin to build inter-disciplinary and international linkages? What do we need to do to change the culture of the academy?

NS: I'm very sympathetic to the argument that you have to fight for socialist politics wherever you are. For most of us that means the academy. I think that also is used as an excuse for people not to fight in other places, so I want to be clear about that. We have to be politically involved outside the academy. If you are not, it really hampers you. You get blinders. Having said that, I'm fairly involved with the International Critical Geography (ICG) group, which is a group that has managed to have three conferences since 1997 where between 25 and 40 countries are represented. One was in Vancouver, one was in South Korea, and the most recent was in Hungary. That is very deliberate, to not meet in places like New York or London or Tokyo. So that is very important, because in a weird way, spent disciplinary organizations like the Association of American Geographers (AAG) are just not understanding the internationalization of academic work that is going on. The AAG manages to get away with it because now the AAG is the biggest conference for British geographers, even bigger than the Institute of British Geographers conferences. The AAG is a fundamentally national conference. As much as they like international people to come—because they pay more money to attend the conference, especially if they aren't members—the focus is still rigorously American.

I think the ICG group has real advantages actually. It's just natural: our group is younger, more intellectually savvy, and it's certainly politically much more progressive. [It's a place] where socialists and feminists can come together and talk and not have a lot of that normal academic bullshit on the agenda and have good debates about political stuff. I think the ICG is a great antidote to much of academia and I think it is something we should build. I think the next conference is going to be in Mexico in 2005.

Actually the AAG recently floated the idea of changing its name to the Association of the Advancement of Geography, to recognize the international context and drop the American. The last news I saw suggested people really weren't going to go for it—it is just clumsy. It's an attempt to evolve into something different without making any real change. What's the problem with real change? You want to change the name of the organization, let's change it to the International Critical Geography group. Actually, I don't recommend that, there are a lot of people in the AAG who wouldn't want that. What's the problem with real change, why do you have to try to fudge those issues without having the debates? I think the main problem in the AAG is that there still is

no real place to have those political debates in the discipline as a whole.

dC: That's totally right. Thinking back to after September 11th, some of the high ranking AAG officials were touting within the organizational newsletter how the war on terror and its surveillance element would provide great opportunities for geography as a discipline, without any discussion about whether this is the type of discipline geography wants to be.

NS: These are the same people who are pissed off at us because we are "politicizing" geography somehow, that we are getting political. On the other hand, they very clearly took their side with George Bush, or the democratic friends of George Bush, believing in the war on terrorism—which is a drastic ideological misnomer—and saying, "Well O.K., what's in it for geographers?" The level of both political conservatism and utter and total opportunism that was involved in that whole NSF effort to advance an agenda on the geography of terrorism was extraordinary. It's not only that, I mean they claim to speak for the whole discipline. Well, many of us spoke out after September 11th, in different kinds of venues, about terror, terrorism, and New York City, and none of what a large part of what the discipline did was represented in this AAG attempt to talk about the unified front of geographers to the geography of terrorism. And so I think it is very clear there is a backlash in the AAG. There is a re-conservatizing of the discipline that is palpable. We are going to have to see what happens as a result of that. But what I think it means is that many of us, who in previous periods felt some sort of connection to the AAG, now feel it less so. And I think the question of whether we want to be members of that organization is up for grabs.

dC: In your interview with geographer/activist Gracia Gabriela Ortega, you asked her "You are a political geographer and at the same time you believe geography has a political purpose, a political function in social activism. How do you see the connection between political geography and geography in politics?" And because it is a good question, we would like to ask you your own question.

NS: First, let me just say about Graciela, she was an extraordinary person. She lived through the coup in Chile, which, many people don't realize, happened September 11th, 1973. And had she still been alive in

September 11th 2001, she would have been very sure that all of us as geographers understood the parallelism.

I guess for me it's a biographical thing – geography has always been political. When I first came to the United States in the 1970s, I was fascinated by the ways in which geographical processes—which often meant physical processes—shaped the landscape. I love and still love glacial geomorphology. I am just amazed at how glaciers make landscapes. So what's political about that? Well, we live in those landscapes on a daily basis. And the way that physical processes create landscapes, forcing turns in the road and leaving certain resources in some places and not others, which in turn forces choices and debates about location, is just intrinsically fascinating to me. So one could say, the politics of geography goes back to the physical geography for me.

