decolonial/delinking approach of the Latin American school led by Walter Mignolo and Arturo Escobar, among others. She consistently follows their call to activism and engagement in opposition to postcolonial theorists, who still ground their work excessively on Eurocentric academic knowledge production, something very clear in other chapters.

The ninth chapter, ‘Subaltern Sea?’ by Sharad Chari, brings the intriguing experimental provocation of thinking beyond ‘terracentrism’ (p. 193) and into oceanic studies and maritime infrastructure to question if the Indian Ocean itself can be perceived as subaltern. Chari cleverly challenges the limits of the ‘grounding fields of vision’ (p. 195) behind geographical knowledge, while providing the book’s most transnational and transcultural approach by borrowing from Caribbean scholars.

The closing chapter, ‘Urban Fragments’ by Colin MacFarlane, provides the most direct and valuable theoretical contribution to the field of this journal by ‘exploring the broad influence of subaltern studies on urban studies’ (p. 210). The author defends the notion of the ‘fragment’ as a valuable resource for urban research while stressing three fundamental issues of the subaltern: its relation to political struggle, the challenge of its representation and its connection with the limits of urban theory. He also manages to provide the reader with a more diversified, complex and complete view of the contemporary patchwork that is the ‘subaltern studies imagination’ (p. 221), as well as its struggles over time.

Following McFarlane’s defence of the ‘fragment’, Sharp’s, Radcliffe’s, Laing’s and Gidwani and Kumar’s pieces could be singled out as the most essential ones to the field of contemporary Urban Studies. This is because they result from ethnographical work, which engages and attempts to present lesser-known realities to an international audience.

Overall, the book is an excellent source for those seeking to be introduced to different perspectives on the topic of subalternity, although most of its contributions ironically come from scholars based in the so-called ‘Global North’, a fact which could be examined by contemporary thinkers claiming for the decolonisation of knowledge production. The absence of local scholars from Africa and Latin America, who are highly regarded in their own non-English-speaking (and non-British-bound) milieux, might be a sign that we still have a long way to go when it comes to reshaping academic production. As captivating as it is, the fact that this book hailing from a conference of the British Royal Society is presented with aspirations to be a landmark in subaltern geographies might also be, in itself, something to be reflected upon by all of us. Still, it is a highly recommended reading to tease the need for collaboration, shared learning and situated knowledge.

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Luuk Slooter, The Making of the Banlieue: An Ethnography of Space, Identity and Violence, Basingstoke and New York, NY: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019; 281 pp; ISBN: 978-3-030-18209-0, £74.99 (hbk); ISBN: 978-3-030-18212-0, £54.99 (pbk)

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The most intriguing episodes of The Making of the Banlieue take the reader to the street corner, inside the youth centre and to the hang-out in front of a supermarket. They take you inside La Courneuve, a stigmatised and marginalised banlieue town north-east of
Paris, to the interactions and conversations with youngsters, youth workers and other inhabitants of the neighbourhood that the author observed and participated in. These episodes, put in dialogue with theoretical debates from the fields of sociology, anthropology and social psychology, make Luuk Slooter’s book a rich ethnography. This is a must-read for anyone interested in the question of urban inequality in France, violence in the banlieues and more generally the complex relationship between ‘the state’ and its citizens.

In his book, Slooter studies ‘the making of the French suburban crisis and its episodes of violence’ (p. 13). The book challenges the assumption that ‘the banlieue’ and ‘the banlieue youths’ are given or fixed categories and shows how they are ‘made and remade over time through social interaction’ (p. 14). The aim of the book is not to identify what is the banlieue, the banlieue youngster or the banlieue crisis, but to develop an understanding of how these categories are internally and externally constructed. This is an urgent task as the banlieues are still – and maybe even increasingly – perceived as being in crisis, and in public, political and academic debate such labels are quite easily used and reproduced.

Slooter starts ‘outside’ of the banlieue: with sketching a historical overview of urban policy, seen ‘from the Paris city center’ (p. 22). Drawing on Foucault’s governmentality approach, he studies the frames (‘language of description’) and practices (‘technologies of governance’) employed by state actors. He shows that years of urban policy have contributed to the drawing of boundaries between ‘here’ and ‘there’, between ‘us’ and ‘them’. Thereby, Slooter contributes to the existing scholarship, mainly the work of Dikeç (2007) and Kokoreff and Lapeyronnie (2013), in two ways. First, by providing a more comprehensive historical account, taking the construction of the first HLMs as a starting point. Second, by showing how violent events and the responses to them are core to the ‘making of the banlieue crisis’.

After this ‘outside’ state perspective, or what he calls ‘external categorisation’, Slooter explores three aspects of the ‘making of the banlieue’ as seen from the ‘inside’: internal place-making processes, social identification strategies of youngsters and manifestations and interpretations of violence. This, he labels ‘internal self-identification’. These chapters form the empirical core of the book, drawing on the extensive and in-depth fieldwork of the author. In building his argumentation, Slooter convincingly puts his data in dialogue with, again, Foucault’s governmentality approach, this time complemented with analytical concepts from place-making theory, identity-making theory and urban violence theory.

The most interesting and illustrative piece is the chapter in which Slooter explores youngsters’ identity-making. Here, he explains how they employ various strategies of social identification. Moreover, he illustrates how youngsters engage in not one but multiple strategies and that these strategies respond to both external and internal expectations: from the state and the street corner. Slooter shows how the categories (‘the banlieue youth’) and boundaries (‘us vs them’) that are often portrayed as fixed are constructed, negotiated and contested. This focus on processes of becoming, the dialogues between empirical data and analytical concepts and the rich ethnographic detail make the book a nuanced, in-depth and thereby important account of the world of youngsters growing up in the French suburbs.

