The renaissance in urban theory draws directly from a fresh focus on the neglected realities of cities beyond the west and embraces the global south as the epicentre of urbanism. This Handbook engages the complex ways in which cities of the global south and the global north are rapidly shifting, the imperative for multiple genealogies of knowledge production, as well as a diversity of empirical entry points to understand contemporary urban dynamics.

The Handbook works towards a geographical realignment in urban studies, bringing into conversation a wide array of cities across the global south – the ‘ordinary’, ‘mega’, ‘global’ and ‘peripheral’. With interdisciplinary contributions from a range of leading international experts, it profiles an emergent and geographically diverse body of work. The contributions draw on conflicting and divergent debates to open up discussion on the meaning of the city in, or of, the global south; arguments that are fluid and increasingly contested geographically and conceptually. It reflects on critical urbanism, the macro- and micro-scale forces that shape cities, including ideological, demographic and technological shifts, and rapidly changing global and regional economic dynamics. Working with southern reference points, the chapters present themes in urban politics, identity and environment in ways that (re)frame our thinking about cities. The Handbook engages the twenty-first-century city through a ‘southern urban’ lens to stimulate scholarly, professional and activist engagements with the city.

Susan Parnell is an Urban Geographer in the Department of Environmental and Geographical Science and also serves on the Executive Committee of the African Centre for Cities, both at the University of Cape Town, South Africa.

Sophie Oldfield is a Geographer and Associate Professor in the Department of Environmental and Geographical Science at the University of Cape Town, South Africa.
“This Handbook brings together some of the most interesting and prominent voices on cities to speak of and from the conurbations in which the majority of the World finds itself. Thinking on cities has been dominated by perspectives from the north, but this volume provides an elegant and insightful reassessment; one that manages to get past familiar but unhelpful north–south dualisms. It illuminates the lives and spaces of the many, the politics of being and becoming, the materiality of urban formation, and the contours of a new urbanism informed from the south. An essential and compelling read put together with care by the editors.”

Ash Amin, 1931 Chair in Geography and Fellow of Christ’s College, University of Cambridge, UK

“Cities across the global south are busily reconstructing multiple forms of ‘received’ twentieth-century urbanism. During the early twenty-first century, they will help reshape the global and regional economic landscapes, along with our contemporary imaginations of justice, good governance, social development and sustainability. Through this, they will almost certainly create new geographies, histories and epistemologies. Under the editorship of Parnell & Oldfield, this Handbook explores this diverse and heterodox terrain in a rich and timely contribution to the theory and practice of critical and transformative urbanism as articulated by leading voices of the global south.”

Aromar Revi, Director Indian Institute of Human Settlements, India
THE ROUTLEDGE HANDBOOK ON CITIES OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Edited by Susan Parnell and Sophie Oldfield
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‘FROM THE SOUTH’

Sophie Oldfield and Susan Parnell

Writing from the southern tip of Africa in the crisp winter temperatures of June, this is an exciting moment for us personally and professionally. This is a big book on what are path-determining issues for the twenty-first century. Cities, especially southern cities, are our future. We want to make clear, however, that this book does not establish a body of scholarship on the global urban south through a critique of the norms and the limits, the problems and the lacunae of northern scholarship and its universal presumptions and applications. It is instead a celebration of scholars and scholarship committed to making urban futures better, more interesting, legible, sustainable, and more just. It also works towards a geographical realignment in urban studies, bringing into conversation a wide array of cities across the global south – the ‘ordinary’, ‘mega’, ‘global’ and ‘peripheral’ – as well as diversely situated authors and perspectives. As the nuanced texts and the many glorious images in the book reveal, assuming a southern perspective, or point of departure, inevitably alters one’s gaze on cities: this is an invigorating, not debilitating, shift in orientation for urban studies.

The 700 or so pages that follow demonstrate unequivocally that efforts to create southern urbanism de novo are misplaced: this scholarship, although not exhaustive or complete, already exists. Moreover, the work on cities from the south, in the third world, beyond the west – however one labels and packages that suite of cities we all recognize by their informality, their diversity, their pace, their youth, their poverty, their human energy – is rich. Contributors to the geographical realignment of urban studies, moreover, include scholars from the social, scientific and technical fields, multinational consultancies and agencies and the big NGOs. Working from across this multi-sourced and interdisciplinary material, we seek to provoke thinking on what southern dominated urbanism in the first truly global urban century implies for ideas and practice. We have configured The Handbook to open rather than foreclose intellectual debate, showcasing a multiplicity of styles and methods, political views and research questions. This does not mean we have no specific agenda for the volume. What infuses this collection is the explicit commitment to engaging the twenty-first century through a ‘southern urban’ lens, doing so in a manner that stimulates scholarly, professional and activist engagements with the city.

The new international distribution of cities has shifted profoundly, with the global south the new epicentre of urbanism. To account for the significant reorientation that the real demography of the present and future demands, the task for this Handbook is to outline a different way of doing urban studies. Questions of how to achieve a ‘worlding’ of cities, investigate the ‘ordinary’ city, or foster a ‘southern’ theorizing of urbanism permeate every chapter of the book.
The chapters in The Handbook also reflect the groundswell of (southern) writing on the (southern) city, much of which has not yet been fully acknowledged in the old urban studies core. With the massive demographic and economic changes of the last three decades, the parochialism of the research heartland is a problem. It means that cities that are highly profiled in the canon of urban studies no longer reflect the hubs of urbanization or the most critical contemporary global urban problems. For urban theory, the consequence of the distortion is the prioritization of ideas that speak predominantly to cities forged by the industrial revolution, the realities of the Anglophone parts of the world, and an associated tendency to overlook the rapidly growing cities where traditional authority, religious identity or informality are as central to legitimate urban narratives as the vacillations in modern urban capitalist public policy. This lacuna in understanding urban practices is also a product of a distorted global distribution of research-active scholars and scholarship, the politics of knowledge that shapes urban studies. Where academics work is a dynamic that is difficult for an ascendant southern urbanism to counter; as editors our aim has been to establish an internationally credible cohort of authors commensurate with The Handbook’s objective of providing a prestige reference work, while giving greater profile to lesser-known cities and researchers located outside of the intellectual heartlands.

The tone of The Handbook is unashamedly academic, but because of the subject matter, where a significant proportion of the knowledge on urban places lies beyond the academy, there was an imperative to respect styles and sources of knowledge production regardless of whether it was found in a United Nations document, a scholarly journal or an activist blog. It is not just the complexity of cities but also the diversity of theorists and researchers that the book showcases and problematizes. For instance, we, like many others published here, have both worked and lived in north and south. We also live in a context where simple notions of north/south, rich/poor, black/white are grossly insufficient to understand power and identity in the city. Urban studies has a tradition of invoking the intellectual writings of divergent disciplinary traditions, something our training as geographers embraces, a discipline that stands at the crossroads of ecology, biology, anthropology, development studies, planning and history, and which we have endeavoured to pursue in seeking contributors from diverse backgrounds to The Handbook.

We hope that the multi-register tone of the book also reflects our far from pure academic commitments. Like an increasingly large percentage of scholars, we are embedded in multiple relationships and conversations across donors, state, province, city, activists, and non-governmental and community organizations. In consequence, in selecting the topics covered too, we were careful to ensure that the concerns that dominate southern policy makers, scholars and residents were appropriately profiled. In framing our search for chapters, we were especially anxious to speak to a new generation of urbanists, who may not necessarily live in cities of the south, but will be much more conscious of and engaged with cities in the south than past generations of either academics or professionals. The Handbook is intended to provide this cohort with a robust and authoritative overview of the state of this rapidly developing sub-field of urban studies, known somewhat clumsily as southern urbanism or cities of the south.

To frame why such a large and diverse volume is necessary, the opening section of the book speaks directly to the debate on the utility of an alternative southern theoretical positioning and the value of establishing a distinctive set of southern urban problems. Here we seek to open up discussion, rather than take a position on the precise meaning of the city in or of the global south. Indeed, we would also caution against splitting off or prioritizing the theoretical from the conceptual, empirical and methodological concerns that infuse every other section and chapter. Many of the papers deal overtly with particular southern urban issues, but there is never a suggestion of a unique city form or even exclusively southern problems. Rather, working from southern urban realities highlights known urban divisions such as food security, fragmented urbanism or inequality, while underscoring the relative lack of state resources and high levels of household poverty as overarching determinants of the urban
condition. Even loosely applied, this southern (re)framing challenges the intellectual status quo and makes way for new modes to illuminate the drivers of urban change.

We have aimed to build The Handbook from empirical evidence and intellectual formulations drawn from the physical, social and economic realities of relatively under-documented cities. The majority of the urban places we invoke are located in territories that the Bruntland line delineated as ‘the global south’. The spatial scope of the collection is however not literal. Throughout the volume we have used lower case text for the ‘global south’, connoting that this is not a physical nomenclature. Across (and sometimes even within) the chapters, authors invoke widely varied ‘definitions’ of southern urbanism, revealing that for urban scholars in general the notion of the global south is fluid and increasingly contested, both geographically and conceptually.

Reticence over being specific about what places are in or out of the southern delineation should not detract from the widespread concern to (re)view the global urban condition with a southern sensibility. There is little consensus on how exactly to move a (southern) urban agenda forward, representing in our view a healthy diversity of views within the field. In contrast to eschewing regional or global categorizations of a city, a cohort of writers, marked by strong exposure to African, South Asian and Latin American cities, press the view that extreme levels of urban poverty and under-servicing create imperatives for distinctive practical and political action that can only be achieved when there is greater understanding of the dynamics of fiscal impediments, urban need, management failure, complexity and struggle in actual cities, those conventionally thought of as ‘in the global south’. For other authors in The Handbook, such distinct southern positioning is less useful; instead they work from a relational, rather than binary, notion of south–north relations, revealing in many instances the ‘reverse’ flow of ideas and practices from southern to northern cities, and highlighting too the ways in which urban experiences (including poverty and informality) are also global and universal.

While the big ideas of urban studies infuse the work of scholars across the world, a major challenge for urbanists in and of the south has been to generate publications that have local traction and practical application. Ideas used to shape research have to be seen to be legitimate at the city and national scales and this means a locally legible account that gives due weight to drivers of urban change, regardless of their form or point of origin. In our global system of cities, it is essential to theorize urban change in ways that make transparent how specific local problems resonate with universal challenges of, for instance, natural resource threats, the uneven distribution of wealth, new technologies, sustainable infrastructure management, and the erosion of the quality of life.

No city is static, and cities everywhere are subject to major forces of social, economic and environmental change, a set of debates that provide necessary reminders of the absolute limits of resource constraints for all urban life. Mindful of our common urban future, a number of the chapters within The Handbook deploy theory and practice from the southern city to conditions in northern cities, highlighting that resource limits, poverty, informality and growth are not the preserve of the south. In seeking contributions for The Handbook, our premise was that there are important issues around wealth and consumption evident everywhere and much extant urban theory has a global application.

To reflect the widely varying and diverse research and conceptual entry points, as well as a device for organizing and making the debates more accessible, we have placed the close to fifty chapters into sub-sections. Some chapters could readily be located in one or more section, and the intention is not to compartmentalize. To aid readers each section includes a brief introduction to the critical issues that illuminate rather than summarize the chapters within each theme.

We are mindful that The Handbook has shortcomings and gaps. For example, there is not enough on crime, biodiversity or housing. We have not addressed the issue of how cities should be taken up in the global Sustainable Development Goals that are currently under formulation through United Nations processes. China is underrepresented, much of Eurasia is ignored; issues of research methods and ethics
are almost entirely absent, and so on. The themes we profile are in no way presented as a comprehensive assessment or manifesto of a southern repositioning of urban studies. Moreover, we have no pretensions that we provide a sufficient range of case material to satisfy the need for a more comprehensive coverage of cities that simultaneously informs local action and the way global thinkers frame their generalizations. What we hope the collection does do is profile provocative material from alternative points on the map, minimizing the disconnect between solutions born of the richest urban centres and their application in some of the poorest. We also hope it inspires a confidence in normalizing the use of southern cities as common reference points for comparative debate and collective abstraction.

Lastly, the cover image invokes the notions of travel and departures, metaphors consistent with the premise of the volume that the start, if not the end point, for innovation in urban research and praxis, of necessity, has to hold the city of the global south as a critical, if not exclusive, reference point. The ideas and practices of twenty-first-century cities are widely contested, varied in scope and scale and there are multiple theoretical entry points. This is not a relativist argument – this is not everything goes, a ‘both/and’ type of approach. Rather we acknowledge that what emerges out of a conversation about southern urbanism is a product of contestation, debate, the ability to invoke evidence, the acknowledgement of theory generated in multiple places, and an ability to acknowledge and access corridors of power inside and outside the academy.

In this growing and diversifying community of scholars and practitioners, the tightly knit leadership that marked out the dominance of Anglo-American writing on the city is fraying. This is both healthy, in that there is no orthodoxy, but tricky in that the scholarship is fragmented and difficult to access.

Selected precisely because they are representative of the ‘new normal’ of the urban world, this body of work on ‘southern urbanism’ helps us move forward. It reminds us that the majority of research on southern urbanism is not focused on the issue of whether the city of the south is a useful or correct theoretical framing. Rather, most authors are associated with a tradition of empirical work and engaged political practice that invokes theory to interpret global forces and their local specificity. There is no single expression of this bottom-up conceptualization that stands in contrast to big theory formulation analytically; it nonetheless provides and provokes bodies of work that critically and theoretically inform interventions that come out of the south.

Overall, The Handbook embraces the imperative for multiple genealogies of knowledge production and a diversity of empirical entry points essential for excavating the complex ways in which cities of the global south and global north are rapidly shifting. It demonstrates that it is possible to map and understand these processes but this requires extensive and sustained research, and on the ground exposure. Moreover, multiple investigations and diverse entry points are essential to understand what levers of change might be, who actors are, and the diverse power configurations that are at play. The book is thus not prescriptive, there is no squaring of one theory and body of knowledge in relation to another; rather we aim for recognition and conversation between and across them, drawing on these diverse readings to highlight the complex interplay of structure and agency, the global and the local, the theoretical and the empirical that give substance to our understanding of how cities run as well as the ephemeral qualities of citizens, spaces and urban knowledge.
PART I

Critical urbanism
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What inspires a conversation about critical urbanism? For some, it is a project of overt engagement and celebration of the breadth and complexities of cities of the global south, the myriad realities that shape cities and makes the task of ‘thinking cities’ innovative and exciting today. For others, it is a challenge to develop urban knowledge and theory that can travel and engage complexity, across borders and boundaries, producing new and better ways of knowing. Certainly, critical approaches to southern urbanism pose a challenge to do things differently, to ‘dis-assemble’ and ‘re-assemble’ our notions and practice.

From ‘worlding’ to ‘de-territorialized’ global thinking, from scepticism to a claim for southern urban knowledge, at stake in this debate lies contention over the significance of place – the south, the post-colony, the periphery, its relationship to theory, and the ways in which both shape the epistemological knowledge at the heart of an invigorated project for urban studies. Indeed, what marks this collection of interventions are the divergent views within a cohort of scholars who, nonetheless, collectively assert the imperative of reframing of urban studies (in general) from a southern vantage point.

Ananya Roy, for instance, draws on contemporary notions of the global south as temporal rather than geographical, emerging in specific historical conjunctures – the ‘now’ of the ‘Asian urban century’ in this case. A project of ‘worlding’ urban theory, she takes seriously circulations, ‘shadow lines’, to create new geographies of theory of and from the global south. Unsurprisingly, given the dynamic pace of this critical debate, arguments for and against southern urbanism are taken in different directions by other authors in this section.

While sympathetic to a project of global southern urban theory and its intent, Alan Mabin is sceptical of the utility of ‘urban theory from the south’. What we need, or lack, is not addressed by imposition of a theory from and of the south. And, must we be didactic about where our ideas travel, rejecting the notion, for instance, that northern theories aren’t useful in the south carte blanche? He suggests instead that theories travel, and in doing so, are richly populated in place, region, networks, and in conversation. Working between Paris, Johannesburg and São Paulo, unlike Roy’s located urbanism, he suggests thinking in relation, in pathways across conventional terrain of north and south.

In clear contrast, Sujata Patel argues for ‘southern urban theory’, to overcome the Eurocentric epistemic trap in which urban studies (and sociology) are caught. Demonstrating the problematic and persistent equating of urbanization and modernization in critical – supposedly progressive – urban theory, she argues for the disruption of such universals. While ‘provincializing’ North Atlantic urban
studies is a task for those in the North Atlantic, Patel invites southern scholars to conceive of a reinvigorated urban studies, networked across the south, a project that addresses the serious material and political inequalities central to the contemporary global production of academic knowledge. Writing from India, she challenges us to create a language and practice of social science that is southern, and thus truly global and critical.

Like Patel, Carlos Vainer argues that we must ‘move beyond out of place urban ideas’. Reflecting a Brazilian, and more generally, a Latin American experience, he argues that coloniality – knowledge shaped in colonial relations – sustains the dissemination of ‘best practice’ city modelling built on what was European, and is now largely a North American model. To challenge coloniality we have ‘to imagine a different world, a better world’. Vainer highlights the need for a dialogical approach – one that is ‘free’ and ‘fair’, that recognizes its assumptions; a project in which all theorists acknowledge the location and limits of ideas.

In concluding with Jennifer Robinson’s chapter, the section comes full circle. Robinson argues that in calling for ‘urban theory from the global south’ we are too easily caught in a ‘territorial trap’ – embodied in notions of south, north, west, colonial, and post-colonial. She suggests ‘southern city knowledge’ can only be an interim way to redress and address what is absent in our global ways of thinking about cities. She aims, instead, to ‘reconfigure the tactics and form of our comparative imagination’ in order to ‘think cities in a world of cities’. What is really lacking in our urban knowledge? Engaging the notion of planetary urbanism (drawing on Brenner and Schmid 2013) and the idea that urbanization is always variable, polymorphic and historically determinate, she offers a more abstract, less territorial, terrain and sensibility to think the city anew.

Divergent and contentious, rich and exciting, these approaches all break with the status quo of urban studies and open up how we see and view the city and its place in the world. By repositioning our point of departure, they ask us to consider too how we imagine the academic project, the nature and purpose of knowledge, the societal debates and tensions that shape the research project. Not simply divisions of theory and practice, south and north, applied and academic, a debate about critical urbanism from the varied perspectives of theorists of the urban south is rich and contentious, full of possibility, reshaping and forging new conversations and imaginations.
3
WORLDING THE SOUTH

Toward a post-colonial urban theory

Ananya Roy

But unless theory is unanswerable, either through its successes or failure, to the essential untidiness, the essential unmasterable presence that constitutes a large part of historical and social situations (and this applies equally to theory that derives from somewhere else and theory that is ‘original’), then theory becomes an ideological trap.


Inventing the south

In Singapore, at the heart of the Kampong Glam heritage district, lies Muscat Street. Bordering the Sultan Mosque, it is lined with a series of arches, each depicting the global interconnections that bind Singapore to the Arab world (see Figure 3.1). Murals prominently feature trade maps, specifically shipping routes from Muscat to Canton and Singapore (Figure 3.2). Sans date, such maps narrate a glorious and timeless history of economic hegemony. In doing so, they inaugurate a post-colonial present, one in which Muscat, Canton and Singapore are the centres of a world order, world cities bound together in a geography of familiar relationalities.

I present the murals of Muscat Street as an instance of the ‘worlding of the south’. Following Heidegger, the iconography of the arches can be understood as a ‘world view … not a view of the world but the world understood as a view’ (Heidegger 1976: 350). They are an ineluctably modern world view, in Heidegger’s sense of a world view being necessarily modern, that ‘the basic process of modern times is the conquest of the world as picture’ (ibid.: 353).

As a world view, the maps of Muscat Street also decentre the world. They conjure a world of trading relations that span a territory broadly understood as Asia. Other geographies remain off the map, irrelevant in this decentred representation of economic hegemony. A historical depiction of Indian Ocean empires, such representations are also bold assertions of a future that is now imagined as the Asian century, an era of the emergence and ascendance of Asian economies that stretch from the Arabian Gulf past the South China Sea to the Pacific Ocean. Heidegger (1976: 350) reminds us that in the age of the world view, ‘we are in the picture . . . in everything that belongs to it and constitutes it as a system, it stands before us’. What stands before us at Muscat Street is the invention of the global south. I do not mean invention in a pejorative way, but instead as the sheer creativity of human practice, and as the sheer fact of the invented character of all that passes as tradition (AlSayyad 2003). And what
Figure 3.1 Muscat Street (Photo: Ananya Roy)
Worlding the south

is invented at Muscat Street is indeed a ‘system’, the global south as system, as that which can stand before us as a whole.

The world that is on view at Muscat Street is inevitably an effect of the state. The Kampong Glam neighbourhood, now a heritage district, was designated as a Malay settlement in British colonial master plans. Anchored by the Sultan Mosque and neighbouring madrassas, the area came to be seen as home not only to merchants from the Indo-Malay archipelago but also to trade routes linking Singapore to the Arab world (Ismail 2006: 244). Street names evoked these distant and yet familiar geographies: Bussorah (Basra), Muscat, Baghdad, Kandahar, and the generic Arab Street. As Yeoh (1992: 316) argues, the conferral of the street name, Arab Street, by the British indicates the effort to identify the area as an ‘Arab kampung’. In this way, the colonial city itself could be neatly ordered into ‘recognizable racial units’, with Europeans inhabiting the ‘town’ and racial-ethnic others ‘relegated to separate kampungs’ (ibid.: 317).

But what is at work in Muscat Street is more than the remains of the colonial past. Equally at work is the statecraft of post-colonial government. The designation of Kampong Glam as a heritage district (see Figure 3.3) took place in the 1980s when, as Yeoh and Huang (1996: 412) detail, historic conservation emerged as an urban planning priority in Singapore. Such efforts were part of a broader state project to reclaim ‘Asian roots’ as a ‘bulwark against westernization’ (ibid.: 413). What was at stake was not only a search for ancestry but also the making of national futures. Thus, Minister of State George Yeo was to declare in 1989: ‘As we trace our ancestries, as we sift through the artifacts which give us a better understanding of how we got here, as we study and modify the traditions we have inherited, we form a clearer vision of what our future can be’ (Yeoh and Huang 1996: 413). The murals of Muscat Street can be understood in keeping with this vision of the multi-cultural, post-colonial city, one in which heritage becomes a vital element of the redevelopment of urban futures.

But it can also be understood as a world view, one that constructs the global south, its histories and its future. To the extent that this world view is the Asian century, Asia must be understood not as a bounded location or even as a set of circulations but rather as a citation, a way of asserting the teleology of progress.

Today, at the arch that marks the entrance to Muscat Street, sits a brass plaque (see Figure 3.4). It signifies the ‘reopening’ of the street in 2012 as a joint redevelopment effort of the city-state of Singapore and the Sultanate of Oman. We are instructed to view the arches and murals that ‘reflect Kampong Glam’s role as a hub for Arab traders during Singapore’s early history’ and ‘symbolise the maritime and trade connection between Singapore and Oman which have continued to this day’. As in British colonial urban planning, such a script creates stable ontological categories of recognition, notably that of Arab-ness. And as in the case of the state-led urban redevelopment of the 1980s, the joint Singapore-Oman venture is a tracing of ancestry in order to forge new destinies of global capitalism. Such destinies implicate and transcend the territorial boundaries of sovereign nation-states, evoking the unbounded geography of empire and world. The collective subject imagined here is at once national citizen and post-national worldly subject.

The reinvention of Muscat Street can thus be understood as an example of what Aihwa Ong and I have analysed as inter-referenced Asian urbanism, a set of citationary practices that seek to narrate a history of Asian hegemony and a future of Asian ascendance (Roy and Ong 2011). Marked by numerous urban experiments of which Muscat Street is only one, these geographies of solidarity (re)invent Asia as territory and temporality, and above all as a citation. From global Islam to global capital, from ancient trade routes to speculative financial markets, such circulations and citations place cities like Muscat and Singapore at the centre of a ‘reopened’ world order. It is in this way that the global south becomes a world view, the world understood as a view. But such a world view is necessarily untidy, in Said’s (1983: 173) words necessarily ‘unmasterable’. What then is the theory/Theory that is generated from and about such a world view? What then is theory/ Theory from the south?
Figure 3.2  Murals featuring shipping routes from Muscat to Canton and Muscat to Singapore (Photos: Ananya Roy)

Figure 3.3  Kampong Glam heritage district (Photo: Ananya Roy)
Maps of theory

While the twentieth century closed with debate and controversy about the shift from a ‘Chicago School’ of urban sociology to the ‘Los Angeles School’ of postmodern geography, the urban future already lay elsewhere: in the cities of the global south, in cities like Shanghai, Cairo, Mumbai, Mexico City, Rio de Janeiro, Dakar, Johannesburg, Singapore, Dubai. For many decades, the canon of urban theory had remained primarily a theory of a Euro-American urbanism, a story of urban change in a handful of global cities: Chicago, New York, Los Angeles, all located in the global north. The cities that housed the world’s urban majority could only appear in this canon as ‘mega-cities’, sites of underdevelopment, on the margins of the map of global capitalism. Although considerable empirical research and robust analysis was being conducted in the context of such cities, this work had not necessarily entered into the annals of what constitutes Theory, or the authoritative canon of the discipline of urban studies. Mega-cities were, as Jennifer Robinson (2002) sharply put it, ‘off the map’ of urban theory. Against the ‘regulating fiction’ of the First World global city, Robinson (2003: 275) called for a robust urban theory that could overcome its ‘asymmetrical ignorance’.

Robinson’s call has been taken up by several genres of urban scholarship. From the mandate to ‘see from the South’ (Watson 2009) to the effort to create new regional theories that can ‘speak back to putative “centres” of geography in transformative ways’ (Sidaway, Bunnell and Yeoh 2003: 279), the effort to enact a post-colonial urban theory is now fully underway. In this chapter, I outline one such
approach and its efforts to disrupt the canon of global urbanism by foregrounding the cities of the
global south. Following my previous work with Aihwa Ong, I designate this approach as ‘worlding’
and suggest that it is one of several possible contributions to the making of post-colonial urban theory
(Roy and Ong 2011). But before I outline an analytics of worlding, let me first address the question of
cities of the global south and why they matter.

Urbanism in the south

The twenty-first century is commonly understood as an age of historically unprecedented urbanization,
notably in the global south. As the most recent State of the World’s Cities report produced by UN-
Habitat, notes, ‘today of every 10 urban residents in the world more than seven are found in developing
countries’ (UN-Habitat 2012: 25). The ‘urban millennium’ is also then an age of southern urbanization,
or specifically an ‘Asian urban century’, with half of the world’s urban population now living in Asia
(ibid.: 28). UN-Habitat (2012: 28) describes this world of cities as that of ‘massive conurbations’, or
‘meta-cities’. If nothing else, contemporary urban theory has to take account of the material realities of
the urban century. However, as Brenner and Schmid (2013) warn, the idea of the urban age is a ‘chaotic
conception’. They caution that ‘the urban is not a pregiven, self-evident reality, condition or type of
space’ (Brenner and Schmid 2013: 20). Instead of a focus on settlement types, they call for the study of
historical processes of spatial change and global capitalist development. Such an approach is in keeping
with Lefebvre’s (1974) philosophical mandate to understand urbanism not as objects in space but rather
as the production of space. It is in this sense that the cities of the global south are the centre of a world
order that is being created and recreated through the urban revolution. And it is in this sense that
southern urbanism is today’s global urbanism, what Lefebvre (1974: 412) would have described as the
making of space on a ‘world scale’.

To take account of southern urbanism also requires conceptualizing urbanism as a formally
constituted object, one produced through the practice of statecraft and the apparatus of planning. This
is, as Lefebvre (1974: 11) argues, the ‘active − the operational or instrumental − role of space’. The
‘urban millennium’, and indeed the ‘Asian urban century’, must be understood then as historical
conjuncture, one at which the terrain of the urban becomes the matter of government. As Rabinow
(1989: 76) explains, such forms of government produce a field of rationality; they are a ‘normative
project for the ordering of the social milieu’. A prominent theme in the normative projects of the urban
millennium is that of economic growth, recast in the recent UN-Habitat report as ‘prosperity’. Keenly
attuned to economic crisis, and titled ‘The Prosperity of Cities’, the report argues that cities are a
‘remedy’ for ‘regional and global crises’ (UN-Habitat 2012: 11). In the face of stark socio–spatial
inequalities, the report frames the question of economic growth as ‘shared prosperity’ (ibid.: 12). It is
language that is reminiscent of emerging policy paradigms in many parts of the global south, for
example, the discourse of ‘inclusive growth’ that now dominates urban planning in India (Roy 2013).

What is significant about the vocabulary of shared prosperity or inclusive growth is not its remedial
character but rather its implied reference to a new world order of development and underdevelopment,
the rearrangement of prosperity and growth across global north and global south. On the one hand, the
economies of the North Atlantic are in turmoil. From the American Great Recession to what has been
dubbed the ‘existential crisis’ of the Eurozone, hitherto prosperous liberal democracies are on shaky
ground. If the 1980s was billed as the lost development decade in Africa and Latin America because of
structural adjustment, then today, the Bush era of neoliberal redistribution is being billed as the lost
decade for the American middle class (Pew Research Center 2012). In sharp contrast, in the economic
powerhouses of the global south, for example in India and China, new hegemonic models of capital
accumulation are being put into place. And there is fast and furious experimentation with welfare
programmes and human development, be it the building of the world’s largest development NGO in
Worlding the south

Bangladesh (Roy 2010) or the crafting of a ‘new deal’ for India’s slum-dwellers (Mathur 2009) or the institutionalization of ‘right to the city’ policies in Brazil (Fernandes 2011) or vigorous debate about a guaranteed minimum income in South Africa (Seekings 2002; Ferguson 2009). These exist in relationship with, and also at odds with, what Wacquant (2009: xi) has billed as ‘the neoliberal government of social insecurity’, or ‘America as the laboratory of the neoliberal future’. Such socio-spatial formations call into question the global south as the location of underdevelopment. They reveal the intense reinventions of development that are taking place in the global south, practices and imaginations that seem foreclosed in the North Atlantic. They also bring into view the multiplicity and heterogeneity of capitalism’s futures. In short, they present a challenge for how a post-colonial urban theory, one concerned with cities of the global south, may be forged.

Theory from the south?

In previous work (Roy 2009: 819–20), I have argued that it is necessary to craft ‘new geographies of theory’, those that can draw upon ‘the urban experience of the global South’. The intent of such an effort was ‘not simply to study the cities of the global South as interesting, anomalous, different, and esoteric empirical cases’, but rather to recalibrate urban theory itself. I expressed optimism that ‘as the parochial experience of EuroAmerican cities has been found to be a useful theoretical model for all cities, so perhaps the distinctive experiences of the cities of the global South can generate productive and provocative theoretical frameworks for all cities’. My call for ‘new geographies of theory’ raises at least two questions. First, at a time when the global south is being reinscribed and redrawn, what does theory from the south entail? Second, why theory?

Following Sparke (2007: 117), I mean the global south as a ‘concept-metaphor’ that interrupts the ‘flat world’ conceits of globalization. Sparke (2007: 117) notes that ‘The Global South is everywhere, but it is also always somewhere, and that somewhere, located at the intersection of entangled political geographies of dispossession and repossession, has to be mapped with persistent geographical responsibility.’ Such an approach to the global south allows us to think about the ‘locatedness’ of all theory, and to take up the task of mapping geographies of theory as one that entails responsibility. But the locatedness of the global south does not imply a single and stable location. Instead, I am suggesting that the global south be understood as a temporal category, an emergence that marks a specific historical conjuncture of economic hegemony and political alliances. It is this conjuncture that I have designated with the short-hand reference, the Asian Century.

If the global south is not a stable ontological category symbolizing subalternity, what then does it mean to produce theory from the south? Comaroff and Comaroff (2012: 12) define the task in a manner that is attentive to the historical conjuncture I have already outlined: that it is in the global south that ‘radically new assemblages of capital and labor are taking shape’ and that these ‘prefigure the future of the global north’. Theory from the south, the Comaroffs (2012: 7) argue, is not about narrating modernity from its ‘undersides’, but rather revealing the ‘history of the present’ from the ‘distinctive vantage point’ that are these frontiers of accumulation. It is with this in mind that I have been interested in ‘post-colonial self-government’, its audacious programmes of reform and development, and its aspirations of economic hegemony (Roy 2013). For theory to respond to this ‘specific historical and social situation’, it must disassemble the world view that is the global south.

Here it is worth turning to Clifford’s (1989) ‘Notes on Theory and Travel’. Clifford writes: “‘Theory’ is a product of displacement, comparison, a certain distance. To theorize, one leaves home. But like any act of travel, theory begins and ends somehow.’ For Clifford, ‘every center or home’ is today ‘someone else’s periphery or diaspora’. Theory, he thus argues, ‘is no longer naturally ‘at home’ in the West’, because the West is no longer ‘a privileged place’ to ‘collect, sift, translate, and generalize’. In keeping with Said’s ‘Traveling Theory’, Clifford ‘challenges the propensity of theory to seek a stable
place, to float above historical conjunctures'. If the condition of no longer being ‘at home in the West’ is understood as the post-colonial condition, then it may mark a useful, albeit unstable, (dis)location for a theory from the south. But for such a theory not to become what Said cautions against as an ‘ideological trap’, it must also conceptualize the global south as a place that cannot be privileged, as a world view that must be diligently and constantly disassembled. After all, a world picture or world view is, as Sidaway (2000: 606) notes, an essential truth. While Sidaway sees a world picture to be a mainly western representation, I am arguing that the self-worlding of the south also entails the conquest of the world as picture. Recently such a world view was on display at the summit of the BRICS held in Durban and at which a new development bank was discussed. Bond (2013: 1) describes the summit as one at which heads of state met ‘to assure the rest of Africa that their countries’ corporations are better investors in infrastructure, mining, oil and agriculture than the traditional European and US multinationals’. To craft a theory from the south it is necessary to critique such forms of post-colonial reason.

But why theory? Theory matters because too often cities of the global south are narrated in the format of empirical description. I am not suggesting that empiricism can somehow be separated out from theorization. In fact, all theory is provincial and parochial, and thus empirical. All empiricism contains within it organizing concepts and purposive norms. What I am concerned with though is the structuration of urban theory through a divide between Theory and ethnography. Note my deliberate capitalization of Theory, as that which masquerades as a universal, as that which has global purchase, as that which can be capitalized. While cities of the global north are often narrated through authoritative knowledge, or Theory, cities of the global south, are often narrated through ethnography, or idiosyncratic knowledge. While Theory is assumed to have universal applicability, ethnography is seen to be homebound, unique, lacking the reach of generalization. Thus, in their recent treatise, Theory from the South, Comaroff and Comaroff (2012: 1) note that too often the ‘non-West … now the global south’ is presented ‘primarily as a place of parochial wisdom … of unprocessed data … as reservoirs of raw fact: of the historical, natural, and ethnographic minutiae from which Euromodernity might fashion its testable theories and transcendent truths’. Such geographies and methodologies of authoritative knowledge must be interrogated and disrupted. As Cheah has noted (2002: 59), ‘we need to understand more fully the schema through which the subject of universal knowledge becomes isomorphic with the West and all other regions become consigned to particularity’. It is in this sense that what is needed is not only a rich empirical description of cities of the global south but rather what I have earlier termed ‘new geographies of theory’ (Roy 2009). To be concerned about the geography of theory is to pay attention to how theory is inevitably located and the ‘conditions of acceptance’ (Said 1983: 158) under which it travels to exceed and even transform its geographic origins.

In his famous essay on ‘Traveling Theory’, Edward Said (1983: 168, 173) reminds us that ‘theory is a response to a specific social and historical situation’ and it is thus ‘unanswerable’ to ‘the essential untidiness … that constitutes a large part of historical and social situations’. Following Said, it is possible to argue that a theory of/from the south is necessarily a response to the specific historical conjuncture that I have already outlined, one in which the urbanization of the world must be interpreted and analysed and one in which new claims to economic hegemony must be critiqued. But such a theory, also following Said, is necessarily incomplete, necessarily an articulation of the untidiness that is the ontological category that is the global south. If southern Theory is to avoid being what Said (1983: 173) fears is an ‘ideological trap’, then the radical instability of the meaning, location and history of the global south must constantly be in view. The murals of Muscat Street, which I presented at the start of this essay, are a glimpse of such radical instability, of the untidiness of the seemingly stable categories of Asia, Arab, Singapore/Singapura, global south. As Comaroff and Comaroff (2012: 47) suggest, ‘the south cannot be defined, a priori, in substantive terms. The label bespeaks a relation, not a thing in or for itself.’
Worlding the south

In an essay on the ‘fantasy of urban India in its current phase of globalisation’, Lata Mani (2008: 43) argues that ‘globality’ is a ‘phantom discourse’ which creates a ‘mode of affiliation’ for the ‘chief beneficiaries’ of globalization. Mani’s critique marks a disavowal of the ‘global’ that is widespread in post-colonial theory. And it raises the important question of the geographic signifiers of theory and their distinctive meanings. I borrow this idea from Jazeel (2011: 75) who calls into question the ‘innocence’ of such geographic signifiers. As I have already noted, to assert the global south as a signifier of theory requires constant vigilance. Mani’s critique raises the additional question of how a theory that speaks from the ‘unmasterable presence’ that is the global south can reject the phantom discourses of globality and globalization and yet retain a sense of embodied location and material relationality. It is with this puzzle in mind that I turn to the concept of ‘worlding’. In particular, I am interested in how ‘worlding’ may provide an alternative to the phantom discourse of globality and the dominant paradigm of globalization (see also Madden 2012). Radhakrishnan (2005), for example, argues quite vigorously that worldliness must not be confused with globality. For him, ‘globality is a condition effected by the travel of global capital’, while worldliness is the state of ‘being in the world’. While ‘being in the world’ is available to all locations in the world, globality is a ‘fait accompli in the name of the world’. Worlding is ‘a perennial process of a lived and immanent contingency’, while globality is a ‘smooth and frictionless surface where oppositions, antagonisms and critique cannot take hold’ (ibid.: 184). In a brilliant turn of phrase, Radhakrishnan (2005: 185) presents the ‘metropolitan legitimation of globality’ as the ‘provincialism of dominance’. It is this provincialism of dominance that several scholars have sought to expose and critique the canon of urban theory as well.

I am keenly sympathetic to Radhakrishnan’s distinctions between globalization and worlding, between globality and worldliness. Yet, in my use of the term worlding, I am also interested in how the world-picture or world view is entangled with the global circuitry of capital, with ways of ‘being in the picture’. If we are to rely on Heidegger’s concept of the ‘worlding of the world’, then we must also acknowledge, as does Young (2000: 189), that Heidegger, especially the late Heidegger, is concerned with dwelling rather than with homelessness or radical insecurity. ‘To dwell is … the experience or feeling of being “at home” in one’s world … it is the existential structure of being-in-the-world’ (Young 2000: 194, 202). Dwelling, for Heidegger, as Young (2000: 189) notes, is ‘ontological security’. In other words, here worlding becomes a way of finding a privileged place, of being at home, of crafting the art of being global. As on Muscat Street, a being-in-the-world is produced alongside the travels of global capital. With this in mind, there are at least three ways in which I deploy the term ‘worlding’ to provide an approach to post-colonial urban theory and to the worlding of the global south.

First, in my previous work with Aihwa Ong (Roy and Ong 2011), I have argued that the canon of urban theory, with its emphasis on ‘global cities’, fails to capture the role of southern cities as ‘worlding’ nodes: those that create global connections and global regimes of value. The worlding city is thus a claim to instantiate the world understood as world view. From Indian ‘world-class cities’ to influential world models of urbanism such as Singapore, the worlding of the south is a complex and dynamic story of flows of capital, labour, ideas and visions. Ambitious experiments, these worlding cities are inherently unstable, inevitably subject to intense contestation, and always incomplete.

Second, it is important to note that worlding practices are not simply the domain of governing and transnational elites. In his work on African cities, Simone (2001: 17), for example, highlights how practices of worlding are set into motion through the ‘state of being “cast out” into the world’. For Simone, ‘worlding from below’ involves ‘circuits of migration, resource evacuation, and commodity exchange’. It is thus that, in the Indian context, I have described the ‘world-class’ city as a mass dream, rather than as imposed vision. Such notions of the popular and populist character of worlding cities bear
resemblance to recent discussions of subaltern cosmopolitanism. Jeffrey and McFarlane (2008: 420) thus present cosmopolitanism as a ‘set of performances enacted by diverse agents’. Indeed, as Gidwani (2006: 16) argues, the ‘unmarked Eurocentrism’ of dominant strands of cosmopolitanism must be called into question through the actually existing cosmopolitanisms of the world’s subordinated populations. It must be noted, this is no romantic alternative to the provincialism of dominance. Gidwani (2006: 18) pointedly argues that ‘there are no subaltern solidarities to be sutured’ across subaltern populations who ‘inhabit vastly different places within globalization’s geographies’ and even have ‘opposed interests’. Nevertheless, to be attentive to the world view as a mass dream is to understand both the scope of hegemony and its limits.

Finally, worlding indicates how disciplines are worlded. For example, Gillman et al. (2004: 260) view globalization as a ‘godterm’, one emanating from a ‘US nationstate that continues to occlude its myriad interests and intentions under the mythic term, America’. They thus call for a worlding of American studies that is quite closely beholden to Heidegger, as a ‘critical tactic’ that can make the ‘world horizon come near and become local and informed, instantiated as an uneven/incomplete material process of world-becoming’ (Gillman et al. 2004: 262). In urban theory, the idea of worlding makes evident how cities are worlded in authoritative knowledge.

If the idea of a world view, and even that of ‘being in the picture’ of the world view, relies to some extent on Heidegger, then this third meaning of worlding requires moving beyond metaphysical philosophy to post-colonial critique. In fact, as Spivak (1999: 212) comments in a footnote on Heidegger’s concept of worlding, ‘it is not okay to fill these outlines with the story of imperial settlement although Heidegger flirts with it constantly’. She argues that it is imperialism that transformed the ‘uninscribed earth’ into a ‘represented world on a map’, into the ‘worlding of a world’. Indeed, in an earlier essay, Spivak (1985: 262) had drawn attention to the ‘worlding of what is now called the Third World’. Examining the ‘empire of the literary discipline’, Spivak shows how the Third World is taken up as ‘distant cultures, exploited but with rich intact literary heritages waiting to be recovered, interpreted, and curricularized in English translation’. At the same, there is a silence about such worlding connections in the literatures of European colonizing cultures, a sanctioned ignorance of imperialism and its penetrations. Spivak urges us to study such cartographic inscriptions and silences. She also asks if ‘an alternative geography of the “worlding” of today’s global South’ can be broached (Spivak 1999: 200). To me, this is what seems to be at stake in the project of urban theory: an analysis of the worlding of the world but equally an effort to imagine other worlds.

**Shadow lines**

In the novel, *The Shadow Lines*, Amitav Ghosh (1988) tells the story of a protagonist who traverses a world that spans Calcutta and England. It is a provocative and poignant post-colonial tale. Its post-colonial sensibility lies partly in the ambiguity of what constitutes ‘home’ in a series of acts that Ghosh (1988: 113) describes as ‘coming home’. But more significantly, the novel is a glimpse of the violences through which the post-colonial subject is constituted. A young boy, the protagonist, tries to make sense of the ‘trouble in Calcutta’, wondering whether it is meant to ‘keep Muslims out or Hindus in’ (Ghosh 1988: 194, 199). Years later he was to try to speak of the communal riots of 1964, to deal with ‘an emptiness in which there are no words’, to wonder why he remained silent even though there was ‘no barbed wire, no check-points to tell me where the boundaries lie’ (Ghosh 1988: 213). Now a doctoral student in New Delhi, he pulls out a tattered atlas and a rusty compass. He begins to draw circles with cities at the centre, to see which other cities are encompassed by the arc of the compass. Each, he realized, was a ‘remarkable circle: more than half of mankind must have fallen within it’.
Beginning in Srinagar and travelling anti-clockwise, it cut through the Pakistani half of Punjab, through the tip of Rajasthan and the edge of Sind, through the Rann of Kutch, and across the Arabian Sea, through the southernmost toe of the Indian Peninsula, through Kandy, in Sri Lanka, and out into the Indian Ocean until it emerged to touch upon the northernmost finger of Sumatra, then straight through the tail of Thailand into the Gulf, to come out again in Thailand, running a little north of Phnom Penh, into the hills of Laos, past Hue in Vietnam, dipping into the Gulf of Tonking, then swinging up again through the Chinese province of Yunnan, past Chungking, across the Yangtze Kiang, passing within sight of the Great Wall of China, through Inner Mongolia and Sinkiang, until with a final leap over the Karakoram Mountains it dropped again into the valley of Kashmir.

(Ghosh 1988: 227)

Ghosh writes that his protagonist was trying to ‘learn the meaning of distance’. The scene, I would argue, depicts a worlding practice, an alternative worlding of the global south and an alternative worlding of cities. It is a scene that manifests what Ash Amin (2004: 33), building on the work of Doreen Massey and in calling for a ‘new politics of place’, describes as an ‘excess of spatial composition’. Here cities are imagined not as ‘territorial entities’ but rather as ‘temporary placements of ever moving material and immanent geographies’ (Amin 2004: 33, 34). Here once again we are reminded of Radhakrishnan’s insistence that, unlike globalization, worlding is a process of ‘lived and immanent contingency’. But in seeking to learn the meaning of distance, Ghosh’s protagonist is worlding the global south in a manner that disrupts the established world view. That rusty compass on a tattered atlas in a college student’s hostel room in New Delhi cannot conquer the world as picture. It can only seek to write against/speak against/draw against the violence that has already been enacted in the post-colonial nation. The circles, and what they encompass, are untidy. They defy post-colonial reason. Ghosh’s protagonist thus draws ‘shadow lines,’ relationalities hitherto unimagined but with the potential to disrupt the provincialism of dominance.

I would like to think that urban theory is on the cusp of drawing such shadow lines, those that do more than travel with global capital or replicate what Ghosh (1988: 288) calls the ‘looking-glass border’ of petty nationalism. If the Asian urban century is an age of the world view, of the conquest of the global south as picture, then such shadow lines are more urgent than ever before. If the task of theory of/from the south is to be consolidated, then such shadow lines must be, as Spivak (1999) has already insisted, ‘a critique of postcolonial reason’.

References


4

GROUNDING SOUTHERN CITY THEORY IN TIME AND PLACE

Alan Mabin

Introduction

In their recent book, *Cities: Reimagining the Urban*, Ash Amin and Nigel Thrift offer what they characterize as a ‘provisional diagram of how to understand the city’. They see this attempt as being limited, of course, by several constraints, not the least of which is the epistemological question of ‘what counts as knowledge of the urban?’ Along with this there are caveats to the effect that they were unable to cover, issues of ‘gender, race and the environment’ and that it was the ‘cities of the North’ that they had in mind while writing the book. None of these detracts from this excellent book, but they are reminders that the universal reach of the book’s title — to *reimagine the urban* — turns out to be somewhat limited after all. (Rao 2006: 225)

Cities are always incomplete and in transition. Do the same ideas, concepts and understandings help to comprehend what is going on in all cities; are cities completely individual; or are there distinct sets of cities, to which particular ways of thinking apply? As with most questions of theory, the generality of statements about cities inevitably arises. In conducting detailed work along some select comparative axes in São Paulo, Paris and Johannesburg, I confront the possibility of distinction between cities in apparently very different settings. It is through these routes that contemporary intrusions of ‘theory from the south’ into debate become significant for my work. In researching and writing change in three cities on three continents, a single theory of cities, or as Rao (2006: quoted above) suggests, a universal framing fails to explicate my chosen sites of enquiry. I have confronted what to make of ‘southern theory’ (Connell 2007) in relation to cities in the south as well as the north of the world. Students of urban anthropology, architecture, geography, history, planning, politics and sociology find themselves bathed in the idea that southern cities cannot be understood through western or northern theory and need something new. I consider the question here: what is ‘theory from the south’ or ‘urban theory beyond the west’ (to cite the titles of works from Comaroff and Comaroff 2011 and Edensor and Jayne 2012)?

Cautions can be sounded around the problem of models — from Chicago to Los Angeles, and then on to Miami, Atlanta and cases in the ‘elsewheres’ of global urbanisms. Moreover the notion of ‘the south’ or ‘cities of the south’ evokes in general a post-colonial turn in many social disciplines, and its possible intersection with critiques of political economy (from ‘dependency theory’ to ‘anti-
neoliberalism’). One key proposition in current argument is that ‘cities of the south’ present a space of experimentation that prefigures the near future of the west (or north). The risk of wholesale adoption of such perspectives may be ‘a larger set of claims that tend to obscure even while claiming to clarify’ (Aravamudan 2012).

Mindful here of the possible dismissal of such theorizing as merely an ‘obsessive anxiety about latest fashions in Northern theory’ (e.g. Mbembe 2010; 2012), I explore what there may be to gain for consideration of the world of cities from new realities and new ideas emerging ‘in the south’. For as Roy and Ong (2011) have it, ‘both political economy and post-colonial frameworks’ are limited. Neither, they claim, is ‘sufficient in enabling robust theorizations of the problem-space that is the contemporary city’. There is thus a search for ‘new approaches in global metropolitan studies’, doing better than either positioning cities ‘within a singular script, that of “planetary capitalism”’, or searching for ‘“subaltern resistances” in cities that were once subject to colonial rule’ (Roy 2011: 307).

To explore these debates, the chapter first reflects on what is theory from the south, asking what we mean by ‘cities of the south’ and by theory ‘in’ or ‘from’ them. I then consider the debate that there is something to learn of more general utility from cities of the south. Are there some limits to the idea of ‘urban theory from the south’ or ‘beyond the west’? Here I outline a sympathetic but sceptical position. Lastly, I work through what some consequences for action in cities of theory from the south might be. That is for policy, for programme, for plan, for practice — and for democracy, as well as for possibilities of writing the city.

**What is ‘theory from the south’?**

Where does the use of the term ‘the south’ originate? Aravamudan (2012) suggests that the initial origin of the term lay in Willy Brandt’s ‘North–South’ report

> that attempted to transpose the major developing divide in the world of the 1970s away from the standoff represented by the Cold War that was seen as an ‘East–West’ divide. Sometimes ‘south’ merely and supposedly politely substitutes for ‘what we used to call the third world’ (Comaroff and Comaroff). All the same, as [Comaroff and Comaroff] acknowledge, the ‘South’ stands loosely for the ‘postcolonial’.

(Aravamudan 2012)

Of course we may use that notion to include the entire world-after-colonialism and thus city spaces from London to Brisbane (see, for example, Jacobs 1996). While there can be no precision about these terms, there is, indeed, a problem if we understand ‘the south’ as a geographical category, or the cities of the south as such, for then we impose spatial ideas on a relational category: that of the south as referring to social relations, not to place. Instead, Grovogui (2011: 175) reminds us that the term relates to a *movement* visible in contradictory ways since the Bandung conference of 1955. In effect the oppositional binary which the term ‘south’ mostly conjures seems to be ‘west’ versus ‘south’, as in the title phrase of Edensor’s and Jayne’s (2012) collection, ‘beyond the west’.

In this chapter I use the term ‘south’ loosely — less as geographical expression (though that is inevitable and a conceptual/geographical tension persists), more as referring to a dual situation of post-coloniality and particular political economy. I do, in general, oppose the notion of the south to notions of north and sometimes west, as, I suggest, much of the current literature does: sometimes using other terms (‘south-east’ instead of south for example, in Yiftachel 2006 and Watson 2013 — although this is a geographical reference which might not resonate in South America).

The first characteristic of what these present literatures term ‘southern’ is one of being, at least previously, very much under the hegemony of people and organizations and ideas of an ‘elsewhere’ and
of ‘different culture’. One component of ‘south’ is undoubtedly coloniality/post-coloniality. One cannot mean here that colonialism has ‘gone’, for as many scholars at least beginning from Bhabha (1994) argue, its cultures continually intrude on the present. But, there is a second component: the global south refers here, particularly, to conditions of scarcity for majorities, whatever the levels of superfluity for minorities may be. Such an image conjures familiar problems of negatively defining through ‘lack’ or absence, but the companion of scarcity is a complex of creativity, inventiveness and experiment, captured in the notion of the provisional in the relationships and interactions of people in the south of the world. The south, and cities of the south, are marked both by a political economy of insufficient resources to provide on average a decent life for all; and by (post) colonial disabilities. It is in these intersections that those promoting ‘theory from the south’ endeavour to engage.

Conceptually, ‘theory from the south’ is the terrain of the interventions of two of the most cited recent contributions to discussions of ‘southern theory’ − those of Australian sociologist Connell (2007), and Chicago anthropologists, Comaroff and Comaroff’s more recent volume (2011). To a considerable degree, these authors base their work in that of others associated with southern ideas: Aijaz Ahmad (2008); Arjun Appadurai (1996; 2000); Homi Bhabha (1994); Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000); Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (see especially Spivak 1999). Then there are others, moreover, whose work has been rooted in or at least read as post-colonializing the world − Fredric Jameson; Achille Mbembe; Ngugi Wa Thiong’o − in work written mostly in English and sometimes in French (Guénif-Souilamas 2012); and Obarrio (2012b) and Moraña et al. (2008), reflecting a somewhat different series of literatures from Latin America, writing originally in Portuguese and Spanish.

‘Southern theories’ proceed from the broad idea that ‘the south’ can produce different perspectives, concepts, arguments, from those traditional in literatures deeply embedded in western or northern experience. But beyond the idea, or claim, what is the problem that is being posed? In other words, what exactly is it that ‘northern or western’ theory cannot engage?

A central theme is that ideas deployed in much social theory and description originate in the north of the world and that ideas originating in the south are ignored in these hegemonic accounts. Reflecting on why ‘southern theory’ appeals to scholars located in the south, Duminy (2011) notes that

Connell basically set out … a highly political argument demanding that global knowledge flows in the social sciences be reconfigured to respect the global South as a valid source of knowledge about social action. An intimidating task, given the persistent ‘extroversion’ of Southern authors towards the research methodologies, validity claims and financial incentives of dominant metropolitan knowledge industries.

Critiquing prominent figures in western sociology − in particular James S. Coleman, Anthony Giddens and Pierre Bourdieu, Connell seeks to ‘tease out some of the geopolitical assumptions underlying general theory as such’. As with much post-colonial writing, she tries to establish ‘what view of the world and its inhabitants is at work’ in these authors’ writing and theorizing. Connell argues against claims of universality deployed by these social theorists because they fail to engage the relativities of the south: for example, ‘time involves fundamental discontinuity and unintelligible succession’ (Connell 2007: 45).

Authors such as Connell or Comaroff and Comaroff do not evenly cover the entire spectrum of ‘the south’, nor do they claim to do so. In particular the conditions of Latin America often elude inclusion among descriptions and propositions applied to much of Asia and Africa. Although the complexities of difference between Latin American and African or Asian histories are legion, and could not begin to be exhausted here (cf. Sheinin 2003), approaches to dependency, development and modernity have substantial histories in Latin America itself and among those writing Latin America elsewhere (cf. Moraña et al. 2008). Salvatore (2010: 333–4) compellingly argues that ‘Latin American literary and
cultural studies had been practising the critique of colonialism’s impact on culture and had been criticizing Eurocentrism before Said, Spivak, or Bhabha appeared on the intellectual landscape of North–Atlantic universities. Certainly Brazilian literature is long replete with exploration of multiple modernities, a central feature of contemporary southern theory followed in the post-colonial (Asian and African) debate, more than the perhaps separate origins of such discussion in Latin America (cf. Cesarino 2012). Limited in the Anglophone urban debate by English, the language consideration makes for inevitable partiality. So one has to work provisionally and at a rather broad level of generality, mindful of the limits of most statements, and at minimum, of the huge diversity of ‘the south’.