Coming to the United States, and actually Philadelphia in particular, I saw the same kinds of extraordinary spatial differentiations I knew about in physical landscape, but in the social landscape. So the area around where I was living, around Chestnut Street, was largely white, middle class, largely students at the University of Pennsylvania; but if you went 120 yards north to Market Street, it was largely black, working class, high levels of unemployment, bars. The way that social differentiation got written into the landscape was just stunning. As a young undergraduate, I had, on the one hand, this sort of mild anarchist ecological kind of politics in the early 1970s; on the other hand I was just fascinated by the geographical differentiation of the landscapes I would walk around. What the year I spent in Philadelphia and the recognition of the social differentiation of landscapes did was to allow me to put the two together. So for me, politics is always in geography, I can't understand a geography that is not inherently political.

So when somebody says they want to be objective about their geography, I say I don't even understand what that means. Objective is not the same as telling the truth. You tell the truth, whether you are objective or not is a whole other thing. It is impossible to be objective. In the 18th century, to be 'objective' meant to have an objective, to have a goal, in what you were doing. Now objective means precisely not to have a goal. And it is a very dishonest use of the word "objective."

The important point is that where things are located has a lot to do with who gets what and how. And it has a lot to do with power. So I can't understand a geography that is not political. And I think one of the challenges we have in the United States is to respatialize the politics.

That is where the anti-globalization movement is quite good. Globalization is a spatial concept. And anti-globalization is about how we organize the space of the world.

dC: Currently, there is a heated debate in New York City about what is to be done with the World Trade Center site. You have written extensively about September 11 and how the U.S government and media were able to perform a shift in scale and nationalize an event that initially resonated strongly on both local and global scales. Whatever comes to be built on that site will solidify, indeed spatialize, a form of scalar politics. If you were somehow to become involved in the redevelopment of the World Trade Center site, what would you like to see done? Is there a way this landscape could be used to present a different version of scalar politics?

NS: The question is about the World Trade Center site and what happens. I am involved in the discussion, but not involved with the process. This is an extraordinarily corporate process. I can tell you what I think is going to happen and what I would like to happen. What I think is going to happen is we are going to get some version of a corporate reconstruction with some modulated memorial space. What it looks like I don't think anyone knows yet. There are two proposals on the books, but both of them involve very high buildings and so one of the discussions is who will work on the 80th floor of one of those buildings on that site. That is a genuine question. Even more importantly, who is going to lease the space in one of those sites? But actually even more importantly than that, do you know what the insurance rates are going to look like for the 80th floor? I think that on some level, the architects have not begun to think about the level of political control and design control and geographical control the insurance industry will have. There will be a series of fights about that.

On September 11th, when the planes hit the buildings, it was an extraordinary tragedy, it was a global tragedy, but it was made into a national tragedy. It was made into "America Under Attack" which was the leader on CNN, and that was the headline in the New York Times the next day, and that has been the motif ever since. The nationalization of that event, the "Attack on America," has everything to do with justifying the wars that have followed since.

But let's turn it around. If the event was nationalized then, what's wrong with nationalizing the response now? If the nationalization of response for war was appropriate, why don't we nationalize the site? And nationalize the response to what was built. Why not make it where the federal government is involved in the site? Better than that, why not nationalize it in a way that the people involved who are relations of the victims of the attack are centrally involved in determining the architecture? George Bush himself said there were ninety-one countries represented among the people who were killed in the building. So let's internationalize the site, let's internationalize the kind of response, the kind of memorial that should be put up and the kind of infrastructure that is put in after this point. That's no more far-fetched than nationalizing the event on CNN; in fact, it's just a reciprocal political wager.

But also, what shouldn't get lost are the very local impacts as well. Places like Chinatown were hammered by that event and they have received virtually no support since. Businesses have closed, not so much because of proximity to the site, but because of the tourism that failed after September 11th. And even tourism that is now happening because of the site has not offset the losses to Chinatown.

