

INTRODUCTION

Hurricane Katrina resulted in the tragic deaths of thousands, but it was largely Black, poor, and elderly populations from New Orleans low-lying and least protected areas that were most effected. As is now well known, the storm was, to a degree, a relatively mild hurricane – a Category 3. What caused the devastating destruction was therefore not the hurricane itself, but, rather, the city’s failed levees, built by the Army Corps of Engineers in 1951. The faulty levees left populations in the city’s most low-lying areas the most vulnerable. These were the areas, perhaps unsurprisingly, that tended to be occupied by the folks who had the least say in where they lived. Forced into areas most susceptible to flooding through discriminatory housing practices long before Katrina, New Orleans’ Black and poor folks were no strangers to the dangerous fusions of race, space, and class that have historically constituted the city’s cultural and material geography. These same neighborhoods had flooded during the Great Mississippi River Flood of 1927, and again in 1965 during Hurricane Betsy (DYSON 2006). In 1927, city officials purposefully bombed the levees in order to flood the low-lying areas and ensure the protection of the richer, whiter parts of the city, like the French Quarter, Garden District, and Uptown.

When Hurricane Katrina made landfall on August 25, 2005, I was living in Burlington, Vermont in the northeast corner of the USA, almost as far away as one can get from New Orleans while still within the contiguous landmass that makes up the continental United States. At the time, I did not have a television. One of my friends called me, saying, “have you *seen* what is happening in New Orleans?” I had heard about it on the radio, read some about it, and seen some photographs, but my friend made clear that I needed to *see* it on *TV*. The disaster, the destruction, the abandonment, it was something, she argued, that could only be fully grasped by seeing the moving image on TV. Having never visited New Orleans prior to Katrina, the city was in some ways merely an image for me, and seeing it on screen in the aftermath of Katrina likewise seemed unreal in the same way that images from Mardi Gras appear so different, so Other, from my life in the whitest state in the union. But perhaps most of all, I was shocked to see newscasters as horrified as myself – not just at the images of destruction, of bodies and buildings, bloated, flooding – but at the abandonment of a seemingly entire segment of the population. Although the news framing shifted to looting and criminality fairly quickly, there was a moment, an opening, in which it seemed the event was uncategorizable through traditional news framings of disasters or New Orleans (GIROUX 2006).

According to GIROUX (2006), the images of abandonment following Katrina revealed what he terms a “biopolitics of disposability,” in which neoliberal U.S. policies aimed at privatization, self-responsibility, and the security state had left whole segments of the population – namely poor, Black folks – left to fend for

themselves, to waste, to die, for the “good” and “health” of the rest of the population. GIROUX (2006, 9–10) argues,

America was forced to confront these disturbing images ... The Hurricane Katrina disaster ... revealed a vulnerable and destitute segment of the nation’s citizenry that conservatives not only refused to see but had spent the better part of two decades demonizing ... the decaying black bodies floating in the waters of the Gulf Coast represented a return of face against the media and public insistence that this disaster was more about class than race, more about the shameful and growing presence of poverty ... The bodies of the Katrina victims ... did reveal and shatter the conservative fiction of living in a color-blind society.

Like GIROUX, many critics in the immediate aftermath of Hurricane Katrina were hopeful that, out of this horrific situation, there might be the possibility for a collective social protest against the kinds of policies and practices that had maintained this racial, class, and spatial intertwining of injustice. Katrina perhaps helped to reveal that we were in fact not living in a “post-racial” America, where all one needed to do to succeed was to want it, to work hard enough, and to learn the tools and techniques of self-responsibility. So too, in the enormous failure of government to rescue people from the floodwaters, in large part due to the cut of government funding and resources for disaster preparedness in marginalized spaces and the integration of a self-responsible rationale in this context as well, it was hoped that the aftermath of Katrina would reinvigorate the need for government to care for its people and to protect its most vulnerable. But most of all, it was hoped that all of these possibilities would coalesce into a rebuilding of a more socially and spatially just New Orleans than what had come before it, one that would redress the abandonment of the Black and poor who made up the majority of its population.