But the purpose of ‘southern theory’, as with all social theory, lies in the terrain of power. A deep intent of ‘southern theory’ is destabilization of northern thinking − and of those who do it. That is not unusual, it parallels and intersects with other generational turns, which − however significant the associated ideas may be in comprehending change in the world − purposefully set out to unseat hegemonies and in many cases the hegemons purveying them. In the case of post-colonial writing and its partial offspring, ‘urban theory from the south’, the motivation lies along paths worn by Chakrabarty (2000) − the provincializing of the North Atlantic world, and the worlding of the south (Mbembe 2001, 2010).

Leaving aside all sorts of difficulties of position, which shape this chapter, southern theory has several lines of argument. I reflect on four here:

1 that northern theory fails or does not apply in the south;
2 the future is outlined in the south not the north;
3 the north−south axis of power can be inverted − northern hegemones intellectually may be challenged, Europe may be provincialized (Chakrabarty), Africa may be worlded (Mbembe); and
4 events and ideas in the south are powerful for understanding the world as a whole, not only the south.

The subsequent discussion in this chapter takes up these lines of argument in relation to ‘cities of the south’.

‘Cities of the south’ and theory for/in/from them

With the passage of the world and most of its territories towards urban living, ‘la question urbaine est de nouveau au cœur des sciences sociales’ (the urban question is once again at the heart of social sciences). What is southern theory and research contributing to the urban question?

Following the general lines of ‘southern theory’ or ‘theory from the south’, a present tendency claims that ‘northern’ or ‘western’ urban theory cannot cope with explanation of cities in the ‘global south’, not to mention support intervention in such places (Edensor and Jayne 2012; Watson 2009), a notion gaining currency more widely (cf. Choplin 2012). There is some ‘consensus that we need a new kind of urbanism’ to reflect the reality of cities in the 21st century’ (Parnell 2012; Roy 2009 and others), perhaps a ‘postcolonial comparative urbanism’ (see McFarlane 2010, Robinson 2011a and b). Expressing this sentiment directly, the International Journal of Urban and Regional Research published a call for contributions to challenge head-on theories derived from the global North … cities across the global South can pose fundamental challenges to theories from the global North. We look forward to a time when our urban theory is derived as much from studies rooted in Buenos Aires … as in ones rooted in Chicago or Los Angeles.

(Seekings 2012)
In this mix, however, varying notions populate writing about possible differences between the ‘northern’ or ‘western’ urban theory and what is going on in the cities of the south.

A central case is the term the ‘modern’. The notion of an export of modernity or modernism from northern to southern cities has long been contested in arguments about hybridity, multiplicity, provincialization, subalternality and experimentation (see Leontidou 1996 among others). The critique suggests that ‘The western metropolis [is] implicitly considered as more developed, complex, dynamic, and mature’ than its ‘non-western’ equivalents (Robinson 2003, cited in Edensor and Jayne 2012: 3). In consequence, urban theory has embodied a notion of linearity, that what has happened in cities of the north in the nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries is being reproduced in the cities of the south. Under attack along with modernization theory and its variants, such arguments are still present in much urban writing − witness many general and even sophisticated textbooks on cities, written and published mostly in the ‘north’, in which most pages are taken up by northern illustrations with ‘cities of the south’ added almost as an afterthought, simply to be analysed and understood via the ideas established in the earlier pages.

The empirical passage of the majority of global city population to the south has, of course, given pause to many who seek to contemplate cities across the world as a whole. It is in part this new reality that provides for excitement and generates audiences for texts traversing the field, with Robinson’s Ordinary Cities (2006) a prominent example. From this body of work, differentiated as it may be, emerges the alternative hypothesis, that cities of the south reveal something new. Even without going to the extreme of claiming a new linearity, the future of the north or west is now visible in cities of the south. This is a powerful and appealing hypothesis. While there is a tension between the perspective that cities are part of a seamless whole − all are ordinary − and that northern theory does not suffice, a common thread lies in agreeing that intellectually privileging cities of the north is unacceptable; those of the south have been neglected and bypassed.

What is the claimed newness, or, perhaps difference in this departure ‘from the south’ (for there may be an elision here)? In 1996 Leontidou located what is different in contemporary southern cities as their ‘in-between spaces’. The issue here is more profound than simply that western cities are the subject of huge literatures and research and discussion, whilst ‘the other cities of the world remain relatively poorly understood’ (a starting point in Choplin’s 2012 useful review).

One facet of ‘southern urban theory’ might be deeper understanding of cities of the south. In 2010, Simone, for instance, evoked some of what might be new and different from the notions of northern urban theory in his theme of southern cities as made up by ‘movements at the crossroads from Jakarta to Dakar’. Presenting qualities of ‘cityness’ that resonate with many readers, he has begun to convince audiences, including and beyond those primarily interested in cities of the south, that his rummaging around among those who have been less visible in the urban cannon holds a key to new questions about the city in general: for example, about what is and what is not governed, and about how things are and are not governed in the city (Le Gales and Vitale 2013).

What is new and different? What might be missed by older city concepts from the north? At a much smaller scale of the everyday, the street, the house, the market, the apparently casual grouping, Simone’s work reflects on how peripheralized citizens create and recreate ‘a new urban sociality even under dire conditions’ through various experiments, ‘trial balloons’ and possibilities for popular culture (Simone 2010: 314−16). ‘The city is a way of keeping things open and of materializing ways of becoming something that has not existed before, but which has been possible all along’ (Simone 2008: 201). His work, whatever its possible limits (see below), has encouraged large numbers of readers to think of the city in terms of provisionality, circulation, operations, intersections, and in-betweeness.

Not stopping there, the directions of debate multiply: towards forgetting the massive weight of literature on ‘northern cities’, or more radically, claiming that northern cities may be better understood via ideas from southern cities, for that is where the ‘new’ is to be found. Perhaps the global star of
current southern city theory, Roy (2009) calls for ‘new geographies’ of imagination and epistemology in the production of urban and regional theory. She has sought to explore the production of space in select southern cities, from Calcutta to Beirut and beyond. Along with Simone she portrays ‘worlding’ the city as diverse and multiple processes, involving ways of mastering contemporary techniques of governance well beyond elites, of accomplishing forms of ‘worlding from below’, and of reframing city representation (Roy 2011). To move beyond vertical opposition of ‘above’ and ‘below’, she calls for a ‘latitudinal’ approach.

Similar ideas and concepts can be found in recent collections popularizing ‘southern’ takes on cities. With questioning modernities at the core of their approach, Edensor and Jayne (2012), for example, structure their collection of ‘urban theory beyond the west’ under headings such as de-centring the city, order/disorder, and mobilities and imaginaries, familiar tropes of improvisation, multiplication of opportunity, and accessing as many networks as possible. From this collection one gains support for Simone’s proposition, in his own contribution to the volume, that southern cities ‘are no longer the subaltern’ (Simone 2011).

There is also a second line of thought on cities of the south. More radical in my mind, it gives rise in the wider ‘southern theory’ literatures, for example, to the notion propounded by Comaroff and Comaroff (2011) that ‘it is Europe and America that are tending to evolve according to processes observed in Africa, and not the other way round as is typically assumed. The same may also be true for cities...’ – ‘In some respects, [southern cities] are ... even foreshadowing what might happen (for better or for worse) in . . . Western cities’ (Choplin 2012: 3). A variant of this approach, which flows from ‘southern theory’, in general, is that ‘cities of the south’ present a space of experimentation that prefigures the near future of the west (or north). In other words, for Obarrio (2012b), ‘whereas the colonies might have always been the first laboratory of modernity’, there is allegedly something new in the political, economic, and cultural ways in which the south anticipates the contours of the Euro-American future.

I have certainly found that grounded understandings of what is going on in the periferias of São Paulo can be useful for telling stories of life and thinking about urban practice in the outskirts or grande couronne of Paris, at least in general terms. What the city is for ordinary urban residents can come alive through accounts of social life in southern cities provided by many recent authors. This necessarily eclectic review thus shows some of the excitement which notions of ‘southern urbanism’ have generated in the last decade or so.

Scepticism and ‘new’ southern city theory

Nonetheless, a lot of what is being written currently ‘from the south’ ends up analysing cities of the south through concepts and tools emanating from long-standing urban studies elsewhere. Within the pages of collections such as Edensor and Jayne (2012), or even Roy and Ong (2011), one searches a little fruitlessly for the promise of new concept and substantial difference in contemporary cities of the south. New consequences for society or of life in the city seem scarcer than some of the rhetorical promises.

For example Goldman’s (2011) analysis of speculation and change in Bangalore may well introduce terminologies familiar from authors surveyed above, but the main lines of research and argument seem to come from something else: that is, from the western/northern canon. The same seems to be true of much of what authors report in the pages of Mayaram’s (2008) collection *The Other Global City* – a set of texts that remain entirely dependent on ‘northern points of reference’. It may well be that the relative neglect of cities from Istanbul to Tokyo in western literatures is an impoverishment, but that does not mean that something substantially different is introduced theoretically. An empirical corrective to imbalanced attention does not by itself produce a serious change in thinking. Despite its claims, the book did not achieve its ambition to get beyond both imperial and nationalist readings of cities.
Following Chakrabarty (2000), Robinson (2003) has appealed for acknowledgement of situatedness in the production of urban theory, a sentiment echoed by Edensor and Jayne (2012: 6). Certainly some humility of position is in order. But the same light can be shone in other directions. We are all inserted into a limited canon, quite apart from where we are physically situated: language is a profound limit.

Choplin (2012) points to the danger that the sociology of knowledge reveals a map of Anglophone dominance in the world of ideas. In doing so, she appeals to urbanists to take Francophone work more seriously (presumably one may add hispanic, lusophone, sinophone, and so on). Choplin goes on to warn of ‘idealis[ing] anglophone scientific output to the point of creating a new hegemonic model of thought’, in my opinion an extremely valid perspective. There is usually a great deal of self-referentialism, which marks many a scholarly grouping. And in that vein, some of the real difficulties of ‘southern views’ of the city may be more apparent to viewers who are not enmeshed in post-colonial texts or simplistic ‘anti-neoliberal’ literatures − including scholars in Latin America and beyond the English language.

We are still in the terrain of not quite being able to establish just what it is that northern/western theory cannot ‘analyse’, explain, or inform. The claimed consensus (Parnell 2012) that southern theory is what we need for exploring cities, may be a sufficient consensus for some, but may not, or not yet, stretch across the wide terrain of city studies. Moreover, Roy’s (2009: 819) argument that the ‘dominant theorizations of global city-regions are rooted in Euro American experience and are thus unable to analyse multiple forms of metropolitan modernities’ (emphasis added) requires further scrutiny. It remains, for instance, unclear exactly what city/society relationships in the hyper-diverse ‘south’ elude ideas formed in the ‘west’ or ‘north’.

The idea that what has been happening in the cities of the south should now inform what is understood of the cities in the ‘north’ seems attractive − but both conceptually and empirically poorly substantiated. The risk of wholesale adoption of such perspectives may be ‘a larger set of claims that tend to obscure even while claiming to clarify’ (Aravamudan 2012). Recording, comparing and juxtaposing the urban experiences of cities worldwide, as Rodgers (2012: 134) suggests, means ‘identifying any universal dynamics in global urbanization arguably depends … on understanding … particular circumstances’. It seems out of line then to propose that something about ‘cities of the south’ provides new models for cities in general, in analytical terms, as Chicago so successfully provided for so many for so long, and as various other schools have contested in many recent decades (such as the ‘LA school’ or its competitors in the United States, including New York from time to time, and places such as Atlanta and Miami). Key to the idea of these latter models of the city, its society, its geography and so on, are such elements as continuing cosmopolitanism, diversity of form and polycentricity both geographical and otherwise; and perhaps in the case of Miami (but others too) something special about ‘key’ cities and their elsewhere. Certainly as soon as I read the use of a general term such as ‘Euro-America’ I become suspicious about a failure to grapple with the very diversity and subtlety demanded by those who wish us all to take ‘southern urbanism’ and its theoretical potential seriously.

Notably, there are lacunae in recent claims about cities of the south, reflecting I think a forgetfulness or writing over of the multiple forms of social life argued for by many authors on American cities − noting, for instance, indeed that all is not ‘formal’, that governance is not complete (see Devlin 2011 for a compelling contemporary example). Moreover, recent calls for comparative research across the globe have historical precedent, for instance Castells (1983), Marcuse et al. (2011), and long-standing approaches to cross-continental comparison, whatever their flaws, such as Burgel’s project Villes en parallèle (Burgel and Conrado Sondereguer 2010). Certainly, we are a long way here from the magisterial urban theory we might associate with Peter Hall, and other actors, authoritatively striding across stages of the past, even distant from Amin and Thrift (2002) in the more recent past.

New rhetorical representations can be astonishingly powerful, at least for some, even when they don’t add much in the way of new ideas. Take Simone’s statement cited above, that ‘The city is a way
of keeping things open and of materializing ways of becoming something that has not existed before, but which has been possible all along’ (Simone 2008: 201). Whilst evocative, it remains more opaque than helpful. Pieterse (2012) hints at this in his critique of the celebration of provisionality and the lack of an adequate political economy of ‘what is going on’ in the often well described ‘swirling circumstances’ of fast changing cities (as in Paling 2012 on Phnom Pehn). After all, are the kinds of social relationships and ‘operations’ explored really something we didn’t know about, after Stedmann Jones’s (1976) deeply sympathetic history of ordinary London lives in the mid nineteenth century, and many others? The question thus remains: what have self-consciously southern city theorists done to go beyond the northern? Is there reason not to take up northern concepts in the cities of the south?10

If calls for southern theory of the city reveal lacunae in considering what has ‘come from the north’, as Aravamudan (2012) suggests, it could be remarked of some of the recent literature that ‘[i]t is much less from the South, than it is about the South’. Whilst praising Spivak for her contributions Eagleton (1999) noted that ‘a good deal of post-colonialism has been a kind of “exported” version of the US’s own grievous ethnic problems, and thus yet another instance of God’s Own Country, one of the most insular on earth, defining the rest of the world in terms of itself’ — and it is easy to project New York’s problems onto cities in the rest of the world. When those focused on southern cities equally project onto the north, seeing Paris as though some of its disabilities merely mirror those of Johannesburg, the same error occurs: working more deeply across both spaces potentially helps to reduce this tendency (cf. Mabin 2013).

A further problem is that post-colonial accounts of power seem to abandon hard won rights, freedoms and ways of being which start from 1886, 1835, 1789 in ‘the north’ (in, for example, Chatterjee 1993 and Chakrabarty 2000: cf. Chibber 2013, esp. chapters 7 and 8). Purcell (2007: 204) seems reasonably measured when he writes ‘It is especially important for democrats in advanced economies to realize that … the most exciting new democratic movements are just as likely to arise in South America or Africa as they are in New York or Brussels’. But of course, the inverse is equally true. ‘When a consensual, democratic, encompassing order did finally slowly emerge [in the west] in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, it was not a gift bestowed by capitalists. It was in fact a product of very long, concerted struggles on the part of workers, farmers, and peasants’ (Chibber and Birch 2013). In this vein, a little more caution is needed before celebrating ‘resistance societies’ which contribute to indigenous urbanisms, but which may also and simultaneously be global, linked to capital, and thus not easily reduced to the categories ‘above’ or ‘below’ (Roy 2011). One is reminded of the sobering thought put forward by the perhaps overly mercurial Sokal, in the course of furious debate occasioned by his spoof attack on Spivak, that ‘epistemic relativism is suicidal for progressive political movements’ (Sokal 2000: 1300).

A tendency which I discern in self-designated ‘southern’ writing is to overemphasize the income disparities and by extension identity and citizenship issues, of cities of the south by comparison with western/northern cities. For example, ‘citizenship differs from the North Atlantic variants in being differentiated, that is it is universally inclusive in membership but massively unequal in … severe income inequalities’ (Watson 2013: 87). Varying conditions in western-northern cities are passed over: the banlieue, for instance, becomes homogenizing of many things – blackness, youth unemployment, circular passages linked to African regions – as in Simone (2011). But some months in the Parisian banlieue taught me more than anything else how multiple and diverse are their conditions: a diversity not at all captured simply as ‘badlands of the republic’ (Dikeç 2007).

Exacerbating this limit, the evidence cited frequently arises from following elements of just a few lives or scattered observations, as in Nuttall (2008) and some of Simone’s work (e.g. Simone 2007); scarcely ‘fine grained’ (as Watson 2013: 88 characterizes some of this work), or powerful ethnography’ (cf. Pieterse 2012) as promoted and sometimes claimed. Of course powerful expressions and representations can be drawn from limited enquiry – as in literature and film – but the methods
applied can also miss what is going on. Reporting on conversation at tables in cafés and bars in Abidjan, Simone (2007: 246) suggests a mutual unintelligibility of language: ‘every affective response seemed to make sense, although there was no surface evidence as to why particular feelings might come and go’. How would that impression differ from trying to follow occasional conversation in bars, cafés, social clubs or family mealtimes in all sorts of neighbourhoods, across many social classes, in cities from Chicago to Paris, as well as Johannesburg and Rio? Or, for that matter, from café conversation a hundred or more years ago?

More explicit claims of ‘the new’ emerge in another recent collection (Samara et al. 2013a: 2). Here ‘three defining aspects of the city’ turn out to be ‘social polarisation and spatial division [with] … local expressions of transnational governance’; ‘refashioning of certain city quarters into cosmopolitan landscapes’; and ‘complicated politics arising from … changes cities are experiencing’. These features, which appear to me to be common observations, often made rather more subtly in long-standing literatures on New York, London, Paris, Berlin and Moscow, among many others, are then said to constitute ‘an identifiable … transnational urbanism distinctive to the Global South’ (Samara et al. 2013b: 2). The notion that eclectic bits of information tagged to quite common ideas found in pedestrian accounts of cities everywhere constitute ‘empirically rich, theoretically informed’ work seems a little unreasonable. As I’ve previously noted, ‘Much present writing juxtaposes sweeping academic views on what’s happening in cities with colourful journalism on a local event. The assumption of author (and I suppose reader) seems often to be that the two are related. But, frequently, they are not’ (Mabin 2011: 1972). In the process, what is special about post-colonial, subaltern, and related theory ‘from the south’ seems to be lost: the experience and persistence of colonizing cultures in the lives of citizens. Perhaps that is not really surprising, for in most cases of recent self-conscious collections of work on ‘cities of the south’ the authors live, work and see for the most part very much in and from the cities of the north of the world, carrying exogenous concerns into inappropriate terrain. Urban theory from the south seems to have difficulty carrying the contributions of southern scholarship into the northern city, beyond sweeping generalization usually about recent immigrant populations. Consequently it hardly provides a strong base for thinking about collective shaping of city futures. Sustained work on the politics, economics, histories, and daily life of southern cities, in all their glorious diversity, offers glimpses of something exciting and occasionally distinct, which is why I celebrate the contributions of many scholars in this terrain earlier in this chapter. But what we have available presently, does not yet take us very far into the promised land of southern urbanism.

And to action! – based on theory from the south?

Part of the project of ‘theory from the southern city’ is an agenda for action, built on a long tradition of engaged scholarship to which I am very sympathetic (Oldfield et al. 2004; Yiftachel 2006; Watson 2009). Rapidly changing cities in the south are definitely shaping agendas for change. Ferguson (2012) suggests:

Today, social assistance is being fundamentally reconfigured as a host of developing countries (from South Africa, to Brazil, to India, and beyond) have confounded the by-now standard scholarly narratives of a triumphant neoliberalism by morphing into various new kinds of welfare states. And they have not modeled these new welfare states on Northern exemplars (Sweden or what have you). Instead, they have developed new mechanisms of social assistance, and new conceptions of society, that rely less on insurance mechanisms and the pooling of risk among a population of wage-earners and more on non-contributory schemes anchored in citizenship and operating via the payment of small ‘cash transfers’ (often to women and children) … ‘The Development Revolution from the Global South’.
The rise of the new welfare states may illustrate Comaroff and Comoroff’s proposition that global innovation today often emerges first in the south, with its responses to ‘normal’ high unemployment, informalization, and mass democracy set against mass poverty, conditions which seem to some increasingly to describe ‘wealthier’ societies (Ferguson 2012). This line of thought certainly intersects with that of Robinson and Parnell (2011) who flag the limits of assuming global neoliberal intentionality in urban management (cf. Pieterse 2012). But, it is partly contradicted by others, for example Caldeira (2011) on São Paulo who writes a great deal about the deterioration of conditions for (most?) of the poor, or excluded, or indeed merely youthful, in that city of her birth and scholarship (cf. Caldeira 2000). Anything close to Ferguson’s assessment, suggesting amelioration for many, is strongly contested, of course. Some Brazilian urbanists maintain the view that their cities continue to be fundamentally in crisis and that things are becoming more and more problematic for many. But they also provide cases of rapidly increasing complexities. For Caldeira ‘worlds set apart’ in the city (2011) represent profound fractures, and Brazilian cities saw widespread (but far from unanimous) social action in mid-2013. So, perhaps also for many, she concurs that things have moved on (personal conversation, São Paulo, July 2012, see Chapter 35 in this volume). Some of those who provided foundational analyses and played central roles in urban reform over several decades, also see elements of advance (Maricato 2001; 2009). These incomplete, but better city circumstances, have come about for many reasons and I’ve explored them elsewhere (Mabin 2012). If São Paulo’s self-representation as a global city is a ‘myth’ according to Whittaker Ferreira (2007), it is nonetheless a confident, growing, increasingly well-managed city in which some major projects at metropolitan scale have made real differences to daily life, against the backdrop of a second Brazilian economic miracle and extremely positive politics − despite corruption, enormous mobility difficulties, and other continuing issues. National social policy combined with the success of the Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) in shifting the agenda in national and city politics and programmes since the end of the 1980s and particularly since becoming the presidential party in 2003, certainly has quite a bit to do with these changes, though of course not exhausting causality. How we ‘know the city’ in these times and in such places emerges through exploration and recognition both of disability and celebration of successes in collective action − whether ‘from below’ or through public agency. In this vein, a last arena of debate on southern theory is beginning to develop. It can be indicated broadly through some recent and contested South African experience. For example, Robinson and Parnell (2011) bring together Robinson’s familiar thoughts on ‘ordinariness’ and observations of city development strategy processes (Robinson 2006) with Parnell’s experience of ‘city development strategy’, primarily in South Africa but also in other southern cities (see also Robinson 2011a; 2011b). City strategy is about the future, clearly: the always unknowable but always shaped-in-the-present, made-in-the-future, without guarantees of connection between the two. The authors claim that one may reach something beyond ‘neoliberalism’ globally, by ‘embracing’ ways in which some southern city development strategies seek to do so. A key difficulty in the (northern) construction of ‘southern’ perspectives seems to be the imposition of recent northern histories into stories of the south:

the turn towards privatization, deregulation and liberalization … figures prominently in new research and writing on transnational urbanism. In responding to the neoliberal challenge, municipal authorities of the Global South installed new regulatory regimes that have removed institutional constraints, legal barriers and administrative barriers in order to pave the way for making the market function efficiently through downsizing, outsourcing and rightsizing municipal services.

(Murray 2013: 295)

The problem, however, is that many southern cities simply have not previously enjoyed much of the public provision of elements of life portrayed in this type of account: on the contrary, there are cases
where present municipalities are seeking to move in precisely the opposite direction. It does seem that
some practitioners read authors such as Roy as being anti-planning, anti-design, anti-urbanism (cf. Fiori
and Brandão 2010: 189–90). Yet as Meth (2010) indicates, the less formal types of authority, which
emerge in at least some places, often reproduce the supposed ills of the full-tilt planning systems. It
appears that similar contest can be identified in all sorts of places in the global south (cf. Paling 2012;
Seekings 2012; Simone 2010; Watson 2013).

My conclusion is not that ‘harder work’ is needed on bridging the divide between developmentalism
and ‘ordinary citiness’ (Robinson 2006). I appreciate the frustrations of trying to move the urban
along, leading to calls for working ‘against the redundant division between applied and theoretical
research agendas on the contemporary condition and possible futures of . . . cities’ (Pieterse 2011: 1) Yet,
the whole point of the lack of knowledge and (perhaps) concept of cities of the south is the overwhelming
need for profound and substantial research on what is going on. Elision between shallow stabs at that
kind of research and the world of ‘what should be done’ remains a fundamental shortcoming of texts
on cities of the south: and perhaps, of the north as well. In the end, what is needed, and in some
instances what is emerging, appears to be attempts at bringing together cities across the world.

Conclusion: grounding ideas in cities across south and north

The key to more profound, exciting and less sectional approaches to cities will lie in much more
carefully constructed comparative method. This means more than McFarlane’s (2010: 725) ‘comparison
not just as a method, but as a mode of thought that informs how urban theory is constituted’. On the
contrary, specified points of comparison seem necessary (Le Gales and Vitale 2013), ‘opening up new
channels of urban research and policy formation within a wider world of cities’ (Harris 2012: 2955). Of
course, we need east, west, north as well as south. Marcuse (1989) said of ‘dual city’ that it’s a ‘muddy
metaphor for a quartered city’; and the world of cities is rather more than bifurcated.

My current work, for instance, is set in my own city of birth and scholarship, Johannesburg, and in
two cities in which I have spent substantial time conducting research: São Paulo and Paris. I do not
claim universals from my work, but I would claim some prospect that more general points arise as I
explore government, policy, planning, large-scale change, mega-projects, mobility and elements of
daily life in these city regions (cf. Mabin 2012).

I am engaged in a search to express just some of what seem to me vital features of the urban question
in these times. Of course I have no illusions about exhausting the subject, let alone realizing ‘the
promise of the city’ (Tajbaksh 2001). My method certainly includes ‘comparison [that] might be
conceived as a strategy of indirect and uncertain learning’ but perhaps because I have worked reasonably
equally in three places on different continents I tend to doubt that what will make things more clear is

Perhaps there would be little future for urban theory in a world where ‘urbanization has been
generalized’ (Brenner 2013: 93). But even if the planet were entirely ‘urban’, theorizing the city would
still have to deal with difference – simply, diversity of the urban and what difference such diversity
makes for society: to ignore that would would inter alia be to miss the value of post-colonial theorizing. Yet,
the notion that the world is ‘all urban’ denies the experience of places that are not like Manhattan – and
of many who dwell and labour there, whose social units stretch across surprising spaces (Steinberg 2011
provides a marvellous illustration). Thus, Brenner’s thesis that ‘the concept of urbanization requires
systematic reinvention’ (2013: 101) invites translation into continuous and diverse reinvention, as well as
in specific identification of the transitory or more durable and perhaps elusive common. Simultaneous
work in three cities of Africa, Europe and South America indicates to me a requirement to pursue that
translation. City scholarship will continue to enter less fruitful avenues: a pure ‘southern take’ will not
resolve the problems of an arrogant and purely northern one. No-one, nor one single group, will
entirely succeed in drawing into connection the extent of contemporary urbanisms. Crossing language, disciplinary, conceptual and all sorts of other boundaries is essential, yet will remain unavoidably incomplete. But the pleasure, perhaps, lies in the engagement.

In ‘European Capital of Culture’ Marseille in February 2013, I had the opportunity to stay in the midst of Euromed (le plus grand chantier de l’europe − the largest construction site in Europe, we are told), and to walk through scenes of ‘regeneration’ in the docks − as ever running behind timetable − and neighbouring landscapes of gentrification in areas like lower La Villette. Up in a different old working-class neighbourhood, in Belle de Mai, at the recently opened La Friche (an old tobacco factory now named something like ‘wasteland’), I spent some hours in the midst of the art produced by artists from the ‘deux rives’ (two shores) of the Mediterranean. The exhibition, part of Marseille-Provence Capital of European Culture 2013, is titled ‘Içi, Ailleurs’ (here, elsewhere). All of the artists address mobility and fluidity, movement, flux, as well as stasis. For example, one, named Kader Attia, explores cities of the Mediterranean world − through many periods of history and in shifting contact with each other. Grappling with this work, it struck me again that in the complex world of cities, everywhere, artists working right now may be on more far reaching ways of communicating what contemporary city life and cities are about. The city is always suspended as a case of ‘heres’ and ‘elsewheres’, connected yet − yet … and that is why artists may be doing a better job than southern, or northern, theorists in ‘painting’, ‘composing’, ‘dancing’ and ‘writing’ cities into being. It remains to scholarship to go further.

References

Grounding southern city theory


A. Mabin


Grounding southern city theory


Notes

1 I hope that this chapter’s value has been improved by responding to critique of versions at ‘Cities are back in town’, Sciences Po, Paris; at a social sciences/city institute workshop at Wits (Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg); at South African Contemporary History and Humanities/Cities in Transition seminar, University of the Western Cape; from a vigorous discussion at the Wits Interdisciplinary Seminar in Humanities at Wiser; referee’s comments; and especially the remarks of Cynthia Kros, Ruchi Chaturvedi, Sian Butcher, and the editors of this volume, none of whom is responsible for the outcome.

2 In leading journals of city studies, such as the International Journal of Urban and Regional Research and Urban Studies, there is ample evidence of the intrusions to which I’m referring. New publications pursuing related lines of argument appear with increasing frequency, the most recent including Rogue Urbanism (Pieterse and Simone 2013) and Locating Right to the City in the Global South (Samara, He and Chen 2013a).

3 A body of work I know a little in relation to its massive scale, but better than other Latin American scholarship.

4 A Latin American adoption of postcolonial perspectives (cf. Moraña et al. 2008) closer to those of some Asian and African authors could be connected to the rise in the very recent past of indigenous and black movements in Latin American countries and cities. Challenges to internal hegemonies and authoritative theories can appear differently in these circumstances, as South African scholars presumably know well. Moreover, it has been suggested that ‘South Asian scholars writing from South Asian universities have an entirely different relationship with their counterparts in Anglo-American academia’ from those writing from Africa (Burke 2003): ‘African intellectuals should be motivated by one set of problematics in their writing and thinking and
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Anglo-American academics by another.’ On issues of language, here we are considering primarily a literature published in English. Of course, many ideas present in recent Anglo theorizing come from authors originally writing in French, well or badly translated into English, well or badly understood, for that matter ‘good’ or ‘bad’ depending on evaluations from different corners. Post-colonial studies have been rather more rare around ‘Francophone’ parts of the former colonized world, than is the case for the ‘Anglophone’.

Such as being perhaps one of Spivak’s suspicious ‘white boys talking post-coloniality’ (1999: 168).


In the Anglophone sense – not meaning ‘planning’ but the wider idea of ‘city life’.

Here I note my own earlier error in promoting South African cities as the image of the future (Mabin 1999).

Even though my argument contained a seed – urbanization without industrialization – of what might need further exploration as ‘urban theory from the south’ as one seam, it reflects how far removed recent Chinese or Indian experiences are from such tropes.

Where cities remain in parallel rather than intersecting somewhere before infinity, there will be much less to learn. In other words, identifying the possible points of contact is critical – a point made by Bob Beauregard (personal communication).

For instance, Deleuze and Guattari (1994) gave us striated and smooth spaces to work with, which some Latin American scholars have taken up in the city – Jáuregui (2010) on Rio for example: the formal built city with its lines and reference points as striated space, not in any way separated from the smoothness and less apparently determined nature of the informal city.

Dates respectively of mass demands for an 8-hour day in Chicago; beginnings of the Chartist movement in England; and the French revolution.

Without wishing to exaggerate the significance of such positionality, it is evidenced by the point that in one such recent volume, 14 of 19 contributors live and work in the USA or Western Europe.
IS THERE A ‘SOUTH’ PERSPECTIVE TO URBAN STUDIES?

Sujata Patel

Since the late 1970s and particularly after the 1990s, the dynamics of the world have changed. At one level, the world has contracted. It has opened up possibilities of diverse kinds of trans-border flows and movements, of capital and labour, together with signs/symbols, organized in intersecting circuits. While in some contexts and moments these attributes cooperate, at other times, these are in conflict and contest each other. Thus, at another level, even though we all live in one global capitalist world with a dominant form of modernity, inequalities and hierarchies are increasing and so are fragmented identities. Lack of access to livelihoods, infrastructure and political citizenship now blends with exclusions relating to cultural and group identity and are organized in varied spatial and temporal zones. Fluidity of identities and their continuous expression in unstable social manifestations demand a fresh perspective to assess and examine them. Not only do contemporary social processes, sociabilities and structures need to be perceived through new and novel prisms and perspectives but it is increasingly clear that these need to be seen through new methodological protocols. As a result, many social scientists have asked whether social theory has a social science language beyond what it formulated in its foundational moment in the nineteenth and early twentieth century to comprehend this challenge (Turner 1997).

Today, most scholars agree that the social sciences which were promoted in the 1950s and 1960s to examine and assess modernization and modernism across the world have little to no purchase. These theories were based on perspectives developed in late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century theories and promoted a ‘convergence’ thesis. The ‘convergence’ thesis, in its liberal and/or Marxist formulations argued that the structures, patterns and processes associated with modernization and capitalism and thus industrialization and urbanization (emerging earlier in Europe and later extending itself in the Americas and the Antipodes) were and are universal models of social change and dynamics of the world. Such a thesis, it is contended, cannot be accepted today. The experiences of modernization of the rest of the world are significantly different. The question that needs to be addressed is: do we have a social science language that eschews a convergence thesis to examine these new processes? One way out is to accept relativism and advocate the necessity of pluralizing models of modernity and urbanization thereby creating many ways of defining change. Another is to deconstruct and displace late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century structures of social science thinking and frame social sciences that can promote both inclusivity and diversity.

The first group of social scientists who suggest a need to pluralize argue for a cosmopolitan social science (Beck 2002). They propose that given the huge differences in the articulation of modernization
processes in the world including that of capital accumulation, patterns of industrialization and forms of urbanization, the nature of inequities and exclusions varies across the globe. The new global world order, cannot accept a thesis that standardizes the western experience and hegemonizes it as the only singular articulation of a model of modernity across the world. As a consequence, new concepts and theories to comprehend these plural worlds have been proposed, such as multiple modernities (Eisenstadt 1999), alternative modernities (Gaonkar 2000; Bhargava 2010), hybrid modernities (Bhabha 1994), entangled modernities (Therborn 2003) and global modernity (Dirlik 2007).

As against this position, another section of social scientists have suggested a need to move beyond pluralizing the Atlantic model and to investigate the (negative) theoretical and methodological attributes and properties that have organized this model. They suggest that if these negative attributes are identified, new formulations will not only not repeat them but show that differences have always existed in experiences of modernization and modernities and what came to be universalized was the specific experience of north-west Europe.

These critics suggest that the perspective, Eurocentrism (Amin 2008; Dussel 2002; Mignolo 2002; Quijano 2000; Wallerstein 2006), provides an answer to this question and it does so by formulating a new way to assess and comprehend the history of social sciences of the Atlantic region. It proposes that social sciences were primarily organized as a discourse and elaborated knowledge on and about the Occident that argued that the latter was distinctive and that its history was endogenous and internal to itself. European social sciences legitimized the organization of the world into two spatial units, the west and the east, having separate and distinct histories unrelated to each other. Eurocentrism is a style of thought that distinguished ontologically and epistemologically the ‘Occident’ and the ‘Orient’ to create knowledge on and of the Occident and the Orient as distinct. Enmeshed in Eurocentrism were two myths: first, the idea of the history of human civilization as being a trajectory that departed from a ‘state of nature’ and culminated in the European experience of modernity. Second, that the differences between Europe and non-Europeans were and are natural though in truth these were based on racial differences. Within Eurocentrism, the colonial experience was present in its absence. No wonder Eurocentrism has also been discussed as the episteme of colonial modernity. ‘Both myths’, according to Anibal Quijano, ‘can be unequivocally recognized in the foundations of evolutionism and dualism, two of the nuclear elements of Eurocentrism’ (Quijano 2000: 542).

Eurocentrism has posed seminal questions regarding the episteme of the social sciences in a fundamentally different manner. The questions that these theorists raised were not about how to incorporate new voices and areas of study within the existing ways of doing social sciences. Rather the questions raised were primarily about the nature and construct of the corpus of established knowledge regarding the ‘social’ as formulated in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries; it was about what constitutes its ‘science’, its facticity and its truth. It was about the way this knowledge and its ‘truths’ has been designed and devised; it is about the moorings of its perspectives, methodologies and methods: in short, its system of practices. These, the social scientists argued, failed to comprehend the diverse and plural nature of the world and instead constructed a social science within and through the Atlantic experience.

This chapter is written from a sociological perspective which draws from these debates. It is important to mention this location as some recent interventions (Robinson 2006; Roy 2011) have used different explanations to raise the same questions. The chapter is divided into four sections. In the first part I delineate this debate regarding Eurocentrism and in the second part I discuss how the field of urban studies is enmeshed in this project. In the third section, the chapter elaborates the further ramifications of Eurocentrism and its expressions within the field of urban studies in the ‘south’, while the last section presents a strategy and a possible way to resolve the problem in order to create new themes for study and research.
A ‘south’ perspective to urban studies

Eurocentrism, colonialism and modernity

The first full statement on Eurocentrism comes in the late 1980s from Samir Amin when he critiques the Eurocentric vision in contemporary social science theory and argues that it is organized in and through twin processes, that of crystallization of the European society and Europe’s conquest of the world. European theories of modernity, Amin argues, clothe these twin processes by asserting the first and disregarding the significance of the latter in the formation of the first. In order to understand how these two processes are organically interlinked, Amin’s essay on Eurocentrism goes back into time and reinterprets history, to discuss the nature and growth of ‘tributary states’, a form of a pre-modern state, and the articulation within various scholastic trends in these states that ultimately lead to the formation of a ‘science’. Amin juxtaposes historical evidence with popular conceptions of its development within Europe to indicate how misrepresentation and ‘misrecognition’ displaced this historical evidence and became the basis for creating an episteme, one that excluded and disregarded how knowledge and ‘science’ actually were developed.

Amin’s argument is presented at three levels: First, he contends that Europe and the Afro-Asiatic regions were the peripheries of the Mediterranean tributary states whose centre was at its eastern edge, (Hellenistic, Byzantine, Islamic, including Ottoman). Scholastic and metaphysical culture of these tributary systems created four systems of scholastic metaphysics: Hellenistic, Eastern Christian, Islamic and Western Christian. While each contributed to the formation of culture and consciousness of Europe, it was the contribution of Egypt and later of medieval Islamic scholastics which was decisive in changing Europe’s culture from being metaphysical to scientific (Amin 2008: 38). Second, he shows how since the period of Renaissance, this ‘real’ history of Europe has been distilled and diluted to be replaced with another history that narrated its growth as being the sole consequence of its birth within the Hellenic-Roman civilization. Third, Amin argues that the European narrative made Europe the centre of the world and of modern ‘civilization’, the distinctive characteristic of which was science and ‘universal reason’. The rest of the world was constructed to be its peripheries, which, it was argued, could not or did not have the means to become modern − that is places of reason, science and technology. This later became the narrative of social science (Dussel 1993, 2000, 2002; Quijano 1993, 2000, 2007; Wallerstein, 2006)

Dussel and Quijano argue that the origin of social sciences is not in the Enlightenment period. Rather its growth can be located within the European Renaissance, the German Reformation, the French Revolution and the English Parliament. They assert what Amin had said earlier − that Eurocentrism was a theory of constructing a self-defined ethnocentric theory of history, that of ‘I’. They also affirm, in a manner similar to Amin, that the European narrative and thus its theory of history simultaneously makes invisible and silences events, processes and actions of violence against the rest of the world, without which Europe could not have become modern. They extend this thesis to suggest that Eurocentrism is not only a theory of history but an episteme, a theory of power/knowledge. If this episteme theorized the ‘I’, the ‘centre’, it also theorised the ‘other’, the ‘periphery’. Thus Dussel argues:

modernity is, in fact, a European phenomena, but one constituted in a dialectical relation with a non-modern alterity that is its ultimate content. Modernity appears when Europe appears itself as the ‘centre’ of World history that it inaugurates; the periphery that surrounds this centre is consequently part of its self-definition. The occlusion of this periphery ... leads the major thinkers of the centre into a Eurocentric fallacy in their understanding of modernity.

(Dussel 1993: 65)

Second, this episteme now termed ‘categorical imperative’, simultaneously creates the knowledge of the ‘I’ (Europe, the moderns, the West) against the ‘other’ (the peripheral, non-modern, and the East).
This perspective legitimizes a theory of the separate and divided nature of the knowledge of the West and the East. It divides the attributes of the West and the East by giving value to the two divisions; while one is universal, superior and ‘emancipatory’, the other is particular, non-emancipatory and thus inferior. Dussel quotes Immanuel Kant who argued that while European ‘Enlightenment is the exodus of humanity by its own efforts from the state of guilty immaturity’ ... ‘laziness and cowardice are the reasons why the great part of humanity remains pleasanably in the state of immaturity’ (Dussel 1993: 68). This inferiority, a condition of its not becoming modern, in turn further legitimates the need to emulate the ‘moderns’ and to accept the colonizing process as a ‘civilizing’ process. This was the myth of modernity and led, according to Dussel, to the management of the world-system’s ‘centrality’:

If one understands Europe’s modernity—a long process of five centuries—as the unfolding of new possibilities derived from its centrality in world history and the corollary constitution of all other cultures as its periphery, it becomes clear that, even though all cultures are ethnocentric, modern European ethnocentrism is the only one that might pretend to claim universality for itself. Modernity’s Eurocentrism lies in the confusion between abstract universality and the concrete world hegemony derived from Europe’s position as centre.

(Dussel 2002: 222)

Third, as mentioned above, Eurocentric knowledge is based on the construction of multiple and repeated divisions or oppositions. These oppositions, Anibal Quijano (2000) argues, are based on a racial classification of the world population. This principle becomes the assumption to further divide the peoples of the world in geo-cultural terms, to which are attached further oppositions, such as reason and body, science and religion, subject and object, culture and nature, masculine and feminine, modern and traditional. While European modernity conceptualized its growth in terms of linear time, it sequestered the (various) East(s) divided between two cultural groups, the ‘primitives’/‘barbarians’ and the ‘civilized’, each enclosed in their (own) spaces. No wonder this episteme could not provide the resources to elaborate a theory of space, affirming Karl Marx’s insightful statement of ‘annihilation of space by time’.

The consolidation of these attributes across the West–East axis and its subsequent hierarchization across spatial regions in the world allowed social science to discover the ‘nature’ of various people, nations and ethnic groups across the world in terms of the attributes of binaries, constituted in and by the West. This structure of power, control, and hegemony is termed by Quijano ‘coloniality of power’.

Why is this critique important for doing social sciences and more particularly urban studies across the world? The field of urban studies, as mentioned above, has been critical in the elucidation of debates regarding capitalism and modernity. Adopting a Eurocentric approach would help us to understand that before capitalism and its ideology, modernity emerged in Europe and later expanded to the Americas, the world was always interconnected; that these new interconnections linked non-European/Atlantic regions and places with that of Europe and the Americas; that these linkages were built through structures of domination-subordination and based on exploitation of physical and human capital of the non-Atlantic regions; that these created enclaves of specific dependencies and led to uneven capitalist accumulation across the world. Fuelled by imperialism and colonialism, these processes negated this colonial and imperialist history and universalized them through the model of scientific knowledge. As a consequence, this scientific knowledge argued:

(a) that the patterns of modernization and capitalist accumulation which emerged in the Atlantic region were related to the growth of the latter’s uniquely indigenous material and intellectual resources such as, that of reason, science and technology;
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(b) that the non-Atlantic region did not have these productive and intellectual resources and thus needed to emulate those that emerged in the Atlantic region; and,
(c) that social sciences using the comparative methodology had to outline the problems, the complications, the hitches, the difficulties and the defects that restricted, constrained and circumscribed such emulation in the rest of the world.

How did Eurocentric positions affect the framing of urban studies?

**Eurocentrism, urbanization and urbanism**

It would not be incorrect to state that urban sociology and its broader area, urban studies has been and remains enmeshed in Eurocentric positions. Both these specializations were closely entwined with processes of change and transition taking place in the Atlantic region and the patterns of movement from countryside to city were considered inviolable, given and thus natural. No wonder urbanization became coterminous with industrialization and vice versa, allowing many to reaffirm a theory of change that equated both these with modernization. It became easy to argue that indigenous scientific and technological changes heralded social and cultural modernity and a higher stage of civilization. This theory thus became a *sine qua non* of contemporary social scientific thought.

Thus when the Chicago School theorists elaborated their positions on what constitutes the field of urban sociology, they extended the above arguments and suggested that size, density and heterogeneity defined this field.

What happened, in contrast, with the growth of ‘new urban sociology’? Did it interrogate and erase this linear trajectory of Europe-centred growth and development? Did the political economy perspective it offered help to displace the myths of ‘evolutionalism and dualism’ (as Quijano has called them) that had trapped the Chicago School theorists? Obviously there was a hope that the new urban sociology would develop a genuine international orientation and a global perspective. For example, writing in 1980, Sharon Zukin argued that this new orientation would not only document the changes from pre-industrial to the industrial city, or the reproduction of metropolitan urban forms in colonial and post-colonial cities but concentrate on the historical analysis of ‘the hegemony of metropolitan culture within the world system as a whole; the rise and decline of particular cities; and the political, ideological, juridical, and economic significance of particular urban forms’ (Zukin 1980: 579).

Certainly the marriage with political economy opened up urban studies, rechristened from its earlier *avatar* as urban sociology, to new interdisciplinary questions. The focus now became a critical analysis of the city as a form and urbanization as a process of capitalist accumulation. But did this reorientation eschew its evolutionism and thus a Eurocentric orientation? In this section, I highlight briefly how the theories of the two principle proponents of ‘new urban sociology’, sociologist Manuel Castells and geographer David Harvey (1978) helped to instead extend the universalisms associated with Eurocentrism.10

In broad terms, both Castells and Harvey focus on the city and deliberate on the way urban space is produced as a response to capital: while Castells argued that consumption is the key to social reproduction, Harvey suggests that city formation is intrinsic to capital accumulation. Zukin (1980: 581) contrasts the two approaches and suggests that while Castells emphasizes localization of social reproduction (urban segregation of social classes and manual and mental work; unequal access of urban infrastructure and especially consumption goods; and connections between class politics and everyday life) Harvey analyses capital accumulation through the medium of control of state institutions (investment flows, support of financial institutions and creating credit mechanisms beneficial to capitalists).

It is clear that Castells’ and Harvey’s focus remains Europe, and its advanced capitalist system; its origin, the city as a site and consequence of its growth and the urbanization process as its key element.
In their analysis of its origin they continue to evoke the modernization paradigm associated with Eurocentrism. This orientation draws Harvey, on the one hand, to analyse the way Paris and Baltimore grew linearly in and through the dialectics ‘between circuits’ of capitalist accumulation and urban crises. The first circuit of the three that he analysed concerns the production of commodities within manufacturing and ultimately gives way to the crisis of overproduction of goods. It is at this stage that capital moves to the second circuit where it gets new investments in the form of fresh fixed capital such as infrastructure, housing, and construction of offices, leading to the growth of a town or a city. In the process, land is transformed into built environment, both for production and consumption; it becomes thus a constituent of the process of accumulation of capital.

Harvey’s analysis draws on empirical material (from Paris) to argue that without the state playing a pivotal role in mediating the flows of capital from primary to secondary circuit through the creation of financial tools and policies such as housing loans and mortgage facilities, it would be impossible for further accumulation to take place. As in the first circuit, after some time there is overinvestment in the secondary circuit and due to the tendency of capitalists to underinvest in fixed capital (the built environment), this leads to its flow into the tertiary circuit. This involves investment in scientific knowledge and technological advancements to reproduce labour power.

On the other hand, Castells is upfront in his contention that his focus is Europe and particularly the politics in cities of advanced capitalist societies. His bias and his positionality are very clear. Focusing on collective consumption (housing, transportation, communication), he argues that it plays a key role in defining the capitalist system. The urban system works, therefore, within four spheres: production, consumption, exchange and politics. The state mediates between the various elements that constitute the urban system and engages in dialectical relationships with capitalist interests, elite groups, its own employees and the ‘masses’. Since the city is the spatial location of capitalist development, it is the city, and hence space, that reflects the workings and outcomes of this relationship. Urban crisis occurs as a result of state failure to manage resources of and for collective consumption. The result is the growth of urban social movements. But, if the globe is interconnected surely the crisis relates to the capitalist world system? Why does Castells restrict his analysis to specific geographies?

The same geographical and analytical foreclosure limits Harvey’s theorizing. Thus Harvey’s answer to the question, how can one intervene in the process of capital accumulation, restricts his analysis to an assessment of class conflict within the city and the nation-state of the Atlantic region. In consequence, the geography of capitalist accumulation has been pre-decided. Because the urban process under capitalism is created in and through the interaction of capital accumulation and class struggle (in this pre-decided geography), Harvey argues that struggles by social groups threatened by the removal of capital can help prevent capital flight and ensure the survival of an urban infrastructure. No wonder Harvey’s theories ignore the displacement and struggles of the poor in colonial countries taking place over the last 200 years against the transfer of natural resources to aid capital accumulation and investments of city growth in the Atlantic region. It reflects what Edward Said (1993) has said when he discusses the imperial standpoint of knowledge: the bias inherent in the knower was but the natural by-product of the very positionality of the knower in the geopolitical hierarchy.

Both Harvey and Castells are locked into linear theories of change inherited from nineteenth- and twentieth-century Europe. Though London’s growth (Darwin, 2007) as a world city (and similarly that of Manchester, Paris and other cities of Europe) cannot be understood without evaluating English imperialism and its colonial relationships across the world, 11 both Castells and Harvey ignore the relationship between accumulation and imperialism/colonialism, not only mentioned in Marx’s early writings on India but elaborated later by Lenin and Rosa Luxemburg. These latter texts became the basis for Paul Baran’s classic, The Political Economy of Growth (1957). Yet, these works and many others do not find any mention in Castells’ and Harvey’s studies on capital accumulation and urban crisis. The
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focus of their reflections remains cities in the Atlantic region whose expansion they see primarily as a site and consequence of the growth of capitalism within the Atlantic region.

Is there a way forward on this matter?

The geopolitics of travelling theory

The first issue that needs to be asked relates to the way contemporary scholarship confronts the problem of European universals. Some social scientists have argued that the best way out of this epistemic and methodological difficulty is to particularise the universals of European thought. For example, Immanuel Wallerstein has argued that:

Europe in the sixteenth to eighteenth centuries did transform the world, but in a direction whose negative consequences are upon us today. We must cease trying to deprive Europe of its specificity on the deluded premise that we are thereby depriving it of an illegitimate credit. Quite the contrary. We must fully acknowledge the particularity of Europe’s reconstruction of the world because only then will it be possible to transcend it, and to arrive hopefully at a more inclusively universalist vision of human possibility.

(Wallerstein 2006: 106–7)

Dipesh Chakrabarty, the historian of subaltern studies, has made a similar argument. He coined a new methodology called ‘provincialisation’, and suggested that its quest was the following:

To ‘provincialize’ Europe was precisely to find out how and in what sense European ideas that were universal were also, at one and the same time, drawn from the very particular intellectual and historical traditions that could not claim universal validity.

(Chakrabarty 2008: xiii)

A similar stance has been taken by the urbanist Thomas Maloutas (2012), who argues that all concepts and theories travel from the core to the periphery and thus reproduce mechanisms of power relations within the academic division of labour. More particularly, he argues that when context is neglected, it is difficult to escape from reproducing these power relations even when you are producing radical theory: concepts and theories that travel are to a large extent imposed agendas on the periphery, even if intentions are the best possible.

(Maloutas 2012: 3)

In the contemporary context, however, the problem is not merely an epistemic and methodological one. Eurocentrism is reproduced through academic dependencies in many institutional ways across the world, situations through which dominant intellectual traditions (in this case Atlantic ones) expand and extend themselves at the expense of so-called subordinate intellectual traditions elsewhere. These processes are exacerbated particularly when the former ensures its reproduction through the control of infrastructural and intellectual resources of the latter.

Academic dependencies raise issues about the culture of doing social science globally. The Malaysian thinker Syed Hussein Alatas (1972) and the African philosopher Paulin Hountondji (1997) have discussed these as the ‘captive mind’ and ‘extraversion’ respectively. They argue that the syndrome of ‘captive mind’ and ‘extraversion’ can be seen in the teaching and learning processes, in the way curriculums and syllabi are framed; in the processes of research: the designing of research questions and in the methods and methodologies used; as well as in the formulation of criteria adopted for accepting
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articles for journals and books, and ultimately in defining what and where one publishes, and what is academic excellence.

Moreover, an intellectual culture defined by northern social science is held out as a model for the rest of the world. The consequence of this dependence is the ‘infantilization’ of scientific practices within non-Atlantic regions. Not only are these at an incipient stage of growth, but this very condition encourages brain drain and further intellectual dependencies. It is backed by the sheer size of northern social science and its intellectual, human, physical, and capital resources, the infrastructure necessary for its reproduction. This includes not only equipment, and archives, libraries, publishing houses and journals, but also the evolution of a professional culture of intellectual commitment and engagement which connects the producers and consumers of knowledge, embedded in relationships between northern and southern universities and students, as well as northern nation-states and global knowledge-production agencies.

How does one move forward in this matter given the inequalities that organize the global production of knowledge? In order to evolve a strategy it is imperative that we recognize that the question here relates not only to urban sociology or urban studies;13 this issue relates to the doing of social sciences, globally, within and between particular nation-states, as well as various non-Atlantic regions.

One tried and tested strategy has been to use the nation-state and its resources to create a project for a ‘nationalist oriented indigenous social science’. In this instance, some social scientists have understood their role as analysts of one’s own society in one’s (indigenous) ‘own terms’, outside the influences of academic dependencies (Patel 2010b). Many newly independent countries have used this strategy, such as Nigeria, India or the Latin American region; Raewyn Connell’s book Southern Theory (2007) documents the many positive outcomes that can be realized by attempting this pathway.

This type of project has promoted varied but uneven intellectual traditions within different nation-states as scholars discuss, debate and represent social changes occurring in their countries. It has also allowed nationally oriented intellectual infrastructural resources to be created, which include universities, research institutes and laboratories, as well as journals and publishing houses together with professional norms and ethics. However it has become clear that this strategy has its own limitations. Instead of creating what Farid Alatas (2003) calls ‘autonomous intellectual traditions’, in some countries it has led to the reframing of the old colonial dualism in social science.14 No wonder, Hountondji (1997) has argued that such culturist projects, which he calls ‘ethnoscience’, remain limited, part of the colonial and neo-colonial binaries of the universal–particular and the global–national.

In some post-independent nation-states, nationalist social sciences have become closely associated with official discourses and methods of understanding the relationship between nation, nation-state, and modernity; in consequence, other contending perspectives have become marginal. If social sciences of the Atlantic region promoted Eurocentrism, those of newly independent countries valorized the nation and the state; in many instances, the visions of its elite became the frames of doing social sciences. This continues to be true of urban studies, which became associated with the on-going elite-driven state project focused on urbanization and modernization. Contemporary social science has remained silent on the political moorings of this project, failing to examine its close linkages with the metropolitan (advanced capitalist) hegemonic orientation and consequently the dynamics of capital accumulation on a world scale.

