Renewing Class Analysis

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Logics of urban polarization: the view from below

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> All social phenomena are, to some degree, the work of collective will, and collective will implies choice between different possible options ... The realm of the social is the realm of modality.
>
> Marcel Mauss, *Les civilisations. Eléments et formes* (1929)

This chapter analyses the major modalities whereby new forms of urban inequality and marginality are spreading throughout the advanced societies of the capitalist West, fuelling the process of polarization 'from below', as it were, by multiplying social positions and entrapping populations situated at an increasing remove from the middle and upper tiers of the class structure. The argument unfolds in two steps.

First, I sketch a compact characterization of what I take to be a *new regime of urban marginality*. This regime has been ascendant for the past three decades or so, since the close of the Fordist era defined by standardized industrial production, mass consumption, and a Keynesian social contract binding them together under the tutelage of the social welfare state. Yet its full impact lies ahead of us because its advent is tied to the most advanced sectors of our economies – this is why I refer to it as 'advanced marginality'. It is not a residue from the past, as theories of de-industrialization and skills or spatial mismatch would have it, but a harbinger of the future. Identifying the distinctive properties of this consolidating regime of urban marginality linked to the ascendant mode of capitalist growth helps us pinpoint what exactly is new about the 'new poverty' of which the city is the site and fount and why old remedies of more economic growth and an extended wage labour sphere are largely without effect.

Second, I turn to the question that implicitly informs or explicitly guides European debates on the resurgence of destitution, division, and tension in the transforming metropolis: namely, are we witnessing an *epochal convergence of urban poverty regimes across the Atlantic*? I argue that, contrary to superficial journalistic portraits and hasty scholarly pronouncements, we are not: although it is fuelled by common structural forces, urban relegation follows different social and spatial dynamics on the two continents that correspond to the distinct state structures, paths of civic incorporation,

and urban legacies of the Old and New Worlds. Lumping these variegated dynamics under the catch-all phrase of 'Americanization' (or one of its partial derivatives, such as racialization, ghettoization, or multiculturalism, as many analysts of the urban scene have been wont to do) is neither empirically illuminating, nor analytically fruitful. The combined resurgence of inequality and rising hegemony of U.S.-rooted concepts across the globe should not blind us to persistent divergences in the ways societies produce, organize, and react to urban polarization, *even as its structural sources are similar* across societies. At the same time, European state élites must beware of pursuing public policies inspired by neoliberalism that reinforce blind market sanctions in the allocation of space, jobs, and people, and tend to isolate distinct urban zones and populations, thereby encouraging them to pursue divergent and even oppositional life strategies that can set off self-reinforcing cycles of social involution not unlike those that underlay segmentation and ghettoization in the United States.

This chapter, then, is an effort to diagnose the broad social forces and forms with which our current urban predicament is pregnant and that promise to feed polarization in the metropolis of tomorrow – unless we exercise our 'collective will', as Marcel Mauss urged, and act to check mechanisms and steer trends in a different direction. It stresses that, for all the talk of urban rebirth and prosperity that accompanies the millenarist celebration of 2000, for those consigned to the lower reaches of the dualizing occupational structure and the declining neighbourhoods of formerly industrial cities, the prosperity of the 'new economy' has yet to come and the rosy promise of the 'information age' remains a bitter fairy tale.

Symptoms of advanced marginality in the city

The close of the twentieth century is witnessing a momentous transformation of the roots, makeup, and consequences of urban poverty in Western society. Along with the accelerating economic modernization caused by the global restructuring of capitalism, the crystallization of a new international division of labour (fostered by the frantic velocity of financial flows and increased mobility of workers across porous national boundaries), and the growth of novel knowledge-intensive industries based on revolutionary information technologies and spawning a dual occupational structure, has come what one might call the *modernization of misery* – the rise of a new regime of urban inequality and marginality that contrasts with that prevailing during the three decades of the postwar (for a fuller argument, see Wacquant, 1996a).