Yet, there was also skepticism, not only in the political possibility from this opening and the likelihood that it would be used as a land grab to further displace and marginalize the city’s Black and poor, but also in whether or not New Orleans should be rebuilt at all. If New Orleans was built on a flood plane and would only remain open to future disasters, potentially more devastating ones to boot, as global climate change contributes to the erosion of the wetlands in the Gulf of Mexico, why does it make sense to rebuild the city? Wouldn’t it be better, the skeptics argued, to abandon the project and ideal of New Orleans altogether? Wasn’t Hurricane Katrina just a reminder that this place, and these people, were in fact a drag on the economy, on the health of the nation as a whole, and wouldn’t we be better off just letting them go?

The HBO series *Treme* (2010–2013), which is both set and filmed in post-Katrina New Orleans, and is the primary subject of this book, takes up these skeptics in its pilot episode (HOLLAND 2010). Responding to a reporter who asks, “Are you saying this was a natural disaster, pure and simple?,” the Tulane University English professor, Creighton Bernette (played by John Goodman), retorts:

BERNETTE: What hit the Mississippi Gulf Coast was a natural disaster, a hurricane, pure and simple. The flooding of New Orleans was a man-made catastrophe, a federal fuck up of epic proportions, decades in the making ... The flood protection system, built by the Army Corps of Engineers, AKA the Federal Government,

failed, and we've been saying for the last 40 years, since Betsy that it was going to fail again unless something was done, and guess what, it was not ...

REPORTER: Given that it's all gone pear shaped, why should the American taxpayer foot the bill to fix New Orleans, it's going to cost billions?

BERNETTE: Well, since when don't nations rebuild their great cities?

REPORTER: For the sake of argument, let's say that New Orleans was, once a great city ...

BERNETTE: Are you saying that New Orleans is not a great city, a city that lives in the imagination of the world?

REPORTER: I suppose if you are a fan of the music, which has rather seen its day, let's be honest, or the food, a provincial cuisine which many would say is typically American – too fat, too rich. And, of course, New Orleans has its advocates, but what about the rest of the country?

BERNETTE: Hmm. Provincial, passe, hate the food, hate the music, hate the city. What the fuck are you doing down here, you fucking limy vulture, motherfucker. (Throws microphone into the river and grabs the camera).

This scene in many ways demonstrates the central argument put forth by *Treme*: Hurricane Katrina was a human-made disaster, and it is our responsibility to ensure New Orleans will be rebuilt, because, ultimately, New Orleans is a great city, and its culture, is central to the imagination of the world.

Perhaps because Hurricane Katrina was for so many people, like me, spent watching at home from their TV screens, the Hurricane Katrina event has been fodder for a wealth of mediated storytelling, both fictional and nonfictional.¹ But within this broader genre, *Treme* represents a particularly unique and interesting piece of Katrina media. Few have taken up the aftermath of the storm and the politics of rebuilding with such minute attention to detail, blending fact and fiction into what series writer Mari Kornhauser called “faction” (WALKER 2011). *Treme* takes up the problematizations of post-Katrina New Orleans as central provocations in its dramatic storylines, with its first season set in New Orleans three months after the storm and its final, fourth season, ending at the 2009 Mardi Gras. The series was

1 For example, numerous documentaries emerged in the aftermath of the storm, with perhaps the most well-known being Spike Lee's *When the Levees Broke: A Requiem in Four Acts* (HBO 2005), as well as his follow up *If God is Willing and the Creek Don't Rise* (HBO, 2010), and *Trouble the Water* (2008). There are also a number of films based on and drawn from Hurricane Katrina, including *Hurricane on the Bayou* (2006), *Déjà vu* (2006), *The Curious Case of Benjamin Button* (2008), *Bad Lieutenant: Port of Call New Orleans* (2009), *Beasts of the Southern Wild* (2012), and *Hours* (2013) amongst numerous others. Various television programs, both fictional and nonfictional, as well, took up Katrina as narrative provocation. Series such as *K-ville* (Fox 2007), *Treme*, and season 2 of *American Crime Story* (FX, 2017) focused more specifically on post-Katrina New Orleans as a central thread, but a whole host of TV series had individual, or a series of individual episodes, devoted to making sense of the storm, including *Holmes on Homes* (HGTV, Season 1, episode 6), *Extreme Makeover: Home Edition*, *House MD* (Fox, Season 2, episode 23), *Bones* (Fox, Season 1, episode 19), *Boston Legal* (ABC Season 3, episode 11), *Criminal Minds* (CBS Season 2, episode 18), *Without a Trace* (CBS, Season 5, episode 6).