In these circumstances and in relation to these arguments, what should our agenda be? First we need to particularize or provincialize hegemonic social sciences of the Atlantic region and to understand how deeply structured are the inequalities of academic production (Connell 2010). Our second challenge is to understand how similar universals dominate and determine nation-based projects for creating new social sciences. Should this latter legacy, that of creating and institutionalizing a nationalist and an anti-colonialist social science, be dismissed arbitrarily, especially in the context of the epistemic and institutional unequal division of academic resources? And more significantly we need to ask how
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we can ensure and assure the constitution of a critical global social science language, and more specifically a critical urban studies, that is not embedded in Eurocentric language.

I would argue that we have to evolve a twofold strategy. On one hand there is a need to deconstruct the provincialism of European universalisms and locate it in its own cultural and national contexts. This is primarily a project for the Atlantic region, its universities and research institutes, publishing houses and journals, scholarship and its professional norms. It involves a change in syllabi and curriculums, research questions and methodologies of doing research; a self-conscious effort to decolonize its academic moorings.

On the other hand, there is also a need for the global social science community (within and outside the Atlantic regions) to go beyond the ‘content’ of the social sciences (the explanations they offer, the narratives they construct), shaped as they are by a genealogy that is both European and colonial. Rather, we need to analyse their very ‘form’, the concepts through which explanations become possible, as well as the very idea of what counts as explanation. In making this argument, I am not suggesting that the social sciences are purely and simply ‘European’ and are, therefore, ‘wrong’. While such an argument has little relevance given the fact that we are and remain within one world capitalist system, we also cannot dispense with many of these categories. The task in contrast is to recognize that they often provide only partial and often times flawed understandings. We need not reinvent the wheel; however there is a necessity to generate explanations that are relevant for different contexts.

How is this possible? How should we move forward? Obviously we need to move out of truth claims that are universal and assert those that are contextual to make the social science market competitive rather than monopolistic as it is now. One tactic is to ‘open’ up the market of production, distribution and consumption of knowledge to new audiences, institutions, and processes. Social science needs to articulate itself in many expressions at different sites (other than the academic) and engage with the ways these define their distinctive culturist oeuvres, epistemologies, theoretical frames, cultures of science and languages of reflection, as well as sites of knowledge production and transmission. In addition to classrooms and departments, together with syllabi formulations and protocol of professional codes, this type of move can also include campaigns, movements, and advocacies. Thus, its production involves a creative dialectic within and between activists, scholars, and communities assessing, reflecting, and elucidating immediate events and issues which intervene to define the research process, as well as the organizing and systematizing knowledge of the discipline in long-term institutionalized processes central for teaching and learning.

The second tactic is to build intellectual networks across institutions and scholarship among and between scholars of the non-Atlantic region. Horizontal linkages between localities, regions and nation-states of the non-Atlantic regions can substitute for existing vertical hierarchical linkages between imperialist and ex-colonial countries or between that of core and periphery in production, distribution and consumption of knowledge. This type of initiative will help to reflect collectively on common and relevant themes that structure the experience of being part of the ‘south’. Through this type of process and intent, it will be possible to outline a ‘south’ perspective to define contemporary urban studies.

References


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Notes

1 South has both a geographical and political connotation. Geographically, it implies a discussion on the continents of Latin America, Africa and Asia and politically it refers to its common history in colonialism.

2 Urban studies draw together a vast area and combines disciplines as diverse as architecture and design, economics and environmental studies and the jury is still out on the contention that urban studies is a well-defined field.

3 The term ‘Atlantic’ alludes to European and North American social science theories and is used by Walter Mignolo (2002).

4 Eurocentrism is an integral component of contemporary post-colonial thought. See Julian Go (2013).

5 This chapter is based on earlier papers: Patel 2006a, 2006b, 2010a, 2010b, 2011a, 2011b, 2011c, 2013a, 2013b.

6 The first international edition of this book was published in 1989. A second revised and updated international edition of this text was published in 2010 (New York, Monthly Review Press). In this article, I am using the 2008 edition published in India.

7 In such contexts, Amin suggests there was a transfer of material or symbolic wealth from a subordinate to a dominant sovereign. Yet, tributary relations involve no element of administrative control or interference by the hegemon.

8 Zukin (1980) was the first scholar to term new developments in urban studies associated with the American, French and British schools as ‘new urban sociology’. Others who have reflected on the same are Walton (1993), Milicevic (2001) and Brenner (2009).

9 In this text I am restricting myself to Castells’ work from the period of early 1970s to the early 1980s that is, prior to the publication of *The Informational City*, 1989.

10 Further research since the 1970s, when Castells and Harvey elaborated their positions, has merely extended and expanded their positions rather than inaugurated a paradigm shift. As a consequence, in this chapter I consider the positions of these two thinkers as being generic.

11 Interestingly historians doing research on industrialization and urbanization in colonial countries always locate this growth within imperialist and colonial contexts. For example, on Bombay, see Chandavarkar 2009, and Hazareesingh 2007.

12 Farid Alatas (2003) defines academic dependencies as having six attributes: (a) dependence on ideas; (b) dependence on the media of ideas; (c) dependence on the technology of education; (d) dependence on aid for research as well as teaching; (e) dependence on investment in education; and (f) dependence of Third World social scientists on demand in the West for their skills.

13 We did a quick survey of the number of articles on the south (countries within Latin America, Africa and Asia) in the two most important journals dealing with urban issues *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research (IJURR)* and *Urban Studies (US)*. Between March 1977 and March 2013, *IJURR* published 2,526 articles of which 257 (10.17 per cent) dealt with themes related to the south. These (257) were single, double and treble authored papers. Of the single authored papers (72.37 per cent) most (61.82 per cent) were written by authors located in the north. The story is slightly better if not substantively good for *US*. Between May 1964 and May 2013, *US* published 3,366 articles of which 447 (13.27 per cent) dealt with themes related from the south. Of the single authored articles (55.70 per cent) relating to the south, about 55 per cent have been written by those who were located in the north. (I thank Greeshma Justin John for help in doing this survey).

14 The old (colonial) dualism was organized around the binary of Eurocentrism and orientalism, the universal and the particular. Orientalism was a thought system, which originated as an integral part of Eurocentrism and perceived the east in juxtaposition against the west. Orientalist thought valorized the east as being moored within nature, religion, and spirituality, opposite of the west, which was dominated by civilized culture, science and reason (Patel 2006b, 2011a).
DISSEMINATING ‘BEST PRACTICE’?
The coloniality of urban knowledge and city models

Carlos Vainer

Introduction

Although it may be banal to say so, practices of city modelling are not neutral. They are conceived in economic, political and cultural contexts that are completely different from the cities to which the concepts and theories are disseminated, packaged up as ‘tool boxes’ and action models. Effacing the realities and social and territorial problems of the global periphery, they propose solutions that are, in the end, supposedly all-purpose ‘instruction’ on ‘best practice’: applied in situations and contexts entirely different from the ones for which they were conceived.

In this chapter, I engage and question the coloniality of the broad histories and power-alignments that have shaped the dissemination of what we call in the contemporary period urban ‘best practice’. Constituted and legitimized in theoretical, methodological, or operational paradigms, shifting notions of ‘best practice’ have built and sustained universal notions of the city models, planning practices, and projects embedded in and disseminated through colonialism and globalization. These problematic practices shape how we imagine the roles university departments and schools that specialize in land use and urban planning should play at the centre and periphery or - if the World Bank’s geo-referenced language is preferred - in the global north and global south. A critical analysis of this history can help us re-imagine the training city planners and land use specialists receive, so they are able to reinvent cities and be free of competitive planning models and urban marketing that dream of making metropolises on the capitalist periphery into ‘global cities’, or, as is it is now fashionable to say, ‘world-class cities’.

Since the Americas became a part of (European) History with a capital H, our towns and territories have been conceived and designed based on imported models. Colonial powers built towns – ‘their towns’ – in conquered territories, either as new settlements or on top of subjugated pre-colonial existing towns. With the waning of the power of the Iberian Peninsula and the abandoning of urban directives brought together in the ordinances of King Manuel I of Portugal and the code of King Philip II of Spain, French architects and landscape designers took up this role. In nineteenth-century Brazil, for instance, French missions arrived to beautify Rio de Janeiro, giving rise to the construction of mansions, gardens but also private homes for rich, slave-owning coffee plantation owners.

With a turn to Haussmann and hygiene, this project was no longer about an art or a style but became a model for the ‘modern’ town, a process whereby old neighbourhoods were torn down to make way for the wide boulevards of a clean, disciplined and disciplinary town with sanitation. English-style
garden towns and company towns were ‘brought aboard’ from Europe and ‘unloaded’ in America to help the first industrial cities on the capitalist periphery deal with the problems posed by a nascent working class. Progressively, the Western – European and later North American – city became a universal model, exported in modes of urbanization and territorial land use planning and practices of production and consumption.

This trend intensified in the post-World War II years. A time of Keynesian consensus and clarity on the state’s role as planner, we – in the south – were taught to draw up master plans. From 1950 to 1970, models and modes succeeded one another: from the diffusion of regional development plans, inspired, for instance, by the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA), to François Perroux’s growth poles, and the World Bank’s programmes to strengthen what it called medium-sized cities. Embedded in these processes and projects, international consultants became the contemporary heirs of nineteenth-century architectural and artistic missions. Under the banner of neoliberal consensus in the 1980s and 1990s, they have urged everyone to abandon the dirigiste pretensions of overall plans and their rigidities. Instead, ‘market friendly’, ‘market oriented’ plans, ‘historic neighbourhood revitalization’ and ‘regeneration of waterfronts’ are promoted to attract large amounts of ‘footloose’ capital. More recently, mega-projects and mega-sporting events have catalysed a time of ad hoc city planning (Ascher 2001), giving place to the ‘city of exception’.

Universities and international conferences have become venues of choice for disseminating ‘best practices’ that are seen as the ‘handbook’ of urban studies specialists and planners from the south.

Framed in a Latin American experience particularly, the chapter explores the multiple forms of coloniality that sustain the dissemination of ‘best practice’ city modelling. Beginning with an examination of conquest and colonization, the chapter turns to the nature of current coloniality. Drawing on a literature that critiques the epistemological basis of coloniality, I argue that dialogue and debate, and a differently configured practice of engagement and city building, could help decolonize knowledge and reclaim how and for whom cities are produced.

Conquest and colonization

Latin American history began with conquest. And the paradigm of this conquest is, of course, the invasion and victory of the conquistador Cortez. The defeat of the powerful Aztec empire by a small group of Spaniards, no more than 550 of them, still baffles historians. Explanations for it run the gamut. Todorov (1982), Gruzinski (1988) and Dussel (1994) have shed much light on the subject. For my purposes here, colonization – rather than the conquest itself – is what must be understood.

To do so, it first must be emphasized that the Spanish already had inter-cultural contact and conquest experiences when they fought the Moors in the re-conquest of the Iberian Peninsula, a re-conquest that came to an end with the taking of Granada in early 1492; this was the same year – surely not by chance – in which Christopher Columbus, under the patronage of Ferdinand II of Aragon and Isabelle of Castile, arrived in America.

The next most important element is the modernity arising from colonization, and which Cortez, to a certain extent, announced: a modernity that invented, structured and inaugurated a Eurocentric vision of the world. This vision was the basis for the construction of the ‘civilized European ego’ and the ‘savage/barbarian other’. Not simply the bearers of superior technology of arms and the horse, as some argue, the Spanish or European bearers of modernity saw indigenous people as backward inferiors. On the other side, arriving in ships – described as ‘floating palaces’ – for Montezuma and his people the Spanish were superior beings or gods. As the prophecies had foretold, Cortez arrived by sea and was seen as the incarnation of the god Quetzacóatl.

Yet, to conquer does not suffice, one must colonize; in other words, ‘include’ these pagan, savage inferiors in the world, more specifically, ‘in our civilized, Christian world’. This process of inclusion,
however, was also a process that registered a difference: inclusion also created the periphery. Dussel (1994) demonstrates, for instance, that the ‘discovery’ of America was also the act of ‘covering up’, of hiding and veiling the other by erasing his or her otherness and projecting oneself onto this albeit inferior, backwards other.

Traditional, mythic discourse describes modernity as an endogenous process generated in and initially limited to Europe, which then spills over the European frontiers through the benefits of navigation and colonization. From the sixteenth century the Spanish and Portugese, and then in the eighteenth century, the English and the French, progressively took over increasingly vast territories, broadening their world and thereby creating a space for expanding modernity. Building on critical theorization by Andre Gunder Frank (1972), Fernand Braudel (1979), and others, Wallerstein (1991) would deconstruct this myth and its central founding assumption that the essential movement of European modern history is the city’s inclusion in a national economy, the binding of the local sphere into the territory of the nation and state. In this picture and its analysis, he questions the exclusion of a narrative about the world and its economy in the building of European states (1991: 73). Proposing an alternative view, he argues instead that:

The transition from feudalism to capitalism involved first of all (first logically and first temporally) the creation of a world economy. That is to say, a social division of labor was brought into being through the transformation of long-distance trade from a trade in ‘luxuries’ to a trade in ‘essentials’ or ‘bulk goods’, which tied together processes that were widely dispersed into long commodity chains … Such commodity chains were already there in the sixteenth century and predated anything that could meaningfully be called ‘national economies’. These chains in turn could only be secured by the construction of an interstate system coordinate with the boundaries of the real social division of labor, the capitalist world-economy.

(Wallerstein 1991: 73)

Priests, soldiers and merchants wielding bibles, swords and merchandise, were the means whereby this world was born; it is how indigenous peoples were introduced to the world and to civilization as backward, uncivilized and underdeveloped savages. Contrary to the myth, modernity was established as a unity made up of a founding and insurmountable duplicity that reproduced from the outset and throughout its history a centre and a periphery.

Consequently, unlike the Eurocentric myth, modernity is only half European as it is only in the discovery and erasure of the other, in this invention of the other and conversion of the other into a peripheral, inferior being, that modernity ushers in a new world that is European/American, built around essential dichotomies of centre and periphery, developed and backwards, or north and south.

But it is not enough to rout armies and conquer territory; world visions must also be destroyed and the imaginary conquered. The war waged, for instance, against the art of painting as presented in the magnificent book written by Gruzinski (1988) illustrates that this new stage in the conquest was not limited to controlling territories (such as latifundium and encomienda), bodies (in the form of slavery) and arms; it made its conscious goal to subjugate minds through colonization of the imaginary and its associated images.

Moreover, conquest of the natural world was achieved by conquest of the supernatural world, or at least by the way in which it was conceived, imagined, desired (heaven) and feared (hell). How could the very notions of sin and punishment be inculcated if the new believers did not have the frame of mind to imagine hell, to make – it must be said – an image of it? Laying to waste villages and temples and repressing indigenous painting were the means used to erase the imaginary and images that upheld visions of the world and beliefs that had to be destroyed and replaced by those that were European.
Coloniality, knowledge and city models

Once the conquest was complete, all parts of this new world had to be rebuilt in the image of the ideal world at the centre: Europe. The parts that had just been discovered and then erased were remade as a replica, albeit imperfect, inevitably corrupted and perverted due to the very condition of being on the periphery; by definition backward, places where modernity would always be threatened by deviations, incompleteness and even impossibility. Reincarnated in the present, this coloniality of knowledge powerfully persists in contemporary notions and practices of city making.

The current nature of coloniality

If we return to the narrative developed at the beginning of this chapter on urbanity and city planning, it is clear that cities and towns of the periphery are products of the colonial relationship. This is also true for cities in the centre. Would it be possible to understand the history and the evolution of European cities without reference to the centre–periphery relationship? Doesn't the primitive accumulation that Marx spoke of correspond basically to the founding moment of capitalist development in the centre, and, therefore, to the modern city that would soon be the ideal place for industrial development?

Although our cities have always been designed and built according to rules received from the centre throughout the twentieth century, after the Second World War development aid has had an increasing impact in disseminating development models, and shaping the form of urban development. Nonetheless, we have never had before us such omnipresent international cooperation, both bilateral and multilateral. Never before have international consultants played such central roles in the design of urban and regional strategies, in other words, in drawing up and disseminating theoretical and practical ‘agendas’ that shape practices of land use and urban planning.

On one side, development agencies and foundations stimulate and fund research on a number of subjects, themes and issues. On the other, national or multi-lateral development agencies suggest and support institutional forms of practice that reflect particular conceptions and goals of land use and urban planning. This is done in the context of a generalized increase in communication among researchers, university academics and professionals, moving between national institutional frameworks and multilateral development agencies such as the World Bank, the Inter-American Development Bank, and the United Nations’ Habitat Programme, among others.

Today, this is the context and framework in which most university researchers and urban planners design and carry out their research and organize projects in the south. North American universities, for example, dedicated to training planners have developed ‘international studies’ that prepare consultants who will be the bearers of ‘development aid’, the peddlers of models and ‘best practices’ from the north. These ways of working are not the exclusive prerogative of the most conservative groups, of single-minded thinking about urban planning prevalent, for instance, in multi-lateral agencies, or in the materials that consultants disseminate as they move around the world. In the academy, they surface in the unequal development of theoretical production. Many well-known authors on the left and the right replicate these practices and analyses, disseminating these perspectives, concepts and proposals developed ‘in and for’ the centre, in publications and personal visits to the periphery. Rooted in personal experience, views and perspectives are necessarily located.

Contemporary global processes are complex and cannot be simply reduced to social, economic and cultural relationships and inputs. Moreover, globalization may not easily be categorized or redefined by scales or roles, neatly categorized as the south or the north, reflective of hierarchical notions of the local, national or global (see Sassen 1991; Ohmae 1995; Hardt and Negri 2000; Smith 1993; and Swyngedouw 1997). Yet, we must contest the notion that globalization’s homogenization is a fait accompli, disseminated through a single universal model. This goal shapes the central question considered in the remainder of the chapter: Can theories and models built in singular contexts really be disseminated
as universal? What are the possibilities and limits of such theories when they travel to the periphery, in other words, the south? In asking these questions, I am arguing for a critical discussion on the conditions that shape the production and distribution of knowledge, in our case, of urban and regional realities. In doing so, we might reflect on how we can reshape our ideas, theories and tools in order to engage southern urban and regional issues and to what extent we can re-direct urban knowledge so that it can be drawn on to invent more equitable or appropriate cities and land use. To reflect on these questions and issues, I turn now to an epistemological discussion that helps deconstruct and critique coloniality and its impact on how we know and plan for cities in peripheral, southern contexts.

Recent epistemological developments: a theoretical critique of coloniality

At the opening session of the 23rd Congress of the Association of European Schools of Planning in 2009, a learned presentation by Liverpool City Council’s head of planning Nigel Lee, entitled ‘Liverpool Regeneration: Reflections on the Past, Lessons for the Future’, gave attendees an extraordinary journey through the history of the city. His lecture evoked the wealth and luxuriousness of Liverpudlian buildings in the second half of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century when the city was undergoing its greatest development, describing the efforts to revitalize and regenerate the old town and the new uses to which redeveloped buildings were being put. Nothing was hinted about the fact that most of the city’s wealth came at that time from the slave trade, particularly from the role of rich maritime traders from Liverpool in the forced transportation of more than 1,300,000 slaves. Until England abolished slavery or became abolitionist, all the city leaders of this major port were traders in human flesh.9 This silence, and many others like it, hides the barbarian side of primitive accumulation, but also of coloniality.

Here, Mignolo’s work proves useful. He reminds us that, although the discourse of science is a particular regional discourse from Europe, ‘[t]his particular (regional/local) history is nevertheless double: on one side is the history of European modernity and, on the other, the “silenced” history of European coloniality’ (2004: 680). In this discussion, colonization and coloniality must not be confused. Colonization refers to a specific historical period while coloniality refers to one of modernity’s essential, permanent characteristics; the ongoing relationship which throughout modern history marks both the centre and the periphery. Dussel (1994), Mignolo (1995, 2003, 2004), Quijano (2002), and Coronil (2005), among others,10 have clearly shown that coloniality evokes the permanence of an essential trait, to wit, the existence of a relationship that while including us all in the same world also sets up different modes of inclusion for each of us. Although the aim of this chapter is not to make a broad-stroke presentation of this debate, an attempt to summarize this thinking could help us pose some critical questions about city models and knowledge disseminated globally.

Inspired to a certain extent by feminist and ecologist critiques of modern science, this literature shows us that by the very token of their rootedness in movements and universities of the centre, these critiques have been incapable of unveiling another essential trait and pillar of modern science: coloniality. In other words, the discourses of modernity veil the constitutive dimensions of modernity: its coloniality. In sum, Dussel, Mignolo and Quijano suggest that, given the co-essential nature of modernity and coloniality, it is impossible to design and implement complete ‘modernization’ of the periphery in the image of the centre. Dussel (1994: 45) expresses this clearly:

\[
\text{Modernity is a project that can never be completed as it is not possible without coloniality.} \\
\text{The future cannot be imagined as a movement towards completion of what is always an incomplete project of modernity.}
\]

His argument is not about colonialism; it is about the coloniality of power and knowledge (savoir). This brings us to another idea, which is also essential: knowledge, even very abstract knowledge, is not
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something that floats around in the air. It is always, necessarily, located in a context, arising from a context and put into context. Mignolo challenges us to question under what conditions a concept, a method or a theory was conceived of and drawn up, arguing:

Knowing (savoir) is not only a conceptual apparatus that floats around in the mind of humankind but … it is placed, located in a geopolitics of imperial and epistemic knowledge (savoir) as well as in the structure of gender divisions in the Christian, capitalist West.

(Mignolo 2004: 699)

In this context and critique, we are challenged:

to work on an ongoing basis to decolonize knowledge (savoir) in different fields. The decolonization of knowledge … is a crucial task to make possible the imagining of a different world, a better world than the one based on the epistemic principles of the Renaissance and the Enlightenment.

(ibid.: 705)

Instead of the colonial claim of universalism, this argument promotes pluri-versalism, insisting on a radical change in the dominant culture, not only at the centre, but above all at the periphery. In such contexts, too often mixed background, colonized professionals and researchers make up a kind of ‘comprador intelligentsia’, who, despite location at the periphery, have had their imaginary colonized. In effect, this comprador intelligentsia has become an intermediary and articulator of the centre’s vision of the world at the periphery.

Conclusion: building dialogues to decolonize urban theories and models

Bourdieu and Wacquant (2002: 15) provide a simple and clear definition of cultural imperialism; they suggest that ‘cultural imperialism is based on the power of universalizing particulars associated with a singular historical tradition’. With a parallel intent, Schwarz (1992) proposes the expression ‘out-of-place ideas’ to refer to those imported concepts, imaginaries and idealizations that are foreign to a reality, in his case the transposition of nineteenth-century liberal ideas to Brazil where local epigones puncted Adam Smith and David Ricardo-inspired visions of the virtues of the free market, despite the harsh reality that labour was not free and slaves were responsible for the wealth of the nation. In other words, we return to the idea that theories and concepts are not free floating and that the coloniality of knowledge rests on the power of attributing universality to a particular experience.

With this perspective, our duty becomes clearer: to aim towards decolonization, in this instance in the field of urban studies, policy and planning. Of course, this is easier said than done, especially since we are not in possession, for instance, of World Bank-directed tool kits and ‘best practices’ with which consultancies abound. Yet, following Quijano, Mignolo and Dussel, we can assert a certain set of responsibilities. First, researchers in Latin America, the context in which I work and live, and elsewhere in the global south must decolonize urban knowledge. This call is not a proposal to replace the self-centred dominant epistemology built in countries in the centre by another egocentric epistemology built in peripheral countries. To be clear, I am not proposing the replacement of a Eurocentric, mono-topic epistemology by another one – a global southern one – also mono-topic in nature, though centred instead in Latin America or elsewhere in the periphery. The deconstruction of the coloniality of knowledge must avoid all kinds of epistemological nationalism or chauvinism.

Like Mignolo and Boaventura Santos (2004), in making this argument I propose instead that new decolonizing perspectives should be anchored, located, rooted and engaged in our particular contexts;
this savoir will be plural. Based on a dialogical process, an epistemological approach with this sensibility needs to acknowledge and seek universality, while being cognizant of the fact that it will always be incomplete and limited; due to the fact that all knowledge inexorably has a location, and, consequently, is not universal.

In moving beyond ‘out-of-place’ urban ideas, we must not allow ourselves to be seduced by a mono-topic approach or power centred solely on the notion of the south or the periphery. The exercise should be based on another type of universalism, the principle of which is dialogue and a dialogical approach. Here I shall attempt to list a certain number of principles important to this dialogue:

■ It must be the fruit of borderless, free and fair trade of ideas;
■ Each and every participant in it should clearly and directly state the place and context from which he or she is speaking and the condition of the production of knowledge (savoir) that is being proposed or submitted to the dialogue;
■ In sharing discourses, we should explore and express the assumptions they take for granted, their ideas and concepts, even the ones that are believed to be universal and which are so often not verbalized due to the belief that it is unnecessary to say them and articulate them because ‘everybody agrees about that’ (Santos 2004);12
■ The challenges posed by different languages and the difficulties of translation should be recognized (as the Italian phrase ‘traduttore traditore’ suggests, ‘he who translates is a traitor’);
■ It will be helpful to recognize that misunderstandings are produced not only from the limitations of translation, but also from the singularities of social and conceptual contexts. This tension may be the source of some ‘irreducible’ issues, ideas, perspectives and concepts that may only be partially or imperfectly transmitted and received.

Despite the challenges and difficulties, we must believe in the possibilities of a plural epistemology and the decolonization of urban knowledge. To do this, so-called ‘best practices’ must be chucked into the dustbin of history and replaced with multiple, open dialogues: dialogues between researchers, of course, but also between urban studies professors and planners and, maybe above all, between citizens. The latter, better than anyone else, are in a position to transmit their experience, not so that it may be copied but so it may become an inspiration to others, to incite them to invent new urbanities and new ways of studying cities.

References

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Notes

1. Grouped and classified as ‘the south’, ‘developing regions’, ‘emerging countries’, ‘underdeveloped countries’, these more or less sophisticated expressions evoke, often without articulating it, the subordinated peripheral position of these countries and the miserable condition of most of their populations.

2. The Zocalo, the main plaza of Mexico City, was built for symbolic reasons at the ceremonial heart of the destroyed Tenochtitlan, capital of the Aztec empire, in a square close to Montezuma’s palace.

3. Under the inspiration of strategic competitive planning, flexibility and master projects now replace master regulatory plans. *Ad hoc* guidelines and discretionary decision-making processes are justified by the need for market opportunities. These processes establish the city where the exceptions become the rule (Vainer 2012).

4. There is no other world (‘cosmos’) than ours; beyond this (our) world, there is only ‘chaos’ (Eliade 1965).

5. In arguing against the tenets of modernist notions of development (*desarollismo*), Frank (1972) created a pun: the development of underdevelopment. His thesis may be summarized as: the birth of capitalism divides the world into a centre versus a periphery, the former developed, the latter, underdeveloped; evident in the experience of four centuries of the development of capitalism in the central countries, in contrast with peripheral countries’ experience of four centuries of the development of underdevelopment.

6. Respectively, large plantations established in the colonial era and grants by the Spanish Crown to a colonist in America, conferring the right to demand tribute and forced labour from indigenous inhabitants.

7. Here, I am thinking above all of Latin America and Brazil.

8. Although, we should critically assess this notion of ‘international’.

9. Home of the very instructional International Slavery Museum, this museum was nevertheless not on the list of the Liverpool visits and excursions proposed by the congress organizers.

10. See the rich collections by Santos (2004) and Lander (2005).

11. I do not intend to propose a new kind of geographic determinism, or worse, a new kind of intellectual nationalism. In some cases, intellectuals based in the centre can adopt the perspective from the periphery, and we know that many researchers and writers from the periphery based in centre universities have made very relevant contributions to deconstruct the coloniality of knowledge. Franz Fanon and Edward Said, in different historical contexts, are good examples of in-between thinkers.
To give one example, it is enough to recall these ‘universals’ that so often come up in the discourse of multi-lateral agencies, such as: public and private space, home, family, civil society, etc. What universal meanings can these terms have in such varied realities as a favela in Rio de Janeiro, a North American ghetto, a working-class district of London, the streets of Calcutta, the 16th arrondissement of Paris or the suburbs of major US cities?
NEW GEOGRAPHIES OF THEORIZING THE URBAN

Putting comparison to work for global urban studies

Jennifer Robinson

Introduction

Trends in contemporary global urbanization pose a significant challenge to theorizing cities. The well-documented shift in the leading edge of urbanization from wealthier countries (which have historically informed much urban theorizing) to middle-income and poorer country contexts, including the highly populous countries of China and India and the economically challenging circumstances of many African countries, establishes the need for a more global urban studies (Satterthwaite 2007). This chapter argues that global urbanism, the commitment to producing an understanding of the urban which is potentially open to the experiences of all cities − to a world of cities − is well served by a comparative imagination. Thinking cities − the urban − in a world of cities requires that researchers navigate the great diversity of urban outcomes while building broader theoretical understandings; that they engage in producing conceptualizations of the urban which begin with the multiplicity of distinctive experiences of the urban but which also travel beyond the city in question in order to participate in wider scholarly conversations. In this chapter I explore what kind of comparative imagination could support such a project of global urban theorizing.

The spatiality of theorizing the urban experience, of thinking cities in a world of cities, maps well onto the core elements of a comparative imagination − thinking across different ‘cases’ to produce conceptualizations which contribute to wider understandings of the processes being analysed, and which might then, in turn, be considered in relation to other contexts or cases. However, the comparative methods which have conventionally underpinned urban studies have not been well placed to serve the project for a more global urbanism (Robinson 2011). Theorizing cities can benefit from a comparative imagination, but comparative methods need to be refitted to support a more global urban analytical project, including a substantial reconfiguring of the ontological foundations of comparison. For example, what might be considered a ‘case’ needs to be redefined to avoid the restricting and territorializing trap of only comparing (relatively similar) ‘cities’: we might rather compare, for example, specific elements or processes in cities, or the circulations and connections which shape cities, thus rendering urban experiences comparable across a much wider range of contexts, and building research strategies which are adequate to the complex spatiality of urban forms (Robinson 2011; Ward 2010). Comparators − the ‘third term’ which establishes the grounds of comparability of cases (Jacobs 2012) − need to be selected so they are relevant to a diversity of urban contexts, rather than seeking relatively
similar cities for comparison as is conventional. In this way, they will be able to stretch theoretical concepts to the breaking point required for the reinvention of urban studies for global analysis, and not simply reinforce parochial and limited understandings (cf. Pierre 2005). More generally, the status of the case itself needs to be reimagined, in relation to both the wider empirical processes shaping particular outcomes, and the conceptualizations which are an important ambition of comparative strategies. This is essential to ground an adequate post-structuralist comparative method which moves beyond both quasi-scientific explanations and a view of the world in which wider structures are drawn on to explain complex specific outcomes.

The second part of the paper therefore engages with how the ‘case’ might be conceptualized in urban studies. Is the case to be seen as an instance of a conceptually predetermined process, like global capitalism? Or does it potentially bring to light new, emergent conceptualizations of processes which do not invoke overarching singular explanations (Jacobs 2012)? Finally, a theoretical practice which produces revisable, mobile conceptualizations is essential to support understandings which are open to a world of cities and which do not reproduce theoretical practices (or theory-cultures) which are closed to contributions and interruptions from elsewhere, notably those cities previously excluded from analytical consideration, broadly from the global south and especially from poorer cities in danger of a new round of marginalization from emerging global hegemons (Parnell et al. 2009). If urban studies is to build theoretical analyses which can speak to a world of cities, which provoke recognition and engagement from different urban experiences, scholars will need to be alert to new parochial narratives being proposed as universals, and to take some care to prevent the re-entrenching of divisions and assumptions of incommensurability between different cities.

More generally, I suggest that reconfiguring the tactics and form of the comparative imagination aligns with significant issues in the wider theorization of the urban currently provoking considerable debate. How can we approach the conceptualization of the urban through the specific instances of different cities (Goonewardena et al. 2008)? Can we best understand cities as assemblages of circulating phenomena, or as outcomes of wider social processes (Jacobs 2006; McFarlane 2011a; Brenner et al. 2011)? To what extent is it possible to configure a conceptually adequate theorization of either the city or the urban (Brenner and Schmid 2013)? How do concepts of cities relate to the phenomenal elements of the urban world which present themselves to us through observations and encounters (Simone 2011)? These are fundamental issues of both method and theory in urban studies, and they have strong synergies with the core challenges facing a comparative urban imagination: building theorizations across a world of (different) cities. These rather abstract theoretical debates are therefore analytically closely connected to the practical challenges of producing a more international urban studies: they speak to the task of reconfiguring the methodological architecture for grappling with the conceptualization of the urban across a world of diverse, distinctive cities.

The first part of this chapter will consider some recent innovations in formulating the grounds for a more global urbanism, and will build on their insights to suggest that a reformulated comparative imagination could address some analytical and methodological issues which are emerging in this initiative. The second part of the paper will work with theoretical debates concerning the conceptualization of the urban in order to outline a reformatted comparative method to support a more global urban theoretical practice. Here some of the broadest questions concerning how to conceptualize the extent and nature of the urban are relevant to reframing the comparative imagination, especially the webs of interconnections which make it necessary to think the city beyond territory and through the great diversity of urban forms around the world. Finally the conclusion will propose how a reformulated comparativism can help scholars move beyond the potentially divisive territorializing traps of regional and developmental categories for thinking the urban.
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Some analytical tactics of global urbanism

It is widely agreed that urban studies needs to embrace a much wider repertoire of urban contexts in building understandings of contemporary urbanism and to revisit parochial interpretations of the past: the challenge of thinking cities in a world of cities is not somehow only newly arrived! But what exactly is to be done? Different scholars have set out on this project for a global urbanism in a variety of directions, establishing productive and interesting lines of analysis. Pulling them together here I would like readers to join me in being inspired by the extent and range of work which supports global urban studies, and to try out these different paths, while at the same time reflecting on how collectively they also bring into the open some of the emerging challenges of thinking across the diversity of urban experiences.

Some ‘strategic essentialisms’: Critiquing the parochial state of urban studies in the 2000s – and the numerous occasions previously when scholars have pointed out the limited resources shaping dominant understandings of the urban – some initial manoeuvres for a global urban studies involved locating and then dislocating the conceptual foundations of what appeared as ‘western’ urban studies (Southall 1973; Mitchell 1987; Hannerz 1980; Parnell 1997; Robinson 2002, 2006; Roy 2009; Wu 2010). Now, over a decade later, it seems this work of critique needs to be on-going – for it turns out to be far too easy for scholars working in such contexts to simply name their location – northern cities, or regions such as United States (US) or European cities – and to continue to ignore the rest of the world of cities while forming their analyses. Given that such well-resourced scholarship still dominates the key journals, not to mention the institutional resources dedicated to international urban research, again and again, I expect, those of us concerned for a more global perspective, or who live in, work on and think through different kinds of cities will need to review, critique and extend such parochial conceptualizations. The challenge here is that such ideas, even if named as parochial, continue to be styled as universal arguments, and thus gain traction and set themselves on the move, becoming hard to avoid when cities everywhere are analysed. The claims to universalization which are embedded in authorial voice (confident, dominating, authorizing, unmarked) and enabled through the practicalities of unevenly resourced circuits of knowledge and publishing could be further dissipated through embedding expectations of quite different practices of theorization – not only a critical reflexivity on the part of writers, but the propagation of modes of theorizing which are actively open to being revised, much more modest in their voice, and precise about locational coordinates (both physical and social). Some of the practices of comparative urbanism outlined in the next section could be helpful in framing different practices of theorizing.

In turning to articulate new dimensions of theorizing cities from elsewhere, authors have sought new geographies of authority and voice. Surveying the key ideas about cities emerging from different regional contexts (Asia, Africa, South America), Roy (2009) proposes a form of strategic essentialism as a grounding for this work. Certainly, it is important to make the space to speak back to arguably ‘western’ theory by drawing on the best insights of scholars in different parts of the world. The ‘strategic’ epithet indicates some of the limitations of this approach though. For of course these grounds for voice for new subjects of theory (Roy 2011) can emerge from embedded regional scholarship and regional circuits of theorization which are productive and important in their own right (Myers 2010; Sanyal and Desai 2012). Every city, country and region supports and produces communities of scholars, and diasporic networks of interpretation, whose concerns are distinctive (if internally highly differentiated): at the same time connected to wider debates and intimately driven by the histories and politics of that context. The tension between these sources of influence has been a key area of debate in post-colonial scholarship in many parts of the world (Connell 2007 offers some useful reviews). However, wherever one begins, both the city as an object of study and the challenge of conceptualizing the urban draw on much more than regional geography or area studies imagination, as Tim Bunnell (2013) helpfully
explores. Thus, ‘the region’ as a ground for theorization can be a substantively important and generative context in terms of scholarly networks, traditions and practices, but it is already open to a wider array of contexts, influences and theoretical conversations (Dick and Rimmer 1998). Insofar, then, as cities are more than regionally determined, framed by globalizing processes, circulating policies and the numerous reiterations of urban forms, the ‘region’ as a basis for theoretical voice might be claimed, momentarily, but is quickly called into question through internal differentiation across the region, the wider processes of globalization and competing geographical frames of explanation (not least the nation or the city). Our analyses of cities cannot necessarily be circumscribed by the regions or even countries in which they are located. Cities are, as Mbembe and Nuttall have it, ‘embedded in multiple elsewheres’ (2004: 348).

Regional theorizations, then, are productive, and provide generative insights which can be launched into the wider world of theorizations, with which they are often already intimately connected. But regions are deeply entwined with a wider world (substantively and conceptually) and certainly represent geographical delimitations which are artefacts of power and cartographic imagination rather than analysis. Building new subjects of urban theory on such essentialisms runs certain risks. On the one hand, they simply highlight a classic challenge of theorizing cities in a world of cities − trying to build wider theorizations of the urban while always having to start in a particular context or with a particular urban outcome. Advocating the benefits of a speaking position defined by a particular pre-existing geographical container (albeit one framed as leaky and multiple − Roy 2011), could re-entrench isolation of different analytical projects, and prevent us seeking some new grounds for speaking more generally about the urban condition. Insights framed as regional can too easily be dismissed as of limited relevance to other cities rather than help to provoke lines of conversation across diverse but highly interconnected urban experiences; in the worst case this form of strategic essentialism could re-establish the lines of incommensurability which saw urbanists disavow insights from geopolitically, developmentally and regionally different contexts. The dynamic strengths of regional scholarship need to be balanced by a strong attentiveness to the range of different geographies relevant to thinking cities (Bunnell 2013) and perhaps most importantly, tied to theoretical projects which seek to launch emergent understandings into wider conversations, rather than territorialize analytical voice.

This same challenge of deploying strategic geographical imaginations, as grounds from which to speak new accounts of the urban, confronts the idea of a ‘southern’ urban theory. In this case the geography of the south is even more complicated to work with. On the one hand it borrows the geopolitical metaphor linking poor nations beyond the capitalist heartland and western core to figure the broadly critical ‘ex-centric’ positionality of the scholar whose perspective does not derive from the mainstream (western, northern) academy. It does not always rely on the sense of a line of ‘poverty’, though, which is the original meaning of the term as formulated in the Brandt line dividing the world into north and south, and critically its re-orientation as ‘global’ south allows for inclusion of poor countries north of the equator and excavates poverty wherever it is found, including in wealthier contexts. Some quite different bases for the delineation of north and south support post-colonial approaches in academic debate. Raewyn Connell’s (2007) path-breaking book, Southern Theory, develops a sui generis analysis of the lines of exclusion of many parts of the world from the labour of sociological theorization, contesting the positioning of some places as sources of data rather than theory, and insisting on a reinvention of theory for a sociology ‘at a world scale’. The function of the global south in academic analysis is created then through its dual appeal as a critique of wealth and power in the global system and its figuring of the ex-centric scholar or location, which can disturb or speak back to dominant knowledges in a radical idiom framed by critiques of global capitalism (Comaroff and Comaroff 2012). It is in some ways a highly productive tactic for global urbanism, and has inspired the articulation of some important challenges to urban studies, especially when allied with calls for an engaged, politically committed practice, informed by the inventive analyses emerging from city
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dwellers, policy makers, states and other actors in some of the poorest cities which have been highly marginalized in urban studies to date (Parnell et al. 2009; Watson 2009; Pieterse 2013).

Both these moves, to evoke a ‘southern’ positionality, and to excavate regional distinctiveness, are important moments, I think, in the emergence of new approaches in urban studies. But they are both, I suspect, as ‘strategic’ opportunities, interim moves, and more sustained formulations for building global urban analyses will be required. With the strong intersection of urban studies and spatial thinking, would a more subtle analysis of the geographies of theorizing be possible? Rather than bundling a diversity of analytical manoeuvres into the pre-assigned, geopolitically problematic and analytically overladen spatialities of regions or imagined geographies such as the ‘south’, I would propose a much more reflexive and decentred spatiality to ground the multiple subject positions of global urban theory. And a more precise and diversified analytical formulation of the lines of critique relevant to understanding cities is possible: the uneven geographies of global capitalism, the complex spatialities of global poverty, the steep inequalities of scholarly production across the world, and the geopolitics of regions or nations should be interrogated on their own terms, rather than bundled into the cavernous and analytically rather bankrupt forms of region and hemisphere. Certainly, it could be argued that regional configurations do often matter for cities – shared economic positions and political histories shape certain aspects of urban processes: the simultaneity and shared roots of economic crisis in some regions is crucial to understand the rise of informality in some cities (Santos 1979); or the range of interconnections which support regional economic configurations might evoke a form of regional distinctiveness (Roy and Ong 2011). But it is intellectually important and analytically essential to be precise about these spatialities, not least because even these shared histories are unevenly experienced and strongly exteriorized, part of wider global processes (see Bunnell 2013). Such precision would open up the possibility for on-going conversations across diverse but interconnected urban outcomes across the globe, rather than render cities incommensurable or irrelevant to analyses elsewhere through the invocation of a blunt spatial analytics. In the final section below I indicate how a comparative urban imagination might provoke some thinking about new geographies of theorizing. While post-colonial moves are seeking to stretch the imagination of urban theory to draw on the resources of urban experiences across the world, debates within mainstream urban studies also offer some new openings for such efforts.

The disappearing city: A growing interest in the idea of ‘planetary urbanization’, drawing on Henri Lefebvre’s (2003 [1974]) suggestive hypothesis of the ‘complete urbanization of society’ has brought a concern for the fate of cities (literally) everywhere into the heart of urban theory. The sprawling extent and diverse forms of many cities, or even urban galaxies, as Soja and Kanai (2007) would have it, with the proliferation of extensive urbanization processes stretching amongst cities and far beyond the physical form of urban settlement has provoked a growing attentiveness to the impossibility of answering the foundational questions of urban theory: where and what is the city (Brenner and Schmid 2011/2013; Brenner 2013)? The city, Merrifield (2013) insists, is a ‘pseudoconcept’ and along with others working in this field, he invites us to rather seek to re-specify the theoretical content of the ‘urban’, in the wake of Wirth, Castells and Lefebvre (Brenner and Schmid 2013). We might pause to reflect that Wirth’s efforts to ground urban theory in ideas of size, heterogeneity and density were instructively parochial (informed by the experience of particular – US and European – cities) and were widely criticized at the time by sociologists and anthropologists around the world for that reason (Robinson 2006); Castells’ search for a mapping of theoretical concepts onto the city was motivated by his eagerness to displace the heterodox Marxist analysis which Lefebvre was offering to think the city with by insisting that the ‘ideological’ formulation of the city through a theorization of space distracted from what he considered to be the proper focus on conjuncturally significant structural processes which had become aligned with the city – namely, collective consumption (Stanek 2011). In the meantime, urban geographers have attended most carefully to the dual spatialities of territorialization and interconnection which
shape this impossible, unbounded, fuzzy object of analysis (Massey, Allen and Pile 1999; McCann and Ward 2010). Certainly the territorial referents of the term ‘city’ do service for only a small portion of urban processes — perhaps the territorializing moments of political demarcations of administration and governance which frame inter-city competition (although these are supremely exteriorized in the circulations of urban policy); or the constitutive nature of social relations of place (but again, urban social and cultural processes are also highly globalized). This search for new vocabularies of the urban to replace the increasingly unworkable territorial shadow contained in the notion of the city, drawing on the idea of planetary urbanization, is both in step with wider trends in the spatial vocabularies currently used anyway in urban analysis and, more importantly for this chapter, a significant opening for building urban theorization which takes account of the world of cities.

I use the term city from time to time here, alongside the idea of different ‘urban outcomes’, to hold the sign of many aspects of the urban which intervene in the project of theorizing the urban globally: differentiation in urban outcomes, particularity, territorializations, path dependencies, lived spaces, contestations or occupations (Benjamin 2008). And, most importantly, to insist that any project of theorizing the urban at a planetary scale still confronts the challenge of approaching this across the great diversity of urban processes and urban outcomes; Brenner and Schmid (2013) suggest that urbanization is variable, polymorphic, and historically determinate and so what needs to be theorized as urban takes many different forms. Transitions to a more fully urbanized population in some places — with the limitation that this is assessed at the national scale (Brenner and Schmid 2013) — coexist with the stagnation and decline of formerly successful industrial cities (Le Galès 2002); the surge of state geopolitical ambition in the styling of cities across Asia (Ong 2011) accompanies the intense privatism and state withdrawal from shaping cities in many former authoritarian contexts (Hirt 2011); the informal expansion of rapidly growing cities sits, sometimes literally, side by side with the explosion of concrete and glass in the emptied public spaces of corporate urban landscapes and the resultant elite capture of the intrinsic capacities of many cities to engender vitality and centrality (De Boeck 2011; Schmid 2011). And, we could rehearse many more distinctive varieties of urbanism; indeed, a multiplicity of forms, trends and interpretations of the urban condition can be identified around the world.

In this sense, then, and following Lefebvre himself, the theorization of urbanization will always be disrupted by this diversity; and in the face of that, any theorization must find itself provisional and insecure. In their philosophically informed ‘third-wave’ Lefebvre studies, Kipfer et al. (2008: 297) observe that Lefebvre was both sceptical of any ‘premature intellectual totalisation’, alert to the necessary incompleteness of theoretical specifications, and concerned to attend to the differential multiplicity of centres from which to build understandings of the urban. I return to this below.

The challenges for a theorization of planetary urbanization, if it is to be a part of a project for a global urban studies, include being alert to disclosing the locatedness of its inspirations — the places and cities which shape theorization (for Lefebvre these were certainly European, but also through his lifetime he was influenced by quite a wide-ranging set of urban contexts), and the trajectories of theoretical insight (the vocabularies which draw on strongly European philosophical categories). Wider theorizations of the urban also need to keep open the possibility of being disrupted by understandings of urbanization from elsewhere; and to take care not to pre-ordain the theoretical determination of urbanization on the basis of earlier (located) rounds of theorizing, for example, as simply a form of (certain theorizations of) global capitalism (Merrifield 2013). Thinking from different contexts can bring into view a much wider range of relevant processes. In the same way, then, as neoliberalism does not exhaust or even specify the terrain of urban politics (Robinson and Parnell 2011), capitalism does not delineate the processes of urbanization everywhere. And from the outset, the repertoire of inspiration for thinking urbanization beyond the city could be significantly widened. For instance, in a number of different contexts a more developmental and perhaps policy-oriented urban literature (see
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Parnell and Robinson (2012) for a discussion of the importance of drawing on this literature in framing wider urban studies debates has long been concerned with the ways in which ‘the city’ and ‘the countryside’ are woven together through an intricate range of (often transnational) relationships: circular migration, as a constituent and long-lasting feature of many Southern African urbanisms bears attention here (see Potts 2010 for an important discussion of this).

While planetary urbanization as a response to the challenge of the disappearing city (since it is now everywhere - see Wachsmuth 2013) is largely pursued through the lens of political-economic analyses, mainstream urban studies has also drawn a strong engagement with alternative post-structuralist traditions which offer competing vocabularies for more global conceptualizations of cities. I review one of these now, largely inspired by the work of the French philosopher, Gilles Deleuze.

Repeated instances: The final emergent approach to global urbanism which I will review here draws its inspiration from Gilles Deleuze’s (1994) account of repetitious differentiations which suggests we attend to how we come to a conceptualisation of singularities or specific outcomes through working with ‘difference’. As memory and intuition bring objects to ‘thought’, we enter the realm of the ‘virtual’, where objects can come to be conceptualized through actively exploring connections with other possible configurations and instances in a field, and in relation to an ongoing sensibility to matter. Thus, concepts of specific urban outcomes could be understood as intimately connected to many other possible (preceding and future) outcomes, through their shared conditions of conceptualization (as, for example, many instances of ‘gentrification’ could be drawn on in trying to specify how a certain instance of urban regeneration might be understood). And in the case of urbanization (and certainly for ‘gentrification’) many of the processes of production are shared across different instances, such as with policy circulation, or circuits of investment related to urban regeneration. In this view, then, each instance or repetition is only a step aside from other instances, or singularities, distinctive but intimately connected with other specific outcomes (Deleuze 1994). This philosophical intervention offers much food for thought in trying to imagine an interconnected conceptual project across a world of distinctive urban outcomes. In urban studies the most succinct example of this thinking is to be found in Jane Jacobs’s (2006) analysis of the globalising residential high-rise.2

Here, the distinctive achievement of each repetition – almost-the-same – through globalizing circulations and specific assembling of diverse elements to produce each building provides an insight into what it might mean to think with the productivity of the virtual in the sphere of the urban (Farias 2010: 15). The achievement of urban modernity in the repetitive architecture of international modernism emerges from the relatively unpredictable multiplicity of circulations and manifold elements able to be assembled into each construction – buildings that are both repeated and yet produced as original objects, with an equally original yet partly repeated and interconnected set of meanings crafted locally, each time (King 2004): ‘the making of repetition – or, more precisely, repeated instances in many different contexts – requires variance, different assemblages of allies in different settings’ (Jacobs 2006: 22). For Jacobs, each instance produces the global effect of international modernism in her comparative research on the residential high rise: each case is a singularity, and not an example of an already given global process (Jacobs 2012).

Unfortunately the lines of opposition have been drawn between political economy approaches and the kinds of analyses inspired by Deleuze and actor network theory after Bruno Latour. Thus McFarlane (2011a) invokes the idea of ‘assemblage’ as a metaphor for interpreting the city as composed of relatively unpredictable but agentive combinations of objects, techniques, practices and human actions, using the examples of the informal production of housing and mobilization of resistance amongst poorer urban dwellers. And as we saw above, Jane Jacobs focuses on how each instance of residential high-rise is produced through the ‘assemblage’ of different human and non-human actors in specific places. Brenner et al. (2011) see this as at odds with the political economy perspectives which broadly support the theorization of planetary urbanization. They seek to contain the influence of assemblage thinking

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to a methodological innovation that brings into view non-human actants, and might propose new topics for enquiry that would continue to be driven by the wider perspectives of political economy. However, they also note suggestively, that:

Could it be possibly here, faced with the extraordinary challenge of mapping a world-wide yet internally hierarchized and differentiated urban ensemble that the conceptual and methodological gesture facilitated through assemblage approaches becomes most productive? (Brenner, Madden and Wachsmuth 2011: 237)

In this regard, Ignacio Farías (2010) is correct to suggest that the use of actor network theory in urban studies has been empiricist and post-hoc and thus descriptive of phenomena which are rather familiar, and has paid little attention to the challenge of being open to identifying the unpredictable, creative emergence of entirely new kinds of objects and concepts which Deleuze’s thinking might inspire. This approach has certainly not sought to generate any understanding of the urban more generally. Moreover, Deleuze’s interest in the domain of conceptualization as part of the process of emergence is significantly absent from this work, limiting their potential to contribute to wider or more theoretical conversations about the urban (Deleuze and Guattari 1994). Insofar, then, as we might seek to find some common ground between planetary urbanization’s search for new conceptualizations of the urban, and the now extensive urban research in the idiom of actor network theory, I would agree with Brenner et al. (2011) that this could be found in the more Deleuzian-inspired opening to reformulating how the urban might be thought across the diversity of urban outcomes: an engagement with ‘the urban’ as a virtuality. This places the urban as a conceptualization profoundly open to reformulation in response to both differentiated emergent forms of urbanization and the interconnected conceptualizations which we might be provoked to consider as this ‘urban manifold’ makes itself known to us (Simone 2011). This sets the scene, I would propose, for a new form of urban comparativism.

Reformatting urban comparativism

Building critically on the practices of urban comparison, as outlined in the discussion above, we could reimagine comparisons as involving the broad practice of thinking cities/the urban through elsewhere (another case, a wider context, existing theoretical imaginations, connections to other places), in order to better understand outcomes and to contribute to broader theorizations and conversations about (aspects of) the urban. Thinking comparatively can highlight the differentiation of outcomes, it can bring into view the distinctive (or shared) processes shaping a certain urban outcome, it can put to work theoretical insights drawn from other instances or cases; it can insist on the incompleteness of analytical insights based on different contexts; moreover, it can suggest new objects of analysis by displacing ethnocentric assumptions which arise from the inevitable locatedness of all theory. In the case of cities, the opportunity to think comparatively is ubiquitous by virtue of the multiplicity of urban outcomes, or the simple fact of having to think cities in a ‘world of cities’: any act of urban theorization from somewhere is by necessity a comparative gesture, putting a perspective informed by one context or outcome into conversation with wider theorizations. Thus one of the most useful comparative tactics in urban studies is the case study, brought into creative conversation with a wider literature. In many ways this format, the case study - whether understood as a city, a specific urban phenomenon or form, or wider circulating urban processes - in conversation with theoretical debates and other cases, is well suited as a model for global urban studies. It insists on taking seriously the scholarly output of people working in different places, thinking through that work to inform one’s own located analysis and, in turn, suggesting new lines of theorization based on the new case study. The call for a more global urban studies is in some ways well formulated as an insistence on more critical ‘planetary’ reading practices (see Jazeel 2012).
The intrinsic comparativism of urban studies can also be put to work more purposively, and here the repertoire of comparative strategies has been expanding through attention to relational comparisons (Hart 2003; Ward 2010) and to the need to formulate comparative methods which are adequate to the specific spatialities of cities (Robinson 2011). The project of ‘composing’ comparisons can be reconfigured to map better on to current understandings of the urban. Thus, the territorialized figuring of the individual ‘case’ as necessarily a city is clearly redundant (see Wachsmuth 2013) and instead we could seek to put a comparative imagination to work to consider: the range of urbanization processes which stretch far beyond the physical form of cities; the diverse array of social and spatial forms which emerge in different urban settlements; the repeated instances and circulating phenomena (such as policies, forms, visions) which draw highly differentiated urban outcomes into the same frame of analysis. We might draw analytical insights by considering cities through the specific shared connections which shape each, highlighting the impact of different histories and contexts, as Hart (2003) pioneered in her consideration of the effects of rural dispossession on small industrializing towns in northern KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, through tracing the largely Taiwanese industrialists who chose to locate there in response to a late-apartheid industrial incentive scheme. We might compare the webs of relations which creatively draw cities into practical engagements with circulating policies, economic networks, transnational political influences, or actors from specific other cities, as Söderström (2014) does in his comparison of two ‘cities in relations’, Ouagadougou and Hanoi. And the proliferation of repeated instances across cities provides a basis for a locationally promiscuous research agenda to inform a global conversation about many aspects of contemporary urban life (for example, on neoliberalism, Goldfrank and Schrank 2009; on gentrification, Harris 2008; or Jacobs 2006 on the residential high-rise).

