COMMENTARY

Dorian Unmaking Space: Policy, Place, and Dislocation

Ian A. Bethell-Bennett
0000-0002-8958-9581

University of The Bahamas

Abstract

Within an autoethnographic approach, this paper employs concepts such as spatial and climate (in)justice and structural and slow violence to explore disaster capitalism that results from a neoliberal state and its desire to dispose of people it deems as being less worthy. Focusing on the impacts of Hurricane Dorian on Abaco and the fallout, this work builds on other disasters in the region and attempts to draw parallels between the Bahamian government's response to Hurricane Dorian and the similarity this response shares with other regional reactions to natural disasters.

> *Let me tell you a story. For all I have is a story. Story passed on from generation to generation, named Joy. Told for the joy it gives the storyteller and the listener. Joy inherent in the process of storytelling. Whoever understands it also understands that a story, as distressing as it can be in its joy, never takes anything away from anybody. Its name, remember, is Joy. Its double, Woe Morrow Show*. (Minh-Ha, 1989, p. 120)
>
> *I love the power of stories, especially tales told within circles of attentive listeners. Sharing our experiences, viewpoints and values is essential to creating (just) community, especially where these are stories of resistance and survival ... Autoethnography inspires me because it creates a virtual circle for sharing narratives and offers me a platform to, in my own voice, speak to my unique insights and realities*. (Schmid, 2019, p. 265)

The Ethnographic Story

Stories are our lives; without them we disappear into the nothingness of forgetting. This is a story based on a combination of cultural studies and ethnographic research: First-hand survivor accounts, conversations, and peer-reviewed sources from other similar events are brought together to explore and document our experiences. While this story begins at a later date, leaving Abaco in June 2019, I did not realise, could not know, that this would be the last time I would see it as we had then lived it. Kids graduated from high school, moved to college, and the consequent dislocation of familial centres was only furthered by Hurricane Dorian's arrival on the 1st of September. Abaco is already spatially complex, and the idea of spatial justice or environmental injustice is not discussed by the local community. However, within the complexity and the nuanced reading of the society, there is a resilience found in most communities (be it those faced with injustices or protected by social norms) that is deep-rooted and hard to believe. This resilience and self-reliance have come to serve many well in Hurricane

https://doi.org/10.15362/ijbs.v27i1.423

Dorian's wake. This is a story of resistance and survival as we experience the official overwriting of our stories within the newspapers and from government sources.

On the 31st of August, we went to bed as usual. The 1st of September, Hurricane Dorian woke us. My wife received an inundation of WhatsApp messages, text messages, Facebook messages, and phone calls. This continued for the next few days as survivors, in general, my life, and that of my family, shifted completely. We heard from people who were trying to organise escapes from the disaster zone and were being charged for evacuation flights. The Bahamian government denied all of these eyewitness experiences and recounting of nightmares lived or seen. Thus, this paper is partially autoethnographic in as far as we—acquaintances, friends, family, and I—are directly implicated in the disaster, but it is also limited because other family members are more implicated than we are, or I am, because they had spent most of their lives there and are actively trying to rebuild.

Schmid (2019) contends that "autoethnography inspires me because it creates a virtual circle for sharing narratives and offers me a platform to, in my own voice, speak to my unique insights and realities" (p. 265). Accordingly, this paper uses an autoethnographic approach to capture the relationship between the researcher, the community, and space and combines this with the concepts of structural and slow violence, putting the post-Hurricane Dorian experiences in conversation with Harvey (2008), Low (2016), and Soja's (2009) explorations into spatial justice. It is essential to underscore the slow violence evident in this undoing of lived experience and the spatial relationship present in allowing the slow violence to develop. Here, I draw on Nixon's (2011) concept of slow violence and Galtung's (1969) notion of structural violence, explained later in this article.

What also becomes clear from the days and weeks that followed the disaster is that there was no disaster or evacuation policy or plan in place for something this devastating. If there was a policy, no one could point to it; no one knew of it; no one knew how to use it. The word *policy* in the title of this piece speaks, therefore, to the dire need to create national plans/guidelines that are both robust and widely available for the public. Policy serves no purpose if no one, except a few officials, who are unable to find or implement it, know about it. But even if those few officials know, how effective can they be in rolling it out? In this case, there were too few to do any real policy work and to be effective in rescuing the people from the disaster zone, though this seems to have been overlooked. Indeed, more than a year after Hurricane Dorian, policy to mitigate and adapt to climate change is as unrealised as it was before Hurricane Dorian. Much of this, I argue, is structural and slow violence that is visited on the poor and those who are perceived as less important by a deeply colonial culture structured around class, gender, and race-based paradigms of justified disempowerment.