created and produced by David Simon and Eric Overmyer, who had worked together previously on the critically acclaimed police procedural, drawn from Simon's book, *Homicide: Life on the Street* (NBC, 1993–1999). Like Baltimore in Simon's most critically revered work, *The Wire* (HBO, 2002–2008), the city of New Orleans, and especially the neighborhood from which the series takes its name, serves as a character in *Treme*. The series details the lives of racially diverse residents extending outward from the Tremé, a historic neighborhood adjacent to the French Quarter associated with the city's jazz history and poor and working-class African American community. *Treme* focuses on the struggles of individuals to rebuild their homes, lives, and neighborhoods in New Orleans after Katrina. It focuses especially on the role of culture, and the distinctiveness and uniqueness of New Orleans as a hotbed of cultural vitality, as the city's savior. In so doing, it makes a powerful argument for how and why New Orleans should be rebuilt. As the diatribe from Creighton Bernette, above, suggests, *Treme* is both a critique of government failure and the kinds of racial and class politics that resulted in the city's uneven geography as well as, ultimately, a celebration of New Orleans' culture and an argument for rebuilding the city in and through that culture. As the HBO website describes the series,

What keeps the city afloat through all of this is its culture. Mardi Gras Indian chief Albert Lambreaux (Clarke Peters) is sewing in preparation for Mardi Gras. The social aid and pleasure clubs are getting ready to hit the streets in their colorful, fast step finery. And those loveable rogues, Davis McAlary (Steve Zahn) and Antoine Batiste (Wendell Pierce) have cooked up a new set of schemes on and off the bandstand. (HBO n.d.)

Treme aims to be distinct from the traditional parlay of New Orleans' city branding efforts and Hollywood representations of the city by emphasizing the quotidian practices of artists and artistic practice rather than the spectacular sites of Bourbon Street tourism. The series takes an especial interest in the "real" in the ways in which it seeks to narrate, promote, and argue for the value of the city's culture (and its musical, food, and creative cultures in particular) and the struggles of culture bearers, workers, and practitioners as they try recover from the storm. Producers of *Treme* stress that the series is committed to communicating a sense of New Orleans that is "authentic," such as in the practices of Mardi Gras Indian sewing, rather than a spectacularized version of the city that has so often been the subject of previous television and film representations. *Treme*'s construction of an "authentic" New Orleans seems aware and self-reflexive of the city's relationship to a commercial, touristic, and spectacular cultural history. It is, indeed, a show that still highlights the city's 'holy trinity' of food, music, and architecture, but it also provides a critical look into what has traditionally been accepted into these categories and makes space for debate and struggle over them as well. *Treme* aims to show the cultures of those groups and individuals who had for so long before Katrina remained invisible to much of the white, middle-class, tourist population who visited the city. More so, it aims to show how this culture serves as the heart and life force for the city as a whole. The decision to title the show after the name of the historic neighborhood

Tremé points to *Treme*'s investment in highlighting areas of the city not well-trodden on the tourist map, to engage (raced and classed) spaces in the city that were adversely and unequally affected by the Katrina event, as well as to celebrate the creative potentiality that is indigenous to these "authentic" spaces.