Reformatting comparison to support a global urban studies, therefore, has many possible practical tactics for proceeding: building comparisons through reading strategies to put case study work into wider conversations; composing bespoke comparisons across diverse outcomes or repeated instances; tracing connections amongst cities to inform understandings of different outcomes or to compare the wider interconnections and extended urbanization processes themselves; and, as we discussed in the previous section, launching distinctive analyses from specific urban contexts or regions into wider conversations.

A new ontology of comparison is also required, which amounts to a new geography of theorizing, or generating concepts. First, as we have seen, an account of the process of building concepts through engaging across the differentiated field of the urban needs to provide for a radical deterritorialization of the ‘case’. Theorizing the urban ‘now’, following Walter Benjamin, for example, provides one possible resource for re-imagining the spatiality of comparison, and a method for theorizing cities in the midst of elsewhere. Whether through the logistics of composing, tracing or launching, the comparative imagination calls for attention to the strong exteriorization of the urban – i.e. the fact that cities are shaped by processes that stretch well beyond their physical extent. Benjamin presents the ‘now’ – the ‘now of recognizability’ – as a dialectical image (Benjamin 1999, N7: 7) in which the present, rather than being seen as a result of a sequential (progressive) historical causality, is understood, or brought into recognition, through moments of the past which are scattered in time. To capture the sense of the now, various elements of the past, he suggests, need to be blasted out of the course of positivist history in which time is seen as continuous (or within the rubric of an abstract sense of enduring time, following Kant), and realigned in a constellation of ‘now’-time – a dialectics at a standstill bringing different elements of the past and present crashing together, and in which the relations of temporality itself are immanent (Hamacher 2005). As Benjamin suggests: ‘For while the relation of the present to the past is a purely temporal, continuous one, the relation of what-has-been to the now is dialectical: it is not progression but image, suddenly emergent’ (Benjamin 1999 N2a: 3)."}

Thus an urban ‘now’ would involve analytically drawing together elements from cities and places distant in both time and space, with leaps of explanation and connection reaching back in time, as well
as across to other places, to constitute the immanent interpretive space-times of globalizing urbanism. In such a re-crafted image of the urban ‘now’, interpretations of different cities are potentially multiple, depending on your analytical constellation. But these are also intimately interconnected through many shared circulations and mutual inhabitations (see Robinson 2013a; Caygill 1998). We find here in Benjamin’s historical method resources to insist on both the empirical multiplicity of the urban (a diversity of inter-related urban outcomes) and the multiplicity of possible conceptualizations or analyses of the urban.

If the resources for imagining new spatialities of comparison can be retrieved from the mainstream history of urban studies, reconceptualizing the ontological status of the case is closer to hand in contemporary debates inspired by Gilles Deleuze. In order to recompose the significance of the case, we need to question whether it is helpful to see the case either as an example of wider processes, or as a ‘context’ in which wider processes are hybridized. Thus, in a Deleuzian idiom, as I outlined above, cases could be thought of, not as examples of wider processes (such as restructuring, in Clarke’s 1995 excellent study), nor their hybridization (as in Peck et al.’s 2009 analysis of neoliberalization), but as singularities – specific (if repeated, differently) outcomes resulting from empirically determinable processes. This is neither to jettison conceptualization, not to return to an opposition between wider systemic processes and their contextualized outcomes. Even in its post-colonial idiom (for example, Chakrabarty 2000) this imagination, which preserves the idea that structures (such as global capitalism) derived in analysis can be identified locally in a hybrid, differentiated form, generates a view of many places as residual to theorization, marking only the hybridization of processes derived (and already conceptualized) from elsewhere. This both retains the centrality of conceptualizations informed by only some contexts, and reduces the study of different places to a form of ‘defanged empiricism’, unable to transform understandings of these wider processes and leaving conceptualizations relatively intact (see Chaudhury 2012; Connell 2007). Drawing all cities into the conceptualization of urbanization would benefit from reimagining this relationship between cases and concepts so that theorization of the urban can be informed by the widest range of urban experiences.

This clearly requires considerable further specification but, as a prosaic example, empirical investigations into the many shared processes shaping different cities could both contribute to a more open theorization of the urban and draw inspiration from a wider range of urban contexts. Rather than being seen as abstract ‘structures’, perhaps the ‘rule regimes’ of global capitalism (Peck et al. 2009), or extensive urbanization processes (Brenner and Schmid 2013), alongside the circulations of urban forms (Söderström 2014) and the emergence of specific state capacities (McFarlane 2011b) might be empirical objects of investigation in their own right (i.e. not assumed as already conceptualized structures), and also open towards conceptualizations of the urban. Here the ‘virtuality’ of the urban can offer a useful perspective, referring to the generative process of producing understandings of distinctive outcomes both through exploring interconnected conceptualizations and through tracing the genesis of outcomes in the interconnected relations, dynamics and processes which specify one among a multiplicity of possible urban outcomes (the virtual for Deleuze (1994) being about both concepts and matter). This would offer one way to appreciate the diversity of urban outcomes while supporting wider conversations and explanations.

The key comparative ambition to explain outcomes can benefit from reframing the meaning of the ‘case’ in comparative analysis as not simply an example (perhaps hybridized) of singular overarching processes (Jacobs 2012), but as specific outcomes (singularities) which open opportunities to interrogate and conceptualize the wide range of dynamics constituting the urban. In this framing, both Benjamin and Deleuze can inspire us to propose the precarious nature of conceptualizations, their revisability, and the instability of their empirical referents. The urban manifold, as Simone (2011) puts it, in its many expressions ‘makes itself known to us’. This prompts processes of conceptualization, presents new entities to our imaginations, draws us in to revising theories, remaking interpretations, generating new
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concepts, or performing new iterations of an emergent urban. In this imagination, conceptualization is a dynamic and generative process, one subject to rules of experimentation and revisability (Deleuze and Guattari 1994).

That theory should be practised and conceptualized, as radically revisable is essential for a more global urban studies. In this regard, Lefebvre’s postulation of the urban as a ‘virtual object’ — but with a rather different meaning to ‘virtual’ than is used by Deleuze — can reinforce this. Lefebvre observes that ‘the theoretical approach requires a critique of this “object” [the city] and a more complex notion of the virtual or possible object’ (Lefebvre 2003: 16), as both theoretical and historical possibility. In one of his comments on this he suggests that the urban is virtual in the sense that it can be analytically deduced, like the rules of language, from the range of processes at work in cities (2003: 50—4). Or, as Kipfer et al. (2008: 292) note, Lefebvre’s analytics of space establishes the idea of a ‘concrete utopia of an urban society as a differential space-time’. Thus the virtual notion of the urban, its openness to history, supports the one sense in which the urban ‘revolution’ might be figured through the transformative potential embedded in urban space as ‘differential’, and open to being remade and reimagined. He also considers the urban revolution in another sense of the historical revolution, underpinning the idea of the ‘complete urbanization of society’, in which the field of the social comes to be determined by the urban. The urban is made ‘world-wide’ not only in its extension across the planet but in its complete determination of the social formation. For him, though, it is important that the urban is also a political and practical achievement — the urban is to be made through political contestation. Lefebvre’s sense of the urban as a ‘possible-impossible’ ties the emergence of urban society to the unpredictable dynamism of urban space; as Schmid (2011: 59) insists, Lefebvre’s urban is both a conceptually and a politically open space in which ‘urban society is not an already achieved reality, but a potential, an open horizon’. Its virtuality lies in its inability to be completely theoretically specified, both because it is never possible to completely specify any conceptual object, and also because the urban is radically open to historical transformation. In this sense, then, the urban, and our conceptualizations of it are always emerging.

Conceptualizations of the urban, if they are to respond to the interconnectedness and emergent unpredictability of the diverse forms of cityness in a world of cities, need to be formulated as radically revisable: as Simone puts it, ‘the urban is always “slipping away” from us, always also somewhere else than where we expect it to be’ (2011: 356). A reformatted comparative imagination draws us to proliferate the grounds for comparability across cities or different urban outcomes through: re-specifying the spatiality of the case in order to more adequately theorise cities in the midst of elsewhere; reconsidering the status of the case to be able to explain outcomes in such a way as to ensure that cases are not seen as simply exemplars of pre-given overarching processes; and insisting that the concepts generated through comparative analysis can be understood as revisable. This reformatted comparativism opens up the possibilities for new geographies of theorizing to support a more global urban studies.

New geographies of theorizing

It is the argument of this chapter that rather than grounding global urbanism on new geographies of theory (Roy 2009), which suggests a static distribution of ideas across different places which are often lacking in analytical coherence (as with regions or the ‘global south’), and which potentially render different urban experiences once more incommensurable, we need to look for new geographies of theorizing which destabilize the terms of the urban and set in motion conversations towards its on-going reinvention. This chimes with current theoretical debates within urban studies. Theorists might be drawn to the geographical referent of the ‘south’ to initiate a critique of metropolitan theory, but I propose here that we attend much more closely to the caveats which theorists present when they discuss
concepts such as the ‘global south’ (see, for example, Comaroff and Comaroff 2012). This encourages focus on the less prominent geographies of circulation and punctuation (Roy 2011) which surface in the impossibility of operationalizing or demarcating the tenuous regionalizations of knowledge exemplified by the idea of the global south, or present in regionalized (African, Asian, European, post-Socialist) urbanisms. A reformulated comparative imagination for post-structuralist times directs our attention to the multiple spatialities and temporalities of the urban, and to the determination of specific urban outcomes by wider circulations and interconnections.

Building more globally relevant understandings of the urban will require conversations about urbanity across the diversity of twenty-first-century cities and their multiple histories. In the spirit of the ‘urban now’, such conversations — multiple, innumerable and not easy to anthologize or canonize — will have many starting points and circumscriptions. There could be specific places or practices which inspire them, and cities or events which some conversations won’t be able to encompass. Like the cities which urbanists find themselves challenged by, these geographies of theorizing the urban will be hard to trace, sometimes impossible to place, tracking across and beyond the contexts and events on which they hope to have purchase, beholden to a changing constellation of concepts and experiences, crafted from a literal manifold of the urban. This imagination — which fits well with a reformulated comparativism — opens up the potential for a more radically decentred and reflexive subject of theorizing. Losing the territorialized referents of theory inherited, for example, from developmental discourses such as the ‘global south’ does not need to signify an unmooring of the theorist of the urban, or suppose a power-laden and resource-rich planetary view from nowhere. I would hope it might rather provide the opportunity for practices to emerge which rely on much more precisely specified grounds for theorizing without entrenching difference or legitimating analytical isolation. In seeking to locate the place of critique, theorists could draw on the rich spatiality of the urban to define more productive cartographies from which to launch analyses of the urban, inspired by the assumption of the vital revisability of theorizing cities ‘now’ to imagine that their voices can transform theory.

References


New geographies of theorizing the urban


**Notes**

1 I would like to thank the editors of this volume, Sue Parnell and Sophie Oldfield, for their patience and very generous comments on this text. Also, many thanks to the different audiences in various places where I have been able to present these ideas, for their questions and engagements on these debates, and also to thank Maliq Simone for his encouragement, and Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid for making this paper much harder to write!

2 The second part of this paragraph draws on Robinson (2013b).

3 I am using the term, ‘urban outcomes’ here to indicate some specific urban space or process. If the term city is under erasure, for the moment, I am hoping this term would refer to specific examples of the wider range of spaces and processes we are interested in.

4 This paragraph draws on Robinson (2013b).

5 Thanks to Maliq Simone for comments on this.

6 Goonewardena *et al.* (2008) explain very well the different meanings of ‘world’ intended here; see also Madden for an insightful review.

7 Parts of this paragraph draw on Robinson (2013a). For Deleuze scholars, however, this more determined sense of the ‘possible’ is rather different from the ‘utterly unpredictable force’ which is characteristic of the virtual for Deleuze (Hallward 2006: 38).
PART II

The urban: past, present, future
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Cities rarely obliterate their past or have absolute control over their future development trajectories. Regardless of location, the task of managing the contemporary city is inevitably uncomfortably juxtaposed between the collective aspiration of what might be achieved under optimal conditions and accommodating the legacies (good and bad) of the urban management practices of previous generations. The fixity of the built form, the typically inert institutional structures of urban governance and the complexity of the levers and instruments through which urban space is fashioned, means that cities are not receptive to rapid or path-breaking change. Instead, the city of yesterday, today and tomorrow fuse together; they cannot be readily uncoupled. For students of the city and urban life, coming to terms with the forces shaping the city must be a central task. While the origins of southern cities are typically only twentieth, even twenty-first, century, the interplay of past, present and future processes have to be better understood.

What is widely accepted is that, with few exceptions, colonialism left an indelible mark on cities across the territories once claimed as part of Europe's empires, most obviously, as Home, Huchzermeier and Harris show, in the management of land, housing and services. So ubiquitous was the colonial urban footprint that the 'third world' city was long equated with the experience of European colonialism (Drakakis-Smith 2000; O'Connor 1983; McGee 1971), a nomenclature that has less contemporary resonance. Yet, the current rate of urban growth in the global south (resulting in both expansion and the creation of new cities) means that an increasingly small proportion of contemporary and future urban settlements have any direct link with colonial times. Nonetheless, the spectre of colonial urbanism lives on. Why? For Mamdani (1996), the failure to incorporate the urban — the sub-national scale — into the post-independence political dispensation, where traditionalism has continued to flourish, is key to coming to terms with post-colonial subjectivity in general. He stops short, however, of unpacking the specific role of the colonial settlement for the future of urbanism.

In part, because of the absence of detailed city histories, the precise mechanisms through which colonial power was inscribed on the emergent city of the global south remain unclear. At the same time, the fact that the umbilical cord of colonial influence is maintained in post-colonial cities is consistently asserted. Several chapters in this section address these tensions. Home is careful in his masterful account of the relationship between planning and colonial practice to eschew overgeneralization as he highlights regional and temporal differences in the acts of inclusion and domination that were ushered in by the (unequal) ordering of the city in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. An overall picture of urbanism in colonized territories — rather than a generic model of the colonial city —
emerges, demonstrating that colonial rule was (unevenly) embedded in the everyday political and administrative practices of running the city.

Colonial power was etched on the urban fabric and on its residents, largely through the then emergent professional practice of town planning, the associated provision of housing and urban services and the relationship between past and present urban management. Interrogating the power that underpins the mechanisms and instruments through which the city is constructed, materially and politically, Huchzermeyer, Watson and Harris address these themes. Huchzermeyer sketches the function of the emergence and persistence of a discourse of ‘slums’, Watson explores the perpetuation of inappropriate and misapplied norms, standards and planning practices, while Harris outlines the manipulation of the urban land market and the creation of overlapping and competing systems of land regulation. Together, the chapters reveal the incomplete colonial transition to the ideals and institutions required to govern the southern city. Repeatedly we see, either because of resistance, oversight or neglect, the inability of the modern urban planning regime to implant and displace other modes of running cities, either pre-colonial or new regimes of power, such as gangs. These dispersed, contested, confused, incomplete or fragmented governmentalities would appear to be the norm of the current southern urban milieu. Certainly these chapters highlight how, across the global south, the post-independence failure to fundamentally reconfigure the dysfunctional legacies of colonial housing, planning and land use management to address the needs of all citizens, underpins the complex structural inequities that are the hallmark of contemporary urban problems. Together, these chapters raise questions about the ways in which southern cities are locked in by past injustices and incompetencies.

Until recently, African, Asian and Latin American urban historiography was largely backward oriented, concerned to expose the genesis of poverty, inequality and segregation. While the challenges of the (post)colonial city remain momentous, there is (as subsequent sections of The Handbook explore) now a counter-narrative emerging from the cities of the global south that is more aspirant, growth-oriented and ambitious. The emphasis in urban research on what are now generically labelled ‘cities of the south’ has shifted dramatically over the last decade, partly prompted by the rise of the economic power of once marginalized nations. Nothing exemplifies the shift in global power and the role of cities in this transformation more that the story of the BRICS (Brazil, India, China and South Africa), the important subject of Turok’s chapter in this section. What sets this chapter apart from the voluminous material produced recently on the BRICS is the attention Turok gives to the urban question. The paper acts as a counterpoint to the other narratives of colonialism, but like the other chapters in this section, explores the interplay of global and local forces and their impact on cities.

Overall, this section shows that debates about the past, present and future of cities located across the global south are far from static. The physical immovability of the built environment, the rigidity of inherited administrative norms and institutions leave shadows of past dispensations. However, the rupture of global change unleashed by demographic, economic or climatic forces transforms the form of urban life and the way that urbanity is understood.

References

SHAPING CITIES OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Legal histories of planning and colonialism

Robert Home

Introduction

Anthony King wrote over 20 years ago that ‘The distinctive social characteristic of the colonial city … is the fact of race’ (King 1990: 34). The spatial separation of ‘races’, reinforcing cultural differences and unequal power relations, was strongly developed in the cities created by European colonial expansion, as conscious acts of law and policy. The legacy of colonialism is now etched on the landscape and in the societies of many, if not most, of the ‘cities of the global south’, and it still distinguishes them from those of the ‘global north’, even though they have grown in extent and population far beyond their colonial origins, and the former ‘colonial masters’ have largely departed. Well-researched studies of individual cities exist (e.g. Bigon 2009 on Lagos and Dakar; Legg 2007 on Delhi; Mutale 2004 on Kitwe; Oldenburg 1984 on Lucknow), but to construct a universal account of the city of the south as a colonial manifestation is a challenging task, given its geographical, temporal, cultural, trans-national and trans-disciplinary dimensions.

Various theoretical perspectives have informed the approach in this chapter. Foucault’s genealogical method explores the evolution of practices, discourses and institutions, complex processes that need to be understood in their specificity and locality, their ‘mundane and inglorious origins’ (Kendall and Wickham 1999). The framing device of the ‘gaze of power’ has been argued for colonial cities (Mitchell 1989; Myers 2003), and subaltern studies have introduced a perspective of urban space as negotiated from below (Yeoh 2003). The importance of law has been argued by McAuslan (2003) — ‘bringing the law back in’ — and by Golder and Fitzpatrick (2009), whose re-interpretation of Foucault locates law as one of the ‘modalities of power’.

This chapter borrows from all of these theoretical perspectives, and explores through a legal-historical approach the ideas, practices and processes of colonial urban management, and their impact upon the urban landscape. A ‘genealogy’ of the rules of colonial urban management includes cantonments in India, township rules in Africa, and local government, town planning and public health law transplanted from the United Kingdom (UK). It also recognizes the role of ‘knowledge networks’ of specialist professionals, including administrators, lawyers, doctors/sanitarians, land surveyors and town planners (Ballantyne 2002; Home 2013; Lambert and Lester 2006). The chapter’s geographical scope is limited to the British tropical colonies of Asia, Africa and the Caribbean, and the temporal scope to the mid-nineteenth to mid-twentieth centuries, drawing upon the author’s research on India, Kenya, Nigeria, Trinidad, Zambia and South Africa. Other regions of the world subject to
colonial dominance (such as Latin America, eastern Asia and the Middle East) have attracted studies in the areas of architecture and urban/planning history, although the legal/regulatory dimension remains relatively unexplored (Victoir and Zatsepine 2013; Al Sayyad 1992; Elsheshtawy 2008).

In the mid-nineteenth century Britain’s colonial possessions came under the influence of Benthamite Utilitarian ideas about managing complex societies for ‘the greatest happiness of the greatest number’ (Stokes 1959), which drove a rethinking of approaches to colonial management after the Crimean War (1854–55) and Indian Mutiny (1857–58), particularly concerned with the health and security challenges of maintaining the British presence in tropical climates (Curtin 1989). At that time these colonies were mostly islands and ports, including Lagos, the Indian presidencies of Bombay, Calcutta and Madras, Colombo, Singapore and Hong Kong, together with the small Caribbean dependencies. As European colonialism penetrated the interiors of India and Africa, new challenges and opportunities led to new approaches to colonial urban management. Indirect rule (Europeans overseeing government by traditional rulers) was elevated to a general principle of colonial rule, expressed as trusteeship and the ‘dual mandate’ as advocated by Lord Lugard, which sought to preserve traditional society while introducing western investment and development. It justified racial segregation as a sanitary measure, while British local government law and town planning practices were transplanted to the colonies. By the mid-twentieth century, however, the British empire was being hurriedly dismantled because it was no longer affordable or controllable, but it left a lasting legacy for many cities of the global south.

**Colonial towns: ‘primarily for non-natives’**

Colonial towns were often perceived as separate creations for the use of the colonizers, with port cities in the eighteenth century loosely divided between ‘white town’ and ‘black town’. When in 1931 the British Colonial Secretary (Lord Passfield, better known as the Socialist Sidney Webb) expressed his concern about racial discrimination against Africans in the towns of the new settler colony of Kenya, the local British officials there justified themselves in these words:

> In view of the fact that Government has set aside large areas of land for the use and benefit of the native tribes of the Colony, it is only proper that the townships, which were primarily established for occupation by non-natives, should be reserved for those who should properly reside there, and that the residence therein of natives should be confined as far as possible to those whose employment on legitimate business requires them so to reside. … Unrestricted movement of natives into and within townships leads to the collection in these areas of the worst class of idle disorderly and criminal natives. Such a class makes its living either by begging or by stealing. In the former case they impose themselves upon the hospitality of those members of their tribe who are in employment, relying upon native custom to preclude refusal, and become an intolerable burden upon a decent and industrious community

(Memorandum on Legislation (1931), quoted in Home 2012: 12)

Behind this stilted bureaucratic language lies perhaps the most striking difference between colonial cities of the south and cities of the north: the attempt of colonialists to keep these towns for themselves by excluding the indigenous peoples as much as possible.

Such physical exclusion was facilitated by movement controls imposed without consultation upon the non-white colonial peoples (whether ‘natives’, freed slaves, or indentured and migrant workers). Laws required the ‘natives’ to carry personal registration papers, a system whose genealogy can be traced from the plantations and fugitive slave laws of the Caribbean through the military cantonments of India to the pass laws of South Africa and the *kipande* laws of colonial Kenya (Clayton and Savage 1974; Hindon 1987). Anti-vagrancy ordinances following British legislation allowed colonial
authorities to imprison those lacking the right papers or a means of support (Beier and Ocobock 2008). Medieval and early modern English master-and-servant laws were transplanted and adapted to the settler colonies in Africa and the Caribbean, heavily weighted towards the rights of the master and against the servant (Anderson 2000; Hay and Craven 2004); they did, however, include an employer responsibility (often evaded) to house his workers, of which more later.

From cantonment laws to township rules

The idea of a cantonment (a separate, self-sufficient camp for the military) was a particular product of the British in India, drawing upon older Indian traditions. Many were founded in the mid-nineteenth century, as the British extended their control over the sub-continent, and India and Pakistan today still contain over a hundred cantonments, usually located a few miles from the ‘native’ city. They comprised largely self-contained communities, with separate infantry, cavalry and artillery quarters (subdivided between European and Indian), parade grounds, cemeteries, religious buildings, and bazaars; there were separate barracks for married and unmarried soldiers, and spacious residential plots for the European officers.

The high death rates among British troops serving in the tropics provoked a radical review of sanitary provisions through various commissions of inquiry, following the Chadwick approach to public health and sanitation, which advocated better drainage and water supply, and space and ventilation standards for accommodation (Curtin 1989). After the Indian Mutiny (or Great Revolt), instead of the Indians living outside the port cities of European creation (the division into ‘black town’ and ‘white town’), it was the turn of the Europeans to live outside Indian cities, in the so-called ‘civil lines’ within the military cantonments (Gupta 1981; Oldenburg 1984). Security, health and the preservation of white racial prestige were claimed to justify this segregation of the white colonial community (Home 2013).

A separate cantonment code was devised to regulate these specialized urban areas, and when the British made their new imperial capital at New Delhi, it was the cantonment code that they applied because it offered additional powers of control that were not available in the various municipal acts. The later Cantonments Act of 1924 introduced a measure of representative elected local government to the cantonment boards in India. Its 17 chapters codified in detail such matters as the definition and delimitation of cantonments, constitution of cantonment boards, liquor licensing, property tax, contract administration, nuisance control, sanitation and public health, street and building control, market and trading standards, water supply and drainage, and ‘suppression of sexual immorality’ (Butt 1990).

When many thousands of Indian indentured labourers were exported to east and South Africa, the laws of British India were transplanted to regulate them. When the colonizing British designated new ‘government stations’ along the new railway lines, the cantonment code provided much of the regulatory framework for future urban development, and some of these colonial creations were to become cities and indeed national capitals (such as Kaduna in Nigeria, Lusaka in Zambia, and Nairobi in Kenya) (Home 2012).

Indirect rule and the dual mandate

Another consequence of the violent events of the Indian Mutiny was the idea of indirect rule, for the British learned from the Mutiny that ‘traditional’ societies would only tolerate less direct control. The discredit East India Company was replaced by direct rule under the imperial crown, while the two-fifths of Indian territory still in princely states were subject to a system of ‘indirect’ rule, with the princes being kept in position, but subordinated to British ‘resident commissioners’. From India the indirect rule approach was transferred to the Malay States and Africa (Jeffrey 1978).
Colonies were now becoming seen as a sacred trust placed upon the imperial powers, rather than possessions to be exploited and plundered as they had been by the chartered companies. The intellectual origins of trusteeship lie in the writings of Edmund Burke in the eighteenth, and Henry Maine in the nineteenth century (Stokes 1959; Mantena 2010). By the time of the ‘Scramble for Africa’ in the 1880s, European colonial expansion claimed for itself a ‘civilizing mission’ under international law. As expressed by Lugard, writing of Nigeria (where he was Governor-General):

The British role here is to bring to the country the gains of civilisation by applied science (whether in the development of material resources, or the eradication of disease, etc.), with as little interference as possible with Native customs and modes of thought.

(Lugard 1919: 9)

He later wrote:

Europe is in Africa for the mutual benefit of her own industrial classes, and of the native races in their progress to a higher plane…it is the aim and desire of civilised administration to fulfil this dual mandate… in Africa to-day we are repaying the debt, and bringing to the dark places of the earth, the abode of barbarism and cruelty, the torch of culture of progress, while ministering to the material needs of our own civilization.

(Lugard 1922: 570; 6170

Between the two world wars the League of Nations placed a trusteeship duty upon colonial administrations towards the indigenous peoples they governed, because of those peoples’ perceived peculiar vulnerability, and Lugard’s approach to indirect rule, adapted to the ‘dual mandate’, became for a time the dominant ideology of British colonial management, and led to systematic urban racial segregation and separate development, most notoriously applied and articulated in South Africa under apartheid (Dubow 1989; Maharaj 1997; Maylam 1995).

These policies of indirect rule and separate development had profound consequences for urban development, especially in Africa. Africans were to be kept in reserves under their tribal customary laws except when their labour was required, while towns were to be kept separate and directly administered by the colonial power under rules derived from the cantonment code. The laws governing land tenure were especially significant, as the ‘colonial masters’ reserved to themselves the right to ‘set aside’ land required for ‘public purposes’ such as ‘government camps or stations’ and ‘establishment of townships’ (Kenya Townships Act 1902, quoted in Home 2012: 7).

**Land tenure and urban development**

In Africa the dual mandate meant dual land tenure systems. These distinguished between the plantation estates and townships of the European colonizers, protected by laws of private property, and the tribal areas, where individual landholding was denied. Africans continued to live under their customary land tenure, loosely overseen by British administrators, and sometimes recorded by practitioners of the new discipline of social anthropology (Hammond-Tooke 1997).

The colonization process started when the colonial state claimed rights over all land on behalf of the crown, variously termed as crown, public or state land. It argued that there was ample surplus land in the new territories that was unoccupied or not clearly in beneficial use; this was the concept of *terra nullius*, which has come in recent years to be discredited since the Mabo case concerning aboriginal land rights in Australia (Motha and Perrin 2002). It then felt free to transfer ‘crown’ land through grant, sale or lease to new settlers or public bodies (such as the railways). Lugard in Nigeria...
− and other colonial officials elsewhere − adopted a lofty attitude to this large-scale expropriation of land:

It is still a matter of indifference to the people whether Government takes up a few square miles, here for a township, or there for a railway, or elsewhere as leases to commercial, mining, agricultural or ranching companies. Even if occupiers are expropriated in the neighbourhood of a large town, there is as a rule abundant land elsewhere in the great unoccupied spaces of this vast country.

(Lugard 1919: 29)

The concept of exclusive private property rights (exclusive, that is, to the colonizers, whether settlers or corporations) had already provided a philosophical basis for chartered companies to claim on behalf of the crown vast tracts of land ceded through dubious agreements with African chiefs ignorant of the implications of what they were signing. Thus, for instance, did the British South Africa Company in the 1890s claim the whole of the territory of what became called Rhodesia (North and South) in absolute ownership under the crown, and then subdivide and sell much of it off to white settlers (Allen 2000). The land surveying profession, using their ‘systematic survey’ methods, then became the makers and custodians of a government register of land rights, with ‘fixed’ boundaries on a surveyed map base. This so-called Torrens system of survey and registration, originating in South Australia, was disseminated across the British Empire, especially when the end of the First World War released many trained survey officers from the armed forces into colonial service (Byrnes 2001; Home 2006).

Under the dual mandate approach indigenous or customary land rights were preserved in special trust land areas − the so-called native reserves or trust lands. The 1913 Natives Land Act in South Africa (the so-called ‘first pillar of apartheid’) excluded Africans from acquiring land, making it a prerequisite for legal title providing proof of ‘competence to acquire’ − a racial test that disqualified them. The Act also resulted in a systematic reserves policy which spread across Eastern and Central Africa, and more widely across the British Empire, supported by judgments of the British crown’s Privy Council sitting in faraway London, which held that African customary land tenure did not confer individual ownership upon the occupiers of the land.

Government stations or townships stood on government land which had been designated by decree and taken without compensation. A typical township boundary might be set as a 2.5-mile radius around the tax collector’s office, as delineated on a Land Surveys plan. Once surveyed and gazetted, township land not required for government use could then be subdivided into plots and leased out (usually by auction) for residential or business use by individuals and companies. Africans, however, were excluded from legally owning land in the townships, and if occupying land without express consent could be evicted by force as squatters − a practice which continued into the post-colonial era (Home and Lim 2004).

Segregation, the sanitation syndrome and town planning

The physical form of cantonments and townships provided spacious racially exclusive European residential areas, segregated from the Indian or African population by building-free zones. Lugard’s indirect rule ideas were elaborated even further, by distinguishing not only between the ‘native’ population and the ‘Europeans’, but also other intermediate groups, for whom a ‘Non-European’ or ‘Native’ Reservation was required. In his words:

Only Aliens not ordinarily subject to the jurisdiction of a Native court, who reside for purposes of trade and access to a railway siding, or Natives who are employees of Europeans,
or artisans, and those who minister to the requirements of the community, should as a general rule be allowed to live in the actual precincts of a Township. Carriers and temporary labourers will not usually do.

(Lugard 1919: 417)

Physical separation of the ‘races’ became ‘a general rubric of sanitary administration set by the Imperial government for all tropical colonies in this period’ (Dumett 1968: 171). The term ‘segregation’ in the sense of a physical separation of races – rather than in its scientific meaning – arose about the same time as ‘town planning’ (Dubow 1989 traces it to the year 1908). Doctors advocated racial residential segregation for the prevention of plague, malaria and other diseases, in what has been called the ‘sanitation syndrome’ (Swanson 1977). The leading advocate, Dr. William Simpson, blamed dirty ‘native’, and especially Asiatic, health practices for causing disease, and advocated building-free zones (supposedly wider than mosquitoes could fly) around European-only residential areas. Having made his name in the Calcutta plague outbreak of 1897, he became Professor at the new London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine, wrote textbooks and undertook numerous consultancies advising British colonies on planning for racial segregation (Baker and Bayliss 1987; Simpson 1908).

Detailed rules in the different colonies combined sanitary requirements with land use zoning, and were enforced by small armies of sanitary inspectors. In the East Africa Protectorate, for instance, the Townships (Public Health, Segregation of Races) Rules empowered the Governor to reserve areas for specified land uses, as follows:

(a) European residential
(b) Asiatic residential
(c) locations for ‘Asiatics of the working classes’
(d) ‘native’ locations
(e) commercial areas for Europeans and/or Asiatics (but not natives)
(f) open spaces (Home 2012)

Township rules restricted the use of streets and footpaths by Africans, who were subject to a night-time curfew, and they committed an offence if they stayed outside their reserved areas overnight or longer than a specified period without permission.

Formalized racial segregation reached its peak between 1900 and 1930, but proved incompatible with the newly fashionable land-use zoning which began to make its appearance in the 1920s. In 1929 the Directors of Public Works and Medical Services in Nigeria published a guide to laying out towns and European residential areas (Evans and Pirie 1929), and similar approaches were followed by other European colonial powers; in French North Africa Marshal Lyautey’s concept of the dual city preserved the traditional alongside but separate from the modern town (Wright 1991; Njoh 2007). Enforcement of strict racial segregation was abandoned after about 1930 because colonial administrators recognized its cost and negative economic effects, and doctors (once Simpson had passed from the scene) were no longer convinced of the medical justification. It did, however, get a new lease of life in South Africa, where the Afrikaner Nationalist Government after 1948 through the Group Areas Act created a distinctive urban morphology for what became called the apartheid city (Robinson 1996).

The advocates of the emerging town planning movement, such as Geddes and Reade, believed that it offered a modern approach to colonial management. Various planning acts, derived mainly from English legislation, were passed in some colonies as approaches to managing urban growth and inter-communal tensions through racial segregation (for instance in Kenya, Malaya and Palestine). When the 1932 English Town and Country Planning Act offered the prospect of comprehensive physical planning, it was transplanted and adapted for many colonies, starting with Trinidad in 1938.
During the Second World War town planning was promoted as holding out a promise of better living conditions (under the auspices of ‘colonial development and welfare’), but the resources, and indeed the political will, were always inadequate, and achievements on the ground few (Bissell 2011). Town planning legislation proved to be an inadequate technical response to massive pressure for social and political change, and was recognized by its law-makers even at the time as a policy of expediency (Home 2013).

Forms of urban government

Urban local government was seen by the colonial authorities as day-to-day administration of services, with little thoughts of democratic representation. Port trusts, and later improvement boards, offered alternatives to elected local government, and introduced British approaches to slum clearance and redevelopment into colonial cities (Legg 2007). The government stations (soon renamed townships) created by penetration of the interior were initially administered by part-time colonial officials similar to the former cantonment magistrates. They sometimes operated through a township committee, employing tax collectors, sanitary inspectors and police, and levied various fees (although mainly depending upon central government grants).

Lugardian indirect rule required a dual structure of local government, if native societies were to be ‘protected’ from the disruptive influences of modern urbanization − native authorities for the ‘native’ population, and townships for the colonizers. Lugard’s Nigerian Townships Ordinance of 1917 replaced the terms ‘Government Station’ and ‘Cantonment’ with Township, defined as:

an enclave outside the jurisdiction of the native authority and native courts, which are thus relieved of the difficult task (which is foreign to their functions) of controlling alien natives and employees of the government and Europeans.

(Lugard 1919: 419)

This he presented as a progressive approach to municipal government: ‘the creation, constitution and administration of all towns and municipalities in Nigeria, except for those native towns where the population is sufficiently homogeneous for it to be administered by a Native Authority’. Townships gazetted under the Nigerian ordinance were graded into three classes ‘according to the degree of municipal responsibility’. First-class Townships had an appointed town council, and the other two classes were administrated by a British colonial official, assisted in the case of second-class townships by an advisory board. In practice Lugard’s model was only partially followed, and many third-class townships were never actually brought into operation. In Kenya the Feetham report (1926) recommended a similar local government structure for the white settler areas, and the subsequent Municipalities Ordinance 1928 provided for the progressive conversion of townships into municipalities (Home 2012); they remained, however, dependent upon central grants, as the settlers opposed property rates or betterment levy.

These local government arrangements did little for the needs of African town-dwellers, although they were from the start in the majority, and in the settler colonies these people were subjected to the so-called ‘Durban system’, which became a general model for labour control in British central and southern Africa (Swanson 1976). It originated with Natal’s togt or day-labour system, introduced in 1874, under which day-labourers paid a registration fee which covered their own policing and accommodation (Atkins 1993). The profits from a municipal monopoly over beer-halls were paid into a ‘Native Revenue’ account, which was kept separate from other municipal finances and was supposed to pay for community services (La Hausse 1988). Africans soon recognized the injustice of the Durban system, one Zambian complaining: ‘How much beer must I drink before my children can drink water? Do other countries make poor people drink beer to collect money for water?’ (Hall 1964: 135).
With towns regarded as essentially for Europeans, and African presence supposedly restricted to those in paid employment, the so-called 'locations' came into existence to accommodate Africans who were not housed by their employers. With Africans prohibited from owning landed property, the Natives (Urban Areas) Act 1923 in South Africa, and similar legislation elsewhere, empowered local authorities to build and run African housing in locations within or outside the urban area, which were defined areas where Africans were expected to live. Township rules required 'all natives residing in the municipality, except as are employed in domestic service or exempted by the Governor, to reside within such locations' (Kenya Township Rules, quoted in Home 2012: 14).

In central Africa a curious variation of the township was the phenomenon of the so-called 'twin townships', the result of protracted and ill-tempered negotiation between mining corporations and the colonial administration. The corporations wanted to follow the American model of company town, and keep their workers under separate regulatory regimes of Foucaultian rigour, based upon the model of the closed compounds devised at the Kimberley diamond mines in the 1880s (Demissie 1998; Turrell 1987). When large capital investment was needed in the Rhodesian (later Zambian) Copperbelt, the colonial officials, committed to a policy of trusteeship for the African peoples under their 'protection', regarded the transfer of governmental functions to a private company as 'a grave departure in tropical Africa: it is not our business to increase the profits of a largely American absentee landlord by facilitating their control over our own people' (1932 quoted in Mutale 2004: 90). The negotiated result was twin townships, mining and public townships side-by-side. Both had township boards with wide-ranging by-law powers, but the mining corporations controlled their towns through separate regulations and policing, and paid no property rates; having spent out on social infrastructure, they were adamant not to pay rates to a local authority as well (Mutale 2004).

Peri-urban areas for the excluded

Master-and-servant laws might require employers to house their workers, but the miserable, crowded and unhealthy conditions were criticized by various commissions of inquiry ranging from Natal in the 1870s to Zambia and Trinidad in the 1930s, which all recommended greater inspection powers and minimum space standards (typically 100 sq. ft for a habitable room). Domestic servants were usually housed on the same plot as their (usually European) employers, while the railway (one of the largest employers and a public utility) typically built rows of single rooms in timber frame structures with corrugated iron roofs and walls, without water, electricity, toilets or kitchens.

Until the 1940s the preferred building form was the barrack, of military origins and a variant of the old slave 'barracoons', which spread from the ports into the interior. Mine workers were usually housed in barracks on a closed compound, supervised by a white compound manager (Home 1993). Repeated criticism of the barrack form eventually led to a shift in favour of family housing under the label 'stabilization' of labour. This new concept of family housing for black workers emerged from a discourse on the merits of encouraging a permanent or more stable population based in family households. The mining companies preferred that migrant workers on fixed-term contracts stayed in bachelor housing, regarding their home village as their base; this encouraged a turnover of cheap labour, and avoided detribalization, unionization and family life. Grudging official recognition that families were becoming a permanent and even necessary feature of colonial urban society resulted in a conscious redesign of housing, informed and prompted by contemporary developments in British town planning practice and garden city design. The Colonial Office in the late 1930s was converted to a progressive model of colonial development and welfare, which it hoped would secure labour loyalty in a testing time of approaching world war. Officialdom dropped the term ‘barrack’ (as it had earlier dropped the derogatory term ‘coolie’) and replaced it with the more neutral ‘hostel’.
Both employers and colonial officials ultimately failed in their paternalist housing intentions. The convenient ideology of the dual mandate system allowed the townships to evade responsibility for their ‘natives’, since just beyond the township boundaries lay the reserves or trust lands where most of the African urban population could live (and indeed usually preferred to). Employers were legally required to ensure that their workers were ‘properly housed’, but could be exempt where ‘a servant is able to return to his home at the conclusion of his daily work or to obtain suitable or proper housing at or conveniently near to his place of employment’ (quoted in Home 2012). From this evasion of responsibility developed the so-called ‘septic fringe’ of unplanned peri-urban settlements, which grew in size and density under pressures of natural population growth and rural-urban migration. Sometimes the state intervened to forcibly evict residents in the worst areas, especially in South Africa; there land could be re-designated under the Group Areas Act, and the occupiers could be forcibly cleared from such ‘black spots’ and removed to their black ‘homelands’ or to the township locations. The proliferating peri-urban informal settlements, once called slums but now reluctantly accepted as permanent, form a visible legacy of colonialism in cities of the global south, linked as they usually are to insecure tenure resulting from colonial laws.

Conclusions
Post-colonial states have been quick to consign oppressive and racist township rules to ‘the dustbin of history’ (to deploy Trotsky’s phrase), but the colonial legacy continues to affect contemporary city form and urban practice in the global south. Attempts to unscramble complex and discriminatory laws often only replace them with yet more complex ones, while resource and capacity constraints hold back much-needed urban improvements. Derrida, when evoking the spectre of Marx still haunting Europe even after the fall of communism, coined the word ‘hauntology’ to suggest a psychology of fear that links the past into the present (Derrida 2006). So does the spectre of colonialism and its divisive effects still haunt urban landscapes in the global south.

Colonial ideologies of indirect rule and the dual mandate, based upon the unachievable aim of protecting ‘native’ society against corrupting outside influences, contained such contradictions as to become eventually unworkable. Techniques of colonial management, championed by their respective professional cadres of experts − land surveyors, tropical sanitarians, town planners − proved inadequate for maintaining colonial rule in the absence of popular consent, but their legacies survive in the physical form of cities, even right down to the individual land parcel. The former colonial town has as its preferred form spacious detached housing on securely fenced compounds for the higher income groups, successors to the former ‘colonial masters’. Imported rules of urban management set a legal cordon around the colonial town, while outside lay a neglected sprawl of self-built peri-urban areas, and a divided form has marked the post-colonial cities of the global south ever since.

This chapter has explored the growing academic literature in cross-disciplinary research, especially of legal geography and history, which is opening up a new field for urban studies research, and a new lens through which the colonial legacy for cities of the global south can be examined in its continuing social and physical manifestations. The rigidities of mundane regulations have shaped the divisions and boundaries of urban landscapes, and the lives of their inhabitants, both those that colonial enframing includes and those it excluded. The colonial masters and their worst laws may have gone, but they are buried in the ‘DNA’, as it were, of the cities of the global south − a kind of hauntology of colonialism.

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Legal histories of colonial planning


TROUBLING CONTINUITIES

Use and utility of the term ‘slum’

Marie Huchzermeyer

Introduction

Inadequate, unhealthy and deteriorating housing conditions have long been a concern in urban political, economic and social debates and in policies. Nowhere have these concerns been so tightly packaged in an opposition to city ideals as in the Anglophone world. The negative label ‘slum’ has come to stand for the antithesis of the urban norms and aspirations of philanthropists, politicians, planners and policy makers alike. The term ‘slum’, which applies to a condition rather than a single housing type, does not have an equivalent in other languages. It applies to deteriorating private rental housing, run down public housing or makeshift dwellings in unplanned settlements, all in antithesis to the modern city. In this sense, the term has not only found continued use, but has become dominant in the global development discourse. It is therefore relevant for this chapter to interrogate the roots and functions of this term in urban policy and planning, its use in the British colonial empire and subsequently in independent Anglophone third world states, the highly politicized debates surrounding this term, and its current role in the global urban development discourse.

Setting the Anglophone scene: the emergence of enduring ‘slum’ connotations

The term ‘slum’ has a long history and has occupied a prominent position within Anglophone housing discourses for close on two centuries. Accounts or speculations on the origin of the term diverge but also converge. In the recent academic discourse on ‘slums’, British Geographer Alan Gilbert (2007) reviews Prunty’s (1998) study on Dublin’s nineteenth-century ‘slums’ for the origin of the term. This points to its use originally to refer to criminal activity, but also suggests a connection to the German word schlamm meaning mud or mire. Cowie’s (1996: 263) Dictionary of British Social History has the term deriving in the 1820s from ‘the old word “slump” meaning “marshy place”’, further making the connection that industries at the time were in low-lying areas, near canals, adding that ‘the working class houses built there endured terrible problems of sanitation’.

While ‘slum’ never applied to a particular dwelling size (Gilbert 2007) it originally referred to low-quality working-class housing which was privately produced and administered under rental tenure. Accordingly, the Common Lodging Houses Act of 1851, which was to address the problem of ‘slums’, required ‘the registration and inspection of all lodging houses’ (Cowie 1996: 263). The Artisans’ Dwelling Act of 1875 went a step further by determining standards for new construction, and also
Troubled continuities: the term ‘slum’

‘empowering local authorities to pull down slums and build working-class houses’ (ibid.: 263). The Housing of the Working Classes Act of 1890 introduced the label ‘unhealthy’. However, legal protection for property owners hampered improvement measures under this act (Garside 1988: 26).

‘Slum’ developed into a synonym for certain conditions in certain contexts and eras, in accordance with the emphasis of the housing discourse or policy debate at that time. The ‘slum’ problem in Britain was first identified as a problem of ‘defective sanitation’ and tackled through the country’s early sanitary reform (Garside 1988: 26). However, by the 1880s, it had become evident and well recognized in Britain that despite real advances through provision of piped water and sewers, which became instructive for mainland Europe, poverty prevailed. In the more radical interpretation, low wages led to high occupancy rates and resultant building deterioration and health problems (Garside 1988: 26). − Friedrich Engels had already provided this interpretation in his 1845 *The Condition of the Working Class in England* (Engels 1958/1845). While a radical interpretation did not lead to socialist policies to address underlying structural problems in the British industrial economy, the engagement with ‘slums’ as a problem of poverty resulted in less technical discussions and proposals on how to handle ‘slums’ (Garside 1988).

Dealing with ‘slums’: segregative planning and a critique in defence of ‘slums’

In the context of dire housing and health conditions, two divergent philosophies marked British ‘slum’ interventions in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, and until today exemplify two main strands in ‘slum’ intervention globally. One was an early form of self-help, exemplified by Octavia Hill, who already in the 1860s ‘founded a trust which bought slums and reconditioned them’ (Cowie 1996: 263). She ‘trained teams of women housing managers to instill habits of regularity, thrift and cleanliness into tenants in return for modest repairs and improvements to their lodgings’ and in this way prevented ‘the worst consequences of existing conditions’ (Garside 1988: 28). The other was more ambitious and less humane, and made particular use of the negative connotation of the label ‘slum’. Its proponents Charles Booth advocated for ‘forced removal of the lowest social groups … to labour colonies beyond the suburbs so as to eliminate them from the city’s labour market and thereby improve wages and economic efficiency of the rest of the working classes’ (Garside 1988: 28). This approach received support from Eugenics, a movement drawing (simplistically) on scientific insights into genetics and heredity, which saw poverty as pathological rather than structural. It promoted segregation, and reproductive control for destitute groups (Garside 1988: 28, 29). Its larger objective, which it shared with the early rational or modern town planning movement (its most prominent member, Patrick Geddes, was a Eugenist), was that of ‘greater public well-being and efficiency’ (Garside 1988: 29).

‘Slum’ conditions (in particular poverty and overcrowding) dominated public and political perceptions of cities. This resulted in much-needed investment in housing, but at the same time drove not only an anti-‘slum’ but also an anti-city sentiment. In concerns over the prevention of ‘slum’ formation, city-ward migration was widely framed as the overarching ill, leading Ebenezer Howard, the proponent of the Garden City movement, to note in 1902:

There is … a question in regard to which one can scarcely find any difference of opinion. It is well-nigh universally agreed by men of all parties, not only in England, but all over Europe and America and our colonies, that it is deeply to be deplored that the people should continue to stream into the already over-crowded cities, and should thus further deplete the country districts.

(Howard 1902: 10,11)

The solution was to embrace the virtues of country living into principles of town planning and place working-class housing in the hitherto rural surroundings of industrial cities (Howard 1902). This was the
birth of class-segregated, low density suburban living, which, later coupled with home ownership and backed by the mortgage system, continues to dominate (sub)urban development aspirations across the globe. As ideal, and in reality, suburbia emerged in extreme disparity to spatial and economic parameters of the ‘slum’. This disparity, particularly in terms of residential density, was at its most extreme in contexts where privately produced working-class rental housing predominantly took the form of multi-storey tenements: northern England, Scotland and Ireland, as well as the new Anglophone world in North America. This contrasted with ‘the persistent English preference for cottage-and-garden, and a pronounced national suspicion of tenements and “flats”’ (Houghton-Evans 1978: 89). In cities with multi-storey tenements, this building typology became synonymous with ‘slums’, exemplified for Manhattan by the tenement conditions addressed in Jacob Riis’ (2000/1902) The Battle with the Slum.

As American urban activist Jane Jacobs observed in the early 1960s when driven to pen The Death and Life of Great American Cities, ‘slums’ were the antithesis of what the English town planning movement aspired to: ‘slum … displays – inevitably – features of layout, use, ground coverage, mixture and activities that are diametrically opposed to the ideals of Radiant Garden City’ (Jacobs 1992/1961: 287). New York’s 1942 Redevelopment Companies Law enabled authorities to seize private land, clear it and allocate it to private developers (Flint 2009: 52). Using this law, powerful city official Robert Moses led ‘urban renewal’ in the form of eviction of poor tenants, demolition of tenement districts and redevelopment – initially massive infrastructure or ‘expressways’ and later large-scale middle-class housing (ibid.: 52). Though not his only conflict, the rivalry between Robert Moses and Jane Jacobs is referred to as ‘the most dramatic and consequential in modern American history’ (ibid.: back cover). For the housing discourse, it produced rich (and due to the persistence of this form of ‘urban renewal’, timeless) observations and statements on ‘slums’, including inspiration for alternative principles for city planning. Jacobs (1992/1961: 271) refers to studies by sociologist Herbert Gans reminding of social, economic and political dimensions of urban life too easily forgotten by the proponents of modernist town planning and redevelopment. As Flint (2009: 51) notes, Robert Moses ‘was strictly a planner for cars’. In defence of tenement ‘slums’, Jacobs (1992/1961: 208) notes:

Indeed, overcrowding at low density may be even more depressing and destructive than overcrowding at high densities, because at low densities there is less public life as a diversion and escape, and as a means, too, for fighting back politically at injustices and neglect.

Jacobs was interested in why some ‘slums’ were perpetual, and others had the capacity to ‘unslum’ or improve. In the New York context of the 1950s and 1960s, with the flight of the upwardly mobile from tenement districts into the suburbs, Jacobs links the ‘dream of getting out’, as opposed to a commitment to fight for improvement of a district, to the deterioration of such areas (Jacobs 1992/1961: 271). An ‘unslumming’ neighbourhood is not as lucrative to landlords as a perpetual ‘slum’, and of little economic interest to larger players in the city, therefore it may be earmarked for destruction; resistance to demolition from residents and businesses in turn are a much overlooked sign of the capacity to ‘unslum’ (Jacobs 1992/1961: 288).

Geographic travels of the concept ‘slum’

At the time of battle between Moses and Jacobs, several modernist capital cities had been planned and built in entirely new locations – among them colonial India’s capital New Delhi, inaugurated in 1931 (independent India’s capital from 1949). New Delhi, alongside Canberra and Brasilia, became a reference point for Robert Moses’ modernization endeavours for New York. He envied the ‘clean slate’ New Delhi had been laid out on, not necessitating the ‘meat ax’ with which he had to ‘hack’ his way through the ‘overbuilt metropolis’ (Flint 2009: 52).
Troubled continuities: the term ‘slum’

The 1902 quote above from Ebenezer Howard suggests consensus between those concerned with cities in Europe and the Anglophone world, including Britain’s colonies. Then already Britain had transferred the early modern city planning principles and ideals into its colonial territory. The implementation of these ideals, coupled with the exploitative economy and exclusionary politics, produced what the English had labelled ‘slum’. Consequently, this label, along with the dominant British practice in dealing with ‘slums’ (control over migration, forced removal and demolition, and segregation), also found application in British colonies, with much continuity into independent former colonies. At the same time, housing and town planning concepts circulated internationally, administrations in Kenya seeking inspiration from experience in South Africa (Harris and Hay 2007). Further, there is evidence that the English Town and Country Planning Act of 1902 may have drawn on the Johannesburg Public Health by-laws of 1903 (Parnell 1993).

‘Slum’ as a term and concept and in particular as an antithesis to planning ideals, however, did not travel across language boundaries. In Latin America, where planning and housing typologies were informed by more compact southern European and not the British spatial standards, and where colonialism ended much earlier than on the African and Asian continents (although European domination continued), cities were less rigorously planned and segregated. Nevertheless, unplanned makeshift housing on unused real estate or land left vacant for environmental or geo-morphological reasons paralleled the scale of ‘slums’ of the Anglophone third world. In Brazil, after a period of forced removal and repressive peripheralization of the urban poor during the capitalist–oriented military regime of the 1960s and 1970s, makeshift settlements were increasingly tolerated. They gradually began to be serviced, legalized and incorporated into cities as permanent neighbourhoods, though never at the pace and scale needed (Huchzermeyer 2004). These settlements are referred to by different terms in different parts of Brazil but in its megacities are predominantly known as ‘favelas’. While the word favela has derogatory connotations (Gilbert 2007: 703), Perlman (2010: 37) emphasizes that the terms ‘slum’ and ‘favela’ are ‘worlds apart’. As she notes, “‘slums’ are defined by deficits’ whereas the use of the term ‘favela’ is quite varied, including use in popular contemporary lyrics (ibid.: 37). In the official planning discourse in Brazil, ‘favela’ has been substituted with the phrase ‘areas of special interest’ (ibid.: 36).

The dominant British colonial practice: the example of Nairobi

In contrast to Brazil, Kenya’s capital Nairobi, despite its persistent transgression of official plans, illustrates the application of British city ordering principles and their relationship with the concept of ‘slums’ well. Since its beginnings as the Kenya Ugandan Rail headquarters around 1890, Nairobi developed haphazardly, and for its first six decades without a town planning vision (Obudho 1997). However, its authorities adhered to British city building principles and approaches: ‘sanitary segregation’ and control over those considered inferior (White 1990: 46). Early, lucrative ‘slum’ development was by wealthy Indian landowners, renting out rooms in the Indian Bazaar area. Already in 1902, with an outbreak of plague, authorities burnt the Bazaar to the ground (Nevanlinna 1996). The owners were permitted to rebuild the Bazaar at lower densities further to the south, reproducing similar squalor in the process (Halliman and Morgan 1967).

