Three instances of Louise Tilly's influence on and engagements with anthropology are discussed: first, her work on families, households, and women's work; second, her critique of anthropology for descriptions lodged in "the ethnographic present" rather than in real past and present events; third, a call for documenting political process and collective action. Anthropology over the past two decades has largely overcome her temporal critique, and deployed a more nuanced, and historical, conception of culture (if not in undergraduate textbooks and case studies). Within urban ethnography, a tradition of attention to power relations, beginning with Engels and Du Bois and consolidated in anthropology during the 1920s–1940s, has flourished. These developments have made urban ethnography more historical, for the better. Still, a distinctive anthropological "upstream" view of the past from the present persists, one based in fieldwork "ground truth." [culture, Tilly, Louise, urban ethnography, urban history]

FROM HER PERSPECTIVE AS AN historian, Louise Tilly has carefully portrayed for us the past three decades' developments in the "new urban history." From mine, that of an urban ethnographer, I would like to comment on three of her own programatic contributions to that movement, stressing mutualities between history and sociocultural anthropology, and areas in which those mutualities might be either contrasted or strengthened.

I was one of many admiring readers of Joan Scott and Louise Tilly's Kaplan Prize essay, "Women's Work and the Family in Nineteenth-Century Europe," published in 1975 in Comparative Studies in Society and History. It illuminated my own thinking and teaching about families and households, and about the Industrial Revolution in Europe. On a personal note, it helped place in context the life of my Croatian immigrant grandmother who arrived...
in New York City early in this century, and earned a living by pick-
ing up garments downtown, embroidering and sewing sequins on
them at home in Washington Heights, and returning them down-
town where she picked up the next batch. And like others, for
example, Lamphere in *From Working Daughters to Working Mothers*
(1987) and Salaff in *Working Daughters of Hong Kong* (1981), I also
found Scott and Tilly’s ideas useful in thinking about my own
ethnographic fieldwork—on households, and female wage-earners,
market traders, and child household workers in Accra, Ghana—and in comparative writing (Sanjek and Colen 1990), as
did Rapp (1987).

In 1978 Tilly engaged more directly with anthropology in her
review article, “The Social Sciences and the Study of Women,”
again in *Comparative Studies in Society and History* (there paired
with our symposium participant Susan Carol Rogers’ piece,
“Woman’s Place: A Critical Review of Anthropological Theory”
[Rogers 1978]). Tilly’s article appraised Rosaldo and Lamphere’s
influential edited volume *Woman, Culture and Society* (1974), and
identified as “the book’s most compelling concept . . . the notion
of women as social actors, as seekers of power, as self-conceiving
individuals,” an idea that in 1978 still needed to be affirmed in
both anthropology and history. Nonetheless, Tilly was critical of
anthropology.

The articles describe cultural ideals in the timeless “anthropo-
logical present,” not necessarily what really happened at some
time in the past or what is happening now. As a historian, I rec-
ognize that anthropology as a discipline is dedicated to seeking
out norms. Yet the consequences of the lack of the time dimen-
sion and of the “reality” dimension is [sic] disturbing. [1978:170]

That hurt. In 1983 anthropologist Johannes Fabian’s *Time and
the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* presented a political
and moral critique of ethnography along this same line, arguing for
an appreciation that anthropologists and their subjects exist in the
same spatial-temporal world. That also hurt, but its message has
since been widely received and accepted. In fact, during the 1980s
a refurbishment of anthropology’s concept of culture, one consis-
tent with Tilly’s and Fabian’s critiques, was underway, exemplified
in work by Appadurai (1981), Barth (1989), Cohn (1980),
Moore (1987), Peel (1984, 1987), and Smith (1989). As I summa-
rized this movement in 1991:
Culture is now everywhere, under continuous creation—fluid, interconnected, diffusing, interpenetrating, homogenizing, diverging, hegemonizing, resisting, reformulating, creolizing, open rather than closed, partial rather than total, crossing its own boundaries, persisting where we don’t expect it to, and changing where we do. [Sanjek 1991:622]

I also pointed to earlier historically-attuned views of culture advancing this same perspective: in particular, Goody’s arguments about the deep historical roots of ritual trafficking in West Africa (1957), and Southall’s emphasis on multilingualism and cultural concepts crossing language and even language-family boundaries in East Africa (1971).

Hasn’t the old, ahistorical anthropological “culture” concept, now repeatedly, endlessly flogged, been flogged yet enough? Abu-Lughod in 1991 did not think so, asserting “that ‘culture’ operates in anthropological discourse to enforce separations that inevitably carry a sense of hierarchy” (1991:137–138). Different anthropologists observe the theory parade from different standpoints, I suppose. More pointedly, James in 1996 situated persisting misuse of the culture concept in its old-fashioned, pre-Fabian sense in three locations: undergraduate textbooks, boiled-down case studies, and overheated theoretical writings. Here “ethnographic monographs,” often “dense, complex and difficult of access to most general readers,” are “simplified,” “sacrificing a good deal of the internal dialectic of interpretation;” as a result, “the ‘whole system’ is itself rarely understood . . . as a society, but rather as a disembodied essence of culture, inevitably sliding into the idea of a specific personality-type” (James 1996:84–85,88–90; compare Leach 1976:1–2).