However, *Treme* does more than merely make an argument for how the city of New Orleans should be rebuilt after Katrina. Because the show is also filmed on-location, a result of a variety of cultural policies aimed to attract film and TV production to the city, it is a series that is positioned to do more than just represent the city – it is also more directly involved in the everyday production and navigation of city space as well. Further, because of the series' producers' commitment to representing "authentic" New Orleans – the "real" New Orleans – the production practices involved in this on-location filming have also become involved in the real, lived, and daily practices of places, spaces, and people in New Orleans more than virtually any TV show before it. So, while much of the discussion of post-Katrina media, including *Treme*, has focused on New Orleans as a kind of cultural imaginary, as a representational means of understanding the politics of the storm and its aftermath, the argument I put forth is that understanding how *Treme* intervenes into post-Katrina New Orleans requires going beyond the text. In the chapters that follow, I take *Treme* as a case study for mapping the complex relationships between the television industry, and especially its on-location production practices, and struggles over urban space and rebuilding neighborhoods in post-Katrina New Orleans. Although the series' emphasis on struggles to return and rebuild through cultural practices do indeed get played out on screen, and the series is bound up with the cultural imaginary of the city, *Treme*'s engagements with the city's culture, "authenticity," and its residents' identities and struggles go beyond textual representations and are also made manifest in the show's broader relationship to the city in more materialist terms. Drawing on a discursive analysis of archival documents, *Treme*'s intertexts, interviews with producers, and on-set observation, I argue *Treme* participates directly in the rebuilding of the city through its on-location filming, local hiring, philanthropy, and tourism, and the series also enjoins viewers to participate in the rebuilding and revitalization of the city by eliciting practices of tourism, consumption, and charity.² *Treme* is therefore literally helping to drive,

- 2 I draw on a variety of primary sources including archival research; city planning and policy documents; institutional research, including trade publications and popular press on HBO and *Treme*; viewer comments and blogs; and site-based research including interviews, observation, and the gathering of primary documents related to the filming of the series, local neighborhood rebuilding, tourism, and local media organizations. Engaging in a discursive analysis that traces the rationalities that emerge in these primary documents, my research diverges from an ideological analysis of texts, which would seek the underlying meanings within these texts for the ways in which the text intervened into hegemonic power relations. As FOUCAULT (1972) suggests, discourse analysis instead asks a different set of questions, particularly "how is it that one particular statement appeared rather than another?" (27), "what was being said in what was said?" and "what is this specific existence that emerges from what is said and nowhere else?" (28). Thus, by considering primary documents in terms of a discourse, I am not looking for the emergence of a language per se, but instead a set of practices that, "determine the group of relations that discourse must establish in order to speak of this or that object, in order to deal

create, and intervene into the city that it represents. Moreover, city and cultural policy, as well as HBO branding efforts, are aimed at fostering these kinds of interactions. *Treme* therefore requires a consideration of the ways in which television's production practices are implicated in a broader dispersion of discourses, encounters, actors, and sites than those normally addressed with regards to previous television and film productions *about* New Orleans or Hurricane Katrina. Understanding *Treme* requires a consideration of how television participates not only in the production of images and representations of New Orleans, but also for how it participates in implementing practices of urban planning, zoning, land use, tourism, gentrification, historic preservation, philanthropy, city and network branding, community building, and global and local activism in more direct and material ways. I thus argue for the need to consider how the series is also intertwined with a dispersion of institutions, actors, and networks rarely considered in television studies, including film commissions, urban planning experts, tourism boards, and neighborhood organizations.

Working at the intersections between media, cultural studies, and social and cultural geography, this book suggests that *Treme* offers a particularly illuminating case of the intersecting and, at times, contradictory forces between television production, city policy, viewers, residents, and TV industry professionals. The series represents perhaps a paramount example of the contemporary phenomenon of post-broadcast, on-location television production. Specifically, *Treme* demonstrates how city efforts to attract film and television production collide with the television industry's desire to create new forms of connection for increasingly distracted audiences through the production of "authentic" connections to (often neighborhood-oriented, and racialized) places, or what I refer to as "the media neighborhood" – i.e. an entrepreneurialization of neighborhoods that depends on the vernacular and local cultural practices and performance of specific, place-based identities through on-location film and television production. This book aims to highlight what is at stake in these collisions for local culture and struggles over the right to neighborhood and city space in post-Katrina New Orleans. Whereas much of the research on television and cities, and on New Orleans in particular, focuses on how programs represent place and space, the place-based political economics of television industries, or the places where audiences consume media, this book instead focuses on the cultural role of television production practices in the production of urban spatiality. Through an analytic of practice theory, I argue that television production works as a site-specific spatial practice that plays a material role in the rebuilding of New Orleans by drawing on the everyday practices of residents and viewers. Through interviews with producers, archival research, and analyses of the series