‘Slums’ as they are known today in Nairobi, namely large hutment areas with makeshift housing, little if any sanitation, often also under private rental tenancy, and separate from areas originally designated for Europeans and Indians, had emerged at scale by 1912. This included Nairobi’s now iconic Kibera, established in that year for Sudanese soldiers retired from the British colonial military (White 1990). The Nairobi City Council was formed in 1919 (Hake 1977), followed immediately by the introduction and implementation of measures to curb the city–ward migration of impoverished ‘native’ individuals and families: 1920, the year Kenya was made a British colony, saw the enactment of
a Native Pass Law (restricting movement and migration of indigenous people between rural and urban areas), and 1922 the Vagrancy Ordinance (criminalizing street homelessness) (Aseka 1990; Nevanlinna 1996). By 1920, authorities had developed the first African ‘location’, Pumwani, essentially a site-and-service scheme, in which households were allocated a site and had to construct their own shelter (Etherton 1971: 7). It was intended for the relocation of all Africans from existing ‘slums’, and to ‘contain the Africans of Nairobi into the foreseeable future’ (White 1990: 48). Around the mid-1920s, Nairobi’s population of 30,000 consisted of 9 per cent European, 31 per cent Indian and 60 per cent (largely impoverished) indigenous Kenyans (Huchzermeyer 2011b: 128). Despite very obvious, fundamental differences with British towns, the colonizers found British solutions to ‘slums’ and ‘slum’ formation through segregation, exclusion and control the only appropriate response.

While the authors of Nairobi’s 1948 Master Plan for a Colonial Capital (White, Silberman and Anderson 1948: 45) did ponder on the city’s disparities, their conceptualization, according to professional norms at the time, was informed by British and more widely western town planning ideals. They appraised the appropriateness of the British Garden City Movement for their colonial planning endeavour, highlighting in particular its prevention of ‘slum’ conditions: ‘[i]t wishes to preserve as much of the rural atmosphere as possible in an urban area by restricting densities, deconcentrating flat tenements and excluding non-residential, non-conforming buildings’. Nairobi’s master planners drew more directly on the international town planning movement at the time, with inspiration stemming from the American suburban dream as it had been translated (in the 1940s through the concept of superblocks and cellular and inward-oriented neighbourhood units) for motor car mobility and suburban home ownership (Huchzermeyer 2011b). In the 1940s, this took the form of a large grid of dual carriageways termed ‘superblocks’, each block consisting of several inward-oriented ‘neighbourhoods’ isolated from one another as separate cells. ‘Slums’ were literally co-produced by the normative standards suggested for the neighbourhood units: lower-income units were to have eight single-family houses per acre, and one or two affluent units (Nevanlinna 1996; Huchzermeyer 2011b). Enabling distinction and labelling through stark contrast, Nairobi’s ‘slums’ would easily have over 100 dwellings per acre.

The 1948 master plan for Nairobi remained largely unimplemented (Obudho 1997) and city planning to date remains unresolved with a recent interest in spatial planning as a means to make the city globally more competitive (Huchzermeyer 2011b). Twenty-first-century efforts in Nairobi at implementing highways and flyovers give currency once more to the spatial concept and standards of the modernist superblock. Master planning as an approach, with superblocks as a motorcar network and cellular residential development, continues to enjoy significant legitimacy on the African continent today and has shaped cities particularly in southern Africa (Watson 2009; UN–Habitat 2009; Myers 2011). As Rakodi (2006: 315) notes, ‘a modernist vision for African cities has held sway’. The urban competitiveness contest which has marked city strategies in the late 2000s in Nairobi (later than elsewhere on the globe) has seen an amplification in aspired modernist spatial standards and their contrast with what remains labelled as ‘slums’ (Huchzermeyer 2011a).

The continued co-production of ‘slums’ through modern town planning, and its political utility

For the African continent, colonial urban legacies, particularly the ‘segregation and segmentation of the urban landscape and … the related high degree of inequality’, as well as continued ‘dominance of central governments’ and a ‘strong orientation towards blueprint master planning for modernist visions’ have not been overcome in the short periods beyond colonial rule (Myers 2011: 53, 55). Moreover, ‘ordinary African residents were not empowered to remake or overturn the unenforced and unimplemented ideas; they simply endured in the interstices between what the Europeans
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wanted from the urban order and what the cities might have been without colonialism’ (ibid.: 55). Across well over half a century, modern town planning, with its distorted transfer into the third world through colonialism, had and continues to have two important consequences; one in terms of the persistent necessity of ‘slums’ (due to unaffordability of the bloated formal standards – whether in implemented or unimplemented plans), and the other in terms of the location in which ‘slums’ were to emerge.

As a professional movement in the early twentieth century, rational or modern planning did not foresee land scarcity or the more recent concerns for urban sustainability which call for reduced travel distances and more compact forms of development. Instead, enamoured with the possibilities of motorized traffic, it predetermined wide road reserves, generous land allocation to public functions, and the leapfrogging of land requiring environmental protection or otherwise not deemed suitable for development. Bearing no relation to urban management capacities in what today is termed the global south, such land became available for informal re-interpretation for urgent low- to no-cost residential use (whether by ‘slumlords’ wishing to exploit the housing need of those with little choice, or by those able to set up a hut or shack of their own). Modern town planning also did not anticipate or curb private land hoarding and speculation on undeveloped land, therefore un-used land was available for informal use in the face of low cost dwelling demand. An aerial view of Mumbai, for instance, shows road verges, parks and the open spaces in which modern apartment blocks were placed, all filled with makeshift dwellings. For Brazilian cities, Fabricius (2008: 12) describes this phenomenon as an ‘amorphous tide’ which ‘spread[s] everywhere, taking over the interstitial spaces’ (the interstitial spaces in Brazil are primarily vacant properties and environmentally sensitive land). It must be added that in cities such as Mumbai and Nairobi, it is not uncommon for such ‘available’ land to be grabbed or corruptly allocated for upmarket development (Roy 2009; Obala 2011).

In the absence of radical economic and political change, unattainable official spatial standards, be they for the distance between intersections, the width of road verges and servitudes, the sizes of plot or the distance between streets and buildings, have resulted in exclusion by planning norms. An adherence among authorities and consulting professionals (including civil engineers) to these norms, as part and parcel of professional ethics and standards, translates into resistance to the improvement of ‘slums’ and their legalization or incorporation into planning or zoning schemes. This applies even where land is deemed suitable and its occupants campaign for improvements instead of relocation (Huchzermeyer 2011a) – in Jane Jacobs’s words displaying the capacity to ‘unslum’.

Myers (2011: 73, 74) notes that despite significant differences in the approaches of colonial regimes (British, French, Dutch, German, Belgian, Italian, Portuguese), they all produced in their urban areas ‘a fundamental dichotomy between colonizer and colonized zones’, particularly in terms of spatial and infrastructural standards (ibid.: 74). Urban authorities rarely achieved full planning control over the colonized zones, with disorderly, makeshift and officially sub-standard situations persisting. As a result, the ‘slum’ label had continued application at least in the Anglophone territory. While colonizers used starkly distinguishable difference in spatial standards as a means of control, this too has been convenient for weak post-colonial regimes (see Myers 2002). The ease with which particularly informal or makeshift neighbourhoods are identified, as sub-standard, unplanned or informal, thanks to town planning norms, and therefore in need of termination, allows for control. Simone (2010: 19) warns that ‘[t]oo often political regimes enforce their power by making life as precarious as possible for a significant part of urban populations’. Further, the greater the spatial disparity ‘the greater the ease with which this control is exercised, and the greater the justification for a town planning apparatus that polices the formal order to protect it from invasion by the informal, rather than bridging or closing the gap’ (Huchzermeyer 2011a: 29, 30). While formally approved areas appear to use land extravagantly or indeed wastefully, the precarious life is confined to and crowded into poorly suited or unused pockets of land, or banished to the distant periphery.
Like the term ‘slum’, this form of control through well policed, extravagant and exclusionary planning norms and standards does not readily apply to all Latin American cities. In the economic hubs of that continent, for instance the megacities of Brazil, shacks or informal dwellings in the _favelas_ have consolidated over time into more permanent and often multi-storey structures (Huchzermeyer 2004). Where such neighbourhoods border onto high income apartment areas, a stark spatial differentiation persists, providing sensational motifs for photo-journalists. But in other locations in the city, consolidated and serviced _favelas_ may blend into similar self-built housing typologies of planned low income neighbourhoods. A _favela_ address, nevertheless, may carry a persistent social stigma (Perlman 2010).

In highlighting the disparities produced through modern town planning predominant in the Anglophone third world, it is important not to discard the notion of planning altogether and idealize or homogenize unplanned neighbourhoods and their capacity for improvement. For Indian cities, planner and activist Gita Verma (2002: 62) makes a strong plea for ‘proactive planning’ rather than ‘willful planning for the past’ (essentially ‘slum’ upgrading). She emphasizes the failures of poorly conceived and executed (yet internationally celebrated) ‘slum’ improvement programmes, citing instances where sewerage problems have merely been exacerbated and subsequently remain unattended, contributing to the ‘slumming’ of Indian cities. She argues that residents of India’s ‘slums’ are not settled, remaining in an unsettled state, still to be settled somewhere. They live in constant fear, and hope for a better place to live (ibid.). The family that Katherine Boo (2012) accompanied for four years in Mumbai’s Annawadi ‘slum’ fits this description well.

For Verma (2002), the state is obliged to rehouse or ‘settle’ the occupants of ‘slums’. For proponents of _in situ_ upgrading (such as myself), she makes the uncomfortable observation that fires raging through a ‘slum’ ‘[are] as much or more devastating than bulldozers and happen with greater frequency and suddenness’ (Verma 2002: 68). Indian ‘slums’, as Verma points out, are also prone to landslides and flooding (ibid.: 68). From my own perspective informed by a diverse range of ‘slums’ and ‘slum’ struggles in Anglophone African cities, I have described upgrading as a desired and hard fought ‘exception to the largely unformed planning rules’ (Huchzermeyer 2011a: 29). The intense campaign for global economic competitiveness of third world cities, which the World Bank and other global players have driven since the Bank’s urban policy of 2000 (World Bank 2000), has created the paradox that while global players promote ‘slum’ upgrading, the same organizations entice or whip cities into developing strategies for urban competitiveness, and only very weak calls are made for planning reform (Huchzermeyer 2011a). A fundamental change in the way urban land is allocated and its use is managed is critical for colonial legacies and the contemporary reproduction of segregation and inequalities to be overcome.

**The renewed utility of the ‘slum’ label under the global drive for competitive cities**

An ongoing obstacle to significant planning reform that would address the realities outlined above is not only the political, but also the economic utility of a dual system of inclusion and exclusion in relation to spatial norms and standards, and linked to this the production of ‘slums’ or informal settlements. The Turner–Burgess debate of the 1970s and 1980s centred on the cheapness or affordability of informal, unplanned or ‘slum’ housing. Rod Burgess (1982) emphasized the wage exploitation which relies on the low cost of such shelter and therefore depends on the perpetuation of ‘slums’. John Turner (1972) in turn viewed the low cost as a factor facilitating inclusion, something that allows low waged or unemployed households to gain a foothold in urban areas at little cost and therefore to find a livelihood and save or invest in other aspects of family life such as education. ‘We must know how much money the inhabitant of a slum has, what his expectations are, and what his alternatives are, before we can be sure that the slum, alleged or actual, is doing him more harm than good’ (Turner
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However, as Marris (1979: 423) argued, ‘you cannot have the convenience of cheap labour, without poverty intruding visibly upon the economic prosperity it supports’. Such intrusion may take the form of embarrassing sights, as well as physical congestion through the flouting of planning norms and standards. Pointing to the constant frustration with this condition, in Mumbai, Boo (2012: 248) observes insightfully that the one (‘slums’) makes the other (elite India) ‘late’. The elite is inconvenienced and offended, this translating comfortably into elite support for anti-‘slum’ policies. In South Africa, such elite outrage is reinforced by anxieties over property values. The South African urban property market in which elites have invested and which emerged under the strict socio-spatial segregation of the apartheid regime depends on the continued confinement of the sub-standard and disorderly to the marginal or peripheral ‘slum’. Urban management has effectively balanced the necessity for cheaply housed labour (through the perpetuation of ‘slums’) and the necessity for low levels of intrusion or inconveniencing (through strict policing if not militarization).

Capturing ‘slums’ as intruding into and undermining elite or middle-class norms and entitlements, Marris (1979: 425) notes that ‘slums’ by definition are ‘an affront to expectations of what is appropriate’. This urges us to ask what may have been the affront that led the United Nations (UN) to mainstream the term ‘slum’ in the global development discourse in the year 2000. The UN’s Millennium Declaration reads: ‘By 2020, to have achieved a significant improvement in the lives of at least a 100 million slum dwellers as proposed in the “Cities Without Slums” initiative’ (UN 2000: 5). This target with the powerful slogan ‘Cities Without Slums’ became the Millennium Development Goal (MDG) 7 Target 11 (currently referred to as Goal 7D). Why would the UN embrace and promote the label ‘slum’ in this manner at the dawn of the twenty-first century? Roy (2008: 252) asks, ‘[w]hat do we make of the fact that as the MDGs are calling for a “cities without slums” target so many cities in the global South, for example those in India, are brutally evicting squatters and demolishing slums to make way for urban development?’ To what extent can we argue that under post-colonial conditions of unreformed planning and continued political and economic empowerment of elites the predictable consequence – ‘slum’ control, demolition, segregation, relocation and redevelopment – was in fact intended?

The UN’s modest ‘slum’ improvement target (addressed at only 10 per cent of the estimated ‘slum’ population in the year 2000) and the accompanying, contradicting slogan ‘Cities Without Slums’, have their origin in growing cooperation in the 1990s between the World Bank and the UN’s Human Settlements Programme, UN-Habitat. This led in 1999 to the formation of a joint World Bank/UN-Habitat/UNEP (United Nations Environmental Programme) organization, Cities Alliance, based at the World Bank. Its inaugural publication bore the title coined by the World Bank: Cities Alliance for Cities Without Slums: Action Plan for Moving Slum Upgrading to Scale (World Bank and UNCHS (Habitat) 1999). This defined the term ‘slum’ (with notable negativity) as spanning a range from ‘high density, squalid central city tenements to spontaneous squatter settlements without legal recognition or rights, sprawling at the edge of cities’ (World Bank and UNCHS (Habitat) 1999: 1), and included the ‘slum’ improvement target which the UN adopted into the MDGs (ibid.: 6).

At the time when the World Bank branded the Cities Alliance Program title with the slogan ‘Cities Without Slums’, it was also drafting an urban strategy which it launched in 2000, Cities in Transition: World Bank Urban and Local Government Strategy (World Bank 2000). This strategy builds the Bank’s urban vision on four pillars: competitiveness, bankability, good governance and livability (ibid.). The World Bank’s financial support for ‘slum’ upgrading had dwindled in the 1990s, when it turned its attention to policy (Huchzermeyer 2012). While still promoting the idea of ‘slum’ upgrading, the Bank’s enthusiasm for bankability (the use of urban property as collateral for credit) and urban economic competitiveness (the ability to attract foreign direct investment) as central to solving urban problems was at its height. The power of a literal interpretation of the slogan ‘Cities Without Slums’, at a time when the Bank encouraged third world cities to compete globally for foreign direct investment, must not be underestimated. As of 2000, for instance, South Africa interpreted MDG 7 Target 11 as an
obligation to free cities of ‘slums’ (Huchzermeyer 2011a). Increasingly, the political leadership and its government bureaucracy associated its ‘slum’ eradication target with MDG obligations (Sisulu 2005) and resorted to phrases such as ‘war against shacks’ (Sisulu 2004), also linking its informal settlement eradication target with urban or city region competitiveness (Gauteng Provincial Government 2009: 20). For Kenya, the media in 2009 reported very similar interpretations and undertakings by the Kenyan government (Koross 2009; Mwaniki 2009). As in South Africa, ‘slum’ eradication in Kenya is associated directly with urban competitiveness. Kenya’s 2008 city region strategy Nairobi Metro 2030: A World Class African Metropolis underlines a ‘focus on achieving the vision of a metropolitan [sic] without slums’ (Ministry of Nairobi Metropolitan Development 2008: 74). For the Asia Pacific region, Hasan (2010: 293) makes the observation that ‘World Class’ or globally competitive cities shun informal settlement upgrading, opting for relocation to the urban periphery. Rather than countering the interpretation of a need to remove ‘slums’ from cities, UN-Habitat’s high level communications slipped into wording that supported ‘slum’ eradication rather than improvement or upgrading. Already in 2005, its Executive Director referred to the ‘Millennium Declaration Target of “Cities Without Slums”’ (Tibaijuka 2005: iii). By 2010, a high level UN-Habitat press release reported on the ‘global slum reduction target’ (UN-Habitat 2010: 2), with efforts to help households ‘move out of slum conditions’ or ‘escape slums’ (UN-Habitat 2010: 1). UN-Habitat’s high level messaging on the need to reduce ‘slums’, move people out of ‘slums’ or help people escape ‘slums’ resonates comfortably with approaches of slum demolition and relocation to segregated developments on the urban periphery, as practised under unreformed planning norms and standards.

Competitiveness and bankability tie full circle with modern town planning, both in terms of envisaging massive infrastructure investment, for instance in airports, highways and speed trains to extravagant world class standards, and in the strategies for financing city development that are dependent on credit and foreign direct investment. The city is to attract global investors, and in order to be backed by corporate finance it is to consist, in the first instance, of bankable products or assets. Banks have come to determine even the house and settlement type that low income housing cooperatives in Nairobi may develop for ‘slum’ dwellers – tiled roof townhouses in gated estates. In contrast, an incrementally upgraded, improved or ‘unslummed’ former ‘slum’ does not consist of bankable products. Even if the former ‘slum’ dwellers were to hold freehold titles in the upgraded settlement, the unconventional layout, plot sizes and standards are of insufficient value for banks to provide credit for the improvement of the dwellings. One could apply Jane Jacobs’s (1992/1961) argumentation: ‘unslumming’ neighbourhoods are of no economic interest to larger players in the urban economy. Where potential is recognized for profitable patterns of development on the same land, pressure for demolition and ultimately displacement of the majority of ‘slum’ residents is almost inevitable.

The ‘slum’ economy which produces a low cost of living cannot be replicated in planned, bankable relocation or redevelopment schemes without substantial upfront and ongoing state subsidization. In ambitious ‘slum’ relocation schemes, the re-emergence of ‘slums’ is an inevitable result. Not even South Africa’s elaborate housing subsidy system is able to stem the return from subsidized housing schemes to informal settlements as home ownership in standardized, peripherally located state-funded relocation areas is largely irrelevant to the livelihoods of poor urban South Africans (Misselhorn 2010). In recent years, a frustrated and affronted post-apartheid state, interpreting the ‘return’ to informal settlements as an unjustified non-appreciation of the state’s efforts at planned or orderly assistance, resorted to repressive ‘slum’ control measures of the apartheid era, justifying this on the MDG obligation to free cities of ‘slums’ (Huchzermeyer 2011a). In 2009, the South African Constitutional Court struck down a central section of the KwaZulu-Natal Slum Elimination and Prevention of Re-emergence of Slums Act of 2007, as it had sought to increase the state’s powers to evict, thus contradicting the constitutional principle of protection against arbitrary eviction (Huchzermeyer 2011a). In 2012, the same legislation, including the section found to be unconstitutional, re-emerged as the Mpumalanga Eradication

Many country governments, it appears, understood the message so powerfully packaged with the term ‘slum’: Unless you free your cities of ‘slums’ you stand no chance of entering the survival contest of global economic competitiveness. However, in the light of criticism particularly from the NGO sector in the USA, the World Bank adjusted its urban thinking considerably (Troye 2009). Its 2010 urban strategy Systems of Cities: Harnessing Urbanization for Growth and Poverty Alleviation (World Bank 2010) stands on a more nuanced set of business lines: ‘slum upgrading and urban poverty’; ‘markets, housing and growth’; ‘environment, disaster mitigation and climate change’, as well as ‘governance, management and finance’ and ‘economic growth’. The strategy embraces urbanization (with a positive link to economic growth) and calls for it to be dealt with proactively. It further recommends measures for the absorption of migrants to avoid ‘slum’ or informal settlement expansion. The strategy also draws lessons from the 2008 global economic crisis, caused as it was by an overreliance on the bankability of the homes of ordinary people (World Bank 2010; Huchzermeyer 2012). It will take several years before the shift in World Bank policy is reflected in its partner institutions globally and felt on the ground.

Conclusion: beyond ‘slums’

This chapter has discussed continuities in the use of the term and label ‘slum’, its inception in early nineteenth-century Britain, its transfer to the Anglophone third world through colonialism and modern town planning for which it functions as antithesis, its continuity into the present, and its reinforcement since 2000 through the MDGs. Enduring connotations of the ‘slum’ label are disease, density and overcrowding causing congestion, disorderliness and visual affront; a more recent connotation is the deterrence of direct foreign investment.

In accounts of the global ‘slum’ situation, there has been a transition to the use of the term ‘global south’, replacing ‘third world’. The latter more strongly tied underdevelopment to the global political order and its historical roots. Contemporary efforts to address or eradicate the negative attributes associated with ‘slums’ from cities of the global south have steered away from a much needed departure from the rational or modern Anglophone town planning system which throughout its history has served to spatialize elite politics and an unequal economy, thereby co-producing ‘slums’. Thus we need to caution against exorcising the historiography of the term ‘slum’ with its continuities from the dominant contemporary urban discourse of urban development, which, due to the urbanizing nature of the world is inevitably becoming a discourse about the future of the human condition.

The fundamental reform that is necessary to proactively cater for poor city-ward migrants and transform existing city poverty into a dignified and meaningful urban life is a task jointly for planning, politics and the economy. Echoing leading third world urban analyst Carole Rakodi (2006: 310), what is needed is ‘a vision that is rooted in reality and inclusive, not unrealistic and exclusive’. Contemporary visions for urban competitiveness, with their exclusionary demands on the urban space economy through extravagant planning norms, along with the totalizing discourse on ‘slums’, have to be challenged from below, to represent and support a multitude of diverse urban realities and aspirations.

References


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Notes

1 This became evident in discussion with a team of staff members of NACHU (National Cooperative Housing Union), 13 September 2012, during a study tour to Nairobi with Master of the Built Environment (Housing) students from the University of the Witwatersrand.

2 KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga are provinces of South Africa.
LEARNING PLANNING FROM THE SOUTH
Ideas from the new urban frontiers

Vanessa Watson

Introduction
The field of urban planning has been characterized, with minor exceptions, by the development of theories, models and ‘solutions’ in regions of the global north, addressing the urban problems in these territories, and published through largely English language articles and books also based in these parts of the world. These regions themselves express great diversity (in urban form and governance, and planning responses) and there is a strong, but less dominant, intellectual tradition of planning publication in a range of European languages. Until recently, these theories, models and solutions have found their way to other parts of the world, essentially the global south, through earlier transfer mechanisms of colonial domination and more recent mechanisms such as international development agencies, travelling consultants and academics and property development companies. Based as they are on assumptions that the rest of the world is (or should aim to be) not very different from societies, economies and institutions in the global north, these travelling ideas have had generally disastrous effects on places where they have been promoted and implemented. In the poor, weakly governed, rapidly growing, largely informal and often culturally different cities of the global south (while recognizing the great diversity within these regions) such planning ideas appear to have promoted social exclusion and spatial inequalities, have been insensitive to sustainability issues, and have proved a useful tool for local elites and politicians to acquire and manipulate urban land and its poorer occupants.

The first part of this chapter elaborates on this problem and discusses some of the negative impacts to which northern dominance of planning ideas has given rise. The second part of the chapter proposes, in response to this, the idea of southern planning theory. This section of the chapter considers what the objections to such a concept might be, and also what a perspective on planning from (and not simply for) the global south might offer planning theory as a field of knowledge production.

Travelling planning ideas
The call to question the worldwide validity of what is regarded as ‘mainstream’ theory has emerged in recent years from writers in a number of social science and spatial disciplines. In sociology, Connell’s (2007: ix) book questions the ‘belief that social science can have only one, universal body of concepts and methods, the one created in the global North’. In anthropology, Comaroff and Comaroff (2012: 1) counter the positioning of western enlightenment thought ‘as the wellspring of universal learning’
while the global south is seen as ‘a place of parochial wisdom, of antiquarian traditions, of exotic ways and means. Above all, of unprocessed data’. In the urban studies field, Robinson (2006) has questioned the global cities literature for its implication that the world financial capitals were in any way representative of cities everywhere or should be used as models for other cities to aspire to. Roy (2009: 820), in similar vein, is concerned about the ‘limited sites at which theoretical production is currently theorized’, and calls for the ‘dislocating’ of the Euro-American centre of theoretical production. And Seekings and Keil (2009) call for an internationalization of urban theory which recognizes that the experiences of Europe and America may not be universally applicable, and are in fact more likely to be exceptional from a global perspective.

In urban planning, Yiftachel (2006), Roy (2009, 2011), Watson (2002a, 2009, 2013) and Brownill and Parker (2010) have, in various ways, pointed to the similarly parochial nature of much planning theory. For many decades the intellectuals who led the field in planning theory have lived and worked in the Euro-American regions and, consciously or not, have produced ideas about planning (largely published in English language journals also based in these areas) shaped by the context in which they function. While much good theoretical and practical planning work has emerged from this part of the world, it is usually taken for granted that these ideas and theories are also valid in the rest of the globe, and that underlying assumptions regarding the nature of cities and their societies, economies, culture and governance are so similar from place to place that there is no need to geographically specify the relevance of ideas.

While questionable generalization of theoretical ideas may, in many disciplines, do no more than raise the opportunity for critique and a flurry of journal publications, in professional disciplines such as planning the consequences may be far more serious. Planning theory is produced not only with the intention of developing and taking forward theoretical debates, but also to inform practice. New theoretical approaches in planning from the mid-1990s were even termed the ‘practice movement’ (Liggett 1996) given their basis in studies of individual planners and their practices in order to inform theory building and in turn to encourage more effective practice. While planning theory may influence the work of practitioners far less than theorists hope, it nonetheless can and does, perhaps in uneven and unpredictable ways, shift both pedagogy and professional approaches. Hence when ideas about planning processes and outcomes (spatial models and urban forms), developed to address issues in one part of the world, are inappropriately transported and applied in very different contexts in other parts of the world, it can directly affect lives and livelihoods. This sometimes happens in ways that cause mere inconvenience, but also can, and often does, impose unforeseen costs and hardship on those who are poor and vulnerable.

For example, the use of car-oriented spatial models to inform urban development in those parts of the world where there are high levels of pedestrian movement not only makes their access difficult but leads to a high level of pedestrian accidents. South Africa’s local area movement network design standards take the form of 1.5−2 km-square cells of collector and access road networks, consisting of limited-access arterials and freeways, and are introverted in terms of public facility and amenity provision (Behrens 2005). These standards, incorporated into various South African engineering guideline manuals, are drawn from British and American spatial planning models of the 1920s and 1930s, where they were termed the ‘neighbourhood unit’ and the ‘environmental area’ concepts. This approach to spatial movement structure continued in the UK, as was its copying in other parts of the world: the ‘kilometre-grid’ of new town Milton Keynes was faithfully copied in the 1970s design of the low income suburb of Mitchells Plain in Cape Town. Behrens (2005) argues that the assumption underlying these spatial models is a high degree of individual car ownership and car movement dependence, but when such models are applied in contexts where the majority of the population is poor and moves through the city on foot, then accident and pedestrian fatality is inevitable. South Africa has one of the highest pedestrian fatality rates in the world and Behrens (2005) attributes this directly to the widespread adoption of these European and American spatial planning models.
In Abuja, the new capital city of Nigeria, the city ‘master plan’ was drawn up by architects and planners from the USA and from Japan, based on their vision of a modern western city to which, it was assumed, all Nigerians would aspire. Nigerian politicians certainly did aspire to this, and in draconian attempts to implement the master plan 800,000 people were evicted by 2006 from land that was ‘zoned for other purposes under the Master Plan’, supposedly to achieve the beautification of the city, privatization and ‘cleaning up’ criminals (COHRE 2006). The demolitions included villages which had existed for decades (but were suddenly declared informal and illegal) and had solidly constructed houses and community facilities. Ancestral graves and landholdings were destroyed. Evictions were often accompanied by violence and destruction of private property as little warning was given of removals (COHRE 2008).

In other respects as well the modernist planned city of Abuja fails to accommodate the needs of a largely poor population. Mono-functional land use zoning prevents use of the home as an economic unit − an essential survival strategy under conditions of high unemployment. Street trading, an integral part of most African cities and often the dominant income-generating activity, does not fit into the vision of a tidy, modern western city and is strictly controlled. Planners and officials are determined that Abuja will remain faithful to the intentions of the original master plan and ‘...must be preserved from the processes of change, informality and complexity that dominate Lagos’ (COHRE 2008: 76). Movement systems are designed to cater for a middle-class car-owning population as in cities such as Milton Keynes, not for poor and public transport dependent commuters. This is particularly serious for the newly declared ‘squatters’ (occupants of existing villages which were in the way of the master plan) who faced removal to satellite towns such as Pegi located some 33 km away from Abuja.

In the last three or four years, a spate of new city ‘master plans’ has been developed for African cities, in nearly all cases by architectural and engineering firms located in the United States, the UK, Hong Kong and Singapore. The ‘visions’ of futuristic cities which accompany these plans represent Corbusian modernism taken to the realm of science fiction: sky-scraper glass boxes and elevated transport systems along with manicured green spaces and water features. The new master plan for Kigali (Rwanda) is one such vision, for a town in which 90 per cent of the residents live in informal or ‘illegal’ shelters (UN-Habitat 2010). Developed by an American architectural firm, it has won both planning and landscape awards in recent years. Yet its implementation, if this were to take place, would displace much of the population of one million who could never hope to afford to live in such an environment. In many of these recent plans, both in Africa and the East, new towns take the form of ‘satellite cities’ on greenfield sites outside of the main urban centres (e.g. Tatu City and Konza ICT City outside Nairobi) and well away from the centres of poverty. In effect, this is ‘splintering urbanism’ (Graham and Marvin 2001) at a regional scale with the wealthy abandoning older cities entirely and taking both spending power and formal jobs well away from the reach of the poor. The likely impact of these processes in regions of the global south will be negative in the extreme.

A western modernist fantasy similar to that of Kigali is on the cards for Kinshasa in the Democratic Republic of Congo, where a new development called ‘la Cité du Fleuve’ (prepared by a consortium of international design companies) will occupy two ‘islands’ on reclaimed land in the Congo River (see De Boeck 2012). They will hold mixed retail, office and residential development and one of the islands will be devoted to up-market residential accommodation. De Boeck (2012) describes bill-boards in the city for this and other urban renewal projects which promise that they will bring ‘modernization’ and make Kinshasa a ‘model for the rest of Africa’. In reality though, Kinshasa is a war-ravaged city of some nine million people, the majority of whom live in deep poverty and eke out a living from small informal businesses. A number of fishermen’s villages and hundreds of small farmers will be the first victims of the Cité du Fleuve project as all will be moved off the land. But De Boeck (2012) sees this as the start of a more sinister and pervasive process in which political ambitions to copy other ‘world cities’ such as Dubai and Shanghai shape public spending and physical planning into the future. De
Boeck (2012: 319) describes these processes as ‘spectral urbanization’ underpinned by a ‘politics of erasure’ involving not only new projects but also efforts to ‘clean up’ and ‘sanitize’ the city: street children and youth gangs have been expelled from public spaces in the city, and ‘illegal’ food outlets and shelters have been torn down. This brutal disruption and destruction of the complex and fragile social and economic networks on which the survival of many Kinshasa inhabitants depends, under the guise of urban reform, appears to be, De Boeck argues, inspired by earlier moral models of colonialist modernity.

The models to which cities such as Kinshasa, Kigali or Lagos aspire are now Dubai, Singapore and Hong Kong rather than Paris or Washington, and these Asian cities themselves are the products of similar aspirations about somewhere else that is supposedly more ‘modern’ and more desirable. While the sanitizing and modernizing ambitions of these various efforts do appear to hark back to colonial times, there are also clear twenty-first-century features involving the global property industry (backed by opportunistic architects and engineers), politicians in alliance with both local and global capital and with vote-banked communities, and the tactics and strategies of poorer urban inhabitants as they respond to the opening up or removal of opportunities brought about by these new urban initiatives (see Shatkin 2008, 2011; Benjamin 2008). Ashis Nandy’s (2003 in Connell 2007: 189) perception that the ideology of modernization is now entrenched in the post-colonial middle classes and the post-colonial state in even more ‘developmentalist’ forms than it was at independence, and in ways which are profoundly destructive of pre-existing cultures, also goes some way to explaining the phenomenon of Cité du Fleuve and others like it. Given rates of urbanization in Africa, new urban development (and even on occasion new cities) will be necessary. The concern here is more particularly with the urban vision that is being promoted in these plans.

Shatkin (2008) sees these kinds of initiatives as the privatization of urban planning and development and essentially as a new model of urban governance. In his case of Metro Manila this privatization has taken an extensive and all-encompassing form with private investment in cross-city transport schemes the purpose of which is to unlock the development potential of parcels of land serviced by the new movement infrastructure. In Metro Manila and other large cities of the East, these new developments are massive: Shatkin refers to projected populations of 750,000 to a million to be accommodated in such new developments. Moreover they are scattered across the urban region and do not necessarily take on the ‘edge city’ form found in many US cities. These new systems of transport and residential/commercial development are overlaid onto the existing congested and decayed urban form but are detached from it, creating entirely separate pathways of circulation and land use. Shatkin (2008) refers to this as ‘bypass-implant urbanism’. These schemes attract large government subsidies and this in turn drains public finance available for public space or to address the needs of poorer communities. The consequence is the steady decline of the existing older city, as well as the threatened and actual removal of communities who find themselves in the way of the new development projects and transit routes. Shatkin (2008) questions what may be a simplistic interpretation of Philippines’ new urban developments as purely a copying of an American model of urbanism and argues that instead influential local actors (in this case primarily property developers and their clients) have sought to selectively adapt international models of planning and design to the context of Southeast Asian urbanization.

These examples from various regions of the global south indicate a number of important issues for planning theory.

First, much of current ‘mainstream’ planning theory, dealing with both decision-making processes and planning outcomes (spatial models and urban forms) is based on experience and research in the Euro-American regions, and while it may be very appropriate for these territories (although within these regions as well there is considerable diversity), unquestioned generalization of interpretations and normative ideas to the rest of the globe is highly problematic (see Watson 2002a; Healey 2012). Planning ideas are inevitably based on particular assumptions regarding the nature of society, economy,
environment and political institutions, and since these vary significantly from place to place, such underlying assumptions must be carefully identified before they are considered for wider implementation. Planning theorists, wherever they are located, therefore need to specify these assumptions and where in the world they may or may not hold.

However, although planning theories and practices originating in the global north continue to dominate academic work, educational curricula and planning practices in the global south (accepting that exceptions do, of course, occur and there are even some recent indications of a ‘return flow’ of ideas), the blame for this cannot realistically be laid at the door of planners alone. The flow of ideas and practices in a globalized world takes place through economic, social and institutional ‘structures’ as well as through the actions of various ‘agents’ responding to the particularities of local contexts. Time is important as well as place: in many regions understanding why particular planning ideas were adopted and have persisted requires an exploration of past colonial relationships and the continuity of these into the present. How and why ideas ‘travel’ from one part of the globe to another, and where they might ‘land’, is a highly complex and politicized process (see Tait and Jensen 2007; Healey and Upton 2010) and as the newer cases above indicate, it is currently more likely to be the international property development industry that is driving change in southern cities, than planning theorists.

Second, and following on from the above, it can be recognized that the problem of universalized theories and ideas lies not only in the ‘source’ regions but also in those regions where such ideas are unquestioningly adopted as ‘best practice’ or an ‘absolute truth’. The examples above have referred to the ways in which modernization has become entrenched in post-colonial societies − be it in middle-class tastes for particular built forms and living environments, or in the perceptions of politicians that success implies that their cities must appear to be like those in wealthier countries. But it does not necessarily follow from this that there is a simple ‘convergence’ between cities in various parts of the world. Shatkin (2008) has questioned assumptions that the effects of globalization on Asian cities result in a clear Americanization or westernization of these cities, and argues that these over-simplistic assumptions arise out of the western domination of urban studies literature and a ‘tyranny of terminology’ which has us see all cities through western concepts such as edge cities, Disneyfication or gated communities. Understanding how actors, both internal and external to his case of Metro Manila, together with the historical development of the city, shape urban change allows him to uncover urban development processes which articulate in different ways with global and Americanizing influences. Following Nasr and Volait (2003), he sees outside influences as negotiated with active local actors shaping them to their own ends, and the outcomes of these processes as inevitably hybrid.

Third, an outcome of both of the above is that planning theory in global south regions is poorly developed and planning practitioners have very little of relevance to draw on for inspiration in dealing with the complex problems of southern cities. While the urban studies academic literature is paying growing attention to regions of the global south and suggesting a range of new ‘urbanisms’ (Benjamin 2008; Roy 2011; Shatkin 2011) − the strategies of poorer urban dwellers as they manoeuvre to gain access to well-located and affordable land and living environments, usually through informal and sometimes violent means − planning theory has had relatively little to offer to counter Euro-American interpretations of urban problems or alternatives to put in their place.

Fourth, and in addition to the above, there has been growing recognition over the last several years (UN–Habitat 2009) that rigid and outdated urban planning systems, many inherited from previous colonial eras, have been a major cause of development problems in southern cities. They have contributed to inefficient and fragmented cities, as processes of land release and urban management have failed to keep pace with demands for urban change and development (or new imperatives such as climate change) and the poor have found themselves spatially excluded and marginalized from the now relatively limited part of the city subject to planning and building related controls. Where the poor find that the only way to survive in cities is to ‘step outside’ of urban laws, then the inevitable result is growing informality.
especially in the rapidly growing and unregulated peri-urban areas of cities. In an address to the 2006 World Planners Congress (held to coincide with the World Urban Forum) which was to have considerable impact amongst planning professionals, then UN-Habitat Executive Director Anna Tibaijuka pointed to planning as a factor which often tends to increase social exclusion in cities through anti-poor measures and a belief that ‘in the planned city … the poor should at best be hidden or at worst swept away’ (Tibaijuka 2006: 5). She went on to point to the ‘urbanization of poverty’ as the most important urban issue of the future, as well as the need to address this as part of an environmental sustainability agenda. She also called on planning practitioners to develop a different approach to planning that is pro-poor and inclusive, and that places the creation of livelihoods at the centre of planning efforts.

While this may be true, and while outdated planning legislation is a major source of urban exclusion, this focus does tend to downplay important new market factors that are driving city development in many parts of the global south, in particular the rapid rise of an urban middle class and resultant ambitions for car ownership and occupation of suburban homes. For example, India’s middle class (mostly urban) is expected to grow from 50 million to 583 million people over the next two decades (McKinsey Quarterly 2007). Simone and Rao (2012), writing on Jakarta, draw attention to the growing population that falls ‘in-between the superblocks and the slum’, which will increasingly shape urban space in terms of its demands for formal housing and facilities and create excessive pressure for the redevelopment of historic and poorer areas. And in Africa the prediction is that vehicle use will climb from 50 million in 2012 to 400 million by 2050 (Institute for Security Studies 2011), thus skewing public investment towards road infrastructure rather than public transport and greatly exacerbating urban sprawl and fragmentation. These economic and consumerist trends are serving to spatially marginalize poor communities in cities of the global south rapidly and effectively, yet the planning response to this is poorly developed, and little attention has been paid to it by global north planning theorists given the ‘levelling out’ of these trends in the more economically advanced regions of the world.

The next section considers the issue of the need to expand the scope of planning theorizing so as to encompass all parts of the world, and those issues which remain neglected in current debates and interests.

**Southern planning theory: what it is not and what it might be**

The section of the chapter above has argued that a very real gap exists in what is regarded as mainstream planning theory, with insufficient attention paid to cities which are largely poor (and highly inequitable) and rapidly growing. Gratifyingly, this has been shifting in recent years (Watson 2013) and attention is increasingly paid to these parts of the world: their material conditions and dynamics, their often very different ways of managing planning, the difficult issues which planners and governments face in these areas, and the sometimes innovative ideas which emerge from them. Reference is made to these ideas near the end of this section. But, given that it is in the global south where the majority of the world’s urban population will in future live, scholarly interest is still relatively marginal.

This raises the need and possibility for what may be called ‘southern planning theory’, to echo Connell’s (2007) proposal for southern theory in the social sciences. The rest of this section addresses this sometimes contentious idea, and considers what such a perspective should not be, and what it might usefully offer.

The very idea of ‘southern planning theory’ or planning theory ‘from the south’ can raise objections. Would this not create dangerous binaries between the two, or repeat the parochialism of what may be regarded as current mainstream planning theory, which produces universal generalizations on the basis of contextual assumptions of planning in cities in relatively small and rather unusual regions of the
world? Would it not suggest that both global north and south regions and cities are relatively homogenous areas capable of categorization, when they are known to be highly diverse, continually in flux and generally resistant to categorization? These objections are justifiable: we cannot aim to replace northern planning theory with southern planning theory, or set up artificial binaries between north and south, and certainly understandings of cities in the global south, and the planning ideas which they might inspire, can neither be generalized to the global north, nor simplistically generalized across the very diverse territories of the global south.

Southern planning theory thus needs to take a position between the universal and the contingent. In a recent paper Healey (2012) acknowledges the shift in the past century, in both planning and the social sciences, from the idea of universally valid approaches to social and economic development to a recognition of place diversity and differing conceptions of what development might mean. The earlier proposition of universally valid ideas of development allowed for the uncritical export of theories about development and planning around the world and the assumption that if such ideas had produced western modernism then they would do so everywhere else. If this is not the case, and if every locality is different, is there anything general that planning thought can offer, or is there anything that can be learnt by one place from another (Healey 2012: 193)? Is there, Healey asks, any ‘centre’ to the planning field?

Healey’s (2012) response to this dilemma is that the seriousness of the urban development challenge in many parts of the world is such that planning cannot back away from some degree of theorizing about these issues, particularly in a time when connections and networks across scales have such important effects on what happens in these places of difference. She therefore argues for the need to understand the ‘contingent universals’ of any situation: in other words, understanding what is specific to a place and what can be shared learning across different localities and contexts. Connell (2007: 224) as well challenges the universalization of western ideas which has occurred in social science, but insists that a form of generalization, through the collective practice of social scientists, has ‘a crucial epistemological function’. ‘Theory’, she argues, ‘is the way we speak beyond the single case. It involves imagination, the search for patterns, the critique of data. It is how we get the criteria for comparisons and the terms of a diagnosis’ (Connell 2007: 225). But, she concludes, it is also about knowing the limits of such theory and where it does not apply.

Healey (2012) develops her argument further, suggesting that any travelling planning idea – as an appropriate generalization – must be accompanied by an ‘origin narrative’ which describes the nature of its context and its local pre-conditions for success. She argues for detailed narrative case studies as vehicles for the transfer of learning, an idea that has long support in the field of planning (Flyvbjerg 2001; Watson 2002b). Her hypothesis then (Healey 2012: 196) is ‘that transnational learning works most productively through rich narratives – in-depth cases – rather than through “best practice” summaries or attempts at typologies which systematize qualities of context and try to match them with qualities of experiences’. What is common from place to place, she suggests, is that planning has a normative orientation and a tradition of debate between situated practices and theoretical ideas.

For planning and planners, this approach begs a critical question: ‘which norms’, in a world where many values are not universal, and where beliefs in what might constitute a good or just city will inevitably vary from place to place and between groups within any one place? For example, the norm of informality which characterizes most southern cities, and which comes about as people step outside of the law in order to provide themselves with shelter and income, is commonly viewed as simply ‘dis-orderliness’ and a ‘violation’ of rules and regulations by wealthier urban residents and by city managers. Reconciling these antagonistic norms will take more than debate. It also does not put to rest (as Healey acknowledges) the reality that developing planning strategies in any context is an inherently political process in which, frequently, planning ideas become attached to a political project involving domination of one group by another (and one might add, involving patronage and corruption as well). Southern planning theory is also not about rejecting all planning theories and ideas emanating from Euro-
American scholars or from these regions as inapplicable to anywhere else. What is important is to understand the assumptions regarding social, economic, political and environmental contexts upon which such theories are based and then to consider the extent to which these assumptions may hold elsewhere. This is not always an easy task as such assumptions are often unspecified and require teasing out to be made clear. Healey’s (2012) call for ‘origin narratives’ attached to planning ideas would helpfully counter this problem of unspecified assumptions. For planning, as well, there are always wider processes (e.g. climate change, global economic change, migration) which affect cities in all parts of the world (although in locally specific ways) and which need a local response. Learning between sites across the world can be vitally important here.

Southern planning theory is also not about a rejection of meta-theoretical perspectives such as post-structuralism, structuralism, or political-economy as inapplicable outside of the global north, although again such perspectives may be rooted in assumptions about society that do not hold everywhere. For example, Connell (2007: 172) refers to Partha Chatterjee’s contrast of different ‘modes of power’ in post-colonial states (which opens up a new range of possibilities for ruling classes to exercise their domination) with Foucault’s ‘capillary power’ which resonates more closely with a European context. But various attempts, at least in sociology, to create indigenous theory which can challenge the conceptual system of metropolitan sociology seem to have led nowhere, Connell (2007: 96) suggests. Certainly the ethno-philosophy movement involving African scholars has tended to produce a culture-bound idea of knowledge. More useful, following African philosopher Hountondji (in Epstein and Morrell 2012: 479), is a ‘critical appropriation of the existing knowledge’ which involves learning even from the most biased work from the west. Chatterjee’s proposed understanding of power in post-colonial societies using Foucauldian theoretical lenses in critical fashion could be an example of this.

What, then, could the concept of southern planning theory offer? A view of planning from the global south argues for contextualized and historicized grounded research which also recognizes the location of any place and process in a system of global relations. The comparative case study research method, tracking common issues across possibly very different north–south contexts, is one way of doing this. More recently there has been a revival of interest in comparative case research in the urban studies field. McFarlane (2010) refers to comparative urban research across the global north–south divide as a methodology, a ‘mode of thought’ and a strategy which informs how urban theory is constituted, and how existing theory can be unsettled and destabilized. Robinson (2011) also argues for comparative urban research across the globe which acknowledges how cities are linked together through various global networks, and which works towards an international and post-colonial approach to urban studies. Parochial theory which claims universal status can be unsettled through multi-site and multi-directional circuits of comparative theory generation. In essence both authors are suggesting a realignment of the geopolitics of knowledge production by considering all urban places as having the potential to contribute to the pool of potential understanding and theory building.

The term ‘southern’ planning theory echoes the Nietzschean idea of perspectivism: that all ideas come from a particular perspective or position and there is no one truth or answer to planning problems that is applicable in all contexts. The notion of perspectivism has been used as well in feminist theory (in particular the work of Donna Haraway 1991), which challenged unspoken masculine bias in social theory, the belief in objectivity in science and ‘the view from no-where’. This is the retreat from universalism that Healey (2012) refers to above, and it recognizes that all planning ideas are both rooted in a specific context and are interpreted in particular ways by theorists who do planning work, depending on their particular conceptual lenses, biases and world views.

Following the arguments of both Connell (2007) in sociology and Comaroff and Comaroff (2012) in anthropology, southern planning theory can offer important perspectives on the workings of
planning everywhere. Connell (2007) insists that working at a world scale (using comparative case study research across global north and south) avoids generalizing from the metropole and places the relationship between metropole and periphery (still marked, she argues, by processes of colonization) as a central explanatory element. Comaroff and Comaroff (2012: 1–2), as well, suggest that the global south offers privileged insights into the workings of the world at large: while the project of modernity has always been a north–south collaboration, it is in the global south that the impacts of this relationship have been most starkly felt. This is in line with current post-colonial scholarship which acknowledges the ongoing asymmetrical role of power and knowledge both between and within territories, and which serves to support arguments that colonialism has not ‘gone away’, but has certainly changed its form. The significant point these theorists are making is that global relations of power persistently shape (and are shaped by) local specificities, and the starting point for case or comparative case research in planning needs to be an understanding of this dynamic.

Southern planning theory still needs to be developed. New planning concepts and innovative practices are gradually being identified and theorized: Yiftachel’s (2006) ‘gray spaces’ of ethnocracy, Watson’s (2009) ‘conflicting rationalities’, Roy’s (2011) subaltern urbanisms and state informality, Porto Alegre’s participatory budgeting (in Healey 2012), new forms of co-production (Albrechts 2012), and others, are all ideas emerging from global south contexts which offer insights to planning thought in other parts of the world as well. Problems such as responding to climate change and resource depletion affect all parts of the world but implementing policies to address them need to embed in the specificities of the local. Far more work, and particularly cross-globe comparative work, needs to be done to build truly international planning theory. Epstein and Morrell (2012: 469) argue in the context of scholarship on education that southern theory can simultaneously dethrone and enrich northern, mainstream theory, and the same can be argued for planning theory.

Conclusion

This chapter has argued that a long history of planning scholarship dominated by particular regions of the world has not served planning systems or cities well. Many of the urban and spatial problems currently experienced by southern cities are attributable to failed planning systems and models adopted unthinkingly from Euro-American territories. And at a time when the global demographic and economic shift is placing unprecedented pressures on global south cities, planning scholarship has little to offer in terms of a way forward.

In response this chapter has suggested the need for southern planning theory, but introduces this term with great caution. It can be all too easy to misunderstand and misinterpret such a term. The second part of this chapter therefore explores what such a concept does not mean, and also what it could offer. In particular it proposes a perspective or way of seeing the world (in planning), not a retreat into the parochial problems of global south cities. As such it has the potential to enrich all planning theory and to start to build truly international planning scholarship, underpinned by particular methodological approaches which recognize the necessary situatedness of the planning endeavor wherever it takes place.

References

Learning planning from the south


V. Watson


Notes

URBAN LAND MARKETS
A southern exposure

Richard Harris

The single most important change imposed by the modern world system is that it established a systematic legal basis for what is called title to land.

(Emmanuel Wallerstein 2012: 7)

The struggle of every society is to find a system of tenure that will, under the … circumstances of the time, best optimise the contrary pulls of productivity and social justice.

(William Doebele 1987: 8)

Yidi shengcai – get rich through land.

(modern Chinese saying)

Urban land is peculiar. Farmers care about land quality because their livelihood depends on it. Except for avid gardeners, however, city folk hardly care. What matters is what we can do with a particular parcel. This may be affected by municipal rules, but it always depends on who else has rights of access or use. A house, factory, store or office is useless unless its occupant knows who is not allowed in. Such rights of use and exclusion constitute land tenure, often confirmed in a registered legal document, or ‘title’. Tenure is about the relationships among people, more than about people and land, a fact still exemplified in many societies by the differing legal rights of husbands and wives in the family home (McAuslan 2000; Payne 2002). As social relationships change, so does tenure, which is what Emmanuel Wallerstein is saying above. But, as he also implies, the reverse is also true. Tenure matters. When it is altered, in legal, economic, social and political terms the ground shifts. Lately this has happened most dramatically in China. But, as William Doebele above points out, each society must work things out for itself. They always have.

Although city people may not care about the quality of the land, they still need it. The homeless woman must have a place to lay her head at night, even if it is a commercial recycling container (a recent case in Toronto), and we cannot conceive of homes or businesses – even ‘cloud’ computing, which depends on massive servers – without land. Land is valuable, above all in urban areas where, by definition, demand is high and supply limited. Value translates into price, and the high cost of urban land challenges most those who must survive on low incomes. Less obviously, high prices often link land to national and global capital markets. To acquire property, buyers often borrow, and urban land
markets depend on capital flows. Because the sums involved can be huge, markets in land also shape	hose in finance; a pattern evident in the global financial crisis of 2008 which was precipitated by the
flow of capital into risky mortgages, especially in the United States (Lanchester 2010; Lo 2012; US
Financial Crisis Inquiry Commission 2011). Comparable crises have affected real estate in the global
south, and some believe that China’s property boom is now riding for a fall. Although urban land
markets are local, they are intertwined with global flows.

Value translates into price because markets are now the way urban land is allocated. Alternatives are
possible: rights to land can be apportioned by a central agency − a government, or a tribal chief. But
private markets, where land goes to the highest bidder, have become the norm. China provides the
largest example of recent change, but the market trend has also recently shaped cities in South and
Southeast Asia, in eastern Europe, in sub-Saharan Africa and indeed almost everywhere. Arguably, this
has made land allocation more efficient and raised productivity, but at the cost of rising social inequality
(Hsing 2010). Regardless, markets rule, which is why this survey of urban land reviews in detail how
land markets operate, before outlining the forces that shape them, and how those markets, and our
thinking about them, have evolved since 1945.

In the global south in particular, rapid change underlies the most distinctive aspects of urban land
markets. One of the leading agents of change has been rapid urbanization since 1945, first in Latin
America, then in North Africa and the Middle East, east and Southeast Asia, and now Africa and South
Asia (Angel 2012). This has been driven by the globalization of communications, credit, supply chains,
outsourcing and labour markets. Urban growth overwhelmed the capacity of cities to manage land, and
a great deal of illegal settlement has occurred. Such ‘informal’ development is the most visibly different
feature of cities in the global south. Many writers have implied the distinctiveness of land markets and
built environments in the global south means that they must be viewed apart, and hold no lessons for
the way we think about cities elsewhere. In fact, the contrast has never been so neat and, as I discuss in
the conclusion, is increasingly becoming blurred.

How urban land markets work
Markets work by trading commodities, and as a commodity urban land is weird. It is immobile, which
means that a local shortage can coexist with a surplus elsewhere. Land markets are local, with their own
prices and trends. This is even true within a metropolitan area: parcels in one neighbourhood may be
worth much more than in another because they are closer to workplaces, stores and good schools, or
have a view. At the finest-grained scale, although developers may standardize subdivisions, no two lots
are equivalent, even on the same block. Urban land resists standardization. As the old cliché goes, at
each scale what matters is location, location and location. For all that, because land is tangibly secure it
attracts investors, sometimes from afar.

The vital role of government
Land is also unusual in being intimately bound up with government. Its immobility means that what
happens on one parcel affects nearby sites. Stereotypical examples include a polluting factory or rowdy
bar. These ‘spillover’ effects, or ‘externalities’, affect the value of neighbouring property but are not
compensated, or regulated, unless authority steps in, usually local government, through zoning,
building regulation, or noise by-laws. Property owners need government, and in one form or another
urban planning is ubiquitous (Watson 2009).

And government needs property, especially the revenue associated with it. The immobility of land
helps governments monitor and tax it: a factory owner can threaten to relocate to a lower-tax
jurisdiction, but landowners are stuck. This might suggest that the evasion of land taxes and development
controls is rare. Not so. Sometimes evasion is a matter of government incompetence or incapacity, but a larger issue is at stake. Municipalities not only tax land but usually depend on that tax. They have an incentive to promote development and to work with those who make it happen, including landowners, developers, brokers, builders, and lenders. Hence Miriam Dossal (2010: xxix, 216) uses the ‘politics of land use’ to frame her entire history of Mumbai, suggesting that the city has recently been shaped by a ‘builder-politician combine’. Akin to the ‘growth machine’ identified in many American cities (Logan and Molotch 1987), it is the sort of coalition that, in larger cities, has acquired links with global capital and international donors (Benjamin 2008). Linking land interests with local government is normal and often legal, but sometimes not. After all ‘legitimacy’, like price, ‘is a matter of negotiation’ (Baróss and van der Linden 1990: 4, 11; c.f. Payne 2002: 12).