I agree with Vincent that “ethnography—or, better, the monograph based on field research—has always been the foremost vehicle of critical challenge to anthropology’s dominant paradigms” (1991:58). And it is on this terrain, I think, that we must satisfy Tilly’s charge that we respect both the time and “reality” dimensions, and also employ our new-fashioned view of culture, as one analytic concept among others. In my own political ethnography of a changing multiracial, multiethnic urban neighborhood between 1960 and 1996, The Future of Us All: Race and Neighborhood Politics in New York City (1998), I blended history and anthropology, reconstructing the period before my fieldwork began in 1983 with documents, and telling the story of the next dozen years through my own ethnography of local political arenas, houses of worship, ritual events, and other scenes of observed
behavior and speech-in-action. To understand the white Americans, children and grandchildren of diverse European immigrants whose ethnic distinctiveness was now attenuated, the fluid 1980s culture concept was indispensible:

What white Elmhurst-Corona residents shared most was local knowledge, common experience, and lifelong memories. They viewed their streets and neighborhood through layers of reminiscence, which surfaced in everyday conversation. New sights, structures, events, and neighbors were registered on long-held, shared mental templates of what "Elmhurst" and "Corona" are and were, and how to navigate and live within these neighborhoods. These understandings and routines constituted what anthropologists call "culture"—a way of life that was reproduced daily along predictable pathways and in ordinary interactions, that grew more meaningful over years and decades, and that at the same time was continuously adjusted to new circumstances. [Sanjek 1998:242]

Now, in Tilly's *Comparative Studies* review article she also criticized anthropology for neglecting the "[s]hifting political alliances and coalitions [that] are much closer to a true picture of politics than any ideal of an all-encompassing political system" (1978:168). Three years later, in an even harsher critique of her historian colleagues she wrote that many,

ignore women—and men—who had no formal role in political structures . . . and confine their analyses to formal politics: legislation, day-to-day administration of government activity, officials, and policy. . . . [I]t is necessary to look beyond the formal arena and seek out a more comprehensive method of analysis [involving] collective action . . . defined as a group's application of pooled resources to common ends. [1981 (1986):26–27]

Speaking for urban ethnography: "Not guilty!" If we take Tilly's list of what makes for sound urban history—linking theory and data, making use of quantitative materials, embracing the social experience of ordinary people, foregrounding real past and present events, documenting political process and collective action, and, heeding James and Vincent, look not at urban anthropology texts, theoretical excursions, or simplified case-studies, but rather at the body of critical, sometimes dense, and complex fieldwork-based monographs—we come out quite well.

This tradition begins in 1844 with *Engels' Condition of the Working Class in England* (1969 [1892]), focused on Manchester
and other industrial cities that had sprung up recently and rapidly, with new classes, urban spatial arrangements (anticipating the concentric theory of later Chicago sociologists), symbolic attachments, and modes of observable behavior. Next, Du Bois' *The Philadelphia Negro* (1967 [1899]) depicted an 1890s black neighborhood, and set survey results, combing of documents, and ethnographic observations within an historical portrait of this city over 250 years, with particular focus both on long-established and recently-migrated African Americans.

From the 1920s through the 1940s, anthropological monographs meeting the Tilly criteria included the Lynds's *Middletown* (1929) and *Middletown in Transition* (1937), Hunter's *Reaction to Conquest* (1936), Powdermaker's *After Freedom* (1939), Wilson's *Essay on the Economics of Detribalization in Northern Rhodesia* (1968 [1941–42]), Davis and the Gardners' *Deep South* (1941), Whyte's *Street Corner Society* (1943), Drake and Cayton's *Black Metropolis* (1962 [1945]), and Sundkler's *Bantu Prophets in South Africa* (1961 [1948]). Over the past five decades, the list lengthens, and without citing another string of exemplary titles, let me assert that there are scores of ethnographically-rich and historically-sensitive urban studies that employ a nuanced view of culture, attend to politics and power, and describe "what really happened at some point in the past or is happening now."

In this body of work, is anthropology history? Not quite. Anthropologists by and large approach past events in a distinctive manner that Fenton (1962) refers to as "upstreaming," proceeding from contemporary study of a place or group of people backward in time, using documents and other sources of information; they begin with a fieldwork-derived sense of what Johnson (1995) calls "ground truth." In the present, they study events through the method of ethnography, which has its own canons of validity (Sanjek 1990) and ethical responsibilities (Kuper 1947:10). More and more they make use of documents, but not documents alone.

But anthropology may become history—in several senses. In September 1999 I visited Yankee City—Newburyport, Massachusetts—with my colleagues Tim Sieber and Madhulika Khandelwal. Using Warner's sketchmap from *The Social Life of a Modern Community* (Warner and Lunt 1941), we ascended State Street; observed the old homes of the "upper-uppers" and "lower-uppers" on High Street; walked around Frog Pond and through the two cemeteries, with some graves dating to the Revolutionary War; covered the waterfront; and surveyed the old "lower-lower" Riverbrook section. Today, Newburyport is highly-gentrified, an
upscale tourist town filled with well-heeled shoppers and diners in its busy boutiques and restaurants. In its one antiquarian bookstore, however, there was not a single volume of Warner's, nor had the store's owner ever heard of him or the Yankee City study.

Surely a contemporary historian or anthropologist studying Newburyport's past and present would make use of Warner's volumes, despite their faults as exposed by Thernstrom in 1964. And let us hope that no anthropologist today, anywhere, would make the same historical errors that Warner did. But let us also remember that Thernstrom's point about the unappreciated extent of past geographical mobility was precisely the one made in 1963 about the French village he had studied in 1950–51 (Wylie 1964 [1957]) by ethnographer Lawrence Wylie in his essay, "Demographic Change in Roussillon" (1963), in the classic anthropological volume Mediterranean Countrymen edited by Pitt-Rivers—which returns us to Louise Tilly's turf of nineteenth-century France.

Flirtation between anthropology and history has its own long history. May the relationship deepen, prosper, and long continue.

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