with them, name them, analyze them, classify them, explain them, etc. These relations characterize not the language (langue) used by discourse, nor the circumstances in which it is deployed, but discourse itself as a practice" (FOUCAULT 1972, 46). I therefore consider these documents as part of a broader dispersal of governance, tracing the relationships between these discourses and the various institutions, governing bodies, organizations, and practices to which its discursive formations speak to in terms of how they pose various problems and solutions to post-Katrina governance, urban revitalization, and post-broadcast television.

alongside urban planning and cultural policy discourses, I trace *Treme*'s spatial practices of production as they are implicated in on-location shooting, local hiring, charity, and tourism. I query how *Treme* provides a vehicle for both cultural and economic revitalization and renewal in post-Katrina New Orleans, and I ask what this means for struggles over urban space in the contemporary, post-industrial, neo-liberal city – where the television industry takes up a role in the transformation and recovery of lived, material, and vernacular urban spaces in one of the world's most iconic, and perhaps most divided, cities? I suggest *Treme* throws focus onto some of the trends in contemporary relationships between television production, city planning, and cultural policy along with their concomitant influences on urban space, raced and classed geographies, and creative culture in cities.

On the one hand, this book offers insights into how contemporary television production practices are put to work as neoliberal expedients to urban renewal, city branding, and post-broadcast television branding. Through soliciting cultural performances of racialized neighborhood spaces and offering participation in a television production as means of rectifying racial and class exclusions, *Treme* to some extent abdicates governmental responsibility for the care of its citizens, and for the maintenance and building of crucial infrastructure, as such labors are offloaded onto the private sector and citizens themselves and to the charitable contributions of the television industry and its viewers. In this sense, *Treme* shows how television's public service role is extended beyond its textual representations and into the realm of the physical and material. In doing so, however, politicized and collective forms of social protest, and making demands on government to fulfill its obligations and responsibilities to its citizens, are foregone in favor of the promises of getting involved in television production and representation as expedients to inclusion. Thus, the more politicized aspects of *Treme*'s representations, such as in the exchange between Creighton Bernette and the reporter depicted above, belie a potentially more conservative, and neoliberal, solution to the disaster that the series' production practices help to initiate above and beyond the text. On the other hand, however, *Treme* also reveals how television production's site-specific spatial practices might offer opportunities for articulating a right to the neighborhood through discourses of social justice. That is, *Treme*'s production practices also diverge from those of more traditional television productions, embedding themselves in the neighborhoods in which they film, attending to their histories, politics, and communities. It makes an explicit effort to include places and bodies that have historically been excluded in film and television productions in New Orleans, and, in so doing, it not only represents those places and bodies but it also works to materially network them to structures and infrastructures of power. Further, *Treme* situates itself as a neighbor, and, at times, it articulates a responsibility and a demand on both television producers and viewers rarely seen in the television industry. *Treme* therefore reveals a deep contradiction, and a kind of ambivalence, bound up with post-Katrina rationalities of rebuilding and the responsibilities and roles of the private, for-profit television industry in the current conjuncture.

As the title to this book suggests, the three anchoring concepts for this broader argument are race, place, and New Orleans on television. In the remainder of this

chapter, I therefore parse out how this book theorizes these concepts, as well as the particular arguments it forwards with regards to how *Treme* both draws on and contributes to understanding race, place, and New Orleans on television in the post-Katrina context.