Another reason for government involvement is that land is continuous. There is no ambiguity about the boundaries of a car, but those of a parcel of land require social agreement. They may be surveyed, mapped and recorded, along with ownership, in a registry office, or they may be described orally with reference to landmarks. Either way, an agreed methodology is needed, backed by a legitimate authority. Courts, enforcing state law, are a prime candidate. We cannot speak about urban land, then, without reference to law and the state (Fernandes and Varley 1998).

The formal market ideal and its realities

Assuming that governments do their job, economists have defined a market ideal (Evans 2004). This ‘liberal paradigm’ combines limited state supervision with private freehold ownership, recognizing that sites may also be leased (rented), usually on a long-term basis to ensure lessees find it worthwhile to erect decent buildings. Ownership is unambiguously recorded. Coupled with the enforcement of contracts, this minimizes transaction costs and attracts long-term credit (mortgages), needed because land is expensive. Land-ownership is dispersed, not concentrated, guaranteeing competition. Because ownership is clear, governments know who to tax. On this basis, constrained by master zoning plans that define metro-wide patterns, land goes to the ‘highest and best use’: that which can pay the most, presumably because it is best able to make effective use of the site.

Many policy recommendations about urban land markets have been based on this model. The most notable is ‘titling’, or ‘regularization’. This is the official encouragement and registration of a privatized form of land tenure, where ownership and/or parcel boundaries are currently ambiguous. Conservative historians see the institution of private property as one of Europe’s major contributions to the global south (e.g. Ferguson 2011). Its formalization through titling was advocated by colonial administrators and in the contemporary period by international agencies. The case was often made in a nuanced way (Simpson 1976: 9, 230), and frequently qualified (Dunkerley 1983: 12). The debate was revived by the arguments of Hernando de Soto (2000). Proponents argue that clear title provides security. Apart from psychological benefits, this helps owners obtain mortgages, perhaps to start a business. Critics point out that titling is costly, requires professional skills that few municipal governments possess, and causes price inflation which benefits current owners and speculators but reduces the stock of affordable land and housing (Payne et al. 2009). It may also serve elite interests: rather than being the answer, the ‘legal veneer’ of titling is ‘a political question’ (Wallerstein 2012: 8). Many argue that governments can provide security by signalling recognition in other ways, notably by providing infrastructure such as piped water. This is an important debate but, regardless, urban land markets in the global south clearly depart from any sort of ideal. Ownership is often ambiguous because it is undocumented; credit is often unavailable or too expensive; for millions, security is fragile and, partly as a result, conditions are dire.

In fact, urban land markets in the global south are amazingly diverse. In recent decades, and in most world regions, the emergence of modern land markets has led to areas of western-style development (Dick and Rimmer 1998; Zhang 2010). This includes downtown redevelopment, suburban shopping
malls and gated residential communities for the middle classes. Many projects take the form of Common Interest Developments (CID), in which units are owned privately but common facilities are held jointly. Owners pay regular maintenance fees, while management is undertaken by a residents’ committee. Much of the growth in CIDs, and other western-style developments, has been demand-led. Rising incomes, first in the Asian Tigers (Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong, South Korea), then in the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa), and most recently in countries like Turkey and Mexico, has created a middle class that can afford versions of western lifestyles. Helped by municipalities, developers and landowners have obliged, and along with success they have attracted transnational development companies, banks, and investors. These have helped solidify the emergence of market practices similar to those in Europe or North America. But these initiatives are always influenced by local cultures and legal traditions: gated communities, an increasingly common form of residential development which may appear to be a US export, commonly also build on local traditions, such as Chinese danwei factory housing (Glasze et al. 2006). A persistent difference with the north is in the extent that state agencies provide finance or take charge (Zhang 2010).

Huge profits are at stake. Urban land is more valuable than rural, commonly by a factor of more than twenty. A key issue, everywhere, is who gets the ‘development gain’ associated with land conversion. Possibilities include the original owner; speculators who simply buy and sell; developers who buy, develop and perhaps install services; and the local municipality, which may have considerable autonomy or be largely a pawn of a higher level of government. It is impossible to know what share goes to each: none disclose information. Although patterns vary, speculators and professional developers probably profit most, because they know the market best (Doebele 1987: 17).

Occasionally, governments themselves undertake development and realize most of the profit (Wu and Shen 2013). Chinese local governments that recently acquired land from farmers and then re-sold made a profit of 4000 per cent (Ong 2012). They have an enormous incentive to promote development, a factor in China’s recent property boom. Elsewhere, governments tap into the development gain through a capital gains or land transfer taxes. But they cannot keep track of the market. In India, for example, the stamp (land transfer) tax is sometimes evaded by buyers and sellers who agree to lie about transaction prices (Alun et al. 2004). Politicians and officials also share in the development gain through bribery. With so much at stake, developers bribe to get development approval, and poorly paid officials readily go along. This can happen anywhere, but bribery is especially common in the global south, including India (Dossal 2010: xxxiv), Iran (Bayat 1997) and Pakistan (Hasan 2004). In India, for example, a survey in 1994 found that one third of slum dwellers had to pay bureaucrats ‘speed money’ to get service from public agencies (Perry 1998: 92). Poorly-paid officials often depend on bribe income; personal, patron–client relationships are part of many cultures; and the government’s ability to enforce rules is limited (Mattingly 1993). With the stakes high, rules weakly enforced, and with cities growing rapidly, fringe land attracts interest from many entrepreneurs, including the unscrupulous.

**Informal elements in markets**

The unscrupulous are most active in the informal developments that often spring up next door to the formal. Informality is a slippery term with several meanings (Roy 2005). Here it refers to legitimate (non-criminal) *types* of economic activity that, when undertaken in a particular manner or place, violate regulations or laws. Its existence depends on state law, against which it is defined. Laws, and their enforcement, are political, and so the regulation of informality is unavoidably a tool of governance (Leaf 2005).

Informality in land markets takes various forms (Davis 2006: 40; Baróss and van der Linden 1990: 3). An exhaustive survey found over 20 major types in Cairo alone (Soliman 2004: 135). In one sense, it is possible to speak of degrees of informality, of a continuum, depending on how many laws are
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broken. Commonly, however, assuming that land rights are fundamental, a distinction is made between squatter and irregular settlements. The former involves the invasion and use of land to which settlers have no legal claim, while the latter arise where residents have land rights but where settlement violates one or more state regulations. The municipality may have authorized a different type, or no development for that site; construction may be acceptable, but no building permits have been sought; permitted structures may violate building codes; perhaps the developer has failed to provide required services. Some neighbourhoods are irregular from birth, and remain so; some may be regularized, by being improved, or through the relaxation of standards; and some become irregular through illegal adaptations and/or use. In Cairo, Istanbul and other Middle-Eastern countries, for example, where buildings have flat roofs, illegal storeys often are added (Balaban 2010). Irregularities exist everywhere. In Hamilton, Ontario, about one third of new homes are started before permits have been issued, and about the same proportion of apartments in private dwellings probably violate health and/or building codes (Buist 2010); in London, England, some terraced (row) housing has sprouted illegal backyard huts to house immigrant poor − ‘sheds for beds’ (O’Sullivan 2012); hundreds of thousands of Texans, mostly Hispanic, live in semi-legal colonias (Mukhija 2012). The difference is that in the global south such violations are often the norm. In Mexico City, for example, about three fifths of the population lives in some type of informal settlement. Informality often defines the city in the global south, but exists everywhere.

Squatting

In the global north, a deceptively sharp line is often drawn around the homeless. In truth, homelessness shades into various forms of precarious housing, including couch-surfing. Broadly defined, in many cities in the global south it is widespread, commonly taking the form of squatting (Tipple and Speak 2009). This entails the construction of temporary dwellings by people who cannot afford anything else (Jiusto 2012). Because land has not been surveyed and subdivided in advance, settlement patterns are highly irregular. The quality of the building varies from shelters made from packing cases and plastic sheeting, through wooden shacks, to mud-brick or concrete-block dwellings, depending on how secure the occupants perceive their situation to be. Invasions may occur in dribs and drabs or, relying on safety in numbers, through organized collective invasion. Invasions were common in Latin America in the 1950s and 1960s, but much less so now (Doebele 1987). More generally, squatting has become less common than other types of informal settlement.

Fortunate squatters get access to land for free, though in some cities the police charge even the homeless a ‘rent’ to use the sidewalks at night (Berner 2012). Regardless, markets soon emerge. Settlers scrounge materials and erect dwellings, creating economic value. Builder-owners rent rooms, and eventually sell. The buyers rarely use credit, and the purchase price is also limited by the insecurity − real and perceived − of squatted land. But, in the favelas of Brazil, as in the slums of Ahmedabad and Nairobi, markets develop (Amis 1984; Baruah 2012; Perlman 2010).

Most squatting occurs on publicly owned land, because governments hesitate to eject people who are, after all, citizens and may be voters too. Certainly, many governments do clear squatter settlements, often with force, in part as a deterrent. More commonly in recent decades, clearance is linked with appeasement. In Delhi, for example, in the early 2000s between 60−100,000 dwellings were demolished annually, while squatters were relocated to resettlement colonies (Berner 2012). Typically, the gesture was inadequate: only a minority of families were rehoused and, because colonies were at the urban fringe, the supposed beneficiaries soon returned to the city, often becoming squatters again.

Instead of stamping out squatting, many governments have chosen to live with it (Gilbert 1990). The norm has been uneasy toleration, because governments simply cannot house all those in need. Even in the developed world, cities such as Chicago and Birmingham could not afford to meet the challenge of rehousing the tens of thousands of people who have been displaced by government-sponsored slum
clearance (Flood 2012). In cities like Delhi, Mexico City or Ibadan, millions of people could be involved, and rehousing is understood to be beyond the capacity of any government (Keivani and Werna 2001: 84–6; Tibajjuka 2009: 39–40, 169–71). Clearance solves nothing; some may leave the city, but many move to another slum. In theory, there are moral considerations. In practice, the calculations are political. Clearance may win support from business interests and the middle class who want the city ‘cleaned up’, and made more attractive to investors and tourists. But it alienates low-income households, and squatters everywhere. If the city is any sort of democracy, squatters possess a currency: votes. Where they make up a high proportion of the population, governments must tolerate them.

Many governments go beyond this, learning how to manipulate the situation to their own advantage. They may do this in different ways. Individual officials, including planners and building inspectors, may take advantage of their powers by bending rules in return for bribes and favours. Political parties, or individual politicians, may buy support by promising to protect, regularize, or service a settlement, knowing that such services communicate security of tenure (Benjamin 2008; Gilbert 1990; Simon 1992: 134). If they deliver those services, they have secured a base of support. In time, the whole political system may come to be shaped by such methods of governance. Buying votes with promises is, of course, a hallowed tradition; large-scale squatter settlements simply offer politicians in the global south new scope for invention.

Irregular settlements offer similar political opportunities, but with variations on the theme. Such settlements go under various names (‘pirate’, ‘unauthorized’), some now widespread (Doebelle 1977; Davis 2006). Because its legal status is clear, land in irregular settlements has a price and is affordable only to the lower middle class and above (Durand-Lasserve and Royston 2002: 6). In Delhi during the 1990s, they housed a quarter of the city’s population, and many residents ‘were confident about the future regularisation of their colony’ (Dupont 2005: 330). Indeed, irregular settlements may appeal to the rich who, in Delhi as in Dallas or Madrid, need not fear municipal politicians overmuch. In one of Delhi’s larger irregular settlements, for example, ‘sprawling villas, surrounded by large parks and protected by high walls’ even featured swimming pools (ibid.: 323). Irregular settlements, then, illustrate how informality transcends social boundaries.

As in squatter settlements, vote-buying is one consideration. But because irregular settlements are worth more, economic incentives also count. Irregular settlements are almost as profitable as those that are legal. Here, however, more of the development gain is realized through under-the-table payments. Because their developers are operating in areas, or in ways, that contravene municipal regulations, they need political as well as economic smarts, trading an unstable mix of votes, money, and/or favours with politicians, officials, builders, lenders and buyers (Doebelle 1977; Goldstein 2004; Nkurunziza 2007). To western eyes, their prominence in the global south is noteworthy, but their more formally organized counterparts in Montreal and Melbourne often exert comparable types of influence behind the scenes. In truth, the motives of these developers are normal enough − to make a profit by serving a need − and they do more to house the lower half of the population than governments and formal developers combined. Their strategies are normal too: buy cheap, sell dear. A few ‘colonizers’ (India) or ‘loteadores’ (Bolivia) hold on to their developments and become ‘shacklords’ (South Africa) (Cross 2006: 257; Goldstein 2004: 76). Like formal developers, however, most move on.

From the perspective of the state, and indeed of local residents, it is possible to speak of degrees of informality, ranging from a squatter shack to a property that violates a minor building code. This is a useful way of thinking, underlining the fact that all cities contain informality. At all scales, it coexists with formal markets, albeit in different ways. Formal developers hire workers through informal labour markets to save money, and those tradesmen often occupy informal settlements. This produces striking
juxtapositions. New, western-style cities such as Chandigarh and Brasilia soon sprouted shacktowns. More typically, the interdependence of formal and informal settlements may be seen at the fringe of existing cities, such as Bangalore (Benjamin 2008). Frequently, the same developers are active in both types of developments, as are the politicians and bureaucrats who give approval, whether with official letters or a nod and a wink. And over time, buildings and neighbourhoods pass from one category to the other, as they are improved and acknowledged, or as they deteriorate and are illegally adapted. Formal and informal are co-dependent.

Even extreme informality is not necessarily inefficient or anarchic. Squatter and irregular settlements may not be controlled by the state, but they regulate themselves, with varying success. In Yajouz, Jordan, in the 1970s, settlers ignored state law and handled property allocation and disputes themselves (Razzaz 1994). Sometimes, community organization has preceded settlement, as with the Peruvian land invasions of the 1950s and 1960s (Lobo 1992); more commonly, as in Rio de Janeiro’s favelas, they emerge during or after settlement as residents organize to prevent displacement or to secure public services (Perlman 2010). In irregular settlements, they may be organized by a developer or political entrepreneur. The power of community groups varies, but many influence how land is developed and used. Their activities parallel those of the residents’ associations that run CIDs. Some work better than others, but they routinely become an important part of the local political ecology, a factor that politicians and administrators must take into account.

Even today, not all land is allocated through the market. Especially in Africa, much rural land is communally held (McAuslan 2000). This becomes relevant for urban residents as cities expand, creating peri-urban areas where different forms of land tenure uneasily coexist and overlap. Communal tenure takes varied forms, having evolved over centuries before being adapted under colonial rule, and it continues to change. Although the fact is often overlooked, it can accommodate rights that are specific to individuals and families, but it is not supposed to be alienable (marketable) by them (Krueckeberg 1999). It is difficult to reconcile with private ownership: as one African chief supposedly said ‘land belongs to a vast family of which many are dead, few are living and countless numbers are still unborn’ (Simpson 1976: 224). How such land is used and developed may follow rules not recognized by the state, and therefore be ‘informal’. These rules should not be romanticized. Indigenous governance may embody the law of local elites, and is often patriarchal. That is why some argue that individualized land titling can help emancipate women, but only if titles are granted to men and women equally (Baruah 2012; Varley 2007). But communal forms should not be dismissed. They have their own, geographically variable logic and legitimacy (Fernandes and Varley 1998). Such situations of ‘legal pluralism’ exist, especially in urban fringe areas, in many parts of the world (Tamanaha 2000; cf. Krueckeberg 1999; Razzaz 1994). They pose a unique challenge: whose rules to follow?

In the media and in popular surveys, informality is associated with poverty and slums (Davis 2006). Of course, many squatters, especially, must endure appalling conditions: shacks on stilts above mud flats subject to floods; cardboard shelters huddled at the end of a deafening runway; precarious tenements where slurries of human waste creep down an alley. But these scenes are untypical even of squatter settlements, and certainly their irregular cousins. These offer decent accommodation more affordably than formal-sector alternatives, because land is cheaper, services may at first be lacking, and because development is subject to fewer bureaucratic delays. Urban fringe squatter settlements are cheaper still, although those close to city centres are cheap only because they are horribly cramped. Formal developers erect skyscrapers to help spread the cost of inner-city land, but squatters often subsist at ground level. This justifies densification proposals, such as Mumbai’s decision to redevelop the Dharavi slum (Dossal 2010: 224−5). This is replacing low-rise shacks with high-rise towers that, arguably, will cost no more per square foot.

Informal development is too complex to be praised uncritically, or demonized. It is a pervasive force within urban land markets in the global south, rather than a separate sector to be nurtured or excised.
It shapes the social and economic geography of cities, as it does political systems at the local and sometimes the national levels. Its rise, fall and transformation is bound up with larger global forces and hence the fate of nations.

**Forces shaping urban land markets since 1945**

Living conditions in cities in the global south have attracted a lot of attention from researchers, development agencies and NGOs. Naturally, many have discussed what policies are needed to improve those conditions. Policies make a difference, but the major forces shaping land markets are largely beyond any government’s control.

**Unplanned forces**

Although actions such as Mumbai’s attract attention, the greatest forces shaping land markets are unplanned. The most obvious is the pace and pattern of urbanization, which has affected almost everything about land markets, including tenure and formality (United Nations 2003). Arguably, the liberal paradigm of private land title coupled with government regulation is best suited to the urban environment. Here, where land is valuable, recorded precision about boundaries and title matter, while rapid economic and social change puts a premium on flexibility in ownership and use. At the same time, the typically urban juxtaposition of users requires regulation. At any rate, and with the notable exception of the communist era, as cities have grown and expanded, this set of liberal practices has colonized the expanding urban fringe.

But rapid urban growth poses a challenge. It is fuelled by the poor, whether they be city-dwellers with large families (the middle classes rarely have large families) or more probably migrants. The latter may move from rural areas; some are refugees from war or famine, or immigrants from a poorer country. All hope to make a better life, or indeed any kind of life, in the city. They are in no position to pay the market rate for formal accommodation. And so rapid growth begets informality, and as the rate of growth rises so does the squatters’ share, a pattern traceable from the nineteenth century, when unprecedented urbanization reshaped the regions that we now refer to as the developed world, and continuing into the decades since 1945, when it has transformed the global south (Payne 1989).

A second, related force has been the globalization of markets for labour, finance, manufactured parts and finished products. This trend has been gathering pace for five centuries, since the beginnings of European world-wide exploration. But, like urbanization, it has gathered momentum since 1945, reshaping the global division of labour. The new possibilities for urban employment, notably in China and Southeast Asia, have attracted millions of rural–urban migrants to urban centres. Apart from its impact on urban growth, globalization has affected urban land markets in two ways. First, in many countries it has helped raise average incomes, creating a rapidly growing middle-class demand for formal, and the better irregular, developments. In some countries, including Ghana and Bangladesh, remittances by emigrants, who sometimes return to retire bringing new wealth, has also had a significant impact. Second, it has contributed to the rising income inequality that has affected most nations, fuelling the pressure on the cheapest types of informal-sector development.

**Policy initiatives**

A range of governments and agencies have sought to shape urban land markets. They have done so by influencing the pace of urbanization; by promoting specific forms of tenure security; and generally by fostering the development of land markets.
Most governments do not have an explicit policy for urbanization, but exceptions prove the rule. The British in colonial east Africa, South Africa under the apartheid regime, and China today with its hukou system, have limited rural-urban migration. At most, they have slowed the inevitable. More typically, governments have failed to accommodate rapid population growth. Many inherited or adopted inappropriate, western-style planning regulations that were designed to contain urban growth, and most have lacked the information and management skills to guide growth (Mattingly 1993; Watson 2009). And so they have inadvertently made the problem worse, contributing to rising land prices and the expansion of informal settlements.

Policies with respect to tenure have been more consistent and systemic, especially since the 1980s. Until decolonization between 1945 and the 1960s, the major influences were European colonial powers, including Portugal and Spain (Latin America), Britain (especially India, sub-Saharan Africa, the Caribbean), France (especially Africa), and the Netherlands (Indonesia). Policy details varied between nations, and over time. Britain, the dominant power by 1850, attempted to destroy, and then reconstruct customary tenure as a way of ruling through indigenous chiefs (McAuslan 2000). In the later years of colonialism, however, the emphasis shifted to replacement of customary tenure as a means of promoting development. Such policies were then taken up by international agencies, including the World Bank, which advocated the titling programmes discussed earlier. Especially since the 1980s, many agencies and governments have recognized that, apart from their practical value, municipal services in informal settlements are at least as effective as titling in providing security of tenure. As part of ‘settlement upgrading’, servicing has been widely advocated and undertaken (United Nations 2003). One of the most effective has been the Indonesian kampung improvement programme (Majale et al. 2011: 8).

During the colonial era, colonizers often found it convenient to rule through indigenous elites, thereby preserving communal tenures that kept land off the market. Under communist rule, from the late 1940s some nations took this further by nationalizing both communal and private land. Officially, markets were prohibited throughout the Soviet bloc, China, Vietnam and several African countries, including Ethiopia and Tanzania. But growing disillusionment with communist methods of government, the relaxation of controls in China after 1978, and the demise of the Soviet Union in 1991 eventually led to a rapid reversal. In particular, China has enacted laws to define, protect and promote private property, together with property markets (Hsing 2010; Wu and Shen 2013).

Elsewhere, titling and tenure security has been linked to broader programmes to create and extend formal land markets. These include attempts to improve land management by gathering and recording information about land-ownership and use, and to develop lending institutions for mortgage credit. Such programmes were part of a market enabling strategy which, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, was seen as the best way of improving urban housing for poor households in the global south.

The evolution of markets, and market thinking, since 1945

Modified deliberately, as well as by uncontrollable forces, urban land has increasingly been shaped by market forces since 1945, and so has the way experts think about it. Two periods may be identified. In the first, extending until the late 1970s, the rise of communism kept markets at bay in many countries, not only those under communist rule. Socialist and social-democratic governments in India, in parts of Latin America and in sub-Saharan Africa, acquired and regulated land, with the aim of building housing for the poor. In many parts of the global south, including China, India and large parts of Africa, incomes stagnated or even fell, inhibiting the growth of a domestic middle class that could afford formal market housing. Notable exceptions were the four Asian Tigers. Where urbanization was happening most rapidly, in Latin America, squatting on state land became the dominant form of informal settlement and was at first perceived to lie outside the market (Gilbert 1990).
In this context, debates between researchers and policy makers were polarized between those who emphasized free-market efficiency and those who advocated the achievement of social justice through socialist-style redistribution. Because it rejected state solutions but appeared to fall outside the market, squatting, combined with self-help construction, was variously condemned, romanticized as an expression of grassroots agency, and eventually acknowledged as necessary (Doebele 1983).

Since the 1980s, and with gathering momentum, markets have become dominant almost everywhere, and this has shifted the academic debate. The influence of communism, and socialism, dissipated; the pace of urbanization and globalization increased; the rise of neoliberal thinking within international agencies and national governments led to support for market-enabling strategies. Some squatter settlements were cleared, but many were at least partially regularized. As available public land became scarce, more informal low-income settlement took the form of irregular subdivisions rather than of squatting (Payne 2002). The line between formal and informal, once perceived to be sharp, became blurred. The rise of a middle class in many rapidly urbanizing countries, such as Brazil, China and Turkey, led to a rapid expansion of formal land development. With land markets as with incomes, the line between the developed and the developing worlds — always debated — became problematic.

To some extent, the growing influence of markets in land has reflected the rise of neoliberal thinking, but the reverse effect has been greater: new circumstances have shifted the academic and policy debate. For most observers, the question is no longer whether land should be allocated through markets, but how those markets should be structured. It is no longer obvious, for example, that the western democratic model of governance, once taken for granted, is always the most effective. The modern Chinese version clearly has problems, notably by promoting extravagant development, but it has helped deliver major improvements to hundreds of millions, and within a generation. Then, too, the growth of irregular settlements at the expense of squatting, and sometimes of formal development, has encouraged researchers to acknowledge that formal and informal processes are intertwined. It has raised insistent questions about how to manage such settlements, illegal but necessary. Markets now rule in the pages of academic and policy journals, just as they do in the cities of the global south.

Concluding comments

Recent changes to land markets in the cities of the global south, then, have altered the way academics — most of whom are western by training, if not by birth — think about those places. It is now demonstrably impossible to draw a sharp line between two, or even three, types of cities and nations. Just as significantly, these changes have compelled us to revise how we think about land markets everywhere. It no longer seems plausible to invoke the idea of a singular, pure, formal land market, even as an ideal. Perhaps this is the most significant insight to be derived from viewing urban land from a southern perspective. Informality has always been ubiquitous; now, more people recognize it as inevitable and often legitimate. It provides housing solutions, especially to lower-income households, that formal markets cannot. Sometimes, these are solutions to problems that were created by overzealous or overly rigid governments. As a matter of fact, both formal and informal markets are organized in obviously varied ways in different countries. Each is rooted, or embedded, in unique cultural traditions, including attitudes towards land, the state, forms of tenure and the organization of construction and mortgage credit (Leaf 2005). In many places, for example China and Egypt, the state has collaborated with and sponsored developers in ways that blur the line between governmental and private sectors (Soliman 2004; Zhang 2010). This works in various ways. Depending on the context, different forms of market organization can work equally well — or badly, of course. Any attempt to impose a singular market vision is likely to be misguided, and to do more harm than good. Despite globalization, land markets are still local, and at least some aspects of market thinking must be too.
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Arguably, this has always been true, everywhere. After all, legal traditions between France and England, the United States and Japan, have always differed, and with varying results. For a time, and to most observers, it appeared that such differences might be overlooked; they paled by comparison with land traditions in the developing world, and it seemed possible to imagine a long-run global convergence. Those who were aware of long-term historical trends always doubted this (Powelson 1988). Lately, the economic and geopolitical rise of many nations in the global south has shown that these doubts were well-founded. Nations are fashioning new, apparently effective forms of markets. And if, in terms of land tenure as well as informality, there is more than one way to grow a city, it follows that everyone might have something to teach.

References


Urban land markets


See also the following resources

13

THE URBANIZATION–DEVELOPMENT NEXUS IN THE BRICS

Ivan Turok

Linking the process of urbanization to forces that can propel economic and social development is one of the major challenges of the twenty-first century (Beall et al. 2010). The problem arises because the urban population of low- and middle-income countries is predicted to double from two to four billion between 2000 and 2030 (World Bank 2013). The United Nations reinforces the point: ‘Virtually all of the expected growth in the world population (until 2050) will be concentrated in the urban areas of the less developed regions’ (UNDESAPD 2012: 3). With 42 per cent of the world’s current population, the BRICS1 will be major contributors to this phenomenon.

There is already considerable evidence from countries such as India, Brazil and South Africa that large-scale urbanization without growth and development can cause enormous social dislocation and intractable problems in overcrowded settlements lacking basic services (Martine et al. 2008; UN-Habitat 2010). If and when the population influx fails to gain a foothold in urban labour markets, escalating hardship and frustration in marginalized communities is likely to spark social disorder and conflict (Saunders 2010). This is why about three-quarters of governments in developing countries are concerned about urbanization and have policies to reduce rural–urban migration (UNDESAPD 2012).

Yet history shows that in most regions of the world, urbanization has also been accompanied by human ingenuity, higher productivity and greater economic dynamism, although these benefits have often been less conspicuous and slower to materialize than the social and environmental costs (Jacobs 1984; Hall 1998, 2009; Glaeser 2011). Over time buoyant urban economies generate rising employment, higher living standards, better designed built environments and more taxes to pay for improved public infrastructure and community facilities. China’s recent experience epitomizes this process in some respects and explains why urbanization is now seen as vital to economic development and a national priority to bolster flagging domestic growth and rebalance the economy by strengthening consumer demand (Miller 2012).

A key question for research and policy is whether the very existence of fast expanding urban populations in contemporary conditions of the global south helps to spur economic progress, or whether migration is little more than a consequence of the opportunities available in cities. In other words, does the process of urbanization in and of itself have ‘transformative power’ (UNDESAPD 2012: 1)? The answer to this question has an important bearing on whether urban policy has an economic rationale. If it does, then efforts to stem migration could both impede economic progress and exclude sections of the population from the opportunities this creates. If it doesn’t, urban policy is essentially unproductive and concerned with the distribution of benefits and burdens between urban and rural areas. Similarly,
if urbanization is mainly an effect or outcome of uneven economic development, then it is likely to create all kinds of problems for governments if it outpaces the creation of urban jobs and livelihoods. Excessive urbanization could even undermine the very basis of prosperity.

The purpose of this chapter is to examine the contribution of urbanization and associated policies to inclusive economic development in leading nations of the global south. The BRICS is a grouping of fast growing, middle-income, emerging powers to rival Europe and North America. They accounted for almost half (47 per cent) of the growth in world output between 2000 and 2010, while their share of global production increased from a sixth (17 per cent) to a quarter (26 per cent) (McGranahan and Martine 2014). With four of the ten largest economies in the world, what these states say and do is increasingly important – for urbanization as well as for many other international concerns.

One of the goals of the BRICS is to chart a new paradigm for world development to challenge the hegemony of the global north and its prevailing model of lightly regulated capitalism. The new paradigm is ill-defined at present, and its implications for urbanization and economic inclusion are quite uncertain. The BRICS group is diverse, yet they also share features in common, including their resilience to the recent global downturn, or at least its moderated impact. They all recognize the need to shift their development paths in more equitable and environmentally sustainable directions, although they do not necessarily associate this with urbanization. The chapter argues that urban growth is not automatically or inevitably a progressive force because the negative effects can outweigh the positive, but with careful advance planning and investment in appropriate infrastructure it can contribute to fairer and more durable development.

The first section outlines the conceptual issues surrounding the relationship between urbanization and development, followed by a summary of the global evidence. The next section considers recent patterns of urbanization and development in the BRICS, followed by their experience of policies to deter migration. Subsequent sections consider each country in turn, before the conclusion draws the threads together in arguing that urbanization can strengthen national economies through concentration, efficient infrastructure and functional spatial forms.

The urbanization–development nexus

Urbanization has been closely associated with economic growth and human progress in the north. Historically, the rising share of the population living in cities and towns was accompanied by higher incomes and broader improvements in people’s lives (Jacobs 1984; Hall 1998). Urbanization was bound up with the transition from predominantly agricultural economies to more advanced industrial and service economies, linked to an increasing division of labour and occupational specialization. Economic progress benefited from more people living in cities to stimulate consumer demand, supply labour, and support mutual learning and creativity. It also generated the resources and spurred the civic leadership to upgrade urban infrastructure and improve the spatial arrangement of towns and cities (Briggs 1968; Hunt 2004). The challenges of managing urbanization forced major technological advances in engineering, design and planning of the built environment. Greater efficiency and rising prosperity were the outcomes of what was on the whole a virtuous circle.

An unresolved question from historical experience is how important urbanization was as a driver of economic development. Was it a prime-mover or more of an enabling condition? Similarly, did urbanization always and inevitably stimulate growth, or were other conditions necessary for this relationship to hold? These questions are critical in thinking about the implications for the south, where urbanization is occurring on an unprecedented scale and more rapidly than it did in the north. The socio-economic and environmental consequences for the whole world are therefore far more significant. These issues have been the focus of increasing research in recent years, although many question marks remain.
In theory there are good reasons for thinking that urbanization should contribute to economic development (Duranton and Puga 2004; World Bank 2009; Glaeser 2011). First, concentrations of population in close proximity create markets for firms that are more efficient to supply because of the economies of scale and savings in transport costs. Second, there is a large and expanding workforce for firms to choose from, enabling them to match their specific skill requirements better. Third, larger concentrations of firms mean bigger markets for suppliers and service providers, hence greater specialization, choice and competition between them. Fourth, bigger cities can bear the costs of more sophisticated infrastructure and logistics, including ports, airports, universities and telecoms for external connectivity. Finally, economic concentration intensifies the flow of ideas and information between firms, leading to greater creativity and ingenuity. Positive feedback loops mean there are dynamic effects at work that go beyond once-off efficiency gains. A self-reinforcing, cumulative process attracts mobile capital and talent, generates more varied and superior products, and locks in more durable forms of development through continuous adaptation, upgrading and innovation.

These advantages of urban growth are counteracted by several negative externalities. Rising congestion and overloaded infrastructure increase business costs and may require firms to invest in their own power supplies, water systems and transport services. Large cities tend to have higher property and living costs because of the competition for space, which can reduce business competitiveness and deter investment. Uncontrolled urban expansion increases air pollution, damages ecosystems and reduces the quality of life for workers with a choice of where to live. These drawbacks increase as cities expand, especially if the form of physical development is haphazard and poorer communities are concentrated in overcrowded and squalid living conditions. It is particularly hard for city governments to accommodate the pressures generated by rapidly growing mega-cities and avoid dysfunctional outcomes.

What does the evidence suggest?

There is a growing body of research that has tried to quantify the advantages of urbanization. This is difficult because of the complexities of disentangling the particular urban effects from other influences on economic growth, and uncertainties about timescales, variations between sectors and feedback effects. Studies have adopted different measures and techniques, which makes it difficult to reconcile their findings. One of the simplest methods is to compare the prosperity of different countries with their level of urbanization, measured by the proportion of the population living in urban areas. Many results suggest that there is a broad statistical relationship – more urbanized countries tend to be more developed (UN-Habitat 2010). Henderson (2010) confirmed a strong correlation between urbanization and average income in 2004 for a large group of countries around the world. Yet the spread of observations around the line of best fit was wide, indicating that other factors are also involved. In addition, a statistical association does not mean a causal connection, let alone specify the direction of causation, since there may be more influential forces at work that are not included in the correlation.

As an aside, another important feature of such correlations is that they are non-linear. In other words, the rate of urbanization is most rapid in countries with the lowest levels of economic development. These countries can least afford to invest in the infrastructure required to facilitate orderly urban development and to avoid the bottlenecks and resource constraints that may obstruct economic growth. It is little consolation to explain to the poorest countries facing the greatest social dislocation that everything will turn out right within a generation or two.

A range of more sophisticated econometric studies in the north has sought to quantify the benefits of agglomeration. They use different variables to capture the effects and different modelling approaches, so their findings are diverse (Eberts and McMillen 1999; Duranton and Puga 2004; Turok and McGranahan 2013). Many conclude that cities do offer economic advantages although they are not as
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big as often suggested by agglomeration theory or urban policy proponents. A useful review of the
evidence concluded that the productivity gains from doubling the size of a city are between 3 and 8 per
cent (Rosenthal and Strange 2004). A subsequent review concluded that the variation is even greater
because local and national contexts are so different (Melo et al. 2009).

Many studies conclude that there are different kinds of agglomeration effect (Duranton and Puga
2004). Some emphasize that the advantages stem primarily from industrial diversity because this conveys
adaptability. The opposite applies in a second group of studies, where the greatest benefits come from
firms clustering within the same industry (Melo et al. 2009). A third set of studies emphasize the
importance of amenities and the quality of life in supporting the growth of consumption-based sectors,
such as entertainment, hospitality, tourism and the creative industries (Glaeser 2011).

These contrasting findings indicate that one cannot make simple generalizations about the strength
of agglomeration economies. There is no realistic prospect of finding universal laws governing the
urbanization–development relationship. Context is bound to be crucial, including (1) the form of
urban growth (e.g. highly concentrated or dispersed), and (2) the role of government policy (e.g. in
enabling more functional forms of development through infrastructure investment). Fast growing cities
in low- and middle-income countries are bound to be more vulnerable to the diseconomies of
agglomeration because it is harder to finance the infrastructure required to avoid this.

Evidence from the BRICS

There have been few quantitative studies of agglomeration economies in the BRICS and other
developing countries (Overman and Venables 2010). This is a serious gap in the evidence base, given
where mass urbanization is clearly happening. In the absence of a detailed analysis, a simple descriptive
exercise can yield some useful insights. Figure 13.1 shows the relationship between urbanization and
national economic progress (defined as GDP per capita) for the five BRICS countries at two points in
time, 1985 and 2011. It draws on the World Development Indicators database and shows a consistent
positive relationship for all five countries—they all became more urbanized and more prosperous over
this period. This suggests that there is some connection between urbanization and development,
although it is variable in strength, even among this small sample.

Another important point from Figure 13.1 is that Russia, Brazil and South Africa were already quite
urbanized by the 1980s, whereas China and India were still predominantly rural. Russia, Brazil and
South Africa had experienced substantial urbanization alongside industrialization for at least half a
century before the 1980s. India’s rate of urbanization began to accelerate in the 1980s, whereas China’s
really took off during this decade.

Table 13.1 Economic growth and urbanization in the BRICS, comparative figures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1985</th>
<th></th>
<th>2011</th>
<th></th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>GDP per capita (constant 2000 US$)</td>
<td>Share of urban population %</td>
<td>GDP per capita (constant 2000 US$)</td>
<td>Share of urban population %</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>3334</td>
<td>69.86</td>
<td>4803</td>
<td>84.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>3262</td>
<td>49.37</td>
<td>3825</td>
<td>61.98</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>290</td>
<td>22.87</td>
<td>2640</td>
<td>51.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>264</td>
<td>24.34</td>
<td>838</td>
<td>31.29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Russia</td>
<td>2700</td>
<td>72</td>
<td>3050</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

China has experienced by far the greatest increase in prosperity since the 1980s, with average incomes rising nine-fold from USD290 per capita in 1985 to USD2,640 in 2011 (in constant 2000 prices). Urbanization more than doubled from 23 to 52 per cent. Around three-quarters of the urban population growth was driven by migration rather than natural change. China’s progress has been spectacular, described by Joseph Stiglitz (2006) as ‘probably the most remarkable economic transformation in history … Never before has the world seen such sustained growth … (and) so much poverty reduction’. The country seems to have benefited enormously from its urban transition. Average incomes in Chinese cities are also related to city size (OECD 2013). GDP per capita in the 25 largest cities, for instance, is double the level of the cities that make up the 100–125th size band.

India also experienced substantial economic progress, with average incomes rising more than three-fold from USD264 per capita to USD838 (in constant 2000 prices). Its level of urbanization increased from 24 to 31 per cent. The pace and extent of economic development and urbanization in India was broadly in line with other Asian countries, although India started from a lower base (Turok 2013). India experienced nothing like China’s all-round transformation, although there was considerable improvement.

Brazil and Russia both had much higher levels of urbanization and development to begin with in the 1980s. Brazil continued to urbanize and prosper, while Russia stagnated. This was a traumatic period covering the collapse of the Soviet Union, the forced transition to a market economy and the subsequent gradual recovery. Average incomes barely rose from USD2,700 per capita to USD3,050 (in constant 2000 prices), while the level of urbanization increased very slightly from 72 to 74 per cent. Meanwhile, average incomes in Brazil rose by nearly 50 per cent from USD3,300 per capita to USD4,800 (in constant 2000 prices). Its level of urbanization increased from 70 to 85 per cent. Brazil’s trajectory has been broadly in line with that of other Latin American countries.

In contrast, South Africa started from a relatively prosperous position on a par with Brazil (in terms of average incomes), but experienced far less economic dynamism subsequently. This period also covered a dramatic political transition to democracy. Average incomes in South Africa rose by only 17 per cent from USD3,260 per capita to USD3,830 (in constant 2000 prices). The level of urbanization increased with the demise of apartheid from 49 to 62 per cent. South Africa has not benefited from its urban
transition like most Asian and Latin American countries (Turok 2013). Local conditions seem to have inhibited the development of its city economies.

A more detailed, qualitative analysis drawing on other evidence and research is needed to get behind these important patterns. We consider China’s urban transformation first.

China's purposeful urbanization

China has the largest population in the world and the second largest economy. Its explosive urban surge in the last 30 years is linked to its dramatic economic transition from an agrarian to an industrial society (Miller 2012; CSCIEAS 2012). The government has played a key role in shaping this trajectory. Until the late 1970s urbanization was resisted in favour of rural development, especially during the Cultural Revolution of 1966−76. During this period the urban population was growing by less than five million a year, compared with 20 million a year in the last decade. Urbanization accelerated after the economic reforms of 1978, when the fierce anti-urban policy was relaxed. China’s efforts to industrialize during the 1980s were still strongly rural, and quite unlike the subsequent city-focused growth (McGranahan et al. 2014).

Farmers were given more responsibility for their agricultural produce to increase output and efficiency. Many small enterprises were established to support mechanization and to process the crops and livestock. This spurred rural industrialization and migration towards towns and small cities (McGranahan et al. 2014). An explicit policy objective after 1979 was to support industry in smaller cities so they could transform the countryside (OECD 2013). Another long-standing objective was to constrain the growth of large cities by building satellite cities around them. These now form the basis of clusters of cities with tens of millions of people within each one (CSCIEAS 2012).

The government pursued a highly effective combination of vision and pragmatism whereby particular locations and enterprises showing the greatest potential were given extra support. Special economic zones sited in undeveloped coastal regions offered big incentives to attract foreign investment and export-led industrialization. Obligatory linkages with local suppliers meant valuable spinoffs from the transfer of technology and managerial skills. These early achievements encouraged other territories in the south-east to be opened-up, and by the 1990s these billowing coastal cities were China’s main economic engines. They were magnets for vast flows of domestic migration and investment which depressed labour costs and fuelled the growth machine. Incomes have risen more rapidly in these cities than elsewhere as a result of higher productivity, strengthening further migration (Webster 2011; OECD 2013).

The land conversion process has been highly controversial, contributing to inefficient land uses, road-oriented development and environmental degradation (Johnson 2013). It has also been a source of property speculation among developers, a black market in land, corruption in municipalities and
much illegal construction (Miller 2012). Ambiguous property rights have been manipulated to secure land from rural collectives and peasant farmers in order to sell it for development. National rules have encouraged this by enabling municipalities to retain most of the proceeds. The process has become so important to China’s growth trajectory that central government has sought to gain greater control over it in order to boost or cool the economy as required. For example, a law was introduced in 1999 to slow down the rezoning of agricultural land for urban development (OECD 2013). There has also been growing resistance from below among displaced farmers forced to make way for re-development, prompting counter-efforts to strengthen their property rights (Johnson 2013).

Nevertheless, rapid urban growth has been supported by fast-track regulatory procedures, an absence of public participation, and unprecedented levels of investment in infrastructure, real estate and other fixed capital. China spends about 50 per cent of its GDP on such investment, including roads, power generation, railways, dams, ports, telecoms, factories, office buildings and housing. This is ‘the highest share in recorded history. During their great booms in the 1960s and 1970s, Japan and South Korea never topped 40 per cent’ (Leonhardt 2010). External observers have warned of the risks of overdevelopment and property bubbles. However, the incessant demand from an expanding real economy and massive household growth have averted this (Miller 2012).

Although China’s urban development machine has delivered impressive growth, certain groups have been excluded from the benefits. A household registration system (hukou) was introduced in the Mao era to control urbanization. The permits have been eased to allow temporary migration, but these groups don’t enjoy the same rights to schools, health facilities and social services. The policy reduces the cost to municipalities while meeting industry’s demand for cheap labour. Rising prices in the booming cities also make housing unaffordable for poor migrants. Some farmers have received flats in high-rise complexes to compensate for losing their land. Other migrant workers live in shared accommodation and hostels provided by their employers. Many migrants leave their families behind, which limits their children’s education, health and overall life chances (OECD 2013). Their second-class status means insecurity and lower disposable incomes than those with proper homes and social protection, who spend more on consumer durables (Miller 2012). Therefore the hukou system hinders the rebalancing of the economy as well as being unfair and divisive. Reform is beginning to happen, but it is complicated because migrants might have to surrender land rights in their rural areas and the possibility of having a second child, which is prohibited in urban areas.

Another source of growing social inequality and associated political tensions is the spatial disparity between cities in the coastal belt and inland regions (Webster 2011). The government has recently extended the special support available to the coastal cities to the interior and begun to invest heavily in roads, high speed railways and other connecting infrastructure in ‘logistics corridors’ (CSCIEAS 2012). There are some signs of firms moving inland to access cheaper labour, but it is obviously too soon to say whether inland cities will be able to narrow the gap.

Environmental concerns have also moved up the political agenda, following decades of ecological damage and pollution to air and water courses from unrestrained industrialization, dirty energy generation and rising car ownership. Chinese cities tend to be reasonably compact, but vast industrial parks make inefficient use of land, reflecting the frantic industrial development efforts of municipalities. Measures are being taken to reduce the carbon footprint and increase energy security, including major investment in renewable energy, public transport, green buildings and experimental green cities (CSCIEAS 2012). Severe congestion in the big cities is another reason for the growing emphasis on urban subways and other public transport.

In summary, China’s experience over the last three decades illustrates the economic forces that can be unleashed by urbanization. Aggressive investment in infrastructure and land development has complemented rapid industrialization, resulting in major increases in productivity, jobs and living
standards. Rural–urban migration has fuelled the process by providing a continuous stream of workers to replenish the workforce. Urban policy has been geared above all to fostering economic growth, with less concern for social equity and environmental sustainability. This is changing as the government seeks to rebalance the economy and stimulate domestic consumption. Consumer-driven growth will be led by the major cities and influenced by the extent to which migrant households gain greater security, become more integrated socially, and adjust from savers to spenders. This also implies a new kind of urban growth, based on creating more liveable and inclusive cities.

India’s reluctant urbanization

India has the tenth largest economy in the world, and the second largest population. Its colonial history and complex religious, caste, ethnic and territorial divisions left a legacy after World War Two of a backward economy, poor transport system and inefficient state bureaucracy. The colonial priority given to agricultural exports, mineral extraction and revenue transfers to the United Kingdom (UK) meant limited investment in manufacturing and infrastructure. Public facilities were concentrated in a few leading port cities that catered for the privileged few (Kundu 2014). Cities were segregated into two parts − indigenous and European − to reduce the spread of infectious diseases and impact of social unrest (Chaplin 2011). Slum clearance was the preferred way of tackling overcrowded and insanitary neighbourhoods, with little compensation for the resettlement of displaced communities.

Independence in 1947 brought important political changes and greater public investment in heavy industries, lagging regions and connecting infrastructure. The state began to play a growing role in the ownership and control of leading sectors and corporations, and promoting import substitution to increase self-reliance. Yet widespread inefficiencies meant little improvement in economic performance or living standards. Meanwhile, urban populations were growing strongly, mainly through natural change. Poverty remained very high because of poor urban growth management and under-resourced municipalities (Chaplin 2011). The provision of agricultural subsidies and support for improved farming practices gave some backing to impoverished rural areas.

Major economic reforms were introduced around 1991 to reduce protections for domestic industries from foreign competition and to privatize nationalized entities. The objectives were to attract foreign investment, encourage domestic competition and increase global trade through exports. These and other policy changes, such as financial liberalization, helped to accelerate economic growth to between 5 and 9 per cent a year over the following two decades. Growth has been strongest in the major cities, especially Delhi, Mumbai and Kolkata, where it has fostered a new middle class. This has spawned the expansion of consumer goods and services (such as retailing and hospitality) and new consumption practices and lifestyles (Fernandes 2004). ‘Global city’ aspirations have also influenced urban planning (Dupont 2011), although the government has been reluctant to divert resources towards the big cities. For example, Bangalore has secured an important position in the global IT industry, upgrading from call centres and back office work to higher value-added services, software programming, research and development (Van Riemsdijk 2013).

India’s urbanization has also been oriented towards large cities because of the lure of jobs, but compounding the problems of concentrated poverty and squalid living conditions (Kundu 2014). Some of the physical growth has spilled over into satellite towns which may in due course become part of the metropolitan area as municipal boundaries expand. Large factories, call centres and other enterprises are often established beyond municipal limits because of environmental restrictions within the city and special economic zones established outside. Poorer migrants build shelters nearby to try and find jobs or commute into the central city. Business owners, managers and engineers generally live in the central city (or in new suburban gated complexes) and commute to peripheral workplaces along rapid transport corridors.
I. Turok

Low-income residents are often displaced by urban growth, ending up in outlying squatter settlements. Meanwhile, residents’ associations and NGOs formed by upper- and middle-income groups have succeeded in exploiting participatory forms of local governance to pursue their own interests and oppose national slum upgrading programmes (Chakrabarti 2008; Kundu 2011). Transparency has improved as a result of this decentralization of power, but at the expense of essential services for the poor (Chaplin 2011). Different levels of amenities are provided depending on people’s ability to pay, and little effort is made to expand the supply of affordable housing (McDuie-Ra 2013). Public spending on slum improvement has tended to decline and exclusionary practices such as evictions have increased, partly to ‘cleanse’ the cities of slums and enhance their image among investors (Dupont 2011).

The chief concerns of residents’ associations in middle- and upper-income areas are security, improved amenities and privatization and enclosure of public spaces, shopping malls and residential areas. They seek to sanitize their neighbourhoods by removing encroachments, squatters and informal enterprises seen as threats to their health and safety (Fernandes 2004; Kundu 2011). The outcome is a more general anti-urbanization stance and exclusion of poor communities, reinforced by India’s entrenched social stratification, high levels of destitution, and enduring infrastructure deficiencies (Kundu 2014). McDuie-Ra (2013) describes the discrimination against and harassment of migrants seeking housing and work opportunities in Delhi’s call centres and shopping malls. There is little apparent understanding of, or sympathy for, the needs of poor migrant families for shelter, livelihoods and better living conditions.

The problems are compounded by government policies that seem to ignore the economic potential of urbanization. There have been many attempts to stem migration flows, both through overt urban restrictions and policies to skew economic support to rural regions. Some are indirect, such as inferior public services and inadequate police protection for migrants experiencing hostile attacks. Recent national development plans recognize the value of large cities, but they also criticize the concentrated pattern of growth. Instead they talk about promoting spatially balanced urbanization through satellite towns, small towns and new townships. Nonetheless, India has never had a coherent urban development policy, despite the deterioration in environmental conditions (Chaplin 2011).

A major infrastructure programme was launched in the mid-2000s, called the Jawaharlal Nehru National Urban Renewal Mission. It aimed to streamline local government in 63 cities in order to expedite improved water supply, sanitation, sewage treatment, roads and flyovers. Yet there was no provision to improve facilities in low-income areas where services are unaffordable (Kundu 2014). A subsequent initiative called Rajiv Awas Yojana was launched in 2009 with more of a pro-poor emphasis (Chaplin 2011). Both programmes suffer from under-spending and illustrate deep dilemmas about how state support should be distributed between different cities and towns. The largest cities are best equipped to leverage additional public, private and global finance, but supporting the smaller cities may help to avoid the excesses of growth concentrated in a few mega-cities.

A difficulty with recent economic trends in India is that the leading sectors are not strongly labour absorbing or do not generate the scale of multiplier effects of manufacturing. Service industries such as IT, banking, media, publishing and hospitality also employ few manual workers. Consequently, the employment intensity of India’s recent growth has lagged behind its GDP performance, unlike China’s vigorous industrialization and employment growth. Some observers blame India’s high levels of unemployment and informal employment on long-standing labour regulations which inhibit recruitment (Van Riemsdijk 2013).

There could be at least another 400 million people in India’s workforce by 2050, over and above the current 500 million. Agriculture and related activities currently provide a subsistence living to about 220 million. These sectors cannot absorb the additional labour without further reducing existing low incomes. India will have to undergo a major economic transition to secondary and tertiary industries,
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hand-in-hand with mass urbanization (Kundu 2014). The country’s future prosperity and stability depends on how this occurs.

The larger cities could become more inclusive and absorb more people (Kundu 2014). Careful forward planning, industrialization and provision of cheap housing and services could provide channels for social mobility, skills acquisition and consumer demand to help broaden India’s economic dynamism. Public health and environmental programmes need to shift from crisis management towards preventative and proactive measures that benefit all sections of society (Chaplin 2011). Such measures are resisted by urban elites, whose political power has grown with economic success. However, excluding millions of people in the countryside while a wealthy minority enjoys an exclusive urban lifestyle is a recipe for conflict. India’s economy has shown its strong growth potential, but its urban policies will influence whether this is sustained and diversified over time to benefit the many.

To sum up, India’s far reaching economic changes over the last two decades have improved living standards for many people. However, employment has lagged behind output growth and urbanization remains low and exclusive by international standards. The drive for global competitiveness and foreign investment is somewhat narrow considering the country’s demographic pressures and the inability of rural areas to absorb many more people with viable livelihoods. It seems that the cities will need to become both more productive and more inclusive if they are to make a fuller contribution to national development in the years ahead.

Brazil’s careless urbanization

Brazil urbanized earlier than the other BRICS (particularly between 1940 and 1980) and has continued since then, albeit at a slower rate (Martine and McGranahan 2014). The country has prospered over the last two decades, partly through strong global demand for its commodities and substantial state support via cheap credit for ‘national champions’, i.e. large private and state-controlled companies in sectors such as oil, iron ore, agro-processing and aircraft manufacturing (Leahy 2013). It now has the seventh largest economy in the world, and the fifth largest population. Brazil illustrates how urbanization and industrialization tend to proceed hand-in-hand, rather like China.

The country has gained an international reputation for innovation in urban design, planning and governance since the advent of democracy in 1985. A new approach towards cities was signposted by a chapter on urban policy written into the new constitution. The urban agenda has been driven by strong social movements and professionals working for municipalities and universities in housing, planning, architecture, engineering and law (Fernandes 2011; Rolnik 2011). Previous regimes consistently tried to resist urbanization. Their failure to prepare contributed to severe transport congestion and the infamous favelas that cover the hillsides with overcrowded, unplanned and unsafe settlements. Intense poverty and environmental hazards persist for these communities, despite sustained economic growth.

Brazil’s early settlement pattern was shaped by Portuguese colonial rule between the fifteenth and nineteenth centuries. Their main objective was to exploit the country’s natural resources and foodstuffs. An extractive agricultural and mineral economy was developed, with port towns and cities created as gateways into the hinterland and transhipment points for getting the produce back to Europe (Martine and McGranahan 2014).

A new source of urban dynamism emerged during the late nineteenth century with the commercialization of coffee production in São Paulo state, leading to a growth axis emerging to Rio de Janeiro. Import-substitution industrialization was the catalyst for rapid urbanization, especially after the coffee economy crashed in 1929 with the Great Depression. The country’s population was growing rapidly during the inter-war years through falling mortality. Serious international debts, balance of payments problems and difficulties in importing supplies forced the state to invest in industrial production. This initiated a powerful, self-reinforcing dynamic of urbanization and industrialization
focused on the major cities, and bolstered by the entrepreneurialism of the domestic and international migrant communities (Martine and McGranahan 2014; Feler and Henderson 2011).

Wartime production boosted import substitution further and the state intervened extensively to develop the transport and communication sectors with a view to creating an integrated national market for domestic producers. Central planning was strengthened, major roads constructed and substantial assistance given to develop car manufacturing with its strong backward and forward linkages. Following a military takeover in 1964, the new regime tried to modernize agriculture through incentives favouring large farms. Mechanization boosted demand for the machinery and chemical fertilizers produced in cities, but displaced millions of small-scale farmers and farm workers. Frontier areas in the Amazon region were opened up to absorb agricultural migrants, and even here new towns and cities thrived (Martine and McGranahan 2014).

The number of towns and cities in Brazil with over 20,000 residents grew from 59 in 1940 to 867 in 2010. This coincided with growing concentration in larger cities. Between 2000 and 2010, one-million-plus cities accounted for 54 per cent of urban population growth. This is now slowing down, for three reasons: fertility decline, economic difficulties, and industrial dispersal from São Paulo towards less congested regions (Martine and McGranahan 2014).

