

Buttressed and breached: The exurban fortress, cannabis activism, and the drug war's shifting political geography

EPD: Society and Space
0(0) 1–20

© The Author(s) 2020

Article reuse guidelines:

sagepub.com/journals-permissions

DOI: 10.1177/0263775820907388

journals.sagepub.com/home/epd



Michael Polson

University of California-Berkeley, USA

Abstract

As the post-1980s revanchist drug war transformed US cities, another spatial formation was materializing: exurbia. The final roost of suburban white flight, exurbia also formed via the spatial-racial dynamics of the drug war. The “exurban fortress” projected an imaginary of urban danger and rural security that (1) solidified an anti-drug constituency among (older, white) property owners and disciplinarily transitioned racially marked and poor white residents from an industrial to postindustrial service economy and (2) ameliorated key contradictions implicit to the production, consumption, and governance of exurbia. Taking the case of Calaveras County, California, this article shows how cannabis prohibition politically stabilized spatial meanings and capital accumulation during a period bookended by recessionary crises in housing production (1992–2010). It also shows how medical cannabis activists reimagined the urban and rural in capacious ways, thus catalyzing a local transformation that mirrored national trends around drugs, penalty and Rightist politics. This case illuminates a neglected dimension of drug war geographies and their activist-driven transformation and urges attention to new bordering practices emerging from exurbian spatial imaginaries.

Keywords

Criminalization, rural, conservatism, urban, activism, police

It was hard to miss the Sheriff’s symbolic display of power that day in 1998. He had stationed a squadron of 24 deputies outside the Calaveras County courtroom, standing at parade rest in full swat gear, flanked on either side by two cannons, an eyewitness recalled. Inside, a hearing

Corresponding author:

Michael Polson, 130 Hilgard Way, Berkeley, California 94709, USA.

Email: mpolson79@gmail.com

convened for a man arrested on cannabis cultivation charges (Garland, 1998). When people arrived to exhibit support for the accused, a deputy with a video camera filmed them, an intimidating action at a sensitive time—only two years prior California voters approved medical cannabis and its legal contours were notoriously unclear. The armed phalanx of officers and surveillance of detractors signaled the Sheriff's intention: to establish and fortify a line against cannabis. Yet, why did holding this line merit such a symbolic exhibition of force?

The court case in question, *People v. Galambos*, offers some clues. Robert Galambos was providing medical cannabis for a buyer's club in Oakland, California, roughly 3 hours west of this rural county in California's Sierra Foothills. Oakland had become the epicenter of the medical cannabis movement following voter's approval of "compassionate use." Coincidentally, but not insignificantly, Sheriff Dennis Downum had departed Oakland a decade prior. A white man, he commuted from his suburban home in Pleasanton to his job as a vice cop in Oakland, the most African American city in the San Francisco Bay Area (Mendian and Gambhir, 2019). Repulsed by the legalistic constraints on policing and a fraying moral social order symbolized in the intensely racialized crack epidemic, the Sheriff had come to Calaveras for the promise of rural life, a place he nostalgically, idyllically remembered from his childhood as a perfect place for "hunting and fishing" (Metzger, 2010b). His display of militarized might informed Galambos and his lawyer, a San Francisco civil rights attorney who had defended Black Panther Huey Newton and radical environmentalist Judi Bari, that cannabis might be permissible in the liberal Bay Area but not in this conservative county. Cannabis, an insidious commodity that carried with it "urban," implicitly racial, blight, threatened this rural idyll. It was Downum's duty to protect those who moved to Calaveras to escape drugs and crime (Lewis, 2000).

As this scene intimates, differences between "the rural" and "the urban" are produced, defended, and mobilized for political effect. "Exurban" areas like Calaveras rely upon rural/urban differentiations to appeal to migrants from urban and suburban areas and valorize the low-density residences they consume. Similarly, drugs are signified through spatial differentiations, often through the equation of drugs with a racialized, degraded urban-ness (Lassiter, 2015), an equation evident in California's 1913 cannabis prohibition, which was first enforced in Los Angeles' Mexican barrios (Gieringer, 1999). This article traces how rural/urban differences were produced and mobilized in an interlocking project of cannabis prohibition and exurbanization. Prohibition became a key strategy to defend an exclusionary exurban rurality—to buttress the walls of the "exurban fortress." Conversely, exurbanization was part of a broader anti-urban (Smith, 1996) drug war geography, becoming a destination of white flight, as older, white, asset-class migrants fled both urban strife and increasingly diverse suburbs in the 1990s. Rural/urban differentiations stabilized prohibition geographies and exurbanization during the 1990s and 2000s. Yet both were unsettled in the economic and political reorganization of the Great Recession of 2007–2009, which devastated exurban housing markets and catalyzed a reformation of drug war politics. Amidst this instability, cannabis activists contested and remade a spatio-political order premised on their exclusion. In short, this paper analyzes the exurban fortress as it was buttressed and then breached.

Based on 19 months of ethnographic fieldwork between 2010 and 2019 as well as ongoing secondary source research, this article theoretically considers exurbia and its rural/urban distinctions in relation to the broader literature on the drug war's spatial-racial dynamics. Prohibition rendered these distinctions in ways that alleviated contradictions implicit in exurbia's consumption, production, and management. This article narrates the rise and fall of the Calaveras Sheriff, two waves of cannabis activism, and the correlative spatial-

political stakes. Though the sheriff and the order he protected were toppled, cannabis remains a key lens through which belonging and spatial imaginaries of urban/rural difference are negotiated.

Drug war geographies and the exurban fortress

DeGenova and Roy (2020) encourage attention to “projects of illegalization”—namely, illegalizing processes (Thomas and Galemba, 2013), operating at multiple scales and spatialities (Herbert and Brown, 2006) that cohere in particular places with varying political effects (Garland, 2018; Lynch et al., 2013; Shabazz, 2009) not just for illegalized populations but those who support, benefit, and are otherwise enlisted in these projects (Schept, 2013). Treating prohibition as constitutive of broader illegalizing projects promotes an analytic shift from legal, penal, and carceral institutions, which “represent only the most visible tentacles” of illegalization (Murakawa and Beckett, 2012: 222), to their imbrication within an “elegant social machinery” (Venkatesh, 2012: 656) that produces, supports, purveys, and materializes illegality in particular forms.

In his recent work on the mid-century drug war in metropolitan Los Angeles, Lassiter (2015) shows how the specter of the urban, racialized cannabis “pusher” was central to suburban formation. Fear of Mexican and African-American drug-purveying gangs generated draconian laws and enforcement responses that performed boundary work (Boyce et al., 2015), designating suburbs as zones of white innocence, endangerment, and defense. This analysis furthers works by Mullings (2003), Smith (1996), and Gilmore (2007) that reveal the drug war’s relation to projects of political control, urban conquest, and management of spatio-economic crises in capitalist accumulation across urban and rural spaces. Such analyses depict the “analytical interconnectedness” (McKittrick, 2011: 947) of race, class, cities and drugs to *other* places, populations, and processes. This provides a gentle corrective to accounts singularly focused on drug war-induced suffering and isolation in urban communities of color. Given the disproportionate and devastating consequences to those communities, the latter focus is critical (Bourgois, 2003; Ralph, 2014; Venkatesh, 2008; Wacquant, 2010), yet it also risks rendering them to “spaces of absolute otherness” (McKittrick, 2011: 954), thus obscuring how that racism, anti-urbanism, and criminalization are constituted in unsuspected places.