Where poverty in the Western metropolis used to be largely residual or cyclical, embedded in working class communities, geographically diffuse and considered remediable by means of further market expansion, it now appears to be increasingly long-term if not permanent, disconnected from

macroeconomic trends, and fixated upon disreputable neighbourhoods of relegation in which social isolation and alienation feed upon each other as the chasm between those consigned there and the rest of society deepens. The consolidation of this new regime of urban marginality is treading diverse routes and taking different forms in the various countries of the First World. In the United States and the United Kingdom, it has been greatly facilitated by the policy of wholesale state retrenchment pursued by conservative and liberal parties alike over the past decades. The American pattern is also highly peculiar for the rigid and stubborn spatial and social ostracization imposed upon blacks in the major urban centres. In other nations with strong corporatist or social-democratic welfare states and far less segregated cities, such as northern Europe and Scandinavia, the onset of advanced marginality has been partly attenuated but not wholly deflected. And it has become embroiled with the vexed question of the integration of Third World migrants and refugees, as expressed in the anguish over the crystallization of immigrant 'ghettos' gripping the continent from Marseille to München and Brussels to Brindisi (see Hadjimichalis and Sadler, 1995; Mingione, 1996).

Whatever the label used to designate it – 'underclass' in America and Great Britain, 'new poverty' in the Netherlands, Germany, and Northern Italy, 'exclusion' in France, Belgium, and Nordic countries – the telltale signs of the new marginality are immediately familiar to even the casual observer of the Western metropolis: homeless men and families vainly scrambling about for shelter, beggars on public transportation spinning heart-rending tales of personal disaster and dereliction, soup kitchens teeming with not only drifters but also the unemployed and the underemployed; the surge in predatory crime and the booming of informal (and more often than not illegal) street economies spearheaded by the trade in drugs; the despondency and rage of youths shut out from gainful employment and the bitterness of older workers made obsolete by deindustrialization and technological upgrading; the sense of retrogression, despair, and insecurity that pervades poor neighbourhoods locked in a seemingly unstoppable downward spiral of deterioration; and mounting ethnoracial violence, xenophobia, and hostility towards and amongst the poor, as expressed for instance in the proliferation of police and penal measures against loitering and assorted 'sub-criminal behaviors' amounting to a 'criminology of intolerance' (Young, 1999, pp. 121–140). Everywhere state élites and public policy experts have become acutely concerned with preventing or containing the 'disorders' brewing within and around expanding enclaves of urban decline and abandonment. Thus the sprouting of research on urban decline and destitution supported by various national and transnational bodies, including the European Commission (with its Targeted Socio-Economic Program on exclusion and integration), the OECD, and even NATO on the European side, and major philanthropic foundations on American shores.

Four structural logics fuel the new urban marginality

But the distinctive structural properties of 'modernized misery' are much less evident than its concrete manifestations. Schematically, the emerging regime of marginality may be characterized as the product of four logics that jointly reshape the features of urban poverty in rich societies and foster the multiplication of positions situated at or near the bottom of the social and spatial hierarchy. These features stand in stark contrast with the commanding traits of poverty in the era of Fordist expansion from the close of World War II to the mid-seventies.

(i) Macrosocial dynamic – occupational dualization and the resurgence of social inequality

The new urban marginality results not from economic backwardness, sluggishness, or decline but from *rising inequality in the context of overall economic advancement* and prosperity.

Arguably the most puzzling attribute of the new marginality indeed is that it is spreading in an era of capricious but sturdy growth that has brought about spectacular material betterment for the more privileged members of First World societies. Notwithstanding ritual talk of 'crisis' among politicians for the better part of two decades, all leading capitalist countries have seen their GNP expand and collective wealth increase rapidly since the 'oil shocks' of the 70s. Opulence and indigence, luxury and penury, copiousness and impecuousness have flourished right alongside each other. Thus the city of Hamburg, by some measurements the richest in Europe, sports both the highest proportion of millionaires and the highest incidence of public assistance receipt in Germany, while New York City is home to the largest upper class on the planet but also to the single greatest army of the homeless and destitute in the Western hemisphere (Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991).