The money that sloshed into New York in bucket loads—or at least electronic bucket loads—for twenty years, from the late 70s into the 21st century, came from all over the world. The refinancing of New York was all about Lower Manhattan and the outer boroughs paid for it. The transportation links are worse than they were 30 years ago, and the smashing of the Trade Center has actually accentuated that. The lives of the people in the outer bureaus are more separate from the lives of the people in Manhattan than they were 20 years ago. And all the benefits of the global city and Manhattan were concentrated there. It seems to me a democratization, an internationalization of the response, would also include rebuilding parts of the inner-suburbs, because these are the places that paid for the wealth of Manhattan in the 1980s and the 1990s.

Hunter Thompson just came out with a new book that said if you look back at the last part of the 20th century it's going to look like a party for rich boys compared to what we are about to face in the 21st century. And I think he is absolutely right and that plays out geographically. The party for rich boys, and some rich girls as well, was happening in the 1980s and the 1990s in Manhattan but it also was built on poverty that dominates some of the areas of the outer boroughs, areas which now because of the poverty and disinvestment in housing are the

subject and target of gentrification. When you say a vicious cycle, it's a very vicious cycle for the people who pay the price. I think the rebuilding should pay attention to both those urban scale issues and internationalizations.

I would want international representation for those ninety one countries. There is a precedent for it. The level of grief, of relations and friends and lovers is so significant, to me that trumps private property relationships. Sorry, but nothing seems sacred in the private market, and that level of grief and the force of human loss trumps the capitalist market and for that reason the process must be opened up.

dC: Already, you have talked a little about the anti-globalization movement. You, along with many on the left, were optimistic about the possibilities for collective resistance following the "Battle in Seattle." How has the post-September 11th climate affected the momentum of that movement?

NS: Well, you guys are in as good of a position to judge that as me. The anti-globalization movement made a disastrous mistake two weeks after September 11th, when they decided to cancel their march on Washington. The March on Washington was going to be huge and it should have become an anti-war march. If this was a war on terrorism—which it is not—it is a war for the endgame of globalization to establish a multi-national, but American-centered, global power over the economy. And in that context, an anti-war movement is an anti-globalization movement. And vice-versa. And that should be obvious to them and it was obvious to some people. A march did take place, there were about 25,000 people who went to Washington, and that was good. But I think the movement stumbled entirely, but luckily I think it got itself back on track. In fact, just the other night I was talking to someone who thought the anti-globalization movement ought to get rid of the anti-war movement and become an anti-globalization movement again. And that is exactly not what I would expect to happen. But that's the extent to which the anti-globalization movement has become the anti-war movement. And that's exactly right. You can't fight globalization without fighting against an American war that pretends to be on the one hand for the global good, and on the other hand, is really about particular elite capitalist interests.

I'm optimistic because, going back to those moments of U.S. global ambition, yeah, we are not in a situation where Eugene V. Debs as a Socialist gets a million votes, we don't have that anymore. We are not in a position, where in 1919 strikes break out all over the place after the war and there is this working class political solidarity to demand change. On the other hand, looking back to more recent history, looking back to the origins of the Vietnam War, as anyone who was around in the early 1960's will tell you, there is much more opposition to the war in Iraq, which is almost certainly coming, and even to the war in Afghanistan, than there was to the Vietnam war. So, I am optimistic for that reason.

But I am optimistic, because I was out of the country for a few weeks in December and January, and the difference between the media when I left and when I came back was palpable. It took me a couple days to figure it out, but there is more opposition now appearing in the media. People are now getting mildly serious and sober about the fact that (a) this almost certainly will not be a short war and (b) it is going to cause thousands of Iraqis as well as many Americans to be killed. People are sobering up to what that means and thinking "do we actually want to do this and why?" The majority of the British population, in all polls, has been against the war, even polls that are slanted towards a certain editorial style. I think if you asked a decent, fair question to the American population, I think most Americans would not want this war either. Certainly if you asked, "Do you want your sons and daughters to go off and get killed in this war?" they would say no. And if you let them know this is what is going to happen to a significant number of people, the American people would be against the war.

dC: The nationalistic fervor is waning as we separate ourselves from the attack.