Extending analysis of the drug war beyond its evident targets reveals the deep social and territorial patterning of “penal landscapes” (Lynch, 2001). Drug criminalization, white-flight suburbanization, and urban “abandonment” set the stage for the city’s vengeful, revanchist reclamation (Smith, 1996) from those blamed for its ruination—the poor, people of color, drug users, and others. Yet, just as the urban drug war intensified in the 1980s, it is rarely noted that suburbs were rapidly transforming, becoming more racially diversified (Frey, 2000), and newly politicized and contested under Third Way politics (Piliawsky, 1994). The suburban “silent majority” electorates that fueled law-and-order politicians from Goldwater to Nixon to Reagan found new shelter in exurbia, thus marking “the culmination of a racial sorting out process” (Davis, 1993: 17) that began in white-flight suburbia. Amidst the increasing uncertainties of deindustrialization, welfare state decline, and the ebbing benefits of imperial whiteness (Berlant, 2011; Muehlebach and Shoshan, 2012), exurbia was expressive of a nostalgic, post-Fordist desire for security among aging, white exurban migrants. If revanchism is a retaliatory effort to recover lost territory, *exurban* revanchism (Schafran et al., 2013) endeavored to “take back” an imagined territoriality of a “real” America of “good people” (Holmes, 2008). New migrants fashioned exurbia as an idyllic moral preserve of (white, property-owning) liberty against corrosive urbanizing

forces (Beebe and Wheeler, 2012) epitomized by drugs and the ineluctably racialized human vectors that purveyed them.

Drug criminalization articulates with two key contradictions in exurban formation. First, criminalization manages the contradictory spatial imaginaries¹ of rural/urban difference that is necessary for exurbanization. Conceptually located at the cusp of city and countryside, exurbia developed via “rural restructuring”—the post-productivist move in postindustrial nations away from agricultural or extractive land uses since the late 20th century (Marsden et al., 1990). As rural lands lost value, exurban residential development newly valorized them, opening “rent gaps” into which capital poured (Darling, 2005; Sayre, 2006). Unlike prior extractive industries, exurbia’s core commodity—the house—could not be exported. It required consumption *in place* and *as place*—specifically as a place aesthetically coded *rural* (McCarthy, 2008: 131; Sayre, 2011), whether as a nostalgic idyll (Halfacree, 1996), a locus of identic belonging (Smith and Phillips, 2001), or a natural amenity-scape (Cadieux and Hurley, 2011). Above all, exurban rurality appealed to sub/urban migrant-consumers through its coding as an anti-urban, even anti-suburban, rurality (Taylor, 2011). And yet, exurbia’s production and consumption was created *through* “urbanizing” processes contained in the traffic of people, ideas, and capital. Paradoxically, the *effect of rurality* must be maintained even as *urbanization fundamentally alters* exurbia. The question then becomes: *which* rurality is maintained and *which* urbanizing processes are arrested and permitted?

The exurban literature amply highlights how rural/urban definitions materialize through struggles over nature and planning (Taylor and Hurley, 2016). Criminalization also materializes spatial imaginaries, often of a dangerous, disorderly urban and a secure rural (Somerville et al., 2015). In the United States, cannabis was especially useful in rural/urban delineations as it has been widely produced in rural areas and associated not only with the deviant racial city, but with stigmatized forms of whiteness, epitomized by “back to the land” migrants and their contemporary counterpart, the environmentalist, who threaten rural orders. Cannabis prohibition in the “exurban fortress” implicitly sanctioned some forms of (sub)urban-to-rural movement (e.g. of capital, property buyers, idyllic conceptions), while arresting others (e.g. of drugs, “criminals,” “urban” values). People of color were marked as vectors of urban criminality even as this racial-spatial imaginary was mobilized to police poorer whites as they were pushed out of well-paying extractive industrial employment into low-paying service sector jobs—a hallmark of exurban formation.

Second, exurban narcopolitics (Garriott, 2011) manages the contradictory tendency of exurbanization to produce its own political antagonism. As developers and homebuyers invest in the ideological and material valuation of rural places (Cadieux and Taylor, 2013), the sustained production of homes for evermore consumption poses a threat to the rural landscapes from which they derive value. In response, exurban in-migrants may “pull up the gangplank” (Gosnell and Abrams, 2009) and prevent future migrants from marring, and thus devaluing, exurbia’s rural qualities. Simply put, exurbanization produces residential populations that can militate *against further* exurban development (Dolgon, 2005).

Prohibition enlists exurban in-migrants in a spatial ordering that permits continued exurban expansion. Rather than natural amenities and landscapes signifying rurality, exurban residents could imagine the rural in terms of exclusionary security, protected by anti-crime, anti-drug enforcement. This rural imaginary not only provides the amenity of security but pays dividends, as racialized, anti-urban exclusion bolsters property values, much like suburban redlining before it (Rothstein, 2017). In this imaginary, drugs and crime must be guarded against—not the unbridled development that threatens other signifiers of rurality. The result is a temporal fix to intrinsic antagonisms between amenity-seeking property

owners and developer-led exurbanization. The bonding of exurbanites to law enforcement facilitates “governance through crime” (Simon, 2007) and lessens pressure to develop other state capacities (Tulumello, 2018), like planning, zoning, and conservation. Exurban development can flourish in the resulting deregulated environment.

This article traces how these dynamics converge in a particular exurban project of illegalization. It narrates a struggle over who and what belongs in exurbia. How would exurban spaces be governed, consumed, and produced and what spatial imaginaries would accompany these developments? The article also illuminates how drugs and drug wars have been productive of entire dimensions of society not obviously related to penal–carceral dynamics. By breaking down the War on Drugs into the illegalizing projects that comprised it, one can see the world drug wars made. Only then can the contours of a world without those insidious wars materialize.

Laissez-faire governance and first pass exurbanization

Since its inception in the Gold Rush and the ensuing evacuation of native Miwoks, Calaveras relied on resource extraction. After the 1950s, however, extraction slowly declined, punctuated by closures of timber and cement operations (Limbaugh and Fuller, 2004). Yet, amidst this decline, population boomed. Between 1970 and 2010, Calaveras’ population grew by 233%, 300% faster than national averages. In three hallmark indicators of exurbanization, income from sources outside the county increased 82%, non-labor income from retirement, investments, and rents increased 700% between 1970 and 2010 (EPS-HDT, 2012), and the new population skewed older, with residents over 55 increasing by nearly 25% just between 2000 and 2010 (Calaveras County, 2015). Job markets reoriented around these house-seeking in-migrants. Construction employment mushroomed 400% (1970–2000), eventually comprising over 20% of total job earnings; government employment more than doubled; and lower wage service sector jobs increased 300%, becoming the county’s largest employment sector and generating over 50% of labor income by 2000. A gap opened between service providers, whose real income was declining, and a serviced class (EPS-HDT, 2012). With a booming, older, wealthier population and a low-wage service-providing workforce, Calaveras became a typical exurb.

In the 1980s, Calaveras notched extraordinary growth. Fueled by statewide tax reforms, investment capital’s deregulation, and the emergence of a rent gap between disinvested lands (formerly used in resource extraction) and new land uses, exurban development boomed (Davis, 1993; Gilmore, 2007). In that decade, Calaveras’ population grew by over 50%, becoming California’s fastest-growing county in 1987. Employment grew over 80% (EPS-HDT, 2012) and the largest percentage of current housing stock was built (Towncharts, 2018).

Sparked by the California-centered S&L scandal, however, the housing-related recession of the early 1990s severely sapped this growth, sending Calaveras into its first crisis of exurban expansion. Unemployment peaked in 1992, employment growth stalled, and workers were shepherded into low-wage, service sector jobs or better-paying but inconstant construction work. “Traditional” rural occupations deteriorated—mining earnings declined 65% and farm earnings turned negative, becoming a source of debt rather than income in the 1990s (EPS-HDT, 2012).

Governance until this first crisis was continuous with the county’s *laissez-faire* history. Local government, originally little more than a pact among Anglo property owners to respect each other’s claims (Limbaugh and Fuller, 2004), was kept to a minimum by extractive industries seeking to dispose of lands at will, a dynamic common to extractive zones (Robinson et al., 2006). For 150 years, *laissez-faire* governance lightly operated, ceding the

management and resolution of everyday matters to individuals, creating an often violent, even lawless environment, also common to extractive zones (Watts, 2004). (Calaveras, or “skulls” in Spanish, was the site of California’s first vigilante manhunt mob (Brands, 2008), has notched several serial murderers, and remains a “good place to drop a body,” one biker noted, because murders were treated with lenience. “You’ll only catch seven years . . . but the next county over you’re going for life.”)