I have chosen to organise the paper around the three basic pillars of structural violence, slow violence, and spatial justice, all of which leads to silencing the subaltern people through creating official discourse that misleads the public (Dotson, 2011; Berenstain et al., 2021), especially the public in the capital of The Bahamas, and creates a false narrative. The fake news and false narrative work together to impose the official version over those who inhabit Abaco and Grand Bahama, whose versions of the facts are dismissed as fiction. The first example of this is when rapes and robberies are reported on the United States news channels by survivors ("Everything is gone," 2019), and

then Bahamian authorities go to great lengths to counter these accounts, stating there were no reports of violence or assaults. Reports are the only documentation the Bahamian government accepts as real, yet these reports vary between government departments and agencies (Smith-Cartwright, 2020).

In this piece, I use autoethnography because I was present throughout much of the experience, albeit in Nassau, and felt the pain of many of the survivors through their shared stories while we were all weathering the storm. I have intentionally been vague about survivor identities and refused to use names because survivors have been intimidated to remain silent, and thus the need for privacy. Any photos included are as neutral as possible so as not to expose people to continued structural and political violence because what they survived after Hurricane Dorian was the deep violence of a failed state where private security forces had to be called in to maintain order and individuals had to take turns keeping armed guard over spaces where government forces had simply vanished. By the time I landed on Abaco approximately a week after the storm, some officials were back, but the looting and violence continued unabashed. For example, generators and supplies secured for residents of Abaco by international aid agencies and family members either in Nassau or abroad were somehow intercepted at the port and spirited to New Providence or other parts of the island left untouched by the storm.

Before Hurricane Dorian hit The Bahamas and the Abacos, specifically, there were glaring inequalities and environmental and spatial (in)justices that thrived under the radar until events like the fire in The Mudd in 2018, which was the most recent blaze before Hurricane Dorian. Before the 2018 fire, there were also other fires due to the precarity of The Mudd and Pigeon Pea, what are referred to as shanty town communities built on privately-owned land where "old meets new." Old news is the legacy from Abaco's agricultural industry that imported workers, and recent news is the inclusion, yet simultaneous exclusion, of those workers from the Bahamian ethnoscape, many of whom have been in situ for three generations now. A mid-2000s study by a team from DePaul University demonstrated the long-term relationship with the space and the damage done to this community (Mazzeo, 2013). It was built on a study of Haitians living in The Bahamas conducted in 2005 by a team from the then College of The Bahamas sponsored by the International Organization for Migration; the report was never published locally given the Bahamian Cabinet's inability to approve the document (https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00078779/00001).

However, the focus of this work is bifurcated by the need to understand the deep social and economic exclusion or structural violence coupled with the slow violence that is visited on this community, in particular, and less so on the general Abaco community because of its centre/periphery dynamics. The Bahamas is an example, par excellence, of government, development, and economic activity being focused on the centre, Nassau, the (post-) colonial capital of the Bahamas.

Facts: Background on Abaco

In the 2010 Bahamas census, the population of Abaco was 17,224 and Marsh Harbour held 5,720 (Bahamas Department of Statistics, 2012). Since the development boom of 2010, led by foreign direct investment in certain areas, especially Baker's Bay and others, the population has grown markedly. It is also a winter home for second homeowners from the east coast of the United States, who employ many of the workers on the island. The other group that has grown are the Haitians and Haitian Bahamians, many of whom were born in The

Bahamas to Haitian parents. Understanding the significance of this group is essential to grasping the impact of Hurricane Dorian and its pre-existent inequalities, due in no small part to structural violence. Of course, there are native Bahamian Blacks and descendants of Black Loyalists, who were not granted land or empowered as White Loyalists were.

Abaco is also a Loyalist-descended community, a community which, for the most part, developed around fishing, boat building, and farming, and is historically deeply racially segregated. Its Loyalist descendants own most of the wealth on the cays and some areas of the mainland. Black Abaconians have done better in Cooper's Town and Crown Haven, in the north, and Sandy Point, in the south. An island with lots of coppice and known for its pine forests, former logging industry, and other agricultural products such as tomatoes (which are less common than before but still in production) and citrus (much of the citrus was wiped out by the canker in the early 2000s, as well as a change in policy and tariffs), these areas provided jobs for many labourers. The industry then evolved into a market more focused on service with tourism, maritime, and foreign second home ownership.