NS: Yes, September 11th was an amazing gift to this small group of neo-cons. It provided them with rationale to do things they only could have dreamt of doing before, and killing Sadaam Hussein is only one part of that. The level of global revenge they will now pursue could never have been thought of without September 11th. It sounds perverse, but the source of the tragedy lies with the people who are cynically using September 11th, not with those of us who are against the war; it is those in the Bush administration who are crying crocodile tears while

executing vicious political agendas that they never would have been able to get away with before.

dC: How much does the news media play into your world view? You cite everything from the New York Times to the Sydney Morning Herald to the Washington Post in your work. So it is obvious to us you are not using academia as your crutch for information.

NS: If you did a search of academic articles looking at how often these newspapers were cited, I bet you could go back twenty-five years and never find a single one that cited the news media. Now, at least in geography, we cite the news media tremendously. There is a good and a bad side to that. The good side is that it's a sign that the discipline is getting back in touch with the world and I think that is a great thing. That is why New York Times citations piss off conservatives, because New York Times articles are not "old enough" yet to be true—to be real history. And they are not entirely wrong: they do have a point, because the news media is kind of the first draft of history. But the good side is you are getting current events. Geography should be the kind of place where you can talk about someone like Giuliani; you should be able to talk about how a mayor who has become particularly revanchist is changing the social geography of the city. It should be up for grabs to use the news media, because nothing else is written on it.

On the other hand, there is a tendency to cite the news media and think it is true. Of course the media is riddled with lies, untruths and partial truths. And you have to be very careful about that. And I think the same issue comes up with web citations. I fundamentally don't trust accounts that are purely web-based, and maybe that is the old fart in me, but there has to be some sort of evidential balance. There is stuff in the media you can't get in books stashed away in a dusty library shelf, but then again you need those books to give you a sort of critical vision on the New York Times articles. But in general, I see the increased use of media sources as a positive thing.

dC: So how important is it to speak out in the media and go out and give public lectures?

NS: It is tremendously important, but it is hard to do, because access is blocked to a lot of places. I get blocked. We get interviewed a lot for

things, but the question is who is interviewing you and under what conditions. I get interviewed a lot on questions of gentrification and questions of geography as a discipline and on global issues, but it's who is doing the interviewing. Right now, foreign sources are much more interested in what I have to say than local sources. For example, the New York Times ran a series of three articles on gentrification of Harlem, and I have written extensively about that, and they didn't interview me. They will interview a realtor and a couple of academics who have done no work on gentrification in Harlem but have a broadly pro-gentrification type approach and who can hardly spell Harlem. So there is this extraordinary censorship; it is really a crapshoot. It really takes some reporter getting a hold of you, liking what you say, and continuing to come back to you. Their radar screen is very conservative, so those of us doing critical geography or marxist work or feminist work or political work are not in the obvious places reporters are going to call up. Though I have to say, there was a wonderful piece about the graduate center at CUNY and the expansion of the geographic presence at the center. It is all about contacts and the filter, which is utterly political.

dC: Any concluding comments or notes of optimism.

NS: Rock the world. No, it's a little facetious to end on that. Actually, geography is fantastic place to be academically, and for all the critiques of the AAG and the establishment, compared with how it was for much of the 20th century, it has changed more than any other discipline since the 1960's, because of academic uneven development. It was moribund in the 1960's and now Terry Eagleton is right, it is the sexiest discipline in a lot of ways, precisely because no one can look at you and say "that is not geography." When people say that to me now, it is always someone outside the discipline, never someone inside the discipline. Geographers know better than that. For all the necessary critiques, it is incredibly open.

Notes

1. The Bush administration has repealed the tariffs on foreign steel since the interview was conducted.
2. Webber's book introduces the concept of the "non-place urban realm."

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Globalization in 25 Words or Less

The Worldwide expansion and increased integration of international markets, global capital, economics, trade liberalization, foreign policies, social life between nations, and growth of global awareness.

Rachel Gray
University of Kentucky
United States

Globalization...the movement of people, culture, and technologies across space.

Zhang Jiajie
National University of Singapore
Singapore