Exurban housing producers, the county’s emergent industry, found this minimized, *laissez-faire* government hospitable. As Walker and Fortmann (2003) noted a few counties north of Calaveras, “the form of production may have changed (say, from mining to real estate)” but ideologies of development and growth underlay both (p. 473). Reductively, developers occupied the place vacated by extractionists, uniting with a *laissez-faire* ruling elite in the ideal business environment of regulatory minimalism. Figures like Chief Building Official Ray Waller, who held office over 22 years of prime exurban expansion (1985–2007), illustrate this industrial transition. Waller was ousted when a pattern of graft, favoritism, and corruption came to light, though a pro-development politician dismissed the grand jury case against him after a chief accuser turned up dead in a hotel room. Though extreme, Waller’s case illuminates the primacy of property, *laissez-faire* governance, and lawlessness spanning the county’s transition from extraction to exurban development.

When exurban growth faltered in the early 1990s, *laissez-faire* governance was insufficient to meet the demands of a new, insurgent constituency—exurban homeowners. Not only were exurbanites organizing themselves, as when they brought suit in 1989 against the county for approving a gold mine without an environmental impact report, but they were also uniting with environmentalists, such as in a victorious 1993 case against a water utility for contamination. Though Calaveras’ history of conservation dated back to the founding of Big Trees State Park in 1931, the recession between 1987 and 1992—and the doubt it cast upon unrestricted development—sparked an efflorescence of local conservation organizations: Foothill Conservancy (1989), Central Sierra Environmental Resource Center (1990), the Mother Lode Land Trust (1991), and Sierra Nevada Alliance (1991). If growth-oriented exurbanization was to continue—and if the developer-driven *laissez-faire* ruling bloc was to survive—it would have to innovate a new governing repertoire of governance that spoke to exurbanites. The cannabis-fueled, anti-urban revanchism of the Calaveras Sheriff was just that innovation.

The Sheriff and the idyllic exurb

To Sheriff Downum, Calaveras, the home of his youth, was “made up of unbelievably good people” where “nobody had ever heard of public assistance” and “everybody worked and looked after each other.” Elected as Sheriff in the aftermath of the early 1990s recession, Downum’s nostalgic notion of rural life resonated with economically insecure owners. Downum, having fled the urban and suburban squalor of the San Francisco Bay Area, was one of them. It was his duty, he said, to protect exurban constituents who had moved to Calaveras to escape urban crimes and drugs (Lewis, 2000). Law enforcement’s moral protection (rather than meddlesome, regulatory government based on “liability”) would protect this idyllic community (Metzger, 2010b).

But Downum’s rural reverie also sought to *transform* the rural, from one based on an opaque “good ol’ boy” system that may have tolerated crime among elites (Metzger, 2010b), to one in which the law was (ostensibly) applied evenly, even transparently, at least for an expanding politically empowered homeownership population. Exurbia was to be rural but also vacated of unsavory rural realities, like older rural elites or ugly mining projects. Packaged

for exurbanite consumption, the Sheriff's swashbuckling image was a nostalgic symbol of the rural, another lifestyle amenity demanded by exurban homeowners in hopes to protect and valorize their investments. This Sheriff would keep urban problems at bay by buttressing the exurban fortress from the degeneration posed by the racial-criminal city. Cannabis, which had been part of the California countryside since the 1960s, signified a corrupted rurality. One critic remarked of the Sheriff,

This was a guy who was still fighting the culture wars of the '60s. He came to Calaveras to get even. He harassed anything that seemed like a counterculture . . . He devoted his life to this. It was a simplistic way of viewing the world: get rid of marijuana and your problems will be over.

In Reaganesque fashion, the exurban fortress relied on small government ideology, a big government drug war, and spatio-moral simplicity to drive both. This moral politics offered exurbanites an idyllic, enfortressed rurality rivaling that offered by "anti-growth" conservationists, who sought to address unrestrained housing growth. The construction of idyllic rurality shifted blame for exurban insecurities on a particular construction of an invasive, corrosive, implicitly urban criminality. This rendering of rural/urban difference congealed exurbanites, developers, and the county's historical ruling elite into a new exurbanism that remained economically—but not politically and legally—*laissez-faire*. The libertarianism of the county's past no longer sufficed. Exurbanites demanded state action to protect real estate investments, and notions of moral community were an easy fix.

As an itinerant signifier of urban criminality and decay, cannabis explained away exurbia's first crisis and, in so doing, distracted from housing overproduction, investment market hazards, and conservationist alternatives. Battling cannabis would avenge, perhaps resuscitate, a rurality threatened with loss. Cannabis belonged elsewhere, in cities or liberal rural counties corrupted by previous countercultural urban migration—certainly not in the post-productivist idyllic exurb. This message resonated loudly in the 1990s of eastern California.

Political geography of law enforcement: Punitive conservatism and cannabis prohibition

The year Sheriff Downum was elected, 1994, was a banner year for law-and-order politics. Republicans seized the US Congress, passing the largest anti-crime bill in history, and, following the 1992 Los Angeles uprising, Republicans won California's State Assembly for the first time since 1969 (following another LA uprising in Watts). California's Attorney General Dan Lungren, who made his career in anti-drug, tough-on-crime politics (and would later represent Calaveras in Congress), led the Republican's law-and-order charge in passing a "three strikes" law and measures to track and deny bail to sexual offenders, both of which greatly expanded the size of California's carceral system and precipitated the overcrowding crises of the 2000s (Gilmore, 2007). When viewed alongside Proposition 187, obligating law enforcement to report undocumented immigrants to the federal government, 1994 was a year California sought to reorient the purpose and direction of government toward law-and-order revanchism.

California's federally designated Eastern District, where many of the state's new prisons sprouted up (Gilmore, 2007), ranging from agricultural Kern County to the mountainous Oregon border, including most of the Central Valley, Sierra foothills, and the sparsely populated Sierra Nevadas, was critical to the organization of this law-and-order turn.

The Eastern District encompasses 34 of California's 58 counties, yet contains only 20% of the state's population, leading McCartney (unpublished, Ground zero. Manuscript) to compare its electoral and legislative power to the US South. The district also greatly influences statewide law enforcement associations and lobbying groups, accounting for the a large share of the leadership of the California State Sheriff's Association, California Narcotics Officers Association and California Police Chiefs Association.² These groups consistently supported tough-on-crime and anti-drug legislation and actions, and drew upon steady streams of federal anti-drug funds and contracts to supplement local budgets, train officers, and accrue lucrative overtime in interdiction operations for their members. County police departments did not lack opportunities to enforce federal drug laws through a federally funded (but state-run) cannabis eradication program, four federally funded High-Intensity Drug Trafficking Area teams operational in California, 59 federally funded Multi-Jurisdictional Task Forces dedicated to drug enforcement, special regional operations spanning federal, state, and local agencies, and forfeiture processes linking local law enforcement budgets to federal drug laws. For cash-strapped rural counties, these efforts purveyed federal priorities in local form, activating revanchist spatial projects and political blocs across cities and countrysides in a form of "anti-urban federalism" (Davis, 1993: 6). This created independent power bases for sheriffs' departments to circumvent state and local controls.

In the Eastern District, these institutional efforts pervasively targeted cannabis—unlike other plant-based drugs like heroin or cocaine, California harbored cannabis's entire commodity chain from seed to smoke. In 1996, two years after California's law-and-order zenith, voters passed Proposition 215 to liberalize medical cannabis, an effort spearheaded by HIV/AIDS activists in the San Francisco Bay Area. Attorney General Lungren advised state law enforcement to continue arresting with impunity—medical status, he argued, was a courtroom defense, not an intrinsic, reserved right. Lungren's legal determination set the stage for a series of Eastern District court cases—Richard Galambos in Calaveras, Richard Levin in Redding, Steve Kubby in Placer County, Bryan Epis in Chico, Myron Mower in Tuolumne, Aaron Paradiso in San Joaquin—between adamant sheriffs and equally adamant patients over medical cannabis rights. Federally, just nine days after Prop 215 was passed, President Clinton's Drug Czar Barry McCaffrey convened California law enforcement and political officials to strategize how to subvert cannabis's medical decriminalization. From this meeting, the DEA and Attorney General Janet Reno authorized federal cross-deputization of county law enforcement—Sheriffs could now enforce federal laws (DOJ, 1997). Calaveras' Sheriff Downum quickly availed himself of this designation. Federal law, which had no ambivalence about the illegal status of cannabis, became the county's *de facto* law. Within a few years, Calaveras notched the second highest rate of arrests for cannabis possession in California (Tate et al., 2013).