The two phenomena, though apparently contradictory, are in point of fact linked. For the novel forms of productivity- and profit-seeking in the 'high-tech', degraded manufacturing, and business and financial service sectors that drive *fin-de-siècle* capitalism are splitting the work force and polarizing access to, and rewards from, employment. Post-industrial modernization translates, on the one hand, into the multiplication of highly skilled and rewarded positions for university-trained professional and technical staff and, on the other, into the deskilling and outright elimination of millions of jobs as well as swelling of casual employment slots for uneducated workers (Sassen, 1991; Carnoy *et al.*, 1993). The growing concentration of wealth, in the form both income and property, at the top of the class structure has even spawned a vigorous demand for a post-industrial brand of urban domestics supplied mostly by cheap immigrant labour that caters to the full gamut of household needs of the new corporate nobility: driving children to and from school, walking the dog, cooking, cleaning, as well as provisioning the home and

providing personal security. What is more, today jobless production and growth in many economic sectors is not a utopian possibility but a bittersweet reality. Witness the virtual emptying of the harbour of Rotterdam, perhaps the most modern in the world and a major contributor to the rise of unemployment in this Dutch city above the 20% mark by the early 90s.

The more the revamped capitalist economy advances, the wider and deeper the reach of the new marginality, and the more plentiful the ranks of those thrown in the throes of misery with little respite or recourse, even as official unemployment drops and income rises in the country. In 1994, the U.S. Census Bureau reported that the American poverty rate had risen to a ten-year high of 15.1% (for a staggering total of 40 million poor persons) despite two years of robust economic expansion. Five years later, the poverty rate in large cities has barely budged in spite of the longest phase of economic growth in national history and the lowest official employment rate in three decades. Meanwhile the European Union officially tallies a record 52 million poor, 17 million unemployed, and 3 million homeless – and counting – in the face of renewed economic growth and improved global competitiveness. As major multi-national firms such as Renault and Michelin in France turn in unprecedented profits and see their stock value zoom up, they also 'turn out' workers by the thousands.

Put differently, advanced marginality appears to have been 'decoupled' from cyclical fluctuations in the national economy. The consequence is that upswings in aggregate income and employment have little beneficial effect upon life chances in the neighbourhoods of relegation of Europe and the United States while downswings cause further deterioration and distress within them. Unless this disconnection is somehow remedied, further economic growth promises to produce more urban dislocation among those thrust and trapped at the bottom of the emerging urban order.

(ii) Economic dynamic – the desocialization of wage labour

The new urban marginality is the by-product of a double transformation of the sphere of work. The one is quantitative and entails the elimination of millions of low-skilled jobs under the combined press of automation and foreign labour competition. The other is qualitative, involving the degradation and dispersion of basic conditions of employment, remuneration, and social insurance for all but the most protected wage workers. The two combine to feed the process of polarization from below.

From the time when Friedrich Engels wrote his classic exposé on the condition of the working class in Manchester's factories to the crisis of the great industrial heartlands of Euro-American capitalism a century-and-a-half later, it was rightly assumed that expanding wage labour supplied a viable and efficacious solution to the problem of urban poverty. Under the new economic regime, that assumption is at best dubious and at worst plain wrong. First, a significant *fraction of the working class has been rendered redundant* and

composes an 'absolute surplus population' that will likely never find work again. This is particularly true of older industrial workers laid off due to plant shutdowns and relocation: they are unlikely to have or acquire the skills and contacts needed to reconvert themselves into pliable service workers. At any rate, given the loosening of the functional linkage between macroeconomic activity and social conditions in the poor enclaves of the First World metropolis, and considering the productivity increases permitted by automation and computerization, even miraculous rates of growth could not absorb back into the workforce those who have been deproletarianized, that is, durably and forcibly expelled from the wage labour market to be replaced by a combination of machines, cheap immigrant labour, and foreign workers (Rifkin, 1995).