Facts: Background on The Mudd and Pigeon Pea

The Mudd, situated in one of the lower lying areas of Marsh Harbour, right adjacent to the port and harbour, and Pigeon Pea were the two Haitian-majority shanty towns in Marsh Harbour, though the government-produced *Abaco Shanty Town Assessment Report* (https://ufdc.ufl.edu/AA00068599/00001) "surveyed 777 households, indicated that 3,041 people reside in six shantytowns on Abaco, inclusive of Sand Banks, Farm Road, L & H (Treasure Cay), … and Elbow Cay" (Brown, 2018). Brown (2018) includes details of these communities' demographics: "The Mudd is the most densely populated shanty town with 51.4 percent of the population, followed by Pigeon Pea with 19 percent and then Farm Road with 15.2 percent," also noting that many of the inhabitants in these shanty towns earn a living wage of between $400 and $600 per week, but the majority earn less than $400. Brown (2018) further notes that "sixty-eight per cent of the homes have running water, 78 per cent have electricity and six per cent have cable services." It also seems that most of the inhabitants own their homes. Abaco, like much of New Providence and Harbour Island, is deeply uneven in its development and access to spatial justice. It is fraught with challenges for those who inhabit these working-class communities, or ghettos, and famed shanty towns.

The Ethnographic Story Continues

Hurricane Dorian hit and the phone started ringing. What followed Hurricane Dorian's arrival and much later departure was depressing and sobering. How do we sleep when all of this chaos is destroying our lives? How do we recover? What do we do to redevelop our islands? We got phone calls, texts, and emails, all looking for information about loved ones and friends. I landed on Abaco about a week after the storm and was met by the stench of death, like nothing I had ever breathed before. Before I landed, I had heard and read of massive local upheavals: looting, rape, armed robberies, kidnappings, and more, that meant that the government had disappeared and disorder had crept in.

I would argue that structural violence and systemic, state-sanctioned violence that excludes those who are rendered voiceless by denying or limiting their rights, access to justice, and accessibility to services transforms structural violence into long and slow violence. These forms of unseen violence are becoming more commonly

studied today, as a recent article in *BBC Future* shows:

> Like Galtung, [Nixon] described a kind of violence that was structural, but he was the first to point out that it could also be experienced over many years, possibly even generations. It occurs 'gradually and out of sight, a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all'. (Fisher, 2021, para. 7)

Such violence is building, especially around de facto stateless, impermanent, and informal communities that provide labour but are unwanted by society.

This slow violence is particularly pertinent in Abaco where communities are displaced through what Nixon (2011) notes as:

> Attritional catastrophes that overspill clear boundaries in time and space are marked above all by displacements—temporal, geographical, rhetorical and technological displacements that simplify violence and underestimate, in advance and in retrospect, the human and environmental costs. Such displacements smooth the way for amnesia, as places are rendered irretrievable to those who once inhabited them, places that ordinarily pass unmourned in the corporate media. Places like the Marshall Islands, subjected between 1948 and 1958 to sixty-seven American atmospheric nuclear tests. (p. 7)

Abaco becomes a space like this, particularly if we follow the work being conducted in the Caribbean after Hurricanes Maria and Irma, where residents have been and are being displaced in favour of green gentrification (Gould & Lewis, 2018; Lloréns, 2018; Klein, 2018). Nixon underscores the way slow violence undermines people's land being taken from them and their abilities to survive, but it is invisible or so unspectacular that it is all but imperceptible.

> If, as Saïd notes, struggles over geography are never reducible to armed struggle but have a profound symbolic and narrative component as well, and if, as Michael Watts insists, we must attend to the "violent geographies of fast capitalism," we need to supplement both these injunctions with a deeper understanding of the slow violence of delayed effects that structures so many of our most consequential forgettings. (Nixon, 2011, pp. 7-8)

The slow erasure of many working-class spaces and The Mudd is inevitable given the structural violence that resists their existence.

The Mudd, and other like spaces, should be read as a space of uneven development when compared to the affluent resort communities that proliferate coastal areas. Focus is placed on these communities as they are able to quickly deploy skilled and less skilled labour and resources to rebuild. Thus, the relationship between them and The Mudd shows spatial injustice which develops out of structural violence and results in

> …geographically uneven development and underdevelopment provide another framework for interpreting the processes that produce injustices, but as with other processes, it is only when this unevenness rigidifies into more lasting structures of privilege and advantage that intervention becomes necessary. (Soja, 2009, p. 3)

Thus, Hurricane Dorian served as a form of intervention that the government had threatened before. In 2019, it had planned to eradicate all informal communities on Abaco but was unsuccessful because of a legal battle

and an injunction that was brought against it for its actions (Brown, 2018). Regardless, its goal was met, but in an unexpected way—via a natural disaster.