Cannabis became central to Sheriff Downum's tenure. Federal and state interdiction money funded seven to eight deputy positions; officers reaped overtime pay from anti-cannabis programs; forfeiture assets provided steady funds. A new bureaucratic logic emerged: seize more plants, quantify it in reports, mobilize those reports to acquire funding to seize even more plants. One official remarked that Downum "got more money than anywhere else, any other county," for pay increases, equipment modernization, and funding for a new jail. Most importantly, outside grants gave the Sheriff relative autonomy from county oversight and quotidian tussles over county budgets (Metzger, 2010b).

Downum leveraged prohibition to consolidate ever-wider institutional powers. He organized the Office of Emergency Services and Animal Services under his department. His desire to commandeer the Coroner's office was no great secret when Downum arrested the elected Coroner, Kevin Raggio, for a small amount of cannabis. Downum reportedly

offered to make the “charges go away” if Raggio, the coroner for 25 years, resigned (Metzger, 2010a). Raggio refused—a luxury scarcely available to the 200 people who struck plea deals yearly for cannabis possession under an ounce (Johnson, 2010). These pre-trial deals gave the Sheriff a wide surveillance network of indebted, subordinated informants.

Along with Downum’s wife, June, who was instrumental in pushing the Republican Party in more conservative directions, the Downums, according to another local politician, “were a constant force in re-building what was essentially the only party in the county, building a machine that more or less picked the winners for every race.” Whether in efforts to unseat their libertarian opposition from the Board of Supervisors or position his niece for election, the Sheriff’s move to power exceeded just a departmental power grab. Rather, its force indicated a refurbished governing rationale in Calaveras. This rationale apparently succeeded, as the Sheriff held the line against a first wave of cannabis activism in the county.

Medical cannabis: Round I

The *Galambos* case at the beginning of this article was Dave Jack’s first experience with medical cannabis activism. Stricken with brain cancer, likely the result of his exposure to nuclear radiation in the navy, Dave used medical cannabis to handle his symptoms. The plant—and the social purpose he discovered through activism—gave him a new lease on life. Repelled by Downum’s armed deputies at the courthouse demonstration, he launched into action, immersing himself in a statewide activist community, learning how to combat law enforcement, and building legal expertise. Dave frequently argued *any* encroachment or regulation of medical cannabis rights subverted voter’s intent and was therefore unconstitutional, a legalistic argument that held water with libertarians but not with law-and-order conservatives.

Because the Sheriff’s original approach to medical cannabis was to arrest first and let juries deliberate, the courts were the first arena of contention. Jack and an activist cadre organized a “walker patrol,” so named for the walkers, canes, and wheelchairs many utilized. The patrol attended trials of people charged under cannabis laws. “When the defendant was left alone and had no support, they generally . . . went down,” he explains. “What we did was we bring in the walker patrol and they sit in the court. Usually we would sit in a block. There’d be 10 or 12 of us in a trial.” Their first case was Bill Harrison’s, who was busted with 64 plants. When he showed the sheriff his medical recommendation, Downum allegedly responded he could use it as toilet paper. Harrison was found not guilty, the first decision of its kind in Calaveras.³ Despite this win—a nullified jury and judicial precedent—the sheriff simply changed strategies. He continued arrests but, instead of prosecutions, sought plea bargains, a pre-court practice that circumvented juries and made the sheriff (and DA) de facto adjudicators.

Undermined, activists next took to developing policy to protect patients and delimit police actions. Responding to a patient’s petition, the county formed a commission, comprised of Dave Jack, four doctors, two pharmacists, Sheriff Downum, the DA, and another law enforcement official. The commission met over several months and approved a proposal made by a physician, allowing patients 32 plants and two pounds for medical consumption. Downum, the DA, and the other police official opposed it. Outnumbered, the Sheriff exploded at Jack, who recalls, “He was pointing at me—’you are the one that’s doing all this shit to me,’” after which Downum threw a folding chair to the ground and stormed out. A county supervisor later told Dave the approved resolution was “not going to fly. If we don’t have the sheriff’s cooperation, it doesn’t mean a thing.” Again, the sheriff undermined

activist victory, this time through a de facto veto power made possible through his discretion to execute or ignore regulations. Supervisors approved the commission's plan but no one believed it would alter everyday enforcement matters.

Dave pursued another strategy to delimit police power over patients by making cannabis a matter of religious freedom. Dave helped to bring the Northern Lights Church, a Gnostic sect considering cannabis a sacrament and medicine, to Calaveras by enlisting Rick and Sue Garner to host the church on their property and grow cannabis for 23 patients. The Sheriff promptly raided the farm but, sidestepping overt controversy, he claimed it was because the church lacked a proper business license (Lewis, 2000). Dave responded with a lawsuit alleging violation of religious freedom. The county and church came to a truce: the church dropped the lawsuit in exchange for county policy change on churches and business licenses. The Garners, however, separately struck a plea bargain with the sheriff requiring renunciation of Northern Lights Church and cessation of operations (Garland, 2001). Despite this plea, a judge granted an allowance for the Garners to continue to grow cannabis for patients, this time as private caregivers. The Sheriff balked. Two years later, he returned to chop down their plants. Shortly thereafter, the Garners went bankrupt, foreclosed on their home, and moved to Oregon. "Last I heard [they're] not doing well," Dave reports. Once again, the Sheriff's executive power undermined claims to medical cannabis.

The last episode of this first wave of activism came in 2004, when Kim Cue attempted to open the county's first storefront dispensary. The county, unprepared, placed a moratorium on dispensaries while they studied the issue. One supervisor remembers:

We heard about the issue, we brought people in with cancer, who were medical marijuana patients and then [Sheriff] Downum comes in with this reefer madness video, a PowerPoint to show all these doubtful connections. It was appalling. It was so backward, messed up, so ridiculous that it kind of lost those who were taking this study seriously. One supervisor said, 'Come on, this isn't at all what's going on, this is crazy.' [...] It was so clear one side was ideological and the other just had a human side.

The Sheriff seemingly overplayed his hand. Supervisors, fed up, rejected his concerns and allowed Cue to open. In response, the Sheriff brandished his federal cross-deputization, remarking, "I guess we have to see whether the feds trump the state" (Turner, 2005a) and clarifying that the federal government "could expect my cooperation." Demurely denying his statements were threats—"If she took something I said as a threat, I can't imagine why"—he then extended similar sentiments to the supervisors, stating, "In some other jurisdictions the board's decisions have left it open for some liability." His statements were effective. "Anybody would be out of their mind to open up a dispensary after that," Cue said (Turner, 2005b). Instead, she opened a mobile cannabis delivery service, hoping to stay off the Sheriff's radar. After being followed daily by a deputy on her delivery rounds, she was eventually driven out of business and left the county.

Dave Jack was also forced out. Police habitually parked outside his driveway, miles from the police station; a deputy started a whisper campaign against his son; county deputies raided his house (despite it being in a different jurisdiction); he was threatened with removal of his son by child services; a request went to the DEA to initiate an investigation against him. One day his son walked in the house with three-quarters of an ounce of cannabis he had found hidden in his backseat. A day later his son was pulled over and his car searched, though nothing was found, leading Dave to believe it had been planted. Harassed to the limit, Dave and his family, Calaveras residents for over 30 years, left.

The first wave of Calaveras medical marijuana activism lay in shambles, repelled by the resilient walls of the exurban fortress. Dave Jack, along with other activists, had been banished from this conservative, anti-cannabis exurb, each case contouring its buttressed barriers. Though libertarian notions of individual rights might have resonated in a prior, extractivist era, they found little purchase in the nostalgic rural imaginary of exurbia. Cannabis activists eventually reconnoitered. Yet this time they would do so amidst a housing-based financial recession—a crisis that destabilized exurbanization, the political bloc that supported it, and the rural/urban spatial imaginary that subtended its reproduction.