Second, and more importantly, the character of the wage-labour relation itself has changed over the past two decades in a manner such that it no longer grants foolproof protection against the menace of poverty even to those who enter it. With the expansion of part-time, 'flextime', and temporary work that carry fewer benefits, the erosion of union protection, the diffusion of two-tier pay scales, the resurgence of sweatshops, piece rates and famine wages, and the growing privatization of social goods such as health coverage, *the wage labour contract itself has become a source of fragmentation and precariousness* rather than social homogeneity and security for those consigned to the peripheral segments of the employment sphere (eg, European Economic Community, 1989; Mabit, 1995; MacDonald and Sirianni, 1996). During the golden age of Fordism, wage labour tended to homogenize the work force by creating commonalities of fate along a linear lifecourse pegged on the '40–50–60' schema: forty hours of employment a week for about fifty weeks of the year until one retires at age sixty. With the onset of 'desocialized wage labour', employment no longer supplies a common temporal and social framework because the terms of the labour contract are increasingly diverse and personalized, job tenures are short and unstable, and a growing number of positions do not carry with them protection from material deprivation, illness, joblessness, not to mention adequate retirement. In short, where economic growth and the correlative expansion of the wage sector used to provide the universal cure against poverty and polarization, today they are part of the malady.

(iii) Political dynamic – the reconstruction of welfare states

The fragmentation and desocialization of labour are not the only factors fuelling the rise of the new urban poverty. For, alongside with market forces, welfare states are major producers and shapers of urban inequality and marginality. States not only deploy programmes and policies designed to 'mop up' the most glaring consequences of poverty and to cushion (or not) its social and spatial impact. They also help determine who gets relegated, how, where, and for how long. States are major engines of stratification in their own right

and nowhere more so than at the bottom of the sociospatial order (Esping-Andersen, 1993): they provide or preclude access to adequate schooling and job training; they set conditions for labour market entry and exit via administrative rules for hiring, firing, and retirement; they distribute (or fail to distribute) basic subsistence goods, such as housing, and supplementary income; they actively support or hinder certain family and household arrangements; and they co-determine both the material intensity and the geographical exclusivity and density of misery through a welter of administrative and fiscal schemes.

The *retrenchment and disarticulation of the welfare state* are two major causes of the social deterioration and destitution visible in the metropolis of advanced societies. This is particularly obvious in the United States, where the population covered by social insurance schemes has shrunk for two decades while programmes targeted to the poor were cut and then turned into instruments of surveillance and control. The recent 'welfare reform' concocted by the Republican congress and signed into law by President Clinton in the summer of 1996 is emblematic of this logic (Wacquant, 1997a). It replaces the right to public aid with the obligation to work, if necessary at insecure jobs and for substandard wages, for all able-bodied persons, including young mothers with dependent children. It drastically diminishes funding for assistance and creates a lifetime cap on public support. Lastly, it transfers administrative responsibility from the federal government to the fifty states and their counties, thus aggravating already existing inequalities in access to welfare and accelerating the incipient privatization of social policy.

A similar logic of curtailment and devolution has presided over wholesale or piecemeal modifications of social transfer systems in the United Kingdom, Germany, Italy, and France. Even the Netherlands and Scandinavian countries have implemented measures designed to reduce access to public support and to stem the growth of social budgets. Everywhere the mantra of 'globalization' and the fiscal strictures imposed by the Maastricht treaty have served to justify these measures and to excuse social disinvestment in formerly working-class areas highly dependent on state provision of public goods. The growing shortcomings of national welfare schemes has spurred regional and local authorities to institute their own stop-gap support programmes (especially in response to homelessness and long-term unemployment), which in turn has increased the administrative complexity, heterogeneity, and inequality of social provision.