NEW ORLEANS ON TELEVISION

In an interview about his conception of the series, David Simon noted, “Lots of American places used to make things. [...] New Orleans still makes something. It makes moments” (quoted in MASON, 2010). Whereas Simon’s work in *The Wire* offered a pessimistic critique of the failure of institutions and individuals’ inability to escape their subjectification to those institutional ideologies and materialities, *Treme* seems to hinge upon a hope that individuals, through their creative practices, can draw upon these moments to make something new, to transform institutions, and to transform American culture.³ In his DVD commentary during the final episode of the series’ third season, titled “Tipitina,” Simon suggested that his focus on New Orleans was both about this particular city and its authenticity, but it was also about how New Orleans stood in for the broader condition of US society at this particular juncture. He suggested,

I just keep saying it’s the real ... our point was to use New Orleans to depict, in a very basic way, the situation in which a lot of Americans, not just New Orleanians find themselves, in terms of trying to constitute their society when there is so much arrayed against them at this point. We are here in New Orleans and we see no reason not to use the real.

...

You have this dichotomy in *Treme*, about a city, and a society that doesn’t seem to be working on the most basic levels and it’s not delivering what it is supposed to deliver for citizens on an institutional or systemic level. And, yet, as a matter of individual spirit, the city reconstitutes itself around its own sense of itself and its own art. And there is something I think allegorical for the country in the New Orleans experience there. (SIMON and NOBLE 2013)

As these comments suggest, *Treme* provides a kind of alternative to *The Wire*, as Simon suggests the series offers a potential solution for how America’s cities might respond to the structural forces that had left its predominantly Black and poor citizens abandoned, increasingly criminalized and imprisoned, and continually surveilled, monitored, and problematized. *Treme* suggests that New Orleans and its creative culture and vitality are tools that can be used to resist these forces; culture is a potential solution for those populations who had been abandoned by the state who should have been there to protect them.

3 The main characters are all independent entrepreneurs, many of them working in a creative or knowledge industry – a chef and restaurant owner (Jeanette Desautel), musicians (Antoine Batische, Delmond Lambreaux, Annie Talarico, Sonny, Davis McAlary), writer (Creighton Bernette), bar owner (LaDonna Batische-Williams), civil rights lawyer (Toni Bernette). Albert Lambreaux’s character also celebrates creative practice as his story line centers around his responsibilities as Big Chief of a Mardi Gras Indian tribe.

Thus, although *Treme*, like *The Wire*, no doubt commentates on the structural barriers and institutional struggles each of its characters face as creative practitioners in post-Katrina New Orleans,⁴ *Treme* presents a fairly overt optimistic tone. The optimism hinges on the celebration of local, “authentic” New Orleans culture. As Jacques Morial, son of former Mayor Marc Morial, states in an episode, “The culture of New Orleans, that’s what’s at risk, if they knock out the infrastructure that sustains the infrastructure, then it is gone forever” (JONES 2010). The argument *Treme* ultimately makes, then, is that New Orleans must be rebuilt, and it must be rebuilt through the vitality of its “authentic” i.e. not simulated for tourists, culture. Similarly, if its neighborhoods are to come back, then it must have a culture for them to come back to.

This logic is reinforced by Wendell Pierce, a native New Orleanian who stars in the show as the talented, though largely commercially unsuccessful, trombone player Antoine Batiste, who in addition to starring in the show is also engaged in a neighborhood rebuilding project in Pontchartrain Park – a middle class black neighborhood where he grew up. The neighborhood was devastated by the storm, and his Pontchartrain Park Community Development Corp. is a non-profit organization that aims to assist in rebuilding 75 homes to ensure that its residents can return home. When I asked him how rebuilding Pontchartrain Park related to his work on the show, he argued that the two were inextricably interconnected, noting

The role of art is where as a community, we reflect on who we are and where we’ve been, who we hope to be, our strengths, our weaknesses, and that’s very important to have that reflection, especially during a time of crisis because then you want to know exactly what you’re fighting, for why you’re fighting for this city to come back, why you are fighting for your neighborhood to come, and that’s directly connected to the work I’m doing in Pontchartrain Park ... I realized it was on us, so that was the call to action, and so that directly reflects how the people themselves are the reason for rebuilding New Orleans, the recovery, and that’s why we’re following the individuals of *Treme*. It’s the humanity in the individual, the humanity in the individual that