Hundreds of people were living under constant threat of violence because the structures of law and order had disappeared or broken down in Abaco post-Hurricane Dorian; thus, public disorder reigned. As seen in Barbuda after Hurricanes Irma and Maria, resorts move in, and, in conjunction with governments, displace thousands of citizens from their land by changing centuries old laws (Gould & Lewis, 2018; Human Rights Watch, 2018). Thus, the natural disaster becomes a moment of opportunity to unmake space and remake it in a more unjust way, but far more lucrative for those in power. Perhaps this is where the interstitial space between global capitalism, what Nixon (2011) refers to as fast capitalism, and neoliberalism and the displacement of the Black working class is no coincidence, just as The Mudd was displaced by the bulldozer captured in the photo below.

What was left of The Mudd being bulldozed. Photo © 2019 Ian A. Bethell-Bennett.

The Ethnographic Story Continues: The Tension

From our home in Nassau, as the storm hit Abaco, more updates came in about people being swept away by large waves that came on land. Videos emerged of people screaming for others to come over as roofs flew off and other debris got caught up in storm surges. The images served to deepen the ideas of poverty and criminality of particular groups, and so the discussion later on became that one group of people (a.k.a. the Haitians) had brought the wrath of God on the island. Hurricane Dorian sat on top of Abaco for around 40 hours, according to what our family members related through their WhatsApp messages. Family members and friends ran from shelter to shelter as the buildings were breached by wind and water or simply because the walls had collapsed. These were their lived experiences, as shared via WhatsApp. However, the Bahamian government has attempted to silence these stories or re-tellings of lived experiences, as outlined in Nixon's (2011) concept of how slow violence creeps into a community, unperceived by many.

The hours after Hurricane Dorian finally left were some of the most intense hours I have known. WhatsApp was ablaze, but some people who were on BTC had no news as the network was down. We already knew that our family house had been breached and that people had to flee to find shelter elsewhere. We already knew that some people had survived. We read about the stress. We read about the horror. We read the shock of people being told they needed to have $1,000, $1,500, $2,000 to be able to fly out. Some people were told they could phone someone in Nassau and arrange for payment on arrival. This was even true for Bahamasair, the national airline of The Bahamas. The system had been plunged into dysfunction, but that was perhaps nothing new in a barely functional economy. Of course, none of this was discussed at a national level.

As soon as the news broke of Hurricane Dorian slamming into Abaco, I started getting WhatsApp messages from friends and

former colleagues from Puerto Rico, Dominica, and other places hit by life-changing hurricanes. First, they wanted to donate; second, they wanted to give without involving the government. Given others' experiences with corruption and poor distribution after Hurricanes Irma and Maria, they knew, all too well, how disastrous delays could be and how inept governments were at handling such situations due to their tribalism and cronyism (Gray, 2004). This tribalism is compounded by the power differential setup by the centre periphery paradigm (Wallerstein, 1980). In cases of natural disasters, governments can simply take money from international agencies and have it disappear as Negri and Hardt note (2000), which is something clearly evident in Haiti, especially after the 2010 earthquake. Sadly, governments often stand in the way of people getting aid.

Everything but the kitchen sink takes on a far more poignant meaning.
Photo © 2019 Ian A. Bethell-Bennett.

The Ethnographic Story Continues: Silence and violence

As people flooded the remaining buildings that had not been breached, stories emerged of loved ones being washed away, out of the very arms of those holding onto them. In one dwelling space, the kitchen sink is all that remained. Yet, these stories were squashed. The utter destruction of certain communities in Abaco can be called structural violence, as Nixon (2011) outlines. But as the Bahamian government has repeatedly noted, they could not have foreseen such a disaster (Lightbourne, 2019). However, they could have planned for such a disaster given the signs of increasingly catastrophic events across the globe, and particularly in this region. The first warning was Hurricane Joaquin in 2015, which devastated the southern Bahamas, from which most communities have still not recovered. We also see this clearly in the moving of people from Barbuda and the refusal to allow them to return to their homes, for their own safety, and the push to, then, legally extract them from their land (Gould & Lewis, 2018). As Galtung (1969) notes of structural violence:

> The situation is aggravated further if the persons low on income are also low in education, low on health, and low on power - as is frequently the case because these rank dimensions tend to be heavily correlated due to the way they are tied together in the social structure. (p. 171)

To be sure, Galtung's approach to structural violence coincides with Nixon's slow violence, but it also speaks to Soja's theory of spatial injustice. Soja (2009) notes:

> Locational discrimination, created through the biases imposed on certain populations because of their geographical location, is fundamental in the production of spatial injustice and the creation of lasting spatial structures of privilege and advantage. The three most familiar forces shaping locational and spatial discrimination are class, race, and gender, but their effects should not be reduced only to segregation. (p. 3)

So, what developed was a perfect storm for dispossession based on shock doctrine because so many people had so little voice. To be voiceless or unheard in the halls of

power is to be powerless. And the space herein identified, particularly in The Mudd and in areas around Murphy and Dundas Towns, is where more working-class, Black Bahamians reside, who may never be able to rebuild given new pressures to gentrify or green the space—the reasoning being given is that it is better to move them inland, near the dump and Spring City, a low-lying, government-fabricated community far removed from Marsh Harbour.