Now, the irrelevance of the 'national state' has become a commonplace of intellectual conversation the world over. It is fashionable nowadays to bemoan the incapacity of central political institutions to check the mounting social dislocations consequent upon global capitalist restructuring. But large and persistent discrepancies in the incidence and persistence of poverty, as well as in the living standards, (im)mobility, and spatial distinctiveness of the urban poor in different countries suggest that news of the passing of the national welfare state has been greatly exaggerated. As of the late 1980s, tax and transfer programmes lifted most poor households near the median national income

level in the Netherlands (62%) and France (52%); in West Germany only a third of poor families escaped poverty thanks for government support and in the United States virtually none. Extreme destitution has been eliminated among children in Scandinavian countries while it plagues one child in six (and every other black child) in the United States (these data are drawn from McFate, Lawson, and Wilson, 1995; a more analytical overview on this question is Kangas, 1991). States do make a difference – that is, when they care to. Therefore it is imperative to bring them back to the epicentre of the comparative sociology of marginality and polarization as *generative* as well as *remedial* institutions.

(iv) Spatial dynamic – concentration and stigmatization

In the postwar decades of industrial expansion, poverty in the metropolis was broadly distributed throughout working-class districts and tended to affect a cross-section of manual and unskilled labourers. By contrast, the new marginality displays a distinct tendency to conglomerate in and coalesce around 'hard core', 'no-go' areas that are clearly identified – by their own residents no less than by outsiders – as urban hellholes rife with deprivation, immorality, and violence where only the outcasts of society would brook living.

Nantua in Philadelphia, Moss Side in Manchester, Gutleutviertel in Hamburg, Brixton in London, Niewe Westen in Rotterdam, Les Minguettes in Lyon's suburbs and Bobigny in the Parisian periphery: these entrenched quarters of misery have 'made a name' for themselves as repositories for all the urban ills of the age, places to be shunned, feared, and deprecated. It matters little that the discourses of demonization that have mushroomed about them often have only tenuous connections to the reality of everyday life in them. A *pervading territorial stigma* is firmly affixed upon the residents of such neighbourhoods of socioeconomic exile that adds its burden to the disrepute of poverty and the resurging prejudice against ethnoracial minorities and immigrants (an excellent analysis of this process of public stigmatization is offered by Damer [1989] in the case of Glasgow).

Along with territorial stigmatization comes a sharp diminution of the sense of communality that used to characterize older working-class locales. Now the neighbourhood no longer offers a shield against the insecurities and pressures of the outside world, a familiar and reaffirming landscape suffused with collective meanings and forms of mutuality. It turns into an empty space of competition and conflict, a danger-filled battleground for the daily contest of survival and escape. This weakening of territorially-based communal bonds, in turn, fuels a retreat into the sphere of privatized consumption and strategies of distancing ('I am not one of them') that further undermine local solidarities and confirm deprecatory perceptions of the neighbourhood. We must remain alert to the possibility that this may be a transitional (or cyclical) phenomenon eventually leading to the spatial deconcentration or diffusion of urban marginality. But for those presently consigned at the bottom of the hierarchical

system of places that compose the new spatial order of the city, the future is now. Relatedly, it must be stressed that such neighbourhoods of relegation are creatures of state policies in matters of housing, city, and regional planning. At bottom, then, their emergence, consolidation, and eventual dispersion are essentially political issues.