Brazil’s urbanization occurred despite the opposition of most political regimes. It was resisted because of the administrative, social and environmental problems it was thought to create, but denial simply worsened conditions. The negativity peaked during the most rapid urbanization period between 1950 and 1980. Yet it was fuelled by the state’s own industrial and agricultural policies (Feler and Henderson 2011). During the 1960s explicit measures were taken to stem the process, ranging from roadblocks to fiscal incentives. Regional planning initiatives tried to reduce migratory pressures by stimulating activity in outlying regions. When migration continued, the government tried to curb urban growth by restricting or removing the unplanned slums, or depriving them of basic services. Failure to prepare for population growth damaged the city’s ability to expand in a sensible manner. It was particularly harmful for the poor majority who had to fend for themselves in tight housing markets with scarce land available. They were forced to build makeshift shelters wherever they could on steep slopes, areas prone to flooding and other precarious locations. Some informal settlements were reasonably central but many were on the city outskirts with little prospect of securing public services. Environmental and social problems have accumulated and dwellings have been consolidated, leaving a complicated legacy to be addressed through a mixture of upgrading, renewal and re-development.

Since 1985 the government has emphasized participation and decentralization. Problems are to be resolved through dialogue rather than diktat. Urban reform has moved up the political agenda and is central to making democracy real and reducing inequality. A 2001 law called the Statute of the City established the foundations and was followed by the creation of a Ministry of Cities in 2003. Bottom-up urban planning and participatory decision-making are encouraged through all sorts of public forums. Landowners and other powerful groups have to defend their interests in public rather than behind closed doors, and municipalities have to balance different considerations more carefully in regulating development (Fernandes 2011). Meanwhile, legal reforms have given low-income citizens greater rights to the property they occupy, which will improve their security and assets.

In practice, progress in integrating informal settlements and improving living conditions has been patchy and sometimes slow. This is partly because local plans take time to formulate and implement, the solutions are not straightforward, financial resources are constrained, and the politics are complicated with many disputes over the use of land (Fernandes 2011; Rolnik 2011). A proactive approach to providing housing for the poor is still unusual and migrants encounter persistent resistance when trying to settle in particular cities or neighbourhoods. Meanwhile, national government has introduced a range of important education and social welfare reforms that have already had a measurable impact on inequality.
Participatory budgeting is another feature of democratic urban management. Civil society is directly involved in defining priorities for municipal spending in more than 200 cities. Porto Alegre is the most famous, following the election of a mayor from the Workers’ Party in 1989 (who later became the first Minister of Cities). Part of the municipal budget is put up for local negotiation with social movements and citizens. They discuss local needs and priorities in 16 districts every year. Decentralization has also fostered greater creativity and experimentation in urban design. For example, imaginative new affordable housing is being built in the large Heliopolis favela of São Paulo, along with new public spaces and schools to transform the area. A broader culture of institutional learning and capacity building is being established by sustained state support for independent bodies such as the Brazilian Institute of Municipal Administration and the Curitiba Institute of Urban Planning and Research. The Ministry of Cities is also tasked with strengthening municipal capabilities. A National Council of Cities engages diverse stakeholders in discussing national urban policy.

Of course Brazil’s urban problems remain formidable and it is premature to expect major achievements. Democratic efficacy depends on an organized civil society and informed citizens, which emerge slowly given the legacy. The capacity of different groups to advocate their interests is very variable, as in India. Historic backlogs in urban infrastructure and housing are very costly to address. The government has been criticized in some quarters for providing excessive support for national champions and insufficient investment in transport and other economic and social infrastructure (Leahy 2013). This may be why Brazilian urban economies have been under-performing in recent years in the face of tough international competition (Martine and McGranahan 2014). Other factors may include high levels of crime, informality, under-funded municipalities and inadequately regulated land markets.

In summary, state-sponsored industrialization in Brazil drove a long-term process of urbanization. Persistent efforts to resist urban population growth made little difference, except to create an exclusionary form of urbanization. Poor communities were forced to occupy precarious locations and live in cramped conditions without public services. Related efforts to manage urban growth more strategically and redesign the built environment on more inclusionary principles are inevitably more complicated and costly, implying that social and environmental problems will probably persist for several decades to come. Since the 1990s urban planning has been taken much more seriously, reflected in a range of important social, environmental, legal, transport and design innovations. The impacts of these deserve to be monitored closely by the international community.

South Africa’s contested urbanization

South Africa is one of the most urbanized countries in Africa, with the largest economy. Industrialization was the driving force behind urbanization in China, India and Brazil. The catalyst in South Africa was a mining boom in the late nineteenth century that continued through most of the twentieth century. South African urbanization has been affected by similar destructive influences to those in Brazil and India, albeit in a more extreme form because of overt discrimination. It was forcefully resisted under the apartheid political regime at enormous human and social cost. Apartheid also skewed the built form in distinctive ways, leaving fractured cities with dense poverty traps on the outskirts. There is a continuing legacy of inequality, informality, infrastructure backlogs and transport congestion, which hamper progress to this day.

Urbanization has been controversial for over a century, posing dilemmas for successive governments and resulting in wide-ranging interventions, initially to accelerate it and later to control it. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, a stark form of racially segregated urban development was instituted. This reflected industry’s insatiable appetite for cheap migrant labour, alongside political nervousness among the white elite about black urbanization (Wilson 1972).
The need to assemble a large workforce had profound ramifications (Yudelman 1984). It transformed South Africa from a patchwork of agrarian states to a unified industrial nation with a strong political centre in the early twentieth century. Gold mining was the mainstay of the economy for decades, and almost the only source of export revenues. The mining boom stimulated other industries, such as chemicals, civil and mechanical engineering, and banking (Harrison and Zack 2012). Growing rural–urban migration, gold exports and increasing urban demand for rural produce prompted major investment in the country’s transport and communications infrastructure to link the ports and surging inland towns and cities.

Large population shifts were essential to the mining boom. Early on, most labour came from neighbouring autonomous African states on a temporary basis, establishing a pattern of ‘circular’ migration. Companies introduced large residential compounds or hostels to keep migrant workers on site for control and to prevent poaching. These closed complexes offered food, accommodation and cheap beer, but were also notorious for disease, malnutrition and cramped conditions.

The mineral revolution also had a big impact on political developments. In order to secure a regular flow of workers to the mines, the colonial government began to annex neighbouring African states and introduce rural taxes to coerce migration. The Anglo-Boer War in 1899–1902 can also be traced to the mining boom and the British desire to remove potential threats to mineral exports and facilitate industrial expansion. Mining had a profound impact on social relations and lay behind the draconian apartheid system of legalized racial discrimination and subjugation. This shaped urban patterns for a century through various forms of social and spatial engineering (Turok 2014).

The political desire of white leaders to restrict migration came into increasing conflict with the economic imperative for additional cheap labour. The system of transient migrant labour was a compromise, with black workers forced to bear the costs of spatial dislocation. It benefited the mining companies because workers’ families were left in the rural areas to carry on farming, which moderated their wage requirements and housing costs (Wilson 1972). Companies could also adjust their workforce in line with changing production needs more easily than if they were permanent employees. The essential features of the migrant labour system persist today and were partly responsible for the Marikana disaster in 2012.

During the first half of the twentieth century a series of laws were passed that restricted urban development and denied land and citizenship rights to blacks in urban areas. Their aim was racial separation and containment of an ‘undesirable tide’ of black urban migration (Maylam 1990). But mining and industrialization were exerting an irresistible pull on rural migration, which stoked political nervousness among the white elite. After the Second World War, these sentiments prevailed and draconian controls were imposed to suppress black urbanization in order to sustain white lifestyles and political domination.

A suite of new laws began to entrench segregation by compelling people to live in different places classified by race. Residential areas were separated by physical barriers (‘buffer zones’ and freeways) and laid out in ways that permitted military control in the event of unrest. The resulting disconnect between jobs and homes was worsened by economic restrictions preventing blacks from starting enterprises within the cities. Poor public transport meant long and costly journeys to work. Strict influx controls criminalized peoples’ efforts to secure livelihoods and created a hostile climate of surveillance and intimidation. Although the restrictions did not halt urbanization, they slowed it down, particularly during the height of apartheid in the 1960s and 1970s (Turok 2014).

South African cities now have low population densities in central and suburban locations and high densities on the periphery. This distorted urban form has harmful human and environmental consequences. It creates poverty traps on the periphery and favours road-based transport. Cities remain the dominant centres of economic activity, but they are not performing to their potential or reaping the benefits of agglomeration because of their inefficiency and infrastructure constraints (Msulwa and
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Turok 2012). A modelling exercise found that ‘over 10 years, a sprawling city will cost R57 billion more than a compact city, equal to 1.4% of projected GDP’ (Financial and Fiscal Commission 2011: 3).

The post-1994 democratic government recognizes the problems of a fragmented urban form, but its interventions have been too short-term and sector-specific to initiate change. Spatial planning has struggled to rebuild its reputation, having been an instrument of apartheid. Some pro-poor policies (such as the way in which public transport is subsidized) have reinforced people’s exclusion by subsidizing the cost of living on the periphery, rather than supporting better location decisions (Turok 2013). ‘Service delivery’ has become the dominant narrative across government, implying the roll-out of separate housing, electricity, water and other programmes run by different departments. They respond to where the population is growing, which tends to be where there is cheap or leftover land available, rather than planning ahead based on a vision of more integrated, functional and productive cities. The practical effect has been to perpetuate inherited spatial patterns of segregation and exclusion rather than to reshape them.

With the demise of apartheid, repressive controls were withdrawn and urbanization rates recovered. The government now seeks to treat cities, towns and rural areas even-handedly, in line with the constitutional principle of equity. There is no explicit policy either to support or discourage migration, because of its sensitivity and perceived negative effects on both sending and receiving areas. This neutral stance has generally avoided the serious social damage of the past, but little has been done positively to transform the legacy of urban segregation. Similarly, the pursuit of economic development in cities is less vigorous than in many other countries. Ambivalence about urbanization also translates into a reactive and somewhat indifferent approach towards informal settlements and backyard shacks (Huchzermeyer 2011).

South Africa’s experience since 1994 holds important lessons for other urbanizing countries. It shows how formulating progressive policies and passing laws are not enough to initiate integrated urban development and harness the potential of urbanization. Broad policy aspirations and sectoral programmes need to be translated into concrete city-level strategies set within a long-term vision of a better future. Such strategies need to engage local communities, the private sector and other stakeholders in order to channel their energies in common and constructive directions. Brazil’s experience has been similar, except that there is more urban creativity and experimentation, economic conditions have been more favourable, and inequality has been addressed more systematically.

A broader lesson is that the processes of urbanization and industrialization are politically mediated and may not automatically improve the livelihoods of migrants. People moving to cities may have to organize themselves to press for well-located land on which to settle, better living conditions and skills to access labour markets. Constitutional rights for the poor can promote their cause, especially if backed by political will and government resources to meet their basic needs. Equally important are determined city-level leadership and investment plans that manage urban development more effectively, boost jobs and livelihoods, and work with communities to improve their well-being.

Conclusion

Countries in the south can learn useful lessons about the relationship between economic development, poverty reduction and urbanization from the BRICS nations. The contribution of urbanization to the overall transformation of these countries is not widely appreciated. The role played by their governments in managing the urban transition is also crucial. Each nation faced great dislocation as they urbanized, especially when they tried to resist the process, or when people were steered towards unsuitable locations. In addition, the comparison provides examples of how urbanization can strengthen national economies through concentration and efficient spatial forms. It seems that carefully planned urban growth can strengthen prosperity and well-being. Finally, the BRICS experience indicates the
importance of steering urban development onto a more compact and sustainable path because of the damage caused to the natural environment by negligence.

The question posed at the outset was whether urbanization helps to spur economic progress. From the evidence assembled the answer is that there appears to be a close relationship between urbanization and development, but it is not automatic or linear. A variety of other conditions seem to be important in influencing the extent to which urbanization raises living standards. Industrialization proved significant in creating the kinds of jobs required by less-skilled rural migrants, and in generating multiplier effects on a scale required to constitute an engine of growth. The role of the state was also significant – potentially positive but also damaging if decisions are dominated by narrow sectional interests. China and Brazil show the state’s catalytic role in industrialization and income generation, but also problems of inertia and inflexibility if it inhibits adaptation and diversification to shifting conditions.

The role of city government deserves fuller treatment than has been possible here. There is evidence that municipalities are more responsive to changing realities on the ground than national authorities, particularly for managing the built environment. The availability of well-located, serviced land to accommodate physical growth seems to influence whether urbanization is functional for development, illustrated by China’s urban growth machine. When the functions of land-use planning and infrastructure are neglected, the social and environmental costs of haphazard urban development are considerable, as shown by South Africa, Brazil and India. Democratic government can reduce the risks of exclusionary urban policies, but it needs to be backed by effective powers and resources to influence stubborn spatial patterns. Serious gaps in knowledge mean there is a major research agenda for exploring how the imperative of economic development relates to processes of inclusive and sustainable urbanization in different contexts of the global south.

References


Urbanization/development in the BRICS


I. Turok


Notes

1 The BRICS is an alliance of Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa formed in 2009. The chapter draws on a collaborative research project on Urbanization in the BRICS that was part-funded by the UNFPA and UK Aid (see McGranahan and Martine 2014). Considerable thanks are due to Gordon McGranahan and George Martine for their support and advice on many of the issues discussed in the chapter.

2 Urbanization is defined as the net shift of population and economic activity from rural areas to towns and cities. This is different from the urban population growth, which reflects natural growth (births minus deaths) as well as the rural–urban shift. The level of urbanization is the proportion of the population living in urban areas. The urbanization process can take different forms. It can be concentrated in a few large cities or spread across a range of cities and towns. Within each city it can take the form of compact physical development or urban sprawl and fragmentation.

3 Russia’s experience is not discussed further in the chapter because of the book’s focus on the global south.
PART III

Global economic turbulence: (re)configuring the urban
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GLOBAL ECONOMIC TURBULENCE
(Re)configuring the urban

Sophie Oldfield and Susan Parnell

The world is changing fast, the forces shaping global economic power and innovation are in transition: it is no longer certain who is growing, who is wealthy, and who is consuming. Turok’s paper (Chapter 13) in the last section underscored the fact that the system of cities is constantly in transition, impacting directly on the shifting fortunes of particular cities. For instance, many Chinese cities are booming, its economy predicted to overtake the USA as the largest in the world by 2050; India and Brazil are thriving, merging intense social inequality with expanding middle classes, and expanding economies, as well as innovations in welfare and social support. Some of the highest rates of economic growth are in Africa, and the benefits of this new wealth are most evident in the booming elite quarters of the big cities.

In extreme contrast, North America and Europe are immersed in a debate about austerity, grappling with the consequences of the Great Recession post 2008. In short, the world economy and how we understand its urban expressions has been turned upside down. Southern economies can no longer be classified simply as basket cases, as dysfunctional sites for export-oriented neo-colonialism, although this narrative cannot be completely discarded or wiped off our ways of understanding and viewing the world. Certainly some southern economies persist in poverty, their cities at the vagaries of global market fluctuations and the shifting patterns of the wealthy world’s consumption, their national and city leadership subsumed and dictated to by international institutions and powerful external capitalist forces.

Eric Sheppard’s chapter lucidly casts this rapid change in the dynamics of capitalism and in a longer and more complicated history of globalization and urbanization. Like Carlos Vainer (Chapter 6), he reminds us of a time when Asia was dominant and Europe peripheral, recalling the complex and durable ways in which colonialism reorganized global economies in the interests of Europeans, remaking cities of the global south within this footprint. Through this material and political framing, notions of development have produced the south — in a world-regional sense, the post-colony; and in a ‘fractal sense’, those who live precariously worldwide. In taking southern urban practices seriously, he suggests we can understand the new order of global urbanism and its entanglements, as well as possibilities for change. This historical framing of the urban question illuminates the processes explored in the other chapters in this section.

The chapters in this section help dissect, frame and imagine economic possibilities for cities. Xiangming Chen’s nuanced account of Chinese urbanization presents the reader with two major arguments — the role of the state in steering powerfully urban economic growth and its insertion into
global markets, and a scaling out of state-driven support to smaller cities to build niche economies that are interwoven into global demand. He draws on the Chinese case to point to wider lessons about urban economic expansion, focused on the intended and unintended consequences embedded in the Chinese growth model. Vulnerabilities include local exposure to global economic fluctuations, shallow urbanization based on exploitative migrant labour, and the environmental and long-term economic unsustainability of economically driven urban development.

Other chapters tell us perhaps more familiar but crucial stories about urban economies in the global south. Robert Buckley and Achilles Kallergis caution against an unbridled Afro-optimism and draw our attention to the challenges for growth (or at least the limits of the scope of realistic growth) and of the limits of cities as engines that reposition the region and make it globally competitive. These stories necessarily remind us, as Deborah Faby Bryceson explains, of African economies in their limits — of a set of realities in cities of the global south, evident in the lived infrastructure, and its deprivations, in the deep legacies of structural adjustment and the realities of informality and the widespread failure of economies to agglomerate. Edgar Pieterse and Katherine Hyman reflect on as often overlooked issue, the critical question of infrastructure, financing, and urban governance.

There is a danger of slipping too quickly from a recalibration of the possibilities of southern urban-generated growth back into the stereotype of poverty and informality. Taking a global view, Martha Chen and Caroline Skinner help us understand the centrality of the informal economy but also its energy and creativity, its propulsive growth and dynamism. Defying the conflation of informality and destitution or survival they illuminate the dynamism of the economy of the poor, especially for women working on the literal and figurative margins of our cities. Workplace innovation and energy also emerge in Chris Benner’s account of the global market interface with African call centres in Ghana, Botswana and Mauritius. A global economy and new technologies are recasting the global international division of labour through online innovation, transforming work, its modernity and agency and forging an essentially twenty-first-century urbanity.

For cities with extreme levels of poverty and unemployment and for those with escalating inequality, it cannot be negotiable that an understanding of the economy forms the basis of urban action and research. While it is unreasonable to expect eight papers to cover all aspects of social and economic polarization, clearly, much more work is needed on labour market change, sectoral change, and the generational and gender impacts of the shifting nature of work. For cities whose economies are dominated by the ‘so-called’ informal sector, this broad categorization hides more than it illuminates. Clearly, there are networks of production, retail, and a highly differentiated return on non-formal work. Moreover, while there is relative theoretical clarity on the interlinking of informal and formal, the empirical evidence to test and transform these theorizations is often absent. In sum, the repositioning of the economy of cities of the global south has to lie at the core of the reconfiguration of urban studies; regrettably, scholars have been tardy in engaging these issues.
GLOBALIZING CAPITALISM AND SOUTHERN URBANIZATION

Eric Sheppard

Introduction: globalizing capitalism and urbanization

Understanding currently explosive urbanization across the post-colonial world, its distinctive characteristics, and how to make sense of it, cannot be complete without situating it within the long historical geography of colonialism and globalizing capitalism. From this perspective, we are now observing the return of these regions of the world to the centre of urbanization processes. Cities originated in Asia and were larger and more prosperous there, and in the Americas, before Columbus’s 1492 voyage to present-day Cuba, Hispaniola and the Bahamas catalysed European colonialism (Sjoberg 1960; Bairoch 1988; Sheppard et al. 2009). For Europe, colonialism and capitalism were closely entwined. Local, urban-based proto-capitalist economic practices were scattered along the coasts of Asia, Africa and Europe prior to 1492. Subsequently, Europe shifted from being peripheral to Asian prosperity and trade to become the core of the global economy, as colonialism enabled capitalism, the continent entered its industrial revolution, and its cities grew accordingly (Bairoch 1988; Blaut 1993; Goody 2007). Amsterdam (home of the world’s first stock market), Paris and London each took their turn as the world’s metropolis, reflecting their country’s waxing and waning role in Europe’s competition to control the world.

Since capitalism became ensconced in Europe by the beginning of the nineteenth century, four eras of capitalist globalization and urbanization can be identified. A long nineteenth century (stretching to the First World War) was under the influence of British free trade imperialism, a century that saw London become the largest city in the world, and the rapid growth of industrial cities such as Manchester and Liverpool. In Europe’s non-settler colonies, cities were constructed where Europeans were comfortable (at altitude in the tropics), at key locations of indigenous power, and at port locations for the shipment of colonial products to Europe. Where cities already existed, European urban design was prioritized over indigenous urban morphologies, with European cities often built alongside pre-colonial cities as an example to the natives of the urban good life. This created national colonial urban systems that were parasitic, oriented toward resource extraction rather than endogenous development, and dominated by one or a few exceptionally large, ‘primate’ cities (Hoselitz 1955).

Between the First and Second World War, British hegemony was interrupted: the Great Depression of 1929 triggered a process of ‘counter-globalization’ during which colonial empires were protected from broader globalization processes. Little changed in terms of global patterns of urbanization. The Bretton Woods agreement of 1944 ushered in a ‘new world order’, however, breaking up these cliques,
shifting hegemonic power from the UK to the USA and promoting capitalist globalization (except in the ‘communist’ second world); successful anti-colonial struggles occurred across Africa and Asia. This ushered in an era of state-led globalization: the new US President Harry Truman declared a new era of development, in which nation-states were to be accorded an important role. Each nation’s largest cities became increasingly, if unevenly, integrated into what scholars began to identify as a global urban system with its world cities (Timberlake 1985; Friedmann 1986). For former (and ongoing) colonies, it was their primate cities that became connected into the global system. Urbanization in post-colonies accelerated, in some cases rapidly; indeed urban populations were often favoured by post-colonial ruling elites seeking legitimation from urban residents representing the vanguard of development (Lipton 1977). Yet there were limits and barriers. In Tanzania and China, elites sought to promote rural collectivization. Elsewhere, the limited pace and externally oriented nature of economic development limited opportunities for rural–urban migrants, reinforcing polarization between primate and smaller cities within the domestic urban system (Armstrong and McGee 1985).

During the last two decades of the twentieth century, this state-led development consensus was torn apart in the name of a new neoliberal era of capitalist globalization that still is with us. Neoliberalization refers to how market mechanisms, logics and mentalities become increasingly pervasive in everyday life: Not only is the domain of markets expanding, as public goods are privatized and markets are created for things that were never bought and sold (e.g. childcare, carbon), but the actions of state agencies and households are judged by whether they conform with market logics. Today, almost every national policy initiative worldwide is assessed on the basis of how ‘the market’ (i.e. financial capital) responds, with cities and individuals expected to be entrepreneurial and responsible for their own success (and failure). Neoliberal globalization envisioned reduced state power (except for promoting neoliberalization), opening domestic markets to the free movement of commodities, capital and patents (but not labour). This also has been a period of unprecedented rates of urbanization, particularly in Asia and Latin America, triggering the phenomena to be discussed in the body of this chapter: pressures on cities to conform to neoliberal globalization, and contestations of these norms from southern populations − in and beyond, but often through, cities.

But where is the global ‘south’ (Sheppard and Nagar 2004)? I use the term in two ways. The first is global in a world-regional sense: Those countries that were (or still are) colonized by, or heavily shaped by colonialism stemming from Europe: I use ‘post-colony’ to refer to this geography.1 The second notion of the ‘south’ is global in a fractal sense: Those, wherever they reside, who live precariously. After all, the post-colony includes increasing numbers of the global elite (China had 115 USD billionaires in 2011), while North America and Europe include immigrants and long-term residents who are deeply impoverished, living precariously at least by national standards. By fractal, I refer to a complex geography of inequality, in which zones of wealth and poverty can be found at every spatial scale, from world regions of north and south to elite villas next to poor shacks within urban neighbourhoods.

Also, how does globalizing capitalism relate to development? Again, two ways of thinking can be distinguished. For those who believe in globalizing capitalism’s capacity, at least in principle, to bring prosperity to all, there can only be one (capitalist) path to development that all should follow: a place’s development refers to how far along this trajectory it has passed (Rostow 1960). For those, like myself, who believe that capitalism can never realize this dream, multiple development trajectories should be acknowledged as potentially productive. Gillian Hart (2002) calls these multiple trajectories small-D development, distinguishing this from the big-D Development which global policy makers present to the global south as the normative path to follow.

Before turning to the relationship between globalizing capitalism, development and southern urbanization, it is worth noting that the term ‘urbanism’ comes loaded already with European conceptions about development and modernization (which is why colonizers sought to Europeanize
Globalizing capitalism, southern urbanization

the cities they encountered). Its usage can be traced back to the late nineteenth century in English and French language dictionaries, where it refers to the study of the physical needs of urban societies, the management of urban spaces, the characteristic way of life of city dwellers, and urbanization. The Oxford English Dictionary lists the following formative uses: 'The local colour or detail, the sentiment or the social life, the provincialism or urbanism of the story' and 'Many primitive virtues are obviously incompatible with urbanism and industrialism'. Thus cities (when not vilified as dens of iniquity) are identified as a distinct kind of place, separable from the rural, and taken to be a hallmark of modernism, progress and (literally) the metropole. Urbanization thus becomes a measure of development and modernization. Indeed Henri Lefebvre (2003 [1970]) anticipated a world-historical 'urban revolution', whereby life everywhere is shaped by urbanism. This may already be well advanced, but urbanism in which sense, and for whom?

Making cities global

European urban theories and planning practices have long been brought to the post-colony, as exemplars for its cities to follow (Development). Although prescriptions change over time, expertise comes from the global north. From this perspective, post-colonial cities are often seen as deviant forms of urbanism. This is particularly the case for the largest cities of the post-colony, where the label 'mega-city' has come to mean chaotic, congested, overcrowded, polluted cities, with too many poor people living and working informally (i.e. outside capitalism proper). While mega-city has demographic connotations, referring to any city with more than ten million residents, it takes a darker meaning in the post-colony: 'billions of people will be living in vast slums in the developing world, facing a long list of urban ills on which starvation may be just another bullet point' (Lewis 2007). By contrast, mega-cities in Europe, the United States and Japan have been dubbed 'global cities' (Sassen 1991; Abu-Lughod 1999). There is a huge literature seeking to categorize global cities on the basis of local characteristics or global connectivity (Beaverstock et al. 2000), but the consensus is that global cities, notwithstanding problems, represent an aspiration for post-colonial cities to emulate.

Under neoliberalizing globalization, these developmental norms prioritize free-market principles. Two sub-phases can be identified, reflecting shifting visions of the relationship between state and market (Polanyi 2001 [1944]). During the Washington Consensus (Williamson 2003), structural adjustment programmes sought to replace state-led development across the post-colony with a minimal state, practising deregulation and privatization. After the 1997 Asian financial crisis, acknowledging that structural adjustment had been too extreme, a post-Washington 'consensus' emerged recognizing that markets need states, but that governance must be 'good' (i.e. appropriate to advancing capitalist relations) (Sheppard and Leitner 2010).

Under this neoliberal imaginary, dirty and crowded post-colonial mega-cities can only become more like shiny global cities through the adoption of market-friendly urban policies. A series of 'reforms' have been proposed for the post-colony with this in mind. Paramount among these are policies promoting economic competitiveness, reflecting the emergence during the 1990s in the regional global north of local entrepreneurialism (Leitner 1990; Hall and Hubbard 1998; Brenner 2004). Under neoliberalism, the economic dynamism of localities came to be seen as the sine qua non for national economic development, with economic clusters presented as the key to local success (Taylor 2010). The same policy prescription is being pushed for post-colonial cities (Choc and Roberts 2011). The World Bank devoted its World Development Report 2009 to promoting policies argued to bring competitiveness to all: how institutions, infrastructure and interventions can overcome density, distance and division (World Bank 2009a; World Bank 2009b). It is also investigating city rankings according to competitiveness (rankings having become the default way of measuring performance in neoliberal policy) (Nollen 2011).
A second fundamental policy is ‘regularizing’ land markets. Clear rules governing private ownership of property are a foundation for capitalist markets, but the particular intellectual momentum for this issue is the writings of Hernando de Soto, a Peruvian who grew up in Geneva and in 1990 convinced Peru’s former President, Alberto Fujimori, to adopt neoliberalism. In The Mystery of Capital (de Soto 2000) he argues that poorly demarcated property rights are the principal cause of poverty. If the homes and businesses of the poor (which he estimates as being worth over USD9 trillion worldwide) are not legally registered in their names, then they will not be able to borrow the capital needed to succeed as entrepreneurs; if registration processes are excessively time-consuming they will not set up businesses. Although initial experiments privatizing property ownership proved unsuccessful (Mitchell 2005), there is a worldwide movement seeking to take advantage of digital mapping to register land in post-colonial cities so that it can be borrowed on, extending land markets (The World Bank calls this ‘encouraging progressive land markets’, 2009a: 16). Third, notoriously, has been the privatization of public utilities and services. A core innovation of structural adjustment, the operation of such services has been sold to private companies, including transnational utilities, and households have been charged for services (water, education) that were previously provided as a right (Bakker 2010).

A further strategy has been ‘upgrading’ infrastructure and the built environment. On the one hand, slum settlements have been cleared, land ownership formalized, and new housing built (rarely accessible to those who have been displaced). This eliminates urban spaces over which the state has limited control or information, and where capitalist economic relations are far from the norm, making the poor visible (and governable) as they are relocated (cf. Scott 1999). On the other hand, everyday life is cleared off the streets. This includes removing from transportation arteries any activities that do not have to do with moving people and goods, removing forms of transportation like pedicabs and horses that slow traffic circulation, and building new highway overpasses or express lanes (displacing less politically influential communities in the process). This speeds transportation, enhancing flexibility and profitability for those who can afford it, while eliminating seemingly unruly public spaces of street politics (Bayat 2009). As the term ‘upgrading’ implies, city officials, drawing on northern urban planning principles, envision these actions as improving the quality of urban life and modernizing cities — but for whom?

Financial innovation also is a high priority item. Privatized property creates objects that can be traded and borrowed against, enabling them to be enrolled into contemporary financialization and securitization strategies — including those that triggered the 2008 global financial crisis. Municipal governments now raise money through international financial institutions, local and global banks, and financial agents of all kinds (Goldman 2011). Indeed, a number of cities were badly hurt by speculative investments they had been advised to make prior to the 2008 crash (Lewis 2010). Finance has also been extended to the poor. Microfinance, initiated in Bangalore but now implemented worldwide, has enabled poor women, particularly, to become micro-entrepreneurs — sometimes successfully, sometimes enhancing their indebtedness (Rankin 2002). Microfinance itself also has been financialized and securitized (Roy 2010). Conditional cash transfer programmes, popular in Latin America, pay the poor to do the right thing (e.g. send their children to school), further extending monetary incentives into everyday life (Peck and Theodore 2010b).

Finally, there are policies for enhancing urban sustainability. Notwithstanding unresolved debates about whether cities enhance or reduce humankind’s ecological footprint, post-colonial cities are seen as environmentally challenged: polluted and garbage-strewn. (The urban poor, associated with the most environmentally degraded neighbourhoods, have the smallest carbon footprints.) Under neoliberalism, policy makers turn to ‘green capitalism’ for solutions to environmental problems (Gibbs 2009). This includes incentivizing green production, creating markets (carbon and environmental services) to commodify the environment, and introducing full cost pricing or environmental taxes (to internalize, or compensate for, the cost of market ‘externalities’). In this spirit, post-colonial cities are
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enjoined to increase their sustainability through the market. The World Bank, confident in green capitalism, argues that sustainability and competitiveness can be achieved together, through an integrated approach. This entails systems thinking, broad collaboration, and an ‘investment framework that values sustainability and resilience’ (Suzuki et al. 2012: 5), entailing full cost, life cycle accounting also of ecological assets and the social consequences of depletion, incorporating all ‘four categories of capital assets (manufactured, natural, human and social)’ (p. 6).

Urban sustainability was also a concern at the 2012 Rio +20 conference, emphasizing attention to a broad set of goals, including

reducing the number of people living in slums; improving health and broader quality of life indicators; providing a greater portion of the urban population with decent jobs; improving integrated planning…; improving energy efficiency…; decreasing emissions from transport; improving waste reduction, re-use and recycling; increasing water efficiency and re-use.

(United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development Secretariat 2012: 5)

There are synergies here with both green capitalist principles and upgrading. ‘Good’ governance is argued to be central to linking economic, environmental and social sustainability. This is echoed by the global consulting corporation PricewaterhouseCoopers (n.d.), a report that includes 44 urban exemplars, of which just ten are from the post-colony (six from South Africa). A particularly ambitious urban ecological initiative is the design of stand-alone eco-cities (Register 2002; White 2002). This idea, articulated in the global north, is aggressively being implemented in the post-colony: Masdar City, Abu Dhabi, and Tianjin-Binhai, China.

There are a variety of pathways through which quasi-neoliberal strategies of making global cities are propagated. Supranational institutions (e.g. the World Bank, the United Nations Habitat programme, the Asian Development Bank) and US-based global consulting companies (e.g. McKinsey Consulting, PricewaterhouseCoopers) not only advise at the national scale, but also work directly with municipal authorities. The World Bank had found working with national governments on structural adjustment and poverty reduction programmes difficult: by the mid-2000s several countries were weaning themselves from dependence on World Bank and International Monetary Fund funding, accumulating sovereign wealth funds as an alternative. Thus working with local authorities seemed more manageable, particularly given municipalities’ difficulties in accessing external funding (Goldman 2011). Intensified global inter-urban networking has also been important. These networks have taken multiple forms, including: the increased likelihood that municipal officials and technical experts, and locally employed academics, received their training from Europe and North America, returning with northern theories and a neoliberal mindset; the spread of global inter-urban networks through which cities learn from one another (visiting other cities); and complex policy networks, catalysing ‘fast’ policy mobilities. These work through assemblages of policy-making experts (academics, consultants, planners, representatives of supra-national bodies, municipal officials, etc.) creating networks of such complexity that it becomes hard to discern the origins of novel ideas and norms; they simply emerge as new ‘best practices’ (Peck and Theodore 2010a; McCann et al. 2011).

The set of global cities to aspire to has begun to diversify geographically, however, with Asian urbanization. Before the 2008 economic crisis turned boom to debt-ridden bust, Dubai’s spectacular urbanism enjoyed global attention (Mohammad and Sidaway 2012). Indian cities are enjoined to become more like Shanghai; Singapore is a model for Southeast Asia, and China; Hyderabad’s high-tech development is influenced by Kuala Lumpur; Malaysia’s Putrajaya represents Islamic urban modernism; Malaysians emulate Seoul fashion trends (Bunnell et al. 2012). In one sense, these Asian exemplars track aspects of the northern global city: high-rises (the higher the better), smoothly functioning highways, conspicuous middle-class consumption, cutting-edge architecture, regional
offices of global corporations, centres of finance. At the same time, however, they exceed their forbears: The towers are higher; the modernism ineffably regional; the economic dynamism greater; the cars and mass transit systems newer.

These complex geographies of globalizing capitalism, neoliberalization, strong Asian states, and multiple modernisms are creating hybrid cities in the post-colony. Northern theories and influences remain strong: European theories and planning norms circulate as best practices, embodying teleological development norms. Expertise remains located in the global north, even as those experts change their minds about what counts as best practice. These norms simultaneously are being exceeded, however. Robinson (2006) has warned against writing post-colonial cities off the map as insignificant; some are not only global in their own right but increasingly acknowledged as such, also in Europe and North America. At the same time, wealth and prosperity in Shanghai or Singapore may be bound up with impoverishment there, or elsewhere. Further, as neoliberalizing globalizing capital circulates through the post-colony, aspects that are regressive in Europe and North America may be emancipatory in post-colonial cities (Robinson 2011). In short, southern contestations of northern global urbanism repay careful attention.

Trajectories of post-colonial urban change

It is important to remember that rapid urbanization in the post-colony occurs within the context of a region that historically has been consigned to the periphery of globalizing capitalism, continuing to underwrite relative prosperity in Europe, its former white settler colonies, and Japan by providing raw materials, low-wage manufactured products, and immigrant labour. This is changing: arguably Taiwan, South Korea, Singapore and now China are becoming part of the global core, with rates of economic growth exceeding those in the core. Post-colonial cities are vital to attempts to overcome peripherality, both as centres of political power and potential industrialization, and as gateways to the global economy.

To date, however, globalizing capitalism always has required an accessible, low-wage, externally oriented periphery to support wealth in the core.

Within this global context, post-colonial urbanization has some distinctive features by comparison to that in North America and Europe. First, is its rapid pace. Averaging across the post-colony, the rate of urbanization is unprecedented in recorded history. In 1950, 340 million people, or approximately 36 per cent of the world’s urban dwellers, lived in post-colonial cities; by 2010 this had increased eightfold to 2.7 billion people, or 80 per cent. Shenzhen, China, grew from a fishing village in 1985 to 15 million inhabitants by 2010. It has also been an extremely polarizing process, not only varying between countries, but also heavily focused on the largest gateway cities within a country. Second, is the pervasiveness of informality (Roy and Alsayyad 2004). Informality refers to ways of living that fall between the cracks of state-regulated markets: informal settlements, livelihoods and politics. Such activities exist everywhere but are particularly common in post-colonial cities: 50–75 per cent of all non-agricultural employment in these countries is informal, and 35–62 per cent of the urban population (approx. 800 million) lives in informal settlements (UN-Habitat 2006, 2008). These include transnational informal economic networks supporting livelihoods in the most impoverished neighbourhoods, a process that AbdouMaliq Simone (2004) dubs the ‘worlding of cities’. Third, processes of rural–urban migration are not following what northern theorists call the urban transition, whereby whole populations move from rural to urban areas (Friedmann and Wolff 1982). Instead, rural–urban interactions persist. Circular migration is common, whereby individuals move between city and countryside without residing permanently in either. Households send some members to cities as part of a multi-locational livelihood strategy, maintaining rural–urban links through remittances, etc. Rural elites also exert influence in urban areas, spending part of their time there. Fourth, streets retain the status of urban public space, seemingly chaotic from the perspective of northern cities. With
Globalizing capitalism, southern urbanization

access to and the use of public parks and squares closely monitored, and with space needed for informal activities, streets are where everyday life is transacted: retailing, micro-manufacturing, socializing, political debate. Finally, extremes of wealth and poverty coexist cheek by jowl, instead of being zoned or segregated into different sub-areas of the city, making the direct experience of inequality a part of everyday life.

Of course, the nature and extent of these various characteristics can vary dramatically between cities and countries. For example, India’s massive slums and traffic-jangling street politics have little parallel in authoritarian China. Nevertheless, China has huge undocumented (non-\textit{Houkou}) urban migrant populations, particularly in coastal, export-processing cities. While informal housing may be limited and they may well have quasi-regular employment, China’s urban migrants share with India’s informal populations a marginal social status that limits access to state services, and risk being fired at a moment’s notice.

Taking southern urbanization seriously

Mainstream northern policy makers do not see these distinctive features of post-colonial urban change as challenging urban theory; rather, they see them as evidence that more needs to be done to align post-colonial development with northern urbanization trajectories. Consider, for example, the World Bank’s analysis of Mumbai’s extensive ‘slums’ (as they are termed officially, housing 78 per cent of greater Mumbai’s 12 million inhabitants):

The growth of slums in major cities is characteristic of rapid urbanization … [b]ecause rapid population growth cannot be satisfactorily accommodated. This contributes to wide and increasing geographic divisions … Development … and better infrastructure, combined with focused interventions, eventually bring about a convergence in living standards…

‘A dirtier or more wretched place he had never seen. The street was narrow and muddy, and the air was impregnated with filthy odors … Covered ways and yards, which here and there diverged from the main street, disclosed little knots of houses, where drunken men and women were positively wallowing in filth’. A contemporary description of a developing country slum such as Nairobi’s Kibera…? No, this is an excerpt from Charles Dickens’s \textit{Parish Boy’s Progress} … describing the rapidly expanding city of London in the nineteenth century. (World Bank 2009b: 67–8)

Through this comparison, Mumbai is located on the same trajectory as London – just further behind. The report from which this is taken goes on to explain how Mumbai can be accelerated along this path, as discussed above. Dipesh Chakrabarty (2000: 32) calls this History 1: ‘history in terms of a lack, an absence, or an incompleteness that translates into “inadequacy”’. It is the teleological claim that the south needs to follow the north’s lead, if it is to develop – Development. What this means for the informal economy has been much debated by northern urban theorists (Castells and Portes 1989): some see informality as a corruption of capitalist markets, to be stamped out; others see it as capitalist entrepreneurship in the raw that, with the help of proper property rights, can accelerate Mumbai’s development. But the teleology remains unquestioned.

Taking southern urbanization seriously, however, means questioning the ubiquity and necessity of History 1. Since globalizing capitalism has failed to deliver on its promise of prosperity for the creative and diligent everywhere, other trajectories (little-d developments) must be considered; indeed, they can be found within post-colonial (and northern) cities. First, post-colonial cities have originated policy innovations with global impact. Porto Alegre, Brazil, developed participatory budgeting: a democratic process enabling residents of every neighbourhood to shape the city’s budget to address
their needs (Baiocchi 2001). Curitiba, Brazil, is known worldwide for its innovative mass transit system (Rabinovich 1992), and Bogota, Colombia, pioneered what has become a worldwide ‘ciclovia’ movement to close streets for bicycling (Montezuma 2005). Masdar City promotes itself as the first zero carbon city. At the supra-urban scale, Brazilian social movements helped create the 2001 federal City Statute, establishing ‘norms of public order and social interest that regulate the use of urban property for the collective good, security, and well-being of citizens, as well as for environmental equilibrium’ (City Statute Article 1: Caldeira and Holston forthcoming). Thus urban innovation can emanate from the post-colony (and back again, as with the World Bank’s adoption of participatory budgeting).

In the fractal global south of the precariat everyday actions contest the ubiquity of northern conceptions of urban Development, challenging its underlying urban theory. Contestations take two forms: direct resistance against neoliberalism and global urbanism, and alternative livelihood strategies exceeding or tangential to capitalist norms (Gibson-Graham 2006; Leitner et al. 2007). A relatively peaceful example of the former is the World Social Forum, also initiated in Porto Alegre in 2001, offering an anti-neoliberal alternative to the annual World Economic Forum gathering of global elites in Davos, Switzerland. Propagating the imaginary that ‘another world is possible’, these gatherings are now held in cities around the world, as global, national, regional social fora. More dramatically, street demonstrations, protests and social revolutions have been circulating through cities worldwide since December 2010. These began with the Tunisian revolution against an authoritarian western-supported presidency, and concatenated across North Africa and into the Middle East as the Arab awakening. They inspired well publicized protests against austerity policies in cities as varied as Madison (USA), Madrid, Athens, Tel Aviv and London, but also the Occupy Wall Street (OWS) movement that embraced over 1,000 cities in 87 countries before the FBI coordinated its clearance from cities across the USA in late 2011. These acts of resistance are not necessarily urban in focus, but their success or failure depends on a capacity to occupy key places in key cities. More importantly, they have created a sense that neoliberal Development can be resisted in the places where it has been most actively promulgated − cities (Harvey 2012).

Less dramatic, but potentially of more lasting impact, are the many ways in which everyday precarious urban livelihood strategies contest Development by exceeding it. At the centre of this is the informality of urban life, particularly (but not only) in the post-colony. For example, the more prosperous kampungs (informal settlements) of the sprawling city of Jakarta, spaces where urban life remains inflected with rural politics and various encroachments of the ordinary, provide something of a haven from the westernized consumer lifestyle of Jakarta’s emergent middle class. By comparison to the congested highways surrounding them, such kampungs are quiet, green, collectively organized and more sustainable. Yet they are under threat from land privatization that is enabling developers to buy out kampung residents and construct new multi-use developments (Simone 2010; Santoso 2011). Those scholars who pay close attention to these activities have proposed alternative theoretical lenses for making sense of them, discussed elsewhere in this book, including: ‘the quiet encroachment of the ordinary’ (Bayat 2000), ‘occupancy urbanism’ (Benjamin 2008), rights to the city (Maringanti 2011), ‘insurgent citizenship’ (Holston 2008), worlding (Simone 2011), ‘slumdog cities’ (Roy 2011), and grassroots learning and knowledge sharing (McFarlane 2011). In short, everyday livelihood strategies not only contest urban Development with variegated urban developments, but also can be productive for contesting northern urban theory.

Of course, much of what goes on in cities everywhere, also among the precariat, is aspirational of Development. The desire to become rich and live the Hollywood lifestyle is increasingly pervasive, and influential sub-groups in cities of the post-colony feel that they are achieving this. Urban elites also take advantage of informality for their quiet encroachments (Roy 2009b), undertaking their own struggles against the precariat (e.g. Tabassum et al. 2010). If the urban Development associated with globalizing capitalism were capable of delivering on this aspiration, then northern perspectives would be largely unquestioned. This has been far from the case, however.
**Conclusion**

Urbanization in the post-colony has long been profoundly shaped by northern imaginaries, theories and practices (‘History 1’). The failure of these to deliver on the promise of Development, however, has induced those living precariously to practise their livelihoods in ways that contest mainstream urban theory and policy. Since the 2008 onset of the global economic crisis, this has become increasingly the case. Inequalities have grown since wealth and vulnerability are inversely related. At the same time, particularly in the regional global north, the insistence on pursuing austerity policies – reinforcing the neoliberal dictums catalysing the crisis – only makes things worse for the worse off. The post-colony has shown a greater interest in state-led interventions to mitigate the crisis, but these also struggle to make life better for disadvantaged urban residents. The time is ripe, therefore, for taking seriously other little-d developments in the urban realm, learning from southern cities and their inhabitants.

There has been a call for southern theory (Connell 2007; Comaroff and Comaroff 2011), inverting the presumption that cities of the former colonizers are the source of theory, with those of the post-colony functioning as case studies (cf. Yeoh 2001; Gandy 2005; Robinson 2006; Pieterse 2008; Roy 2009a; Watson 2009; McFarlane 2011; Roy 2011). This cannot be reduced, however, to ‘southern’ academics theorizing cities of the post-colony. First, distinctive practices across the fractal global south – of those living precariously everywhere – are productive of theory that ‘often derives, as much, from a lived practice that may occur anywhere and everywhere’ (Leitner et al. 2008; Comaroff and Comaroff 2011: 49). Second, southern practices are a source of generalization and comparison. Indeed, the post-colony may presage the future of northern cities:

‘the south’ is a window on the world at large … whose geography, pace Kant and Humboldt, is being recast as a spatio-temporal order made of a multitude of variously articulated flows and dimensions … that, ultimately, transcends the very dualism of north and south.

(Comaroff and Comaroff 2011: 47)

In short, north and south are not separable worlds of urban theory and intervention – Development vs. development; they are entangled. The challenge for urban scholarship and policy is to take these entanglements seriously. Particularly in these times of crisis when its shortcomings are so visceral, it is evident that Developmental visions of global urbanism need to be provincialized (not simply rejected), through critical engagement with theories inspired by alternative, ‘southern’ urban practices (Sheppard et al. 2013).

**References**


Notes

1 My use of post-colony in the singular does not imply that postcolonial societies are similar, or variations on some ideal type; they simply share a history of having been shaped by a phase of dependence on some colonial power. Given the remit of this book, I exclude post-colonial countries located in the regional global north (e.g. Ireland).


16

STEERING, SPEEDING, SCALING

China’s model of urban growth and its implications for cities of the global south

Xiangming Chen

Introduction

As we look back around the world over the last 30 years or so, fewer developments have had more transformative consequences globally and locally, especially in the global south, than the coupling of accelerated globalization and urban growth. While many cities of the global south such as those in India and Africa have been growing rapidly, they do not measure up to the speed and scale at which China’s cities have exploded to massive proportions with dramatic changes in all aspects of urban life. A most striking example: a fishing village called Shenzhen on the border with Hong Kong, with only about 30,000 residents in 1979 when it was designated as China’s first Special Economic Zone (SEZ), now stands as an industrial megacity of approximately 12 million people. It became known as an ‘instant city’ that subsequently rose to a second-tier global city (Chen and de’Medici 2012). With many other dynamic cities like Shenzhen, China leads the global south, and the world, in hosting the largest number of cities that have grown most rapidly in the shortest period of time. This historically unprecedented phenomenon poses the question of how to make sense of ‘China’s model’ of urban growth.

In this chapter, I tighten two previously loosely linked approaches to understanding China’s model of urban growth. Focusing on the important drivers of China’s rapid urbanization, one familiar approach gives the credit to a powerful state as the primary force behind the massive build-up and reconstruction of cities. While a recent contributor to this prevalent perspective (see Chen 2009), I here focus more on globalization as a powerful influence on China’s urbanization, but in conjunction with the state’s crucial role, which I characterize as ‘steering’ in this chapter. As the second and more important approach, I take stock of the insights and lessons from China’s model of urban growth by critically evaluating its strengths and weaknesses as they manifest themselves before and during the recent global financial crisis. Once identified and assessed, these lessons can be instructive for other cities in the global south regarding growth in an increasingly challenged global environment and its intended and unintended consequences.

To place the global dimensions of China’s urban model in a broader comparative context, I use a simple scheme to illustrate the basic relationship between globalization, in terms of large-scale economic and spatial integration, and urban growth, with particular attention to cities of the global south. A focus on the variations of this relationship helps highlight the salient features of China’s model. Looking through this comparative lens, I zero in on the key mechanisms that have produced both promising and
problematic outcomes of China’s rapid urban growth. This critical discussion helps extract insights and lessons for other cities of the global south that may attempt to replicate or avoid China’s model, or adapt it to other national contexts. In the conclusion, I discuss the broader theoretical and policy implications from a balanced analysis of both sides of China’s experience.

Globalization and urban growth: locating the Chinese case

Since the growth (or decline) of cities is always driven by both domestic and international conditions, the acceleration and intensification of global economic and other interdependences has altered the relative weight of the impact on cities, shifting it more to the global forces that have reshaped cities everywhere, again more so in the global south. Greater integration of cross-border trade, investment, and physical infrastructure has strengthened the economic connections between cities as production centres and transport hubs and thus fuelled their growth, especially those in neighbouring countries bound by trade agreements like AFTA (Association of Southeast Asian Nations Free Trade Area). The global spread of architectural ideas and cultural practices has also stimulated new and similar growth strategies used by secondary or second-tier cities to compete against one another, to stay viable or move up in the global city system (see Chen and Kanna 2012). It is in the economic realm again where China’s cities, often the previously small and unknown ones like the city of Yiwu in Zhejiang province, rose to a dominant global hub for small merchandise trade. The city’s huge annual trade fairs draw buyers from around the world, besides the over 10,000 of them who reside locally, augmented by the ample and convenient supply of small merchandise items like home improvement tools from densely regionalized assembling and manufacturing (Chen et al. 2012).

The impact of globalization on cities is varied and complex, but how it has affected China’s cities so dramatically points to a simple but useful way to illustrate the relationship between globalization and urban growth. In a $2 \times 2$ matrix, we can expect strong globalization and fast urban growth to go together in the same direction (see Figure 16.1). Since globalization can speed up urban growth in the different ways by which cities are globally connected and integrated, the powerful mechanisms of integration are economic primarily (cross-border trade and investment), secondarily spatial (more connected transport infrastructure) and increasingly cultural (transnational flow of urban design ideas and practices). Although global integration shapes urban growth, cities are not just passive recipients. They instead take proactive steps or are pushed by the state, or both, to globalize by either strengthening their trade or investment ties or adopting external cultural strategies to more aggressively market themselves. The cultural outreach may reinforce economic integration, further amplifying the role of global forces in urban growth. With this elaboration on how globalization helps or hinders urban growth, cities can be placed in any of the four squares (Figure 16.1) in terms of their positions along both the globalization and urban growth dimensions.

While somewhat crude, the logic underlying Figure 16.1 sets up the comparative stage for examining how global integration fosters uneven urban growth, and what other factors complicate this multifaceted relationship. In addition, the simple matrix posits a broad difference between cities of the global north as slow growing or even ‘shrinking’ vs. those of the global south as generally growing, with many of them growing at a very fast pace. No pair of cities is more illustrative of this sharp contrast between the two broad categories of cities than the ‘miracle’ Chinese city of Shenzhen (Chen and de’Medici 2010) vs. Detroit after the 2008 global financial crisis. If the severe urban decline of Detroit is associated with ‘de-globalization’ (Ryan 2012), the rise of Shenzhen can be attributed to the dynamics linked to a sort of ‘over-globalization’ that is only possible in post-reform China.

Given what we generally know about how China has globalized and urbanized, the evidence is compelling to place China’s cities in the upper right-hand quadrant of Figure 16.1. It suffices to highlight both dimensions with a few striking aggregate figures. Regarding global integration, China’s
share of global trade rose from 4.7 per cent in 2002 to 10.2 per cent in 2011, with its exports share of the global total growing from 5 per cent to 10.4 per cent. This rapid growth moved China from fourth on the list of top trading nations to first. With an annual growth rate of 21.8 per cent, China moved up from the sixth largest importer in 2002 to second in 2009, only second to the United States. By year-end 2012, China surpassed the United States by USD50 billion as the world’s number one trading nation, according to their respective official trade figures, although the inclusion of substantial processing trade in China’s imports inflates its conventional trade measure.

Along the urban growth vector, China’s urban population grew from 502 million (39.1 per cent of the total population) in 2002 to almost 700 million (51.3 per cent of the total population) in 2011. In both the absolute size and share of urban population, this growth is historically unprecedented. Looking ahead, people living in China’s cities are projected to reach one billion and account for 65 per cent of the total national population by 2030. Despite these staggering numbers, China’s movement along both the global integration and urban growth tracks is not all linear and smooth. On the contrary, it has encountered both exhilarating rides and unexpected bumps due to strong intervening forces. In the rest of the paper, I focus on how the most important of these forces — primarily a powerful state — have intersected with global factors in turning China’s urban growth into a learning model with positive and negative lessons for cities of the global south.

**China’s model of urban growth**

Despite the growing body of research on China’s urbanization with a heavy focus on some of the booming mega-cities like Shanghai and Shenzhen, and the widespread media reporting on them, especially on the massive infrastructure building and migration, no consistent view has emerged on China’s model of urban growth. However, China was discussed as a model of sorts in a session of the American Sociological Association annual meeting in August 2012, ‘Comparing Cities in the Global North and Global South’, where I was a panellist. The comments from my fellow panellists and questions from the audience, explicitly and implicitly, referred to the Chinese model, or China’s model
to be more exact, which is used in this study. This conversation prompted me to think seriously about how to make the best sense of what it means internally and comparatively.

Any effort to describe China’s model tends to start with a numerical assessment of the combined speed and scale of its urban growth. Yet a recent official government view has looked at it in terms of comparative models: China’s urban growth has avoided two ‘urbanization traps’ – the ‘overurbanization’ in Latin America where urban growth has exceeded economic development, especially job creation in cities, and the ‘poverty urbanization’ in Africa where cities have not delivered the benefits of modernization to rural migrants who became poorer as informal settlers after permanently leaving agricultural land behind. The new Premier of China, Li Keqiang, has recently warned against having modern skyscrapers and poor slums side by side in China’s cities. This official take was sometimes echoed by Chinese academics at conferences who have characterized urban phenomena in cities of the global south like large slums in Mumbai or Lagos as undesirable or problematic, implying the virtue of being slum-free in large Chinese cities such as Shanghai. Leaving the official policy spin aside, the comparative references bring a sharp focus to the question of what are the successful aspects of China’s urban growth. Here I use a simple framework of ‘6Ss’ with each ‘S’ standing for: state steering, speed and scale, scaling out to spread development, to discuss the distinctive strengths of China’s urban model.