Exurban crisis and political reorganization

By 2010, amidst mortgage-based recession, Calaveras exurbanization ground to a halt. Building permits in 2011 were 5% of those issued in 2005 (Janssen, 2012). Construction and retail plummeted, thereby reducing tax revenue, sending the government into fiscal straits through 2012. Property values dropped up to 50% in the region, with Calaveras one of the hardest hit (Bardhan and Walker, 2010).⁴ Over the 2000s, real income declined, 6% of county jobs disappeared, and unemployment rates tripled to 16.3%, topping their previous high in 1992.

Political opposition to unbridled exurbanization mounted. Conservationism grew steadily through the 1990s with the formation of Sierra Forest Legacy in 1997, Blue Mountain Community Renewal Council in 1999, and Ebbets Pass Forest Watch in 2000. In 2000, when Sierra Pacific won permits to clear-cut timber, conservationists pressured it to scale back—and succeeded when local businesses, sensing a threat to natural-amenity tourism, supported them (Limbaugh and Fuller, 2004). Natural landscape preservation was increasingly valued more than extraction.

When recession struck, conservationism intensified and veered in a pro-planning direction. The Calaveras Planning Coalition, promoting community participation in county planning, formed in 2005. In 2007, they were joined by: MyValleySprings.com, a group of exurban residents seeking to moderate growth; Keep It Rural, Calaveras, dedicated to combatting unplanned development; the Calaveras Foothills Fire Safe Council; and the Amador-Calaveras Consensus Group, to build “sustainable local economies.” Several new environmental organizations, like FoCuS (Foothill Collaborative for Sustainability) and FLCR (Friends of the Lower Calaveras River), forged collaborative agendas among conservationists and exurbanites. As Colleen Hiner (2016) details, this pro-planning shift materialized in the activism of homeowner groups in a 12-year court battle over a golf course, culminating in a court decision affirming enhanced abilities to restrict and regulate land use.

Planning and conservation agendas converged in the figure of county supervisor Steve Wilensky, an apple farmer, conservationist, and former union organizer. His “smart growth” platform, based on “the triple bottom line” of “people, planet, and profits” and “full cost accounting” of development’s ecological and social costs, propelled him into office in 2004 in what he called a “general uprising” in this conservative county. His message appealed not only to conservationists and progressives but to ranchers, small businesses, and (some) realtors, who sought moderated development and more deliberative, transparent government.

After winning a shocking 46% of the open primary vote and promising to break Calaveras’ “one party rule,” Wilensky’s opposition mobilized. A Los Angeles development firm, worried about construction restrictions, sponsored a weeklong training for his

opponent; timber companies, worried about environmental restrictions, vocally opposed him; and Sheriff Downum, seeing a candidate advancing outside his political machine, came out swinging. If Wilensky prevailed, the Sheriff warned in a letter, public safety would suffer and voter's guns and chainsaws would be confiscated. Wilensky's response—that "public safety" was not secured through jails and arrests but through a "multi-disciplinary and community approach" to addiction, mental health, and child and domestic abuse—was apparently convincing, as he sailed to victory with 59% of the electorate. Over the next several years, Wilensky advanced a "rural progressive" vision that contrasted with the exurban revanchism defended by the Sheriff.

Economic disarray and reshuffled county politics sparked a reorganization of conservatives, who increasingly rallied around an anti-statist, libertarian-inspired opposition to government intervention—including law enforcement itself. The Calaveras Taxpayers Association, founded by a neo-confederate Christian secessionist, formed in 2007, followed by the Calaveras Tea Party, a Ron Paul MeetUp group, and Gold Country Patriots. These groups were not concerned with urban contagion of drugs, but with a different urban contagion associated with "smart growth" and "sustainability." The most radical saw this rhetoric of planners and conservationists as veiled encroachments upon property rights and American liberty by a bureaucratic, covertly eugenic, and socialistic world government (see Beebe and Wheeler, 2012).

Instead of fighting cannabis, this refurbished Right fought the state-mandated General Plan Update, a key planning document for the county's land use and economic development. Their champions were not the Sheriff's deputies but the Auditor and Assessor, who oversaw government finances and property appraisals. Their foil was not the drug criminal but the director of the Community Development Agency (CDA), a department formed amidst the housing recession after the exposure of longstanding corruption in the county's building agency. CDA's combination of building and planning agencies to promote more transparent, regulated development enraged conservative activists, who saw this as an effort to curtail property rights. Years of controversy ensued, including a salacious grand jury investigation, the churning of six CDA directors in seven years (leading one director to lament that planners were "constantly on the firing line" (Nichols, 2009)), and the eventual dissolution of CDA. In short, planners replaced cannabis criminals as the Right's most reviled symbolic figure.

Sheriff Downum's anti-cannabis, law-and-order politics smacked of anachronism. Viewed by progressives, his opaque, semi-autonomous authoritarianism was antithetical to planning-oriented values of consensus, participation, and regulation; his demands for county funding competed with other budget priorities, like conservation and social services; and his prohibitionism impeded cannabis policy liberalization. For an ascendant progressive political bloc, a new imaginary of rural/urban difference formulated through a vision of conserved nature, planned space, and the identification of unregulated spatio-economic growth as the key urbanizing process to be opposed.

Viewed from a reorganized libertarian Right, the Sheriff's expenditures, particularly harassing medical cannabis patients, were more government waste; his tactics meddled with individual rights; his department, like the CDA, was bloated big government. Even the anti-gay, confederate secessionist founder of the Taxpayers Association opposed Downum based on his massive institutional consolidation and his refusal to accept budget cuts amidst the county budgetary shortage. For this new Rightism, "the rural" requiring protection was not a moral community in need of policing so much as an agglomeration of individuals who required freedom *from* state interventions.

In the wake of the housing crisis, both progressives and conservatives saw clearly that cannabis prohibition had not protected them from other urbanizing processes, whether those of unregulated capital or an overzealous state. While progressives and conservatives advanced differing spatial-political imaginaries to support these political estimates, neither could advance unless the Sheriff were deposed by an articulate, effective force. Cannabis cultivators and patients rallied such a force.

Medical cannabis: Round 2

Marking a pivotal moment in the county's political history, cannabis advocates pushed the Sheriff into retirement in 2010. Since the Sheriff had ejected Dave Jack from the county and autocratically vetoed Kim Cue's dispensary, medical cannabis had become a dormant issue. Yet, the Sheriff's plays for executive authority had left him politically vulnerable. Four days into 2010, this vulnerability became apparent.

Jay Smith, of K Care Collective, had done diligence in verifying Robert Shaffer, the delivery service's second client, as a medical cannabis patient. Yet when Smith came to a Subway parking lot to finalize paperwork and transact cannabis, there was one problem: Robert Shaffer had been arrested two months prior. The man buying cannabis was Deputy Robert Huffman. Using Shaffer's medical cannabis ID card, Deputy Huffman quickly flashed his driver's license, reportedly obscuring the last name. When Jay failed to notice the mismatched names, deputies stormed, arresting Smith and serving warrants on several people involved with K Care. Lacking irony, Downum defended these actions—dispensing should be based on “a relationship” and delivery services were ruses for “just selling drugs” (Nichols, 2010b). The catch, of course, was that Downum ensured no dispensaries could open in order to build those relationships.

By February's end, public furor over Smith's case mounted, leading to a grand jury investigation into the sheriff's department (Nichols, 2010b). Exhausted from battling supervisors over budget allocations—something assured to the sheriff in boom times—the investigation was the last straw for Downum, who refused to watch the “dismantling of an organization [they] helped build.” Downum and his undersheriff soon announced their resignations (Nichols, 2010a).

In April, a new controversy struck the town of Angels Camp. Municipal police stopped a man named Frank for an expired car registration. A Latino, Frank was accustomed to police attention in this nearly all-white county. In Frank's car the officer discovered cannabis, covered under medical recommendation. After a non-consensual search, the officer arrested Frank and confiscated the cannabis for destruction, despite state legal rulings contravening confiscation. When a county detective, who had conducted the K Care bust a few months prior, crossed jurisdictional boundaries to interrogate Frank, Frank called Tom Liberty of Collective Patient Resources (CPR). Liberty, who had just formed CPR, demanded the case be dropped and Frank's cannabis returned, sending the DA citations for relevant court cases. When the DA agreed, the police were compelled to return Frank's cannabis (Metzger, 2010c). Together with the K Care case, these episodes upended Calaveras policing in terms of policy and public opinion, that tacit but powerful arbiter of police practice. Not all were pleased. Angel's Camp police chief was quoted saying he would never return cannabis again unless ordered by the court. He was relieved from duty within the week (Metzger, 2010d).