The specter of transatlantic convergence

One question is at the back of everyone's mind when it comes to the deterioration of social conditions and life chances in the Old World metropolis: does the rise of this new marginality signal a structural rapprochement between Europe and the United States on the model of the latter (see, for instance, Cross, 1992; Musterd, 1994; van Kempen and Marcuse, 1998; Haüßerman, Kronauer, and Siebel, in press). Framed in such simplistic, either/or, terms, the question hardly admits of an analytically rigorous answer. For regimes of urban marginality are complex and capricious beasts; they are composed of imperfectly articulated ensembles of institutional mechanisms tying together economy, state, place, and society that do not evolve in unison and, moreover, differ significantly from country to country with national conceptions and institutions of citizenship. It is therefore necessary first to rephrase this query.

If by convergence, one means the wholesale 'Americanization' of urban patterns of exclusion in the European city leading down the path of *ghettoization* of the kind imposed upon Afro-Americans since they urbanized at the beginning of this century (ie, the formation of a segmented, parallel, sociospatial formation serving the dual purpose of exploitation and ostracization of a bounded ethnoracial category), then the answer is clearly negative (Wacquant, 1996b). Contrary to first impressions and superficial, media-driven accounts, the changeover of the continental metropolis has not triggered a process of ghettoization: it is not spawning culturally uniform sociospatial ensembles based on the forcible relegation of stigmatized populations to enclaves where these populations evolve group- and place-specific organizations that substitute for and duplicate the institutional framework of the broader society, if at an inferior and incomplete level.

There is no Turkish ghetto in Berlin, no Arab ghetto in Marseilles, no Surinamese ghetto in Rotterdam, and no Caribbean ghetto in Liverpool. Residential or commercial clusters fuelled by ethnic affinity do exist in all these cities. Discrimination and violence against immigrants (or putative immigrants) are also brute facts of life in all major urban centres of Europe (Wrench and Solomos, 1993; Björgo and White, 1993). Combined with their typically lower class distribution and higher rates of joblessness, this explains the disproportionate representation of foreign-origin populations in urban territories of exile. But discrimination and even segregation is not ghettoization. Such immigrant concentrations as exist are not the product of the institutional encasement of the group premised on rigid spatial confinement –

as evidenced by rising rates of intermarriage and spatial diffusion when education and class position improve (Tribalat, 1995). Indeed, if anything characterizes the neighbourhoods of relegation that have sprouted across the continent as mechanisms of working-class reproduction floundered, it is their extreme ethnic heterogeneity as well as their incapacity to supply the basic needs and encompass the daily round of their inhabitants – two properties that make them *anti-ghettos*.

If convergence implies that *self-reinforcing cycles of ecological disrepair, social deprivation and violence*, eventuating in spatial emptying and institutional abandonment, are now operative on the continent, then again the answer is negative because European areas of urban exile which forms nodes of polarization, as it were, remain, with few exceptions (such as Southern Italian cities), deeply penetrated by the state. The kind of 'triage' and purposive desertion of urban areas to 'economize' on public services that has befallen the American metropolis is unimaginable in the European political context with its fine-grained bureaucratic monitoring of the national territory. At the same time, there can be no question that the capacity of European states to govern territories of relegation is being severely tested and may prove unequal to the task if recent trends toward the spatial concentration of persistent joblessness continue unabated (Engbersen, 1997).

Finally, if convergence is intended, more modestly, to spotlight the *growing salience of ethnoracial divisions and tensions* in the European metropolis, then the answer is a qualified and provisional yes, albeit with the following strong provisos. First, this does not necessarily imply that a process of 'racialization' of space is underway and that the societies of the Old World are witnessing the formation of 'minorities' in the sense of ethnic communities mobilized and recognized *as such* in the public sphere. Second, ethnoracial conflict is not a novel phenomenon in the European city: it has surged forth repeatedly in the past century during periods of rapid social and economic restructuring – which means also that there is little that is distinctively 'American' about it (Moore, 1989; Noiriel, 1989). Lastly, and contrary to the American pattern, putatively racial strife in the cities of the Old World is fuelled not by the growing *gap* between immigrants and natives but by their greater *propinquity* in social and physical space. Ethnonational exclusivism is a nativist reaction to abrupt downward mobility by the autochthonous working class before it expresses a profound ideological switch to a racist (or racialist) register. Notwithstanding faddish blanket pronouncements about the 'globalization of race', the increased salience of ethnicity in European public discourse and everyday life pertains as much to a politics of class as to a politics of identity.