Once parked in an orderly fashion waiting for people to return.
Photo © 2019 Ian A. Bethell-Bennett.

The first and most important step was to move people off the land; the second point was to take advantage of this moment and to create a new memory by fabricating a narrative that silenced survivor's stories. By obfuscating and challenging any stories of numbers of those dead and missing, the Bahamian government made the victims seem unreliable. Just as occurred in Puerto Rico, the dead stayed in trailers, makeshift morgues for months, while the living waited to find out who they were. In the end, Covid-19 was used as a reason to quickly bury the dead, but still, the police had different numbers of missing and dead than the Bahamian government and survivors had their own numbers ("Dorian missing dispute," 2020; Charles, 2020; "Editorial: Missing Bahamians," 2020; Rolle, 2020). However, most of the dead were not at the funeral, but lost to the sea.

The Ethnographic Story Continues: Where the Reality gets Strange

In order to create a documentary for a Trinidadian newspaper and to check on the family home to try to prevent further loss from theft, I went to Abaco with a colleague from Trinidad. Getting to Abaco was novel. We arrived at Jet Aviation, a private air terminal, to be told to wait. I was working along with a colleague from Trinidad who had somehow found her way to Nassau very unexpectedly, and we filmed for the *Trinidad and Tobago Newsday*. Meanwhile, the reporters were sending minutes back to their bases. There were loud, and not so loud, conversations going on. People, throngs of them, and all not looking like anything I had seen in decades here. A sci-fi movie? Had the body snatchers taken over?

Of course, nothing flowed as they said it would. But eventually we took off. Trans Island Airways lifted off with a group of Royal Bahamas Defence Force officers going to relieve those on the ground, and us, along with someone from somewhere else. Very organised; this was the smoothest part of the day. Precision? I have flown into Abaco countless times, and it was pretty much the same thing. However, nothing quite prepared me for this trip. By then, of course, much seemed normal in the air. It was around a week after Hurricane Dorian, and an air of life-back-to-regular was floating over the chaos and dread of loss. We had driven through feet of water in eastern New Providence as people again lost parts of their homes or just their possessions, but it was nothing compared to Abaco and Grand Bahama. Though what we choose to forget is that it is all trauma, and it compounds, it becomes collective. And when it simply builds up, because no one really acknowledges or does anything with it, something goes awry.

Landing was insanely weird. My thought was that I had no idea of what to expect. But even that was violently upended when we taxied towards the airport or terminal building. A beautiful new building pre-Hurricane Dorian, huge and barely functional though pretty when it was opened well after it was supposed to be, the airport was now a shadow of something else. Water, planes, people. It all seemed like shows we watched on TV as children. Again, no one looked familiar except the Defence Force and the other Caribbean defence force officers. The aircraft and soldiers were dissociative. Where was this? The heat! The smell! The flies! It all assaulted us like a slap in the face. But wait, it got worse. Cars were thrown around like Matchbox toys, trees were where they should be, perhaps, but cars were in them. Buildings were unstable. Water stood, waiting to be told where to go next. Brown, debris-filled, and somehow yellowish, this place seemed familiar but not really.

As we drove into town, the stench hit us. Face covers on, this was nothing we were used to wearing; today, this is different. I was discombobulated, dislocated, and lost. I could not find where I was. I did not know where to rest my eyes. It was nothing like I had ever seen before. The familiar had surrendered to some alien takeover from Hollywood, only this was not Hollywood, and it was not just a movie. The stench! Heat clung to me like a film. The stink and flies gathered and mixed in that bizarre film. Oh, I saw something familiar. Oh, that was not there the last time I looked two months ago. How must it have been for those who were swimming on dry land during the actual hurricane? I can only guess from the exploding chaos and confusion in my head as nothing makes sense. Yes, this was Abaco post-Hurricane Dorian, but it was not really real.

What felt like an altered reality.
Photo © 2019 Ian A. Bethell-Bennett.

We drove to Maxwell's, the food store complex I know well. But this was different. This was unknown. I had shopped here almost daily as we prepared meals and ran out of sodas. Now, the Royal Bahamas Defence Force has set up a command post here. "Take what you want," I was told, but I didn't. The suspension of everything was too weird and too unclear. Civility seemed lost. Police were everywhere. There was a constant buzz, and then it got louder and closer; it hung in the air. Whoop, whoop, whoop, bang, crash, and crunch as bulldozers moved in. With the interview over with the Bahamian commander, no one knew what would really happen next. They were in power, only they were not! We still hear stories about vandals and looters in uniform. We hear about assaults and attacks from those in uniforms, forgetting they are people, too. Nothing made sense. So, it was all normal.