While the book makes these strong contributions, it also asks for further discussion on three aspects. First, ‘the state’ is presented as a rather homogeneous actor in this story. Talking about ‘external categorisation’ and ‘internal identification’, ‘an inside’ and ‘an outside’, implies an ‘us vs them’ and
does create an ‘other’, while we don’t really get to know who that is. In general, it seems that ‘the state’ is that which makes and employs urban policy, but at times also the nuances of who is or represents the state are addressed – for instance, in discussions about the police; or when talking about the youth workers, who work for the municipality but are ‘seen by many youngsters who visit the youth centre not as representatives of the state, but merely as older peers in the neighbourhood’ (p. 85). These discussions suggest that the state is fragmented, but this is not discussed in more detail.

Because of the book’s well-informed focus on laying bare mainly internal dynamics of the banlieue, it is understandable that ‘the state’ is not deconstructed to the same extent as is ‘the banlieue’. Still, this results in the risk of homogenising and categorising an important actor in the story, something the author wants to avoid. In addition, for analytical clarity it is important to know what is exactly meant when we talk about ‘the state’ and to acknowledge the variety of governance layers outside – and inside – the banlieue, from national to local governments and in-between mediators, as they might construct categories in different ways (van de Wetering and Kaulingfreks, 2020).

Secondly, and in line with the above, the author focuses on local (inside) enactments of violence, while a more comprehensive account of violence, including that of the state, would be insightful. Slooter addresses how the state ‘show[s its] presence through repression and (the threat of) violence: […] in the form of hovering helicopters, police interventions and arrests of potential drug dealers’ (p. 243). The author does not extensively develop this line of thinking; however, I believe it would be a relevant avenue to further explore as part of ‘the making of the banlieue’, particularly as other scholarship suggests that the state’s governing projects may aggravate, rather than solve the problems of the banlieue (Enright, 2013).

Slooter’s focus on internal dynamics and interpretations of violence sheds a relevant new light on existing scholarship on urban violence and is, again, well justified – rich ethnography detail follows also from focus. Still, Slooter approaches ‘the making of the banlieue’ as a relational process. Therefore, it would be insightful to learn more about violence not only as an internal project of governing that controls the neighbourhood and its inhabitants, but perhaps also as an external project of governing by the state, especially in light of continuous urban policy focused on urban renovation projects and gentrification in many of the banlieue neighbourhoods (Lelevrir, 2013).

A final question that remains is what this means for urban policymakers at work and for the inhabitants of the banlieues right now. After reading Slooter’s book, we know how the banlieue crisis is made. How to unmake it (or: can it be unmade?) needs further attention. Slooter’s in-depth descriptive and analytical account of banlieue life and urban policy is relevant on its own. At the same time, as boundaries are hardening in France, the COVID-19 pandemic has contributed to existing (also spatial) inequalities, and the polarised political discourse in the wake of this year’s presidential elections reminds us of that surrounding the 2005 urban revolts, this question is in dire need of further exploration.

In his concluding chapter, Slooter paints a picture of what it is like to ‘leave the field’ after an intensive ethnographic study. He drops by the youth centre for the last time and says his goodbyes to the youth workers he was in close contact with. They respond: ‘We will still be here the next time you come to La Courneuve’ (p. 248). Slooter’s book is an important contribution to academic scholarship as it illustrates how the banlieue is
governed both externally by the state and internally by its inhabitants. With an in-depth ethnographic approach to studying the French suburban crisis, Slooter shows how questioning categories and boundaries enables analysis of the complexity of social life. It also opens up a more nuanced and informed dialogue on what is needed for urban change there, a question still highly urgent today.

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**Note**
1. ‘Habitations à Loyer Modéré’: social housing.

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Jaime Amparo Alves, *The Anti-Black City: Police Terror and Black Urban Life in Brazil*, Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 2018: 334 pp.: ISBN 978-1-5179-0156-1, US$27 (pbk)

**Reviewed by**: Luisa G Melo [id], City, Culture & Community, Tulane University, USA

*The Anti-Black City: Police Terror and Black Urban Life in Brazil* is a valuable resource to think critically about the struggle of marginalised people to subvert the Brazilian racial-colonial order. Looking at the current largest African Diasporic population in the last country in the Americas to abolish slavery, Alves’ book is a current and necessary analysis of the impoverished black population in Brazil. Nascimento (2021) claimed that Brazil’s history needs to be written by black hands, and *The Anti-Black City: Police Terror and Black Urban Life in Brazil* makes an essential contribution to writing this history from an overlooked perspective.

Jaime Amparo Alves argues that urban space in Brazil is racially produced, and that police terror represents the hands of the state which traces the boundaries of who belongs to the black necropolis. Brazil is a black country embedded in the fake discourse of ‘racial democracy’ where scholars have traditionally avoided addressing race in the social science field. Alves’ ethnography demonstrates why ‘São Paulo is de facto racial apartheid city’ (p. 50). Even though the racial lines are de jure blurred by Brazilian law, the state and civil society can easily identify black bodies and establish racial boundaries through everyday violence, incarceration and death. The book offers an inside perspective on urban black life in the favelas of São Paulo and people’s struggle to survive in a city designed to exclude, oppress and exploit black bodies.

Alves, research is an outstanding ethnography mixed with journalistic techniques from two years of fieldwork, between 2009 and 2010, in a violent and marginalised area of São Paulo called ‘Fundão da Zona Sul’. Each chapter opens with a richly detailed narration of Alves’ interactions with different actors – police officers, favela inhabitants, incarcerated black people – which puts the reader inside the scene as if they were witnessing that moment with him. The book is a testimony to how the cruel colonial order confines and annihilates black urban life.