Coping with advanced marginality: the turn to the penal state

In their effort to tackle emergent forms of urban relegation, nation-states face a three-pronged alternative. The first, middle-ground, option consists in *patching*

up the existing programmes of the welfare state. Clearly, this is not doing the job, or the problems posed by advanced marginality would not be so pressing today. One might even argue that such piecemeal and increasingly local responses to the disruptions caused by urban polarization help perpetuate the latter insofar as they fuel bureaucratic cacophony and inefficiency.

The second, regressive and repressive, solution is to *criminalize poverty via the punitive containment of the poor* in increasingly isolated and stigmatized neighbourhoods, on the one hand, and in jails and prisons, on the other. This is the route taken by the United States following the ghetto riots of the 60s (Rothman, 1995). It is no happenstance if the stupendous expansion of the carceral sector of the American state – the imprisoned population has quadrupled in twenty-five years and corrections departments risen to the rank of third largest employer of the country even as crime levels remained *grosso modo* constant over that period – has taken place just as casual (under)-employment spread and public assistance waned before being 'reformed' into a system of forced employment. For the atrophy of the social state and the hypertrophy of the penal state are two correlative and complementary transformations that partake of the institution of a new government of misery whose function is precisely to impose desocialized wage labour as a norm of citizenship while providing a functional substitute for the ghetto as a mechanism of racial control (Wacquant, 1998).

While the United States are truly exceptional for the zeal with which they have embraced this 'solution' to social polarization and for the scale on which they have implemented it, the temptation to rely on the police and carceral institutions to stem the effects of social insecurity generated by the spread of precarious work and the retrenchment of social welfare is present throughout Europe. This can be seen in the spectacular rise of incarceration rates among most member countries of the European Union over the past two decades; the massive over-representation, within the imprisoned population, of non-European immigrants and of people of colour, as well as of drug dealers and addicts who are rejects from the labour market; the hardening of penal policies, more openly turned towards incapacitation, as over rehabilitation, and tacitly guided by the principle of 'lesser eligibility'; and in the overpopulation of carceral establishments, which reduces imprisonment to its function of warehousing of the undesirable. Recent shifts in public discourses on urban disorder reveal a similar drift towards a penal treatment of poverty and of the dislocations which, paradoxically, arise from having truncated the capacity for social intervention of the state. One is thus founded to predict that a 'downward' convergence of Europe on the social front, entailing further deregulation of the labour market and continued unraveling of the collective safety net, will ineluctably result in an 'upward' convergence on the penal front and a new burst of carceral inflation throughout the continent (Wacquant, 1999).

Despite the colossal social and fiscal costs of the mass confinement of poor and disruptive populations, imprisonment remains a seductive stop-gap

solution to mounting urban dislocations even in the most liberal societies (Christie, 1997). But, aside from the powerful political and cultural obstacles that stand in the way of the wholesale carceralization of misery inherent in the makeup of social-democratic states in Europe, punitive containment leaves untouched the root causes of the new poverty. The third, progressive, response to urban polarization from below points to a fundamental *reconstruction of the welfare state* that would put its structure and policies in accord with the emerging economic and social conditions. Radical innovations, such as the institution of a citizen's wage (or unconditional income grant) that would sever subsistence from work, expand access to education through the lifecourse, and effectively guarantee universal access to essential public goods such as housing, health, and transportation, are needed to expand social rights and check the deleterious effects of the mutation of wage-labour (Van Parijs, 1996). In the end, this third option is the only viable response to the challenge that advanced marginality poses to democratic societies as they prepare to cross the threshold of the new millennium.

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