I bore witness to the stories: Survivors recount experiences of sexual assaults, collapsing buildings, and the lack of

assistance. Their critics argued that these recountings were fictionalized stories to make the Bahamian government look bad. The guns being stolen, the use of exceptional violence to control unruliness, and the fear of disorder all collide in this space of nothingness and abnormality. Everything was okay? But nothing was okay. I missed the sudden shift in demeanour of the officers as we circulated around what was once an ugly town, because much of Marsh Harbour was never pretty. But there were beautiful parts, too. But this was on another level of ugly. The violence and the threat of violence hung heavily in the air as everything was upside down. Even these words are ineffective in really expressing the heart stopping thuds I felt when I saw the different places I once knew. The banks were gone. Will there be a run on the banks? Well, as we sit a year out from the storm, many of those whose homes were held in mortgage by the bank have still not received a cent even though insurance companies have paid out months before.

Destroyed buildings in Abaco.
Photo ©2019 Ian A. Bethell-Bennett.

But I digress. The officers' guns came out as we arrived at The Mudd. Officers were on alert. They took out their rifles and other service weapons. A bulldozer was cleaning up. Rumour had it that bodies were burnt. Yet, these stories were only stories, especially when law and order had been suspended: The chaos of tracks and mud where roads, shops, businesses, and homes once were. Shoes and gas tanks, shoes, shoes, and more shoes. Clothes scattered everywhere. And yet, the government was silent!

The shoes reminded me of the lives that once breathed and wept in this place. A vessel was on top of what was a part of The Mudd, brought in by a sea that showed dryland drowning. But it was not dry, and there was a lot of drowning. Only without the memory of undocumented lives, there is no loss. The conservatism and xenophobia of the Bahamian masses tends to allow this silence and forgetting. So, there may never be justice because there is no need for it. The structural violence that allowed The Mudd to develop also created its demise, stigma, difference, and violent end. But difference allows violence. Here in The Bahamas, the space of difference allows cleavages to grow. As Soja (2009) notes:

> Justice in the contemporary world tends to be seen as more concrete and grounded than its alternatives, more oriented to present day conditions, and imbued with a symbolic force that works effectively across cleavages of class, race, and gender to foster a collective political consciousness and a sense of solidarity based on widely shared experience. (p. 3)

This is the challenge: many people made homeless by the storm were housed in sanctuaries in Nassau, and their lives were being further upended by the threat of removal to Haiti, a place most young Bahamian-born children of Haitian parents, have never been to, do not know, and are not welcome in. Some of their parents left there decades before. The difference between nationalities allowed cleavages to grow even in the wake of devastation. Stigma and poverty have worked to undo civility.

The Ethnographic Story Continues: On the Inside but not Really

Low (2016) explores the remaking of space in the plaza in Latin America and how various efforts to clean up the plaza made it far less appealing and less of a living space. Those efforts also changed the ethnic and class make-up of the space. Suddenly, those who had spent lives developing the colour and tone of the city were removed. The salt of the earth was drained from it in order to build new cities on the hills, something Low (2016) also explores. Accordingly, Soja (2010) and Harvey (2008) outline concepts of how spatial justice or simply justice and the right to the city are upended by the gentrification of international space and the unmaking of local spaces. Here I turn to Mignolo's (2000) concept of local histories/global designs as a somewhat more physical remapping of space. But because the remapping of space is slow, as Nixon (2011) notes, it tends to proceed unheeded, undetected, except when the conversation turns to moving Blacks to higher land and redesigning not just The Mudd but the entire coast. Suddenly, or not so suddenly, Baker's Bay becomes the model for development, as Mexicans are imported and given work permits to rebuild after Hurricane Dorian because they have particular experiences that Bahamians do not have; meanwhile, the local workforce finds itself out of work, homeless, and dislocated.