- 4 The series, for example, demonstrates the difficulty musicians face in getting gigs (through especially Antoine Batiste’s character), the lack of access to affordable health care and basic services for creative workers, and the structural causes and effects of post-traumatic stress (especially through Creighton Bernette’s character, who commits suicide as a result at the end of the first season), police brutality, and crime. Moreover, it depicts city government as steeped in corruption that has little regard for its city’s creative artists and is instead invested in making quick money and willing to sell entire neighborhoods to developers without consulting its residents. This latter theme is particularly emphasized in Season 2 with Jon Seda’s character, Nelson Hidalgo, a developer and venture capitalist from Dallas, and Oliver Thomas, former City Council person who was forced to resign in disgrace on corruption charges. Thomas, who plays himself in the series, makes a deal with Hidalgo to connect him to black leadership in the city (inviting him, for example, to ride on the Zulu float, which is generally populated by influential leaders in the black community, on Mardi Gras day), thus making it possible for Hidalgo to proceed to raze entire neighborhoods for the benefit and profit of outsiders looking to transform Mid-City (a historically black and poor back-a-town neighborhood) into a medical research center. This narrative makes a poignant critique of the entrenched power relations and complex interactions between race, class, and power that constitute the dominant rebuilding projects in post-Katrina New Orleans.

is making this city come back, in spite of the government. (Wendell Pierce, personal communication, March 17, 2011).

Like the series, Pierce expresses a lack of faith in city or federal government to do the hard work of rebuilding, and he is right to – the resources set aside to assist people in rebuilding were grossly inadequate, mismanaged, and incomprehensibly difficult for residents to access (ADAMS 2013). For Pierce, and for *Treme*, New Orleans' (and American cities more broadly) potential to return and thrive in an inclusive way will depend on the agency and creative vitality of individuals and their communities.

But while the City of New Orleans, the State of Louisiana, and, indeed, the US Federal Government, have undoubtedly done little to adequately redress the harms of Katrina, what is particularly interesting is that its discourses of rebuilding are not so far from Pierce's and *Treme*'s. Perhaps driven by the exposure of the city's legacies of racial, class, and spatial injustices, official discourses of rebuilding, particularly those centered on post-Katrina urban planning, have also problematized pre-Katrina policies and their spatializations. As I detail in Chapter 2, post-Katrina city policies surrounding urban planning and cultural policy acknowledge the abandonment of the city's primarily Black, poor, and "wet" (i.e. vulnerable to flooding) neighborhoods, and they call for an increased emphasis on inclusion and equity. Likewise, they concede that the city had long undervalued the people and places who contribute to making much of New Orleans' culture, and they call for re-valuing these culture workers and bearers, places, and practices as the city's primary assets. This is not to say that the city has not also undergone an intense privatization of public services and space, renewed efforts toward using the disaster as a way to "shock" the city into accepting an increasingly economically and socially conservative agenda, what Naomi KLEIN (2007) has termed "disaster capitalism," that privileges neoliberal solutions to rebuilding. But, rather, this more social justice oriented discourse and policy making agenda sits alongside, in an odd sense of ambivalence and contradiction to, the kinds of discourses and policies that seemed to so obviously contribute to the harms of Katrina.

This book aims to expose this ambivalence and contradiction, what I call a "post-Katrina rationality," in the rebuilding of post-Katrina New Orleans. But my emphasis is on the role of the media, and particularly television, industry in navigating, and more importantly, helping to constitute this ambivalence. While the intensification of the policies of abandonment and neglect, that helped to make possible the human-made components of Katrina's disaster, were taking shape, Louisiana initiated one of the most aggressive tax incentive legislation programs globally to try to diversify its economy by attracting Hollywood film and television productions to film on-location in the state (in 2002). Louisiana was not the only state doing so; more and more states and cities globally are implementing similar policies in order to bolster their cultural economies and attract film and television production on-location (CHRISTOPHERSON and RIGHTOR 2010; MCNUTT 2015; SCOTT 2004; SCOTT 2000). As Hurricane Katrina was brewing out in the ocean, the city of New Orleans had become known as "Hollywood South". Fearful that the