That summer, the Sheriff met his match in the figure of a modern-day cowboy: Guy Meyers. Meyers, a cantankerous property developer, had successfully sued the county multiple times and now, with property markets struggling, sought returns from another little-

regulated sector—cannabis. Surreptitiously, Meyers opened a dispensary at the edge of a strip mall on the county's Stockton-facing edge after obtaining a county-issued business permit through a vaguely worded application. This developer's actions signified two things: (1) cannabis was being incorporated into the logic of real estate and free commerce and (2) the bonds between law enforcement and developers were fraying.

Because of a loophole in state law, the county could not close the dispensary. County officials became tight-lipped, fearing a lawsuit, while Downum repeatedly sent in undercover officers to catch Meyers making a mistake. No mistake came. Hoping to shut down Meyers' operation, the county moved to update a 2005 dispensary land use ordinance, a move supported even by anti-regulatory officials. At the last minute, cannabis advocates learned of an addendum banning outdoor growing by patient-cultivators. In an unprecedented public display, 20 activists disputed this addendum at a county meeting and defeated the bill, inadvertently saving Meyers from closure. It soon emerged that, despite the bill's drafting by the planning department, the Sheriff had revised it (on request from a sponsoring supervisor), inserting the outdoor ban language himself. This enraged other supervisors: the sheriff had crossed the line from executive to legislative powers. The anti-cannabis consensus around Downum lay shattered as the 2010 election approached.

Downum mustered only tepid support for his chosen candidate, Ed Ballard, a veteran grantwriter, avid supporter of the county's new jail project, and the officer who had made the pivotal arrest of medical cannabis patient Robert Galambos (in this article's introduction) in 1998. Running against Ballard was Gary Kuntz, a spurned deputy who had been forcibly retired in 2009 by Downum when the supervisors demanded budget cuts. Kuntz and Downum had been at loggerheads since the mid-1990s when Kuntz testified, at the behest of Downum's libertarian opposition, that department morale was low since Downum's ascent. Kuntz envisioned community-based policing, rebuilt relations and collaborations with other departments, rehabilitated inmates, and even redirecting budget funds to other county functions, like public libraries. Downum sensed endangerment of his legacy; his opponents sensed victory. CPR's cannabis activists joined with progressives, conservationists, exurbanites, and even the county's Tea Party coordinator, who advocated a "regime change" in the Sheriff's office, to elect Kuntz as the county's first new sheriff since 1994.

As with Downum's ascent, his downfall mirrored broader shifts in US conservatism. After 2008, an insurgent Tea Party-fueled libertarianism challenged the punitive policies championed by moral conservatives (Dagan and Teles, 2016; Wilson and Burack, 2012). California repealed the three strikes law, depopulated overcrowded prisons, diverted drug offenses away from prison, decommissioned regional drug task forces, reclassified cannabis possession as an infraction from a misdemeanor, and eventually legalized cannabis entirely. The 1994 anti-crime, anti-drug tide that swept Downum into power had receded.

In this new environment, cannabis activists shifted from civil libertarianism to a new claim on the right to be regulated (cf. Roitman, 2005), at least enough to achieve formal market regularity. CPR—whose coordinator was a founding California Tea Party member—aligned with regulation-minded progressives, planners, and conservationists, pursued regulation and a shift away from law enforcement. Newly political patient-cultivators disrupted the lines between rural/urban, safe/criminal, moral/degenerate, undergirding the Sheriff's power.

Cannabis "criminals" were no longer exterior to, but were compositional of, exurban rurality. Within a month of Sheriff Kuntz's election, the county's first medical cannabis collective opened, 14 years after medical cannabis became state law. Sharing a building with the county's public defender, the collective was a few hundred yards from the county court building—a spatio-symbolic arrangement lost on few. The exurban fortress was breached.

Conclusion

In Calaveras, cannabis prohibition became a means to manage core contradictions in exurbia's production, consumption, and governance. Prohibition, as a governing strategy, mapped a socio-spatial order consisting of an idyllic, enfortressed rurality threatened by corrosive urban degeneracy. Just as the *laissez-faire* hyper-development of the 1980s could not prevent (and likely precipitated) the 1992 recession, the exurban fortress could not insulate residents from the 2007 recession. The latter crisis and reorganization enabled new governing patterns and spatial imaginaries, which crucially materialized through cannabis activism and efforts to topple the Sheriff—the defender of the exurban fortress and its spatial imaginary. As activists inserted themselves and the plant into public life, they challenged and renovated a political order based on their exclusion.

This article, then, provides insight into the geographical dynamics of drug war stabilization and the disruptive transformations of the spatio-political regimes that hold it in place. Exurbia was a key node in this geography, one that stabilized conservative ideas of the urban and rural, fostered constituencies that fueled the War on Drugs, and produced transformative political forces to challenge that war (cf. Schafran et al., 2013).

Exurban Calaveras continues to struggle over what *kinds* of rurality and urban-ness give it shape. Cannabis is a telling barometer of these struggles. After the Sheriff's retirement, Calaveras transformed from a county with one of the highest cannabis-related arrest rates to a rapidly growing center for cannabis production, particularly following the fires and resulting property turnovers that swept the area in 2015. The county passed a landmark bill to permit and regulate cannabis in 2016, which promised substantial government revenues and personal earnings—total sales output (\$251 m) from registered growers was estimated to best the tourism (\$167 m) and agricultural (\$28 m) industry and add over 3,000 jobs to a county with only 16,000 jobs (CBPR, 2017). Yet, resisting even this logic of economic growth, conservative exurbanites organized opposition to cannabis regulation, culminating in the recall of two supervisors and the passage of a countywide ban on cannabis production.⁵ Ironically, conservatives employed the language of both planning (i.e. cannabis cultivation is a nuisance) and conservation (i.e. it would pollute waterways)—state-related, “urban,” languages that libertarian-oriented conservatives had previously excoriated as invasive government interventions. Cannabis, once a crime, now becomes an unseemly rural land use disruptive of exurban landscapes, natures, and communities. As of this writing, the county is moving to pass highly restrictive cannabis regulations. Cannabis remains one of *the* central struggles through which Calaverans differentiate the rural and urban—and to what and whose ends. These kinds of bordering practices, whether through drugs, immigration, race, or political party maps, are critical to contemporary US politics, particularly the populist bordering of “the people” (De Genova, 2018; Maskovsky and Bjork-James, 2020).

Exurbia is a critical site for these investigations. Once again the fastest-growing spatial form in the United States, exurbia outpaces urban, rural, and suburban growth (Frey, 2015), becoming home not only to an exurbanite asset class but also to poor and working people who service them (Berube et al., 2006; Taylor, 2011). Since the 2008 recession, exurbia is not generally absorbing major institutional capital investment—cities assumed that role—but exurbs *are* the destination of *popular* capital investment, namely through individual homebuyers, who in the aggregate comprise a major capital flow (Molina, 2015). This popular capital makes the politics of exurban places increasingly consequential to the US political economy more broadly. Analysis must attend to the *new* productions of rural/urban difference that define exurban politics, particularly its conservative character (Lang et al., 2008).

Who propagates new productions of the rural and its urban exterior? What urban flows are marked as invasive or corrosive of rurality? Which remain unmarked or rendered benign? Answering these questions offers insight into the contentious production of the exurb and its spatio-political categories—an important task at a time when those categories, the rural and the urban, seem entrenched and intransigent, like any well-constructed fortress.

Acknowledgements

Deep thanks to all the people in Calaveras who opened their lives and gave their time to me. Many thanks to Laura Taylor, Alex Schafran, Nathan Sayre and the members of the Sayre Lab for their thoughtful comments and support.

Author's note

Because of the legally sensitive nature of the topics researched, the confidentiality concerns of informants, and the terms agreed upon between the researcher and informants, data are unavailable for public review.

Declaration of conflicting interests

The author(s) declared no potential conflicts of interest with respect to the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article.