The Ethnographic Story Continues: Unmaking Space After the Storm

In Abaco, the Bahamian government has done little. Abaconians have worked tirelessly to rebuild. Much of the effort has been homegrown brawn, determination, and settler grit as they continue to face structural violence from the government and changing policies without warning, but with the effect that many will not be able to rebuild, and violence thrives in the current disorder. The Disaster Preparedness and Response Act (2006, amended 2019) neoliberally removes many rights from citizens or allows their rights to be eroded. This seems to be in keeping with the efforts around the region to reorganise traditional Caribbean communities as green, gentrified spaces where the right kind of people are brought in and encouraged to thrive. Klein (2018) states this in *The Battle for Paradise* which follows the hardships and disaster after Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico. But Klein underscores, as I want to here, the ability of disaster capitalism to take advantage of an economic storm to destabilise the already unstable. We see this too in *Aftershocks of Disaster* (Bonilla & LeBrón, 2019), as well as in Lloréns (2018) and Lloréns and Stanchich (2019). The irony is that we have seen this all before, but we are ignoring it all. Much like Trump's earlier acquisition of the Dorado Beach resort on Puerto Rico and the subsequent tax write-off, and then economic disaster for those who worked there (Dorado Beach, 2021), the acts in The Bahamas hollow out the localness from communities.

To be sure, many people would love a private Abaco to rise from the ashes of the old space of government inefficiency and corruption, but that is a place that unmakes spaces of community and belonging. While The Bahamas seems to be doing this in a gentler way, I would argue that it is simply less obvious, though equally violent. As the effect of the Commercial Enterprises Act (2017) broadens already wide open borders to more international investors in areas that might have, until then, been off limits, this works hand in glove with the Disaster Preparedness and Response Act of 2006 and the Emergency Powers (COVID-19 Pandemic) Regulations of 2020 that provide special powers to the Bahamian government. Additionally, the lack of a Freedom of Information Act in this country allows the

similar unmaking of space and remaking of gentrified green space to occur unchecked because most people do not know it is afoot. The first part of this impact has already been seen on Abaco with the signing of an agreement to develop a massive resort in south Abaco as a way to build back better after Hurricane Dorian. Thus, colonialism never ended; it just changed its face.

As I write this, I am reminded of the challenges Black people face everywhere. I am also reminded of Minh-Ha's (1989) words that end her amazing work.

> Even if the telling condemns her present life, what is more important is to (re-)tell the story as she thinks it should be told; in other words, to maintain the difference that allows (her) truth to live on. The difference. He does not hear or see. (p. 150)

While I am he, I am a feminist with a deep connection to Minh-Ha's philosophy and to the stories that have brought us/me into being. In many ways, academic writing has approached re-storying the past, even with an academic framework, through an autoethnographic position as unacceptable in preference to hard scientific writing and research. However, the lack of a story often allows violence to remain hidden. There is a slow and steady violence that is unperceived but uniquely ubiquitous that shows the need for Black Lives Matter in The Bahamas, too, against the deep dehumanizing of the neoliberal estate.

When I left Abaco for Nassau, I felt as though I had been somewhere that I would never truly be able to recover from. When I returned to Puerto Rico after Hurricane María, I had a similar experience, but the determined resilience of the people and the rising of small businesses from the ashes despite more than one year without electricity, for some, showed me that recovery is possible. In The Bahamas, there remains no plan for rescue or recovery for future natural disasters, more than a year after Hurricane Dorian. The real sticking point is the political system that centres government in everything and endows the prime minister with superhuman power to unmake places in the name of recovery from disasters. This is the unmaking of idyllic, local island space and the making of a new kind of apartheid. Can this be an unintentional unmaking of space?

References

Bahamas Department of Statistics. (2012). *Abaco 2010 census of population and housing*. https://tinyurl.com/2010BahamasCensus Abaco

Berenstain, N., Dotson, K., Paredes, J., Ruiz, E., & Silva, N. K. (2021). Epistemic oppression, resistance, and resurgence. *Contemporary Political Theory,* 1-32. https://doi.org/10.1057/s41296-021-00483-z

Bonilla, Y., & LeBrón, M. (Eds.). (2019). *Aftershocks of disaster: Puerto Rico before and after the storm*. Haymarket Books.

Brown, S. (2018, December 20). 3,041 reside in 6 Abaco shantytowns, report reveals. *Eyewitness News.* https://ewnews.com/3041-reside-in-six-abaco-shantytowns-report-reveals

Charles, J. (2020, June 12). Bahamas has no idea of Dorian death toll after names of the missing were removed from list. *Miami Herald.* https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/world/americas/article243472646.html

Commercial Enterprises Act (2017) Bahamas (No. 19 of 2017). http://laws.bahamas.gov.bs/cms/images/LE GISLATION/PRINCIPAL /2017/2017-0019/Commercial EnterprisesAct2017_1.pdf

Disaster Preparedness and Response Act of 2006, Ch. 34A, part IV. (Bahamas) http://laws.bahamas.gov.bs/cms/images/LEGISLATION/PRINCIPAL/2006/2006- 0004/DisasterPreparedness andResponse Act_1.pdf

Dorado Beach. (2021). *Tax advantages*. https://www.doradobeach.com/real-estate-puerto-rico/act-20-22-tax-advantages

Dorian missing dispute deepens, toll stands at 279. (2020, June 15). *Eyewitness News*. https://ewnews.com/dorian-missing-dispute-deepens-toll-stands-at-279

Dotson, K. (2011). Tracking epistemic violence, tracking practices of silencing. *Hypatia, 26*(2), 236-257. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1527-2001.2011.01177.x

Editorial: Missing Bahamians are not just a number: And they deserve better. (2020, June 17). *The Tribune*. http://www.tribune242.com/news/2020/jun/17/editorial-missing-bahamians-are-not-just-number-an/

Emergency Powers (COVID-19 Pandemic) Regulations (2020) Bahamas (S.I. No. 101). http://extwprlegs1.fao.org /docs/pdf/bha196283.pdf

Everything is gone: Survivors describe the horrors of facing Hurricane Dorian. (2019, September 4). *CBS News.* https://www.cbsnews.com/news/bahamas-survivors-share-stories-of-survival-after-hurricane-dorian-2019-09-04/

Fisher, R. (2021, January 27). The unseen 'slow violence' that affects millions. *BBC Future*. https://www.bbc.com/future/article/20210127-the-invisible-impact-of-slow-violence

Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace, and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research, 6*(3), 167-191. http://www.jstor.org/stable/422690

Gould, K. A., & Lewis, T. L. (2018). Green gentrification and disaster capitalism in Barbuda. *NACLA Report on the Americas, 50*(2), 148-153. https://doi.org/10.1080/10714839.2018.1479466

Gray, O. (2004). *Demeaned but empowered: The social power of the urban poor in Jamaica.* University of the West Indies Press.

Harvey, D. (2008). *Social justice and the city*. University of Georgia Press.

Human Rights Watch. (2018, July 12). *Antigua and Barbuda: Barbudans fighting for land rights* [Press release]. https://www.hrw.org/news/2018/07/12/antigua-and-barbuda-barbudans-fighting-land-rights

Klein, N. (2018). *The battle for paradise: Puerto Rico takes on the disaster capitalists*. Haymarket Books.

Lightbourne, S. (2019). *Bahamas Strong: Hurricane Dorian PSA.* [Video]. https://youtu.be/9NJtFVtIC_Y

Lloréns, H. (2018). Imaging disaster: Puerto Rico through the eye of Hurricane Maria. *Transforming Anthropology 26*(2), 136-156. https://doi.org/10.1111/traa.12126

Lloréns, H., & Stanchich, M. (2019). Water is life, but the colony is a necropolis: Environmental terrains of struggle in Puerto Rico. *Cultural Dynamics, 31*(1-2), 81-101. https://doi.org/10.1177/0921374019826200

Low, S. (2016). *Spatializing culture: The ethnography of space and place*. Routledge.

Mazzeo, J. (2013). Hypertension among Haitians living in The Bahamas, *International Journal of Bahamian Studies, 19,* 15-30. http://doi.org/10.15362/ijbs.v19i1.177

Mignolo, W. (2000). *Local histories, global designs*. Princeton University Press.

Minh-Ha, T. (1989). *Woman, native, other, other: Writing postcoloniality and feminism*. Indiana University Press.

Negri, A., & Hardt, M. (2000). *Empire.* Harvard University Press.

Nixon, R. (2011). *Slow violence and the environmentalism of the poor*. Harvard University Press.

Rolle, R. (2020, June 17). 'Let's not fixate on the numbers': Dames- Nothing 'amiss' on Dorian deaths but he can't explain police total. *The Tribune*. http://www.tribune242.com/news/2020/jun/17/lets-not-fixate-numbers-dames-nothing-amiss-dorian/

Schmid, J. (2019). Autoethnography: Locating the self as standpoint in post-apartheid South Africa. In S. Laher, A. Fynn & S. Kramer, (Eds.). *Transforming research methods in the social sciences: Case studies from South Africa* (pp. 265-279). Wits University Press.

Smith-Cartwright, T. (2020, May 25). Abaco concerns remain over burial. *The Tribune.* http://www.tribune242.com/news/2020/may/26/abaco-concerns-remain-over-burial/

Soja, E. W. (2009, March 12-14). *The city and spatial justice*. [Paper presentation]. Justice special = Spatial Justice Conference, Nanterre, Paris. https://www.jssj.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/JSSJ1-1en4.pdf

Soja. E. W. (2010). *Seeking spatial justice*. University of Minnesota Press.

Wallerstein, I. (1980). *The modern world-system II: Mercantilism and the consolidation of the European world economy, 1600-1750*. University of California Press.