Funding

The author(s) disclosed receipt of the following financial support for the research, authorship, and/or publication of this article: This research was conducted with support from the Wenner-Gren Foundation, City University of New York–Graduate Center, Horowitz Foundation for Social Policy, and the National Institutes of Health/National Institute on Drug Abuse (Grant #: 5T32 DA07233). The writing was supported by the Ciriacy-Wantrup Postdoctoral Fellowship at University of California, Berkeley.

Notes

1. This term marks not individual spatial perceptions so much as collective conceptions emerging from patterned relations, representations, and everyday practices (Boudreau, 2007: 2596–2597; Dickinson, 2015: 43).
2. California Police Chiefs. Executive Board. Accessed 1 December 2013. <http://californiapolicechiefs.org/board-members>; California Police Chiefs. Past Presidents. Accessed 1 December 2013. https://www.cnoa.org/about/past_presidents; California State Sheriffs' Association. 2019–2020 CSSA Officers. Accessed February 2020. <http://www.calsheriffs.org/about-us/board-of-directors.html>
3. The 2002 *Mower* decision, originating in Tuolumne County south of Calaveras, also ruled that the “arrest first, ask questions later” practice was untenable, setting the stage for California’s first statewide medical cannabis legislation in 2004, which effectively removed medical cannabis patients from the court system.
4. California was ground zero for the crisis: 56% of the \$1.38 trillion in subprime loans was issued from its banks, much of that money fueling unprecedented building booms throughout the exurban fringe, where many were moving as urban property values skyrocketed. The exurban development agenda in Calaveras and California subsequently deteriorated (Bardhan and Walker, 2010).
5. Localities are allowed to ban marijuana according to state law that otherwise legalized cannabis.

References

Bardhan A and Walker RA (2010) *California, Pivot of the Great Recession*. Berkeley: Institute for Research on Labor and Employment.

- Beebe C and Wheeler M (2012) Gold Country: The politics of landscape in exurban El Dorado County, California. *Journal of Political Ecology* 19: 1–16.
- Berlant L (2011) *Cruel Optimism*. Durham: Duke University Press.
- Berube A, Singer A, Wilson JH, et al. (2006) *Finding Exurbia: America's Fast-Growing Communities at the Metropolitan Fringe*. Washington: Brookings Institution.
- Boudreau JA. Making new political spaces: Mobilizing spatial imaginaries, instrumentalizing spatial practices, and strategically using spatial tools. *Environment and Planning A* 39: 2593–2611.
- Bourgeois P (2003) *In Search of Respect: Selling Crack in El Barrio*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Boyce G, Banister J and Slack J (2015) You and what army? Violence, the state, and Mexico's war on drugs. *Territory, Politics, Governance* 3(4): 446–468.
- Brands HW (2008) *The Age of Gold*. New York: Knopf Doubleday.
- Cadieux KV and Hurley PT (2011) Amenity migration, exurbia, and emerging rural landscapes: Global natural amenity as place and as process. *GeoJournal* 76(4): 297–302.
- Cadieux KV and Taylor L (eds) (2013) *Landscape and the Ideology of Nature in Exurbia: Green Sprawl*. New York: Routledge.
- Calaveras County (2015) Calaveras County Housing Element 2014–2019. Calaveras County Board of Supervisors. May 26.
- CBPR (Center for Business and Policy Research) (2017) *An Economic Impact Assessment of the Cannabis Cultivation Industry in Calaveras County*. Stockton: University of the Pacific.
- Dagan D and Teles SM (2016) *Prison Break: Why Conservatives Turned against Mass Incarceration*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Darling E (2005) The city in the country: Wilderness gentrification and the rent gap. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 37(6): 1015–1032.
- Davis M (1993) Who killed LA? A political autopsy. *New Left Review* 197: 3–28.
- De Genova N (2018) Rebordering “the People”: Notes on Theorizing Populism. *South Atlantic Quarterly* 117(2): 357–374.
- De Genova N and Roy (2020) Practices of illegalization. *Antipode* 52(2): 352–364.
- Dickinson G (2015) *Suburban Dreams: Imagining and Building the Good Life*. Tuscaloosa: University of Alabama Press.
- DOJ (Department of Justice) (1997) Deputization of State and Local Law Enforcement Officers as Task Force Officers and Cross-Designation of Federal Law Enforcement Officers. *Federal Register* 62(195): 52492. Available at: <http://www.gpo.gov/fdsys/pkg/FR-1997-10-08/pdf/97-26660.pdf> (accessed 12 February 2020).
- Dolgon C (2005) *The End of the Hamptons: Scenes from the Class Struggle in America's Paradise*. New York: NYU Press.
- EPS-HDT (Economic Profile System-Human Dimensions Toolkit) (2012) A profile of socioeconomic measures. *Headwaters Economics* June 28.
- Frey WH (2000) Melting pot suburbs. In: Katz B and Lang RE (eds) *Redefining Urban and Suburban America: Evidence from Census*. Washington: Brookings Institution Press, pp.155–180.
- Frey WH (2015) *Migration to the Suburbs and Sun Belt Picks Up*. Washington: Brookings Institution. Available at: <https://www.brookings.edu/opinions/migration-to-the-suburbs-and-sun-belt-picks-up/> (accessed 12 February 2020).
- Garland D (2018) Theoretical advances and problems in the sociology of punishment. *Punishment & Society* 20(1): 8–33.
- Garland F (1998) Pot fight in Lode. *Recordnet.com*. April 21. Available at: http://www.recordnet.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/19980421/A_NEWS/304219988 (accessed 12 February 2020).
- Garland F (2001) Church founder sues Calaveras County. *Recordnet.com*. Nov 16. Available at: http://www.recordnet.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20011116/A_NEWS/311169929 (accessed 12 February 2020).
- Garriott WI (2011) *Policing Methamphetamine: Narcopolitics in Rural America*. New York: NYU Press.

- Gieringer D (1999) The Forgotten Origins of Cannabis Prohibition in California. *Contemporary Drug Problems* 26(2): 237–288.
- Gilmore RW (2007) *Golden Gulag: Prisons, Surplus, Crisis, and Opposition in Globalizing California*. Berkeley: University of California Press.
- Gosnell H and Abrams J (2009) Amenity migration: Diverse conceptualizations of drivers, socioeconomic dimensions, and emerging challenges. *GeoJournal* 76(4): 303–322.
- Halfacree KH (1996) Out of place in the country: Travellers and the “rural idyll”. *Antipode* 28(1): 42–72.
- Herbert S and Brown E (2006) Conceptions of space and crime in the punitive neoliberal city. *Antipode* 38(4): 755–777.
- Hiner CC (2016) Divergent perspectives and contested ecologies: Three cases of land-use change in Calaveras County, California. In: Taylor L and Hurley P (eds) *A Comparative Political Ecology of Exurbia*. New York: Springer, pp.51–82.
- Holmes E (2008) Palin touts the ‘Pro-America’ areas of the country. *Wall Street Journal*. October 17.
- Janssen S (2012) Property values slip less. *The Union Democrat*. Aug 2. Available at: <http://www.uniondemocrat.com/News/Local-News/Property-values-slip-less>
- Johnson S (2010) Letter to the editor. *ThePineTree.net*. May 4. Available at: http://thepinetree.net/index.php?module=announce&ANN_user_op=view&ANN_id=17266 (accessed 12 February 2020).
- Lang R, Sanchez T and Berube A (2008) The new suburban politics. In: Texeira R (ed.) *Red, Blue and Purple America*. Washington: Brookings Institution, pp.25–49.
- Lassiter MD (2015) Pushers, victims, and the lost innocence of White suburbia: California’s war on narcotics during the 1950s. *Journal of Urban History* 41(5): 787–807.
- Lewis C (2000) Sacramento or Sacrilege? *Recordnet.com*. Aug 27. Available at: http://www.recordnet.com/article/20000827/a_news/308279985 (accessed 12 February 2020).
- Limbaugh RH and Fuller WP (2004) *Calaveras Gold: The Impact of Mining on a Mother Lode County*. Reno: Reno University of Nevada Press.
- Lynch M (2001) From the punitive city to the gated community: Security and segregation across the social and penal landscape. *University of Miami Law Review* 56: 89.
- Lynch M, Omori M, Roussell A, et al. (2013) Policing the ‘progressive’ city: The racialized geography of drug law enforcement. *Theoretical Criminology* 17(3): 335–357.
- Marsden T, Lowe P and Whatmore S (1990) *Rural Restructuring: Global Processes and Their Responses*. London: Fulton.
- Maskovsky J and Bjork-James S, Eds. *Beyond Populism: Angry Politics and the Twilight of Neoliberalism*. Morgantown: West Virginia University Press.
- McCarthy J (2008) Rural geography: Globalizing the countryside. *Progress in Human Geography* 32(1): 129–137.
- McKittrick K (2011) On plantations, prisons, and a black sense of place. *Social & Cultural Geography* 12(8): 947–963.
- Mendian S and Gambhir S (2019) Racial segregation in the San Francisco Bay Area, Part 2. Available at: <https://belonging.berkeley.edu/racial-segregation-san-francisco-bay-area-part-2> (accessed 6 June 2019).
- Metzger J (2010a) Calaveras coroner under scrutiny. *Calaveras Enterprise*. Mar 23. Available at: http://www.calaverasenterprise.com/news/article_f2b4d957-9ea0-53c1-976b-d8faeb21ff5c.html (accessed 12 February 2020).
- Metzger J (2010b) Sheriff reflects on 42 years of service. *Calaveras Enterprise*. Available at: http://www.calaverasenterprise.com/news/article_f0e4e045-7e7d-55ab-ba9e-ff4609696ea5.html (accessed 12 February 2020).
- Metzger J (2010c) Angels Camp Police Department returns man’s medical marijuana. *Calaveras Enterprise*. Apr 13. Available at: http://www.calaverasenterprise.com/news/article_be01f722-01e2-5b2b-a011-cc4737366989.html (accessed 12 February 2020).

- Metzger J (2010d) Angels Police Department chief fired. *Calaveras Enterprise*. Apr 23. Available at: http://www.calaverasenterprise.com/news/article_2b1b0a64-b35e-5637-a7f0-1cd42948bc29.html (accessed 12 February 2020).
- Molina ET (2015) Foreclosures, investors, and uneven development during the great recession in the Los Angeles metropolitan area. *Journal of Urban Affairs* 38(4): 564–580.
- Muehlebach A and Shoshan N (2012) Introduction. In special Issue: Post-Fordist affect. *Anthropological Quarterly* 85(2): 317–343.
- Mullings L (2003) After drugs and the ‘War on Drugs’: Reclaiming the power to make history in Harlem, New York. In: Susser I and Schneider J (eds) *Wounded Cities*. New York: Verso, pp.173–199.
- Murakawa N and Beckett K (2012) Mapping the shadow carceral state: Toward an institutionally capacious approach to punishment. *Theoretical Criminology* 16(2): 221–244.
- Nichols D (2009) Dissolution of agency ends years of turmoil in Calaveras. *Calaveras Enterprise*. May 13. Available at: http://www.recordnet.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20090513/A_NEWS/905130315&cid=sitesearch (accessed 12 February 2020).
- Nichols D (2010a) Undersheriff plans to resign in August. *Calaveras Enterprise*. Mar 2. Available at: http://www.recordnet.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/20100302/A_NEWS/3020318/-1/A_NEWS13 (accessed 12 February 2020).
- Nichols D (2010b) Calaveras deputies ethics questioned. *Calaveras Enterprise*. Jun 9. Available at: http://www.calaverasenterprise.com/news/article_ddb2560c-13e5-5f78-8e93-44c44cfb3026.html (accessed 12 February 2020).
- Piliawsky M (1994) The Clinton administration and African-Americans. *The Black Scholar* 24(2): 2–10.
- Ralph L (2014) *Renegade Dreams: Living through Injury in Gangland Chicago*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press.
- Robinson JA, Torvik R and Verdier T (2006) Political foundations of the resource curse. *Journal of Development Economics* 79(2): 447–468.
- Roitman J (2005) *Fiscal Disobedience: An Anthropology of Economic Regulation in Central Africa*. Princeton: Princeton University Press.
- Rothstein R (2017) *The Color of Law: A Forgotten History of How Our Government Segregated America*. New York: Liveright Publishing.
- Sayre NF (2006) *Ranching, Endangered Species, and Urbanization in the Southwest: Species of Capital*. Tucson: University of Arizona Press.
- Sayre NF (2011) Commentary: Scale, rent, and symbolic capital: Political economy and emerging rural landscapes. *GeoJournal* 76(4): 437–439.
- Schafran A, Lopez OS and Gin JL (2013) Politics and possibility on the metropolitan edge: The scale of social movement space in exurbia. *Environment and Planning A: Economy and Space* 45(12): 2833–2851.
- Schept J (2013) ‘A lockdown facility . . . with the feel of a small, private college’: Liberal politics, jail expansion, and the carceral habitus. *Theoretical Criminology* 17(1): 71–88.
- Shabazz R (2009) “So high you can’t get over it, so low you can’t get under it”: Carceral spatiality and black masculinities in the United States and South Africa. *Souls* 11(3): 276–294.
- Simon J (2007) *Governing through Crime: How the War on Crime Transformed American Democracy and Created a Culture of Fear*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Smith DP and Phillips DA (2001) Socio-cultural representations of greentrified Pennine rurality. *Journal of Rural Studies* 17(4): 457–469.
- Smith N (1996) *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. New York: Routledge.
- Somerville P, Smith R and McElwee G (2015) The dark side of the rural idyll. *Journal of Rural Studies* 39: 219–228.
- Tate K, Taylor JL and Sawyer MQ (eds) (2013) *Something’s in the Air: Race, Crime, and the Legalization of Marijuana*. New York: Routledge.
- Taylor L (2011) No boundaries: Exurbia and the study of contemporary urban dispersion. *GeoJournal* 76(4): 323–339.

- Taylor LE and Hurley PT (eds) (2016) *A Comparative Political Ecology of Exurbia: Planning, Environmental Management, and Landscape Change*. New York: Springer.
- Thomas K and Galemba RB (2013) Illegal anthropology: An introduction. *Polar: Political and Legal Anthropology Review* 36: 211.
- Towncharts (2018) Calaveras county, California Housing Data. Available at: <http://www.towncharts.com/California/Housing/Calaveras-County-CA-Housing-data.html> (accessed 12 February 2020).
- Tulumello S (2018) Neoliberalisation of security, austerity and the ‘end of public policy’: Governing crime in Memphis (TN, USA) through predictive policing, community, grants and police ‘mission creep’. *ACME: An International Journal for Critical Geographies* 17: 171–200.
- Turner V (2005a) Supervisors approve marijuana dispensaries. *Calaveras Enterprise*. Feb 8. Available at: <http://www.shroomery.org/forums/showflat.php/Number/3750880> (accessed 12 February 2020).
- Venkatesh S (2008) *Gang leader for a Day: A Rogue Sociologist Takes to the Streets*. London: Penguin.
- Venkatesh S (2012) The racial dilemma in urban policing. *Criminology & Public Policy* 11: 655.
- Wacquant L (2010) Urban desolation and symbolic denigration in the hyperghetto. *Social Psychology Quarterly* 73(3): 215–219.
- Walker P and Fortmann L (2003) Whose landscape? A political ecology of the ‘exurban’ Sierra. *Cultural Geographies* 10(4): 469–491.
- Watts M (2004) Resource curse? Governmentality, oil and power in the Niger Delta, Nigeria. *Geopolitics* 9(1): 50–80.
- Wilson A and Burack C (2012) ‘Where Liberty Reigns and God is Supreme’: The Christian Right and the Tea party Movement. *New Political Science* 34(2): 172–190.

Michael Polson is a postdoctoral research fellow at the University of California–Berkeley where he is conducting research into post-legalization dynamics around cannabis. He received his PhD in anthropology from CUNY Graduate Center in 2016 and has published in venues including *Environment and Planning A: Nature and Space*, *Journal for the Anthropology of North America*, *California Agriculture*, *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review: and Territory, Politics, Governance*. He is currently working on a book manuscript entitled *Legal: Prohibition, Producers and the New Social Life of Cannabis*.