**Distinctive features and strengths**

State steering. Generally speaking, China’s model of urban growth begins and ends with the powerful state driving urbanization forward with a very ‘visible hand’. This conventional perspective tends to see the state crowding out other forces in shaping the rapid pace and scale of China’s urban transformation. Despite its dominance and wide acceptance, the state-centric model of China’s urban growth is not one-dimensional and certainly not spatially uniform. In hindsight, over both time and space the critical role of the state appears more differentiated and diffused and thus more complex and contingent. It varies a lot over time in terms of how it has affected cities at their different stages of development. The state has acted vertically in varied ways with regard to how the central and municipal government interacted both cooperatively and competitively in local urban growth. In addition, the state has mattered horizontally in targeting different cities and regions with focused and adapted policies and incentives. In the light of these multiple facets, the role of the Chinese state in urban growth takes on a distinctively steering orientation and power instead of being more domineering and directive. This steering refers to the state using a variety of policies and interventions to guide and correct the dynamic course of urban expansion over the last 30 years.

To distil the essence of the Chinese state’s role, I use the logic underscoring Figure 16.1 to trace how the state has been steering the global economic forces to produce rapid urban growth with some beneficial outcomes. Steering urban growth began with the creation of China’s first and largest SEZ in Shenzhen bordering Hong Kong in 1979. While the Shenzhen SEZ shares a few functional similarities to the earlier Export Processing Zones (EPZs) in Taiwan and Korea (Chen 1994, 1995), it grew quickly into a large industrial centre and eventually into a full-fledged modern mega-city of about 12 million people through staged steering by the Chinese government. Designed to attract Hong Kong and overseas investors early on, lower corporate taxes turned out to be a more standard incentive for stimulating urban growth. A stronger version of steering was the state providing upfront financing for building large-scale physical infrastructure to spur and support industrial growth. As this rapid growth later ran into bottlenecks such as the shortage of land, water and energy and environmental degradation, the Shenzhen government tightened restrictions on land approval and elevated environmental standards by banning polluting industries including papermaking and tanning. In response to the socio-spatial marginalization of millions of migrant workers who have built Shenzhen’s massive export machine and spectacular skyline but live on low wages in crowded and sub-standard housing on the city’s outskirts,
the state stepped up its steering, albeit belatedly, by providing them with a more permanent residential status and its associated social and health benefits (Chen and de’Medici 2012). Given Shenzhen’s location next to Hong Kong and economic record as one of the top Chinese cities for attracting overseas investment and exporting manufactured goods, it is often seen as shaped primarily by strong global integration and thus conforming to the logic of Figure 16.1. As illustrated above, however, Shenzhen would not have grown as fast and made the kind of local industrial adjustment to the global economy without the state steering it along the way.

As Shenzhen took off in the 1980s, the state’s steering of urban growth moved north or up China’s eastern seaboard and led to the designation of 14 other coastal cities as Open Cities in 1984, with their largely state-financed Economic and Technology Development Zones (ETDZs) for the concentrated construction of export-oriented factories. These newly open coastal cities not only drew more foreign investment and fuelled more exports but also created more diverse sites for the state to steer new urban construction in the form of ETDZs, located generally on the outskirts, and large-scale redevelopment of old areas in the heart of historic cities like Shanghai (Chen 2009). As the state-designated open areas multiplied in number and geographic scope, the agglomeration of export-oriented production in factories and ports and inward-oriented consumption via residential towers and shopping malls began to scale up and spread around the booming coastal cities.

With the state also steering more resources into inter-city transport infrastructure out from the major coastal cities, geographically adjacent secondary cities have benefited from the positive spillover effects from hubs like Shenzhen and Shanghai, which gradually led to more regional economic agglomeration and spatial integration of all cities in the Pearl River and Yangtze River Deltas (Chen 2007). As part of a state-steered plan to build a number of new towns around Shanghai, Shanghai Volkswagen or SVW (a joint venture between Shanghai Automobile Industrial Corporation [SAIC] and VW) constructed an integrated ‘motor city’ with a Formula One track by the new town of Anting on the outskirts of Shanghai, which facilitated a spatial extension of manufacturing from Shanghai into the Yangtze River Delta (YRD). Shanghai GM or SGM (a joint venture between SAIC and General Motors) began to source simple, specialized components from small suppliers located in towns at the far edges of the YRD. Hankook, a large Korean tyre-maker based in the city of Jiaxing in Zhejiang province, about one hour away from Shanghai, became a major supplier of tyres to VW through its marketing functions in Shanghai. Beyond individual cities, state steering has worked in bringing about some integrated development of key industries such as auto-making and regional economies.

As the coastal cities raced far ahead of the interior cities, the Chinese state enhanced its steering role in urban growth by prioritizing key western cities as new hubs of accelerated development for stimulating the catch-up of the vast inland region. The post-1997 southwestern city of Chongqing, with 32 million people in an overbounded (including an expansive agricultural hinterland) municipal territory of 82,000 sq. km, epitomises this strategic shift in state steering. By designating Chongqing as a central government municipality in 1997, the state elevated Chongqing closer to the centre and its control while giving it greater autonomy and financial support. For example, the central government gave Chongqing 1.5 billion yuan (=USD250 million) as low-interest loans per year for the Three Gorges Dam-affected region, 500 million yuan (=USD80 million) for building new housing for displaced residents, and refunded USD85 million from import taxes to Chongqing for the Dam-related projects. In addition, Chongqing was allowed to lower enterprise tax for new foreign investment projects from 33 to 24 per cent, or even to 15 per cent if these projects were located in the city’s ETDZ, like the Shenzhen SEZ and other coastal ETDZs in the 1980s. Chongqing used this large infusion of central government funds to speed up its development and raise its national and international standing.

Fast forward to the last few years, the government of Chongqing under then new Party leader Bo Xilai became very aggressive in mobilizing massive central and local funds to build large-scale infrastructure and to attract multinational corporations to set up factories locally. In 2011, the last year
of Bo’s reign, Chongqing’s fixed assets investment accounted for 76 per cent of its GDP, compared to 72 per cent for neighbouring Sichuan province, of which Chongqing was a part before 1997, and 64 per cent for the national average. This pushed Chongqing’s GDP to grow 16.5 per cent and its exports to surge 165 per cent in 2011 over 2010, ahead of all provinces and direct municipalities in China on both indicators (H. Liu 2012). As Chongqing illustrates, the state’s role in steering urban growth not only has involved both the central and local government across regions, but also shifted up and down the political hierarchy in intensity depending on both the strategic importance of given cities and the ambition of their leaders.

Speed and scale. Given the strong steering role of the state, the fast speed and large scale of China’s urban growth is fully expected, although it still has no equals compared to all rapidly urbanizing countries of the global south. While the high speed of China’s urban growth itself does not equal success, it should be seen and evaluated as a distinctive strength of a model that is capable of accelerating and compressing urbanization only in the Chinese context. Taking a longer historical perspective would place China’s super-fast urbanization in its proper light. With only 13 per cent of its population being urban around 1950, China was behind India’s 17 per cent and comparable to the level of urbanization in some parts of Africa today. With still less than 20 per cent urban around 1980 when economic reforms began, China has urbanized much faster than India ever since, reaching over 50 per cent urban today relative to India’s slightly more than 30 per cent. Since urbanization and economic growth go hand in hand in this context, rapid urbanization has contributed mightily to China’s overall GDP expansion.

From 1990 to 2007, China’s urban population more than doubled, and real GDP grew almost tenfold. Between roughly 1995 and 2005, over half of China’s GDP growth came from fixed assets investment in the massive construction of factories, transport infrastructure and residential buildings. In 2010, China’s metropolitan regions accounted for 78 per cent of its GDP. Urbanization stimulated more urban consumption, which accounted for 26 per cent of China’s GDP growth (McKinsey Global Institute 2009). In comparative historical terms, China doubled its GDP per capita ten times faster than the world’s first country to urbanize – the United Kingdom – from 1700 to the mid-1800s and five times faster than the United States during its accelerated urbanization between 1800 and 1900 (Dobbs et al. 2012). 8

Related to the sheer speed of urbanization, China stands out among the global south in adding a large number of new cities and scaling up already large cities and even mega-cities like Shanghai. With approximately 200 cities around 1980, China has almost 800 cities today. Often used as a convenient indicator of a significantly scaled city, the cities with one million-plus population in China rose from 20 in 1980 to 102 in 2012, whereas the number of million-plus cities in fast urbanizing Africa as a whole grew from 17 to about 50 today. Europe as a whole has 35 such cities, while the United States has nine. In a more meaningful comparison, India has 42 million-plus cities, ranking second behind China. While we expect a large number of big cities in China given its huge population and territory, this four-fold increase in cities of this size is again exceptional across the global south. At the very top of the city scale, China, more than any developing and rapidly urbanizing country including India, added four more cities (Guangzhou, Shenzhen, Chongqing, Wuhan) to the world’s top 30 largest urban centres by 2010, from only Shanghai and Beijing in 1980 (United Nations 2012). Larger cities are generally more productive due to economic agglomeration. A greater number of larger cities have contributed disproportionally more to China’s GDP growth. From 2007 to 2010, when global economic growth slowed considerably, the GDP of large Chinese cities rose from 20 per cent of that of large cities in the United States to 37 per cent (Dobbs et al. 2012). So China’s economic growth has benefited from both a higher level of urbanization and a greater number of larger cities – a double gain from the simultaneous occurrence of ‘more and larger’ in urban growth.

Given the coupling of speed and scale, China’s urban growth has yielded several positive outcomes beyond and through the greater accumulation of aggregate wealth. One is the rapid expansion of an
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urban middle class with its growing disposable income. The shares of the upper middle- (earning USD6,359–USD15,840 annually) and lower middle-income (USD4,000–USD6,350 annually) classes grew from 1.3 and 5.7 per cent in 1995 to 9.4 and 12.6 per cent in 2005, respectively. Yet their corresponding shares of China’s total urban disposable income went up from 5.1 and 13.6 per cent to 24.2 and 15.4 per cent (Farrell et al. 2006). Related to this improved standard of living in the middle is the alleviation of poverty that has happened primarily through rural–urban migration. The proportion of peasants living under the officially defined poverty line (less than one US dollar a day) dropped from 30 per cent around 1980 to less than 5 per cent by 2010. This has translated into more than 300 million peasants who have moved out of wretched poverty and into low-paying jobs in cities. Higher urban wages over the last three or four years (see later) have helped more migrant workers climb the income ladder, adding some of them to the urban middle class, generally those who are committed to and manage to stay permanently in cities. Looking from the middle and bottom of the socio-economic hierarchy, rapid and massive urban growth has produced a rising tide effect in lifting all boats.

Generally seen as another highly successful aspect of China’s model, large-scale physical infrastructure has been built up intensively and extensively within and across China’s cities, especially in larger cities. In addition to heavy investment from the central government for inter-city highways and high-speed rail, city governments have financed many big infrastructure projects by buying surrounding agricultural land, often with strong administrative pressure, and then selling its user rights to domestic and foreign developers at higher prices. This financing scheme has provided cities with plenty of housing, roads and utilities to keep up with their expanding populations and production capacities. While the loss of agricultural land to urban development has caused a lot of rural resentment and protests against local governments, sustaining cities’ built infrastructure has gone a long way to avoid the emergence of large slums, a dynamic that the Chinese government and some scholars use to praise China’s model.

Scaling out to spread development. As the Chinese state has steered urban growth along a fast track on a large scale, it has also done so along a parallel track of what can be called scaling out to spread development. Scaling out refers to the state steering the growth of medium-sized and small cities across China, especially across its interior. While the number of million-plus cities has risen fast, scaling up the top of the urban hierarchy, its bottom half consisting of smaller cities has sustained its form and functions, if not widening them. According to official government statistics, the number of cities with 500,000 to one million people rose from around 30 in 1980 to approximately 130 today. This net gain of 100 cities in this size category, larger than the added number of million-plus cities, represents a wider spatial spread of secondary or tertiary growth centres which have contributed to GDP and boosted lagging regions. In fact, while half of the urban GDP in 2005 was concentrated in the 40 largest cities, all with one million or more people, the smaller cities collectively accounted for the other half. Smaller cities including those with less than half a million people are projected to make up 54 per cent of the urban GDP by 2025 and contribute to 55 per cent of the urban GDP growth by then (McKinsey Global Institute 2009). This trend is similar to all developing countries where cities of around half a million people are expected to absorb a larger share of urban population and economic growth over the next 20 years.

To look through these aggregate numbers to see the real development benefits from scaling out, we can assess the concrete evidence regarding the city of Yiwu in coastal Zhejiang province as an illustrative case. Few people outside of China have heard about Yiwu and how it has become one of the most globalized cities in China today. Yiwu furnishes an early example of how an autonomous local government steered both local market and global economic forces in jump-starting rapid urban growth through careful planning and flexible policies. Instead of building many factories in spatially distinctive industrial districts like the Shenzhen SEZ and other coastal cities, Yiwu chose a commercial route and thus charted a new path to globalize its own local economy. From the very outset in the 1980s, the local
government focused on promoting spatially centralized and specialized markets and vending stalls for small merchandise such as handicraft items and hand tools. By furnishing the necessary economic infrastructure as well as financial incentives, the local government built up Yiwu as China's hub of small merchandise markets. As these markets grew in numbers and density, they attracted thousands more merchants from near and far, both from within China and from abroad. The increase in commercial transactions led to the emergence and expansion of small factories within and beyond the city. These factories process and assemble more small merchant products to be sold at and exported from the central markets. The entire process, which was created and shaped by local officials, fuelled the economic and demographic boom of Yiwu. Today its population numbers over one million, including approximately 10,000 long-term foreign residents, most of whom are merchants and buyers. This rapid demographic growth represents a tenfold increase since 1990. Through the process, Yiwu has also become the world's leading centre for small merchandise with a market index that is widely regarded as a barometer of prices and performance (Chen et al. 2012). Again, the state has steered Yiwu in showing a positive association between global integration and urban growth (see Figure 16.1).

The scaling out to smaller cities to spread development, through state steering, may also work at a regional scale in China's less developed interior. It can be seen as the urban-scale embodiment of China's 'Go West' development strategy whose long-term success will depend on building up and out from key interior hubs like Chongqing. It is actually in Chongqing where the central and local governments have cooperated on a large-scale experiment, through household registration and land reforms, to urbanize, by 2020, 10 of the 20 million or so peasants living in the rural hinterlands around the established urban district, which currently hosts about 10 of the 30 million people in the entire municipality. Part of this state-orchestrated urbanization involves building up several secondary cities like Wanzhou beyond the old urban centre to absorb a portion of the expected 10 million or so new urbanites. By building up the municipal and transport infrastructure in and around these secondary cities, the state scales them up and out so they are capable of accommodating more rural people and also pushing some development impulses deeper into the more distant and poorer areas near Chongqing’s sprawling municipal boundaries. While it is too early to assess the long-term results of this ambitiously planned approach to speeding up urban–rural integration, it represents a stronger version of the state steering the pace, scale and direction of regional urban growth than reflected in the Yiwu case.

The strongest and most effective, albeit less recognized, agency of scaling out is the extensive and accelerated use of land as an easy and lucrative source of local public finance for the rapid growth of cities like Yiwu. Urban land had no market value in China's pre-reform planned economy. Since reforms began, increasing but incomplete marketization has appreciated the value of urban land to a much higher level than rural land, including that around and adjacent to cities. This has led to what Lin and Yi (2011) called land-centred urbanization by which local governments have expanded their cities by building on relatively cheap land but using the huge amount of fees they have levied on real estate developers for the long-term use of the land. The tax sharing system introduced in 1994, which made local governments pay more taxes to the central government, forced them to scale up the use of land fees as an extra-budgetary source of revenue for local urban development (ibid.). To the extent that this distinguishes China's model of rapid urban growth, it is inherently linked to the legally ambiguous and locally flexible nature of property rights and land development which reflects the incrementally decentralized and locally varied governance during China’s gradual market transition from socialism (see Lin 2010). While it has produced miraculous urban growth, it has brought about consequences on the other side.

**Glaring weaknesses and setbacks**

*Global vulnerability.* If the Chinese state has played a critical role in steering urban growth in such a spectacular manner, it is tempting to dwell on all the successful aspects of this model. A more careful
scrutiny, however, reveals that the major strengths of China’s model carry built-in weaknesses that have resulted in setbacks and new challenges. One major weakness that has developed from a previous strength is the increasingly limited ability of the state to steer urban development in response to more fierce global completion with greater global integration (Figure 16.1). The city of Wenzhou in Zhejiang province, a once very successful model of local entrepreneurial dynamism and robust exports, has exposed the inherent drawback of the model during the global financial crisis. While Wenzhou remained a dynamic front-runner among China’s booming coastal cities into the twenty-first century, its ‘star’ has dimmed some since 2010. As the global economic crisis dragged on and demand weakened in advanced markets, many of Wenzhou’s 500,000 export-dependent private enterprises ran into a serious debt problem. Starting out with loans from families and neighbours, these firms have received little funding from state-owned banks, which tightened credit to rein in inflation. So these firms have turned to underground banking networks to raise cash. Since these networks charge interest rates as high as 90 per cent, a spate of debtors who face more fierce competition (from lower production sites in India and Vietnam) and less demand (the city’s share of the global cigarette lighter market slipped to about 70 per cent, down from 80 per cent), have gone bankrupt. More than 90 borrowers, unable or unwilling to repay their debts, have fled since April 2011 (China Daily 2011). To deal with the serious consequences of this local debt crisis, the Chinese government has since adopted a series of measures including: capping interest rates and ordering big banks to expand lending to small companies; allowing small banks to continue to implement ‘relatively’ lower reserve requirement ratios than big banks; allowing small firms to issue more bills and bonds; and raising the threshold for levying value-added and business taxes on them. These strong interventions have not worked effectively, however, as the non-performing loan ratio in Wenzhou was 3 per cent in August 2012 (or about USD3.3 billion), doubled from the beginning of 2012 and the highest level in a decade (Man-Ki 2012).

The state’s increasing inability to mitigate China’s global economic vulnerability became most obvious at the early stage of the 2008−2009 financial crisis. The sharp decline in overseas demand for China’s consumer exports forced hundreds of coastal factories to close down and an estimated 20 million migrant workers to lose jobs, disproportionally in the Pearl River Delta where labour-intensive factories are spatially congregated. One shoe factory in the city of Dongguan lost 30 per cent in overseas orders and over USD10 million in export earnings from 2008 to 2009. A loss of this scale was huge for China, which accounted for 73 per cent of the world’s total shoe exports (Zhan 2008).

Ironically, China also led the world in recovering from the crisis in 2009, during which unemployment dropped from 20 million in January to 11 million in April and 4.5 million in August. Many coastal factories faced the challenge of hiring enough workers and had to raise wages. In apparel manufacturing, for example, the hourly rate went up 14 per cent to USD1.84, which would quadruple that in Vietnam where the hourly rate had risen only 2 per cent to 49 US cents (Moody 2010). Accompanying and reinforcing this globally induced change, more foreign companies shifted production to the interior in search of cheaper land and labour, attracting more migrant workers to stay at or close to home for work. While keeping its large factory in Shenzhen, which had employed as many as 900,000 workers at its peak, Foxconn opened a huge, modern operation in Chengdu, Sichuan province in October 2010, and might expand to 500,000 staff within the next five years. In 2011, for the first time, the number of local labourers migrating from one part of the expansive Chongqing municipality to another exceeded the number leaving for other provinces, while just a few years ago, 70 per cent were going elsewhere. The local state responded by introducing experiments in Chengdu and in Chongqing, aimed at making it easier for migrant workers from the surrounding small urban and large rural areas to enjoy the same welfare benefits as registered local residents (Economist 2012c). As China’s coastal cities have become more vulnerable to the vicissitudes of the global economy, the spatial shift of globally linked production and migration to the inland cities will exert more pressure on the state to steer and manage global shocks to a larger number of diverse local economies.
Shallow urbanization and city dwelling. As part of its speed and scale, China’s model of urban growth has produced massive factories, spectacular skylines and glamorous shopping malls. But this model has not yielded proportional benefits for the millions of migrant workers from the countryside who labour hard to run the factories and build up the infrastructure. In fact, the state and major cities have created and sustained a distinctive phenomenon of ‘shallow urbanization’ with two dimensions that present double negatives for migrant workers. On the material side, migrants face the persistent barrier sustained by local governments which favours only local residents with urban household registration. They therefore cannot enjoy the benefits of schooling, health-care and pensions associated with this registration. They also face discrimination from urban employers who prefer local residents and younger and more educated migrants. In addition, migrant workers earn a lower average wage and are less able to afford the expensive housing and other amenities in cities. These institutional and economic barriers also limit the social and communal integration of most migrants, who are residentially marginalized in crowded factory dorms or in sub-standard rental units on the cities’ outskirts. This socio-spatial segregation reinforces migrants’ emotional detachment from and lack of identity with cities. As a result, most migrant workers have not settled down in cities permanently, and some tend to return to villages when they get older and become less competitive in the urban labour market. Zhang and Li (2007) found that migrants encounter difficulties in securing employments after they are 40 years old and often have to return to villages. The rural land migrants have left behind, coupled with such familial needs as care for the elderly, also contribute to the return flow. On the other hand, the longer migrants stay in cities, the more likely they are to stay indefinitely, as those who had stayed for ten years in Shanghai have a 95 per cent chance of staying there indefinitely (Ren 2006). The factors affecting whether migrant workers stay in China’s cities or not are varied and complex.

The shallowness of China’s urban growth places migrants at a number of disadvantages, which in turn pose serious challenges to the urban labour market and broader social integration and stability. Without proper access to urban education, migrant workers can’t develop human capital to compete for higher paying jobs. As a result, they get stuck in manual labour jobs, which account for 70.7 per cent of all migrants’ jobs, with only 17 per cent in skilled positions, 7.4 per cent as group or section leaders (a low-level supervisory position on the factory floor or construction site), and only 4.9 per cent in management. Given their lower education and skill, migrants with fewer than nine years of schooling earned 70.3 per cent of registered urban residents’ income in 2005, while migrants with 9–12 and over 12 years of schooling earned 84.6 per cent and 87.9 per cent compared to their urban counterparts, respectively (C. Liu 2012). Moreover, their lower wage also makes it harder for them to spare money to pay for continued education and training. Due to low pay and spatially segregated living, migrants can seldom access or afford entertainment. According to one survey, more than 75 per cent of migrant workers had never been to bars, coffeehouses, movie theatres, fitness centres, libraries or museums. This is no surprise since there are few outlets in the areas where migrants live and congregate. Although libraries and museums are free, they are often located in the city centre and not convenient for migrants to get to from the outskirts. Another survey showed that more than half of migrants consider sleeping a major form of entertainment (Wang 2009). Limited education and lower wages restrict upward economic mobility for migrants and thus reduce their commitment to staying in cities, and the lack of local social and leisure connections erodes migrants’ emotional and civic ties to cities. All these disadvantages add up to a total denial of urban citizenship to migrants (Zhang 2002), working powerfully against the factors that facilitate migrants’ stay such as improved human capital, income opportunities and longer time in the city.

Given the massive number of migrants caught up in the woes of shallow and unsettled lives in cities, the state has resorted to its inherent capacity and practice of ‘steering toward’ a solution. In 2007, the city of Chongqing was named the National Economic Experimental Zone for Urban–Rural Integration with its central goal to deepen shallow urbanization by making it possible for migrant workers to enjoy
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urban life just as local residents and eventually settle down. The city has devised an ambitious three-pronged experiment that comprises: reform of the household registration system, a public housing plan and a land coupon scheme. The city proposed that in 2010 and 2011, three million eligible migrant workers who had been working locally would have their registration status changed to urban. To be eligible one must have worked five years in the central city of Chongqing or three years in a township within the municipal boundary. From 2012 to 2020, another seven million peasants should and would become urban under the broadened eligibility that those with an intention to come into cities can do so. In 2010, Chongqing proposed to build 40 million m² of public rental housing, at about half the market rate, by 2015 for two million migrant workers. By the end of 2011, 8 million m² had been either built or were in construction. Essentially any person who works in the city but does not own a home is eligible for one of these more affordable public rental units. Through a lottery system over four rounds since 2010, more than 300,000 people have been granted the permission to rent the lower-cost apartments. While small, with an average space of 60 m², these units counter shallow urbanization by reducing migrants’ living expenses and promoting their integration with the local community and residents. Integrated with schools, community clinics, green space and playgrounds, the lower-priced public rentals not only are a much improved alternative to the typical housing conditions of migrant workers but also allow them to live with their families in Chongqing, thus strengthening their commitment towards permanent settlement. In the land coupon scheme, villages and peasants can collectively or individually apply to reclaim their rural construction land for qualified arable land. After verification by concerned authorities that the newly converted land is indeed arable, land coupons are issued to the applicants. The Land Coupon Exchange, which acts as the marketplace for transacting coupons, periodically holds auctions where a given coupon goes to the highest bidder, generally a real estate developer. The majority of the revenue from developers’ bidding for land coupons, at least 85 per cent according to the latest regulation (Li 2011), is returned to peasants who can now use the money as start-up capital for any business venture or living expenses as they move into Chongqing or its secondary urban centres. The amount paid by developers can be deducted from the land transfer fees that they need to pay the government when they actually purchase the land for their projects.

With these three policies designed to help deepen shallow urbanization, there is initial evidence that they might have some intended effects. In the three months after the household registration reform became effective in September 2010, more than one million migrant workers changed their status (Deng 2010). In 2011, about 385,000 migrant workers came back from coastal cities. Among the 8.9 million migrant workers from Chongqing’s countryside in 2011, 4.89 million chose to work in the city of Chongqing (Li 2011). While such factors as rising business and living costs and weaker employment demand in coastal cities have played into the return of migrants, especially since the global financial crisis (see earlier), the pull forces evident in these policy changes in Chongqing seem to have gained some strength. Some migrants in Chongqing have voluntarily decided to sell their rural land and become fully urban, citing the reasons that they would expect to face less discrimination holding the official urban status and have secure and affordable housing (C. Liu 2012). Some scholars such Huang (2011) have proclaimed the policy scheme to be the right approach towards equity and justice, and a timely rectification of the overemphasis on growth and efficiency during the last three decades. Others have criticized the policies for the following reasons: the lack of enforcement and delivery of full benefits to migrants; a top-down and arbitrary approach leading to long-run uncertainty due to the lack of careful and anticipatory planning (Xiao 2011); and the huge upfront capital outlays leading to financial unsustainability later (Szelenyi 2011). Only with more time and better data can the full intended effects of these policies be properly evaluated. For now, they are another good representation or reminder of the enduring capacity of the Chinese state in trying to steer urban growth away from its problematic aspects. It does so in order to redress the widespread discontent among migrant workers that threatens broad social stability and long-term sustainable urban growth.
Unsustainability. A critical look at the financially costly and unsustainable Chongqing experiment casts a larger and brighter spotlight on dimensions of China’s model that render it highly unsustainable in more senses than one. Striking inequality, in both economic and spatial terms, perhaps more than anything else, has placed China’s model on an increasingly unsustainable path. Ironically, having launched the SEZs and other coastal cities as the first favoured cities, China’s urban growth has carried a strong element of ‘planned’ inequality from the outset. The early and fast accumulation of wealth in this small number of coastal cities created pockets of prosperity that have since grown into booming centres of greater economic power and a higher level of income and living standard. While the number of such cities has multiplied over time through the state’s spatial steering of new growth targets in the interior, the disparity between the ‘early developers’ and ‘later developers’ has widened to the point where it risks creating a deep and unbridgeable chasm of wealth between cities, primarily between coastal and inland cities.

Growing spatial inequality is part and parcel of the overall urbanization-induced inequality in China that has been the biggest and fastest growing in the world. China’s Gini coefficient has risen from less than 0.3 in 1978 to more than 0.48 today, according to a study by an official research organization (cited by The Economist 2012a). The ratio of urban to rural per capita income rose from 2.2 in 1990 to 3.3 in 2010. In spite and because of its rapid growth and overall wealth, the Gini coefficient for Pudong district, Shanghai grew from 0.37 in 1994 to 0.45 in 2001 (Pudong Municipal Government 2002). Inequality in urban China would be even higher if the so-called ‘grey’ or unreported income is factored in. One scholar in China recently estimated the income of the richest 10 per cent of urban Chinese at some 23 times that of the poorest 10 per cent, while official statistics put the multiple at nine (cited by The Economist 2012a). Of the factors that have contributed to both rural–urban and intra-urban inequalities such as the abuse of official power, the persistence of household registration is the most important; it not only keeps rural educational spending and its return lower than in cities, but also disadvantages rural migrants in urban employment and earnings, as discussed earlier.

China’s model of urban growth is also unsustainable because it has been achieved at a considerable cost to the environment. Driven by hundreds of thousands of factories, large and small, within and around their administrative boundaries, China’s cities, especially those on the coast, are nothing but factory cities and production centres that make all kinds of consumer goods for the world; a number of factory cities are so highly specialized they make and export a single product. For example, the city of Chaozhou in Guangdong province, which churns out wedding gowns and evening gowns in annual sales of USD950 million, exports 67 per cent of them to the United States alone. Given the prevalence of these factories, manufacturing accounts for 49 per cent of China’s GDP, but uses up 84 per cent of China’s energy consumption (Howes and Wyrwoll 2012).

Due to the dominance of its energy-intensive manufacturing, China is now the world’s biggest energy consumer and since 2007 the largest source of energy-related greenhouse gas emissions; its energy intensity (energy consumption per unit of GDP) is nearly double the average of countries in the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD). In terms of a related indicator, the economic cost to China’s environment as a share of gross national income (GNI) in 2011, a measure of the financial cost of pollution and the using up of finite natural resources, stood at 8.9 per cent (or USD650 billion), more than the combined GNI of Austria and Portugal (World Bank 2012).

Explosive urban growth in China has also accelerated its massive production of garbage already at one-quarter of the world’s total, with the urban waste growing at around 8–10 per cent annually (The Economist Intelligence Unit 2012b). This intensive energy consumption and waste production is likely to increase, with 350 million more city-dwellers expected by 2025 and an expected five million buildings, 50,000 of which could be skyscrapers, to be constructed for them (McKinsey 2009). Since cities (accounting for half of the world’s population), with all their buildings and cars, consume over 70 per cent of the world’s total energy, the 220 or so cities with one million or more people in China by
2025 will further elevate this disproportionally voracious demand for and use of the world’s limited energy.

Given their industrial core and heavy export-orientation, China’s cities are unsustainable for two more reasons that have recently become more coupled and mutually reinforcing. On one hand, rapid growth has run up against rising production costs in coastal cities due to higher land prices, wages and more stringent environmental and safety regulations. Labour costs alone in southern China have gone up by 20 per cent a year over the last four years, rising by 12 per cent in Guangdong province and 14 per cent in Shanghai a year from 2002 to 2009, relative to increases of 8 per cent in the Philippines and only 1 per cent in Mexico (The Economist 2012b). Responding and contributing to the rising labour costs in coastal cities, more foreign-owned factories are moving to cheaper and more attractive interior cities. For example, Shenzhen-based Foxconn, which exports USD50 billion worth of such products as iPads and iPhones for Apple a year as China’s largest corporate exporter, has opened several new factories in inland cities including a huge, modern operation in the city of Chengdu, the capital of Sichuan province, in October 2010 (see earlier discussion). Formerly the largest labour-exporter in Sichuan, Jintang county, now part of Chengdu, has benefited from newly available jobs at Foxconn, with wages as high as USD320 a month. Local officials have begun to persuade migrants to stay home after the Chinese New Year festivities by offering tax breaks and low-interest loans for those who want to start businesses (The Economist 2012c). While the average wage and mandatory welfare of China’s second-tier cities, mostly in the interior, are 60–80 per cent of those in its first-tier cities like Shanghai and Shenzhen, they are no longer as low as they used to be. This partly stems from the differential new minimum wages set by the major municipal and provincial governments at the beginning of 2012. The minimum wages for Henan (in central China) and Sichuan provinces were raised by 35 and 23 per cent respectively, compared to 13 and 14 per cent for Shanghai and Shenzhen, which already had the highest minimum wages before the mandated increase (Einhorn and Applegate 2012).

Accelerated population ageing and the associated shrinking of the labour force has also contributed to rising labour costs in China. While the ratio of those aged 60 and over across the world rose by three percentage points in the 60 years from 1950 to 2010, in China it increased by 3.8 percentage points in just the 10 years from 2000 to 2010 (Zhang 2012). As the youngest and largest city of migrants, Shenzhen possessed a favourable demographic advantage in 2000 when nearly 60 per cent of its population was between the ages of 15 and 29, with barely more than 1 per cent of the population over the age of 65. But the proportion of the population in the 15–29 age range dropped to 23 per cent in 2010 as workers matured and the influx slowed. With the lowest birth rate (less than one) among all major cities in China for a long time, Shanghai will see the growth of its working age population slow to less than 1 per cent and the proportion of its elderly (65 and over) rise to 17.1 per cent in 2020 (Economist Intelligence Unit 2012a). Losing the ‘demographic dividend’, its large working-age population, may lower China’s annual growth rate by 1.5 percentage points by 2015 and another percentage point from 2016–2020 (Zhang 2012). If the changing demographic structure can have such a constraining effect on China’s industry-fuelled urban growth, it will magnify the negative impact of other undesirable factors discussed above.

In sum, China’s dynamic model is unlikely to be sustained under the collective and converged weight of widened inequality, energy shortage, environmental degradation, rising labour costs and a shrinking labour force. These constraints combine to reveal the inherent and acquired weaknesses of an urban growth machine steered by a powerful state and fuelled by such favourable, albeit fading, conditions as initial low development, abundant cheap labour, massive rural–urban migration, economies of urban scale and strong external demand. These challenges also offer a sobering lesson to reflect on how to re-balance the comparative advantages and disadvantages of China’s model as its underlying conditions shift. The last section aims to bring some final clarity and focus to this evaluation and re-balancing of China’s model and reflects on its implications for other cities of the global south.
Essential insights and lessons

In bringing this critical assessment of China’s urban model to a close, we have obtained a clearer view of its distinctive strengths and weaknesses, and can even conclude that some of the weaknesses were built into the strengths to begin with (e.g. favouring a few cities first with planned spatial inequality). The hidden or latent weaknesses have surfaced into visible challenges as the model’s strengths have produced great successes such as rapid growth. This ironic logic does not mean moving away from all the strengths in order to find an alternative model. It instead highlights the need to scrutinize how the state has steered globalization to produce some beneficial effects on urban growth, and to consider whether the state can remain a strong force for overcoming the challenges stemming from the downsides of global economic integration and evolving domestic conditions. Essentially, the Chinese state has functioned as a double-edged sword that cuts through and around urbanization in many ways. Sharpening our analysis of how it has done so helps crystallize any potential implications for other cities of the global south.

By steering urban growth in certain ways, the Chinese state has harnessed and tamed some of the powerful impact of global integration at the local level (Figure 16.1). Starting with the few SEZ, especially Shenzhen on the southeast coast, the state has done two things simultaneously to shape the globalization–urban growth connection. On the one hand, the state has pumped massive fixed asset investments to build up extensive and effective physical infrastructure (industrial parks, power stations, roads and ports, for instance) to house a huge number and density of large or small factories for export-oriented production. This initiative amounts to a local or urban ‘domestication’ of the global economy that has paid off for explosive and sustained growth. On the other hand, the state has ‘globalized’ the factory cities by first requiring them to export certain shares of their products and later subsidizing some of them on their exports through rebates. In the meantime, the state has successfully contained the local impact of globalization by favouring and nurturing the growth of large state-owned and some indigenous private firms as competitors against multinational companies with large manufacturing facilities in China’s cities. Born in Shenzhen as an entrepreneurial start-up but having benefited from strong state support, for instance, Huawei has grown into the world’s largest telecommunications equipment maker and networking service provider, with 140,000 employees around the globe. Domestically, huge state monopolies in utilities like the State Grid and China Telecom, through their municipal subsidiaries, have contributed disproportionately to the physical build-up of cities by keeping out other foreign or domestic providers in laying power grids above and fiber optical cables under the ground. Without competitors, they set local prices for electricity and thus secure monopolistic rents that may be equivalent to the socialist state accumulating capital like its capitalist counterpart under a neoliberalist regime (Harvey 2003).

As the key driver of urban growth and a powerful capital accumulator, the state has been able to be the primary source of fixed asset investments, which has accounted for the largest share of GDP since 2001. In comparison, private consumption has since fallen to the second source of GDP growth, while net exports have contributed the smallest share to GDP at about 10 per cent. These relative shares shifted in 2011 when consumption (both private and government combined) contributed 55.5 per cent of China's GDP growth, while investment accounted for only 48.8 per cent, and net exports shrank to 4.3 per cent (The Economist 2012d). While this may be the first sign of the shift from an investment- to a consumption-led model, the imperative to fuel urban growth through fixed assets investment has been deeply entrenched. Local governments, barred from directly selling bonds or taking bank loans, set up almost 6,600 companies to raise money for building factories, bridges, roads and subways. Having grown by 19 per cent in 2010 and soared by 62 per cent in 2009, at the height of China’s massive stimulus, local debt has reached 10.7 trillion yuan (USD1.7 trillion), as much as 30 per cent of which could be bad. This local debt accounted for 26 per cent of China’s GDP in 2011, a larger share...
even than the national government’s debt, prompting the Ministry of Finance to announce a trial programme to allow four local authorities − including Shanghai and Shenzhen − to sell bonds directly to help them repay the loans (Roberts 2012). As a result of continued decentralization and local autonomy through post-reform China, investment-driven urban growth via state steering at multiple levels of governance and financial management is difficult to alter and be replaced by a consumption-led model. In this regard, the persistence of China’s model has deep roots in the planned economy before the reform and rapid urban growth began.

The evolution of the Chinese state through the three decades of China’s accelerated urbanization and globalization carries a revealing set of insights and lessons for other countries and cities of the global south. One side of the coin to take away is how the state has sustained its basic top-down directive power but moderated it into an effective steering approach to urban growth. This seemingly evolutionary process has unleashed a ‘revolutionary’ force propelling a massive building and rebuilding of many large and smaller cities into globally oriented and regionally linked production centres. One distinctive strength of this steering is the state’s effort and capacity to manage, and if necessary, to counter the power and local influence of global capital through a combination of incentives, regulations and interventions. The other side of the coin, ironically, is the state’s increasing inability to tame the growing strength of the localized global companies or joint ventures, and to shield domestic companies and factories from their greater exposure to and dependence on exports, especially during the recent global financial crisis.

This also raises another critical debatable question about the essence of China’s model of urban growth relative to that in Africa. Is China’s rapid urban growth an inevitable result of ‘overglobalization’ that makes even a strong state inherently incapable of dealing with its cumulative outcomes? Fox (2012) has recently argued that rapid urban growth in sub-Saharan Africa is primarily a function of a global historical process that has alleviated the surplus and disease constraints on urban population growth through technological and institutional changes during and after the colonial era, even without the kind of economic growth steered by a strong state as in China. Moreover, Evans (1995) saw the African state in general and the Zairian state in particular as predatory, in extracting resources from society and providing nothing of value in return. In contrast, the Chinese state has created a lot of wealth by building prosperous cities and inserting them into the global economy. But its growing inability to redistribute this wealth and manage the vicissitudes of the global economy has become a current weakness of its earlier strength. It also could very well be a long-term ‘Achilles’ heel’ of China’s state-centric model, even if the state continues to evolve in being less directive and more flexibly steering.

In 2012, China and its new government began to move away from its dynamic model with its striking outcomes and undesirable consequences, and this shift is accelerating in response to growing criticisms from domestic and international quarters, particularly regarding the environmental degradation from the rapid growth and excessive consumption of resources. At this critical juncture, the question of what lessons China can teach the global south, even partially or at all, is more salient. One transferable lesson appears to be that the extensive physical and transport infrastructure financed and built through China’s investment-led model has played a central role in the rapid growth and connection of cities and their extensive global ties and competitiveness. While this is where China is far ahead of rapidly urbanizing countries like India and many African nations, it also is inherently tied to how the Chinese state has worked on urbanization. Any simple attempt to mirror this process is unlikely to lead to a replication of China’s successful development elsewhere in the global south. However, if the Chinese state can draw from its past steering capacity to adapt to the new challenges of rapid urban growth such as the deeper penetration of the global economy, these experiences might provide more useful food for thought for the emerging cities of the global south.
X. Chen

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Steering, speeding, scaling: urban China


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Notes

1 I would like to thank Deborah Davis, Yuan Ren, Curtis Stone, James Wen and this book’s editors for their helpful comments on earlier drafts.

2 The Association of Southeast Asian Nations, or ASEAN, was established on 8 August 1967 in Bangkok, Thailand, with the signing of the ASEAN Declaration (Bangkok Declaration) by the Founding Fathers of ASEAN, namely Indonesia, Malaysia, Philippines, Singapore and Thailand. Brunei Darussalam then joined on 7 January 1984, Viet Nam on 28 July 1995, Lao PDR and Myanmar on 23 July 1997, and Cambodia on 30 April 1999, making up what is today the ten Member States of ASEAN. Under The ASEAN Free Trade Area (AFTA), ASEAN Member Countries have made significant progress in the lowering of intra-regional tariffs through the Common Effective Preferential Tariff (CEPT) Scheme and aim to reach zero or very low tariffs by 2015.

3 These data are official government statistics reported by The People’s Daily, 1 September 2012, p. 1.

4 Processing trade refers to importing intermediate inputs for the assembly of final products for export. This so-called ‘round tripping’ of the imported parts, or a sort of double counting, greatly exaggerates both China’s export and import figures. In the iPhone trade, for example, Chinese workers contribute only USD6.50 to each iPhone, but USD179 is credited to the export figure as an iPhone is shipped out of China, which needs to pay USD172 to import parts and components for the assembly of an iPhone (Xing 2013).

5 These data are official government statistics reported by The People’s Daily, 1 September 2012, p. 1.


8 Large cities here refer to those with 150,000 or more people in the United States and those with 200,000 or more people in China. Although this is a much lower threshold than one million people, it marks cities with
a sufficiently large population. Cities of 200,000 plus people also belong to those globally with fewer than 500,000 people, as opposed to mega-cities, that will account for more of the projected urban growth in the global south through 2030 and beyond.

9 China has built seven of the world’s ten longest bridges, all during the last decade. I have recently ridden across two of the world’s five longest bridges, one between Shanghai and Zhejiang province over the Hangzhou Bay (a between-city bridge) and another from Shanghai to its deep-water port, which is now the world’s largest, on Yangshan Island (a formally within-city bridge), although the latter was formerly part of the territory belonging to Zhejiang province. Both bridges are about 35 kilometres long over a huge span of the East China Sea.
17

DOES AFRICAN URBAN POLICY PROVIDE A PLATFORM FOR SUSTAINED ECONOMIC GROWTH?

Robert Buckley and Achilles Kallergis

Introduction

Since the beginning of the twenty-first century new patterns of economic growth have emerged. No longer are most countries in the global south falling further behind the already industrialized countries of the north (Rodrik 2007; IMF 2012). While in the past 30 years the growth rates of Asian countries – particularly China and India – have been extraordinary, today, these higher growth rates have spread to Latin America and Africa. In this context of greater optimism on the prospects of the global south, increased attention has been given to the idea of an economic renaissance occurring in Africa. This chapter considers the role that African urban centres might play in these developments.

African cities have frequently been studied not in terms of what they are, but in terms of what they might become. In most studies, the future of urban Africa appears either vividly bright or starkly dark. Indeed, Africa’s urban development is a polarizing debate championed by a series of contradicting myths and extreme conjectures. These hyperboles range from the dystopian view of vast mega-cities plagued by poverty, corruption and crime, unable to cope with the influx of new city dwellers as described by Packer (2006) or Gandy (2005), to the recent encouraging forecasts of a sub-Saharan Africa finally seen as an emerging centre of growth and renewal, with great productive potential and a labour force larger than that of India and China, as offered by McKinsey Global Institute’s Lions on the Move (2010), the Monitor’s Promise and Progress (2011) or the World Bank’s African Regional Strategy (2012).

The 2012 World Bank strategy perhaps epitomizes the latter view, underlining that ‘sub-Saharan Africa has an unprecedented opportunity for transformation and sustained growth’ (World Bank 2012: 1). But this optimistic outlook raises an important question: are there any policy issues that could prevent the ‘African Lions’ from following in the steps of the Asian Tigers?

The growing optimism of McKinsey’s prognostications and other recent publications should give us pause as some of the demographic trends celebrated in recent reports could turn out to be double-edged swords if one considers the current conditions in many African cities. With growing slums, high levels of structural unemployment, low and sometimes stagnant levels of infrastructure delivery, African cities seem oddly unprepared for their projected bright future. How will the urban transformation occur in sub-Saharan Africa? Where will the 1.1 billion of the future African workforce live, grow, and receive the education necessary to become the agents of global consumption and production that many envision? Indeed, the success story narrated by the ‘afro-optimists’ could quickly turn Malthusian if
present issues continue to be ignored while the focus remains on accommodating an idealistic version of what the urban African future might be.

The objective of this chapter is to probe into the underpinnings of the optimistic outlooks for Africa’s development by considering how urban conditions, policy inertia, pressing demographic patterns, geographical constraints and weak institutions might constitute ‘binding constraints to growth’. That is, we focus on identifying the central obstacles to achieving sustained economic growth, following the approaches described by Rodrik (2007) and The Commission on Growth and Development Report (2009). We raise the question of whether current urban conditions and policies observed across much of Africa may in fact create such obstacles to sustained growth. This probing suggests that in many cases current African urban policy − or policy inertia − may well serve as a brake on the region’s rosy growth trajectory. More importantly, this stance implies that even in the cases where urban policy manages to remove these obstacles, it often severely limits the inclusiveness needed to achieve greater equity. Finally, our inquiry indicates that other geographical and institutional conditions, well beyond the scope of African urban policy makers, have important implications for the way cities function and policies are constrained.

The plan of the chapter is as follows: in the next section we review urban conditions in Africa, pointing out several troubling aspects. We also consider a number of other common African policy distortions particularly present in cities − such as land market problems and the effects of unequal income distribution on growth. Then, we discuss how these conditions arose, identifying both urban and non-urban policies, which contributed to the situation. We mainly focus on two of the factors shown to be prerequisites for achieving sustainable economic growth − geography and institutions − and discuss how these factors might have different effects in Africa and may affect the way African countries urbanise.

But before turning to a discussion of ‘African urban policy’, we want to emphasize the limitations of such a broad perspective. Considerable caution must of course be exercised in drawing inferences on a regional basis. In the African setting, the weaknesses of cross-country comparisons − even abstracting from data weaknesses − are difficult to exaggerate. For instance, two contiguous countries of roughly the same size, Zambia and Zimbabwe, have very different characteristics with 72 dialects in the former, and just two in the latter (Moyo 2009: xvi). Similarly, the urban policy in countries that range in size from over 2.5 million square kilometres, such as Sudan, to one that is less than 1 per cent of its size, the Gambia, will of course be quite different. Finally, Nigeria’s population, more than 300 times larger than that of Equatorial Guinea, implies very different policy actions in terms of urban development. Therefore, attempts at drawing strong generalizations about a set of countries so diverse, and over an area so large, are either heroic or foolish. But once again, the aim of this chapter is to reveal some of the implicit assumptions that are embedded in the analyses of the prospects for African urban growth. So despite our understanding that there is no such thing as ‘an African urban policy’, we nevertheless persist in looking for common features, which may have a bearing on what we think are the increasingly and excessively optimistic forecasts on Africa’s growth prospects.

**Urbanization and economic growth in Africa**

Although cities may not have caused economic growth, they have certainly been a necessary circumstance for achieving it on a sustained basis. Until the industrial revolution, world per capita income and the share of population living in cities increased slightly for hundreds of years. With the revolution this pattern has shifted; per capita incomes increased more rapidly and sustainably, people moved to cities in increasing numbers, and industrialization took hold. Income, population and urban population trends all followed what is often described as a ‘hockey stick’ pattern of flatness followed by a sharply rising trajectory. Today, Africa seems to be making a similar shift.
Unfortunately, the source of Africa’s break from a Malthusian-like world appears to be similar to many of the explanations offered for Europe’s and North America’s transformation during the Industrial Revolution: another deus ex machina. Only this time, the growth fairy takes the form of a sudden and sharp increase in the prices of the commodities Africa sells. Higher world growth rates have meant higher prices for the exports of many of Africa’s resource-rich countries, which led to a corresponding increase in income. But, this dependence on resource-based growth is of concern, as commodity prices are highly volatile and subject to the caprices of global demand, see Go et al. (2008). This price instability has negative consequences for investment and makes macroeconomic planning challenging. Moreover, much of the resource-based growth can be accomplished without investing in the sorts of urban infrastructure that permit cities to transform into the platforms of economic growth and the incubators of ideas and innovations, as has been common throughout history.3

A further feature of Africa’s current pattern of growth is that it has been accompanied by de-industrialization, as evidenced by the fact that the share of manufacturing in Africa’s GDP fell from 15 per cent in 1990 to 10 per cent in 2008 (UNCTAD 2012). The most significant decline was observed in western Africa, where it fell from 13 per cent to 5 per cent over the same period (UNCTAD 2012). Nevertheless, there has also been substantial de-industrialization in the other sub-regions of the continent. For example, in eastern Africa the share of manufacturing in output fell from 13 per cent in 1990 to about 10 per cent in 2008 and in central Africa, over the same period, it fell from 11 to 6 per cent (UNCTAD 2011). These are not the patterns of industrialization that characterized the beginnings of sustained growth in the nineteenth century, nor are they the patterns that characterized development in Asia or Latin America as its countries urbanized.

Indeed, as Annez and Buckley (2009) show, no country has been able to achieve middle-income status without the ability to industrialize and exploit the agglomeration economies offered by the density of cities. That is, the density of cities affords agglomeration economies, which in turn offers greater productivity. However, density can also be deadly if the foundation for a well-functioning city is not in place. It can bring disease and chaos rather than innovations and human development. In the current African context, and based on historical and cross-sectional evidence that shows that relatively well-functioning cities are essential preconditions for sustained economic growth, we pose the following question: are African cities today able to serve as platforms that can generate the sorts of economic growth and improvements in welfare that have characterized growth patterns globally since the beginning of the nineteenth century? In order to answer this question, one has to consider the idiosyncratic characteristics of African urbanization. Perhaps the first challenge to reflect upon is the region’s demographic transition.

Urban challenges and policy constraints

Demography

Africa’s population has been growing 2.3 per cent per year, a rate more than double Asia’s 1 per cent (UNFPA 2012). The population of Africa first surpassed one billion in 2009 and is expected to add another billion in just 35 years by 2044. This will likely occur during a projected gradual decrease in fertility rates from 4.6 children per woman in 2005–2010 to 3.0 children per woman in 2040–2045 (UNFPA 2012). The fact that the average woman in places like Uganda and Niger has about seven children and that the sub-Saharan average is almost five children per woman — more than triple the European rate — has significant implications for the continent’s growth trajectory.

Moreover, Africa has an extraordinarily young population. The share of its population under the age of 14 is more than double the OECD level (19 per cent) (UNFPA 2012). Of course, part of this difference in the structure of the so-called population pyramid is due to the devastation of the HIV/
AIDS epidemic. In the past 30 years, 15 million have died prematurely from the disease. And while the death rate is declining, it is still more than one million a year, so that soon the total sum of people killed by the disease will be greater than the total number of people displaced from the continent by the slave trade. Indeed, almost 5 per cent of the adult population is infected, and there are more than 30 million orphans, many of them children of parents who have died of HIV/AIDS (World Health Organization 2006).

**Figure 17.1** Slum population in Africa

*Source: UNDESA 2010*
**Informal settlements**

The UN estimates that the cities of the global south will absorb most of the total increase in the earth’s population over the next generation − some 2.6 billion people. This kind of population shift has never happened before and urbanization trends in sub-Saharan Africa will account for the biggest share of the increase (UN-Habitat 2010b; UNFPA 2012).

By the year 2025, the majority of the poor in Africa will be living in urban as opposed to rural areas. The young African urban population will increasingly reside in Africa’s slums. According to the last *State of African Cities Report* (UN-Habitat 2010a), slum prevalence stands at 62 per cent. Moreover, the 2010 *State of the World’s Cities Report* demonstrates that not only does Africa have a much higher slum prevalence level, but also that the depth of deprivation is much more acute compared to other regions of the global south such as Southeast Asia and Latin America (UN-Habitat 2010b). In other words, of the four dimensions of slum living − overcrowding, informal housing, insecure tenure and lack of access to water and sanitation − 37 per cent of slums in Africa have three to four of these conditions, compared to 5 per cent in southern Asia and 8 per cent in Latin America (Pieterse 2011: 1).

**Health risks**

Based on the demographic perspectives, the relatively high urban growth rates and the current urbanization patterns, the obvious question is what are the conditions of a predominantly slum urbanism? Recent studies have shown that even if health conditions are on average better in urban areas, once we disaggregate the urban totals into distinct socio-economic categories important differences arise. In African slums, the so-called urban health premium − i.e., the healthier conditions of the world’s cities that have occurred since the end of the Second World War − no longer exists. While there is certainly less poverty in the city than in the countryside, coming to the city under these conditions no longer ensures that you are likely to be healthier and live longer. Among urban poor groups, infant and child mortality rates often approach and sometimes exceed rural averages (Montgomery *et al.* 2003; Satterthwaite 2007).

For example, in Nairobi’s slums, one of the few cities for which such detailed data exists, infant mortality rates are similar to those of Britain almost 200 years ago (UNDP 2006; Kenny 2009). In some slums these rates are more than three times those of the formal city, and more than double the rural Kenya rates. Additionally, these high mortality rates occur despite plummeting world infant mortality rates witnessed over the past century. In 1900, only one country in the world, Sweden, had

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Infant mortality rate (IMR)</th>
<th>Under-five mortality rate (U5M)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sweden</strong></td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Japan</strong></td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kenya (rural and urban)</strong></td>
<td>74</td>
<td>112</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Rural</strong></td>
<td>76</td>
<td>113</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Urban (excluding Nairobi)</strong></td>
<td>57</td>
<td>84</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nairobi</strong></td>
<td>39</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>High-income area</strong></td>
<td>Likely &lt;10</td>
<td>Likely &lt;15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Informal settlements</strong></td>
<td>91</td>
<td>151</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Kibera slum in Nairobi</strong></td>
<td>106</td>
<td>187</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Embakasi slum in Nairobi</strong></td>
<td>164</td>
<td>254</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: IMR = deaths per 1000 new born; U5M = deaths per 1000 children
Source: African Population and Health Research Centre (APHRC) 2002*
Table 17.2 Comparing Africa’s infrastructure deficit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Normalized Units</th>
<th>Sub-Saharan Africa low income countries</th>
<th>Other low income countries</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Paved-road density</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>134</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total road density</td>
<td>137</td>
<td>211</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Main-line density</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>78</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile density</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Internet density</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Generation capacity</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>326</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Electricity coverage</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved water</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved sanitation</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: Road density is measured in kilometers per 100 square kilometers of arable land; telephone density in lines per thousand population; generation capacity in megawatts per million population; electricity, water, and sanitation coverage in percentage of population.

Source: Yepes, Pierce and Foster 2008

A higher than 10 per cent rate; today, all but 19 countries have such high rates. Unfortunately, all 19 are in Africa. In Nairobi’s informal settlements the rate exceeds this threshold by a factor of nine (APHRC 2002).

**Infrastructure and basic services**

A comparison of the infrastructure deficit amongst low-income countries reveals that the infrastructure networks in African cities – excluding cities in higher-income countries of the region – increasingly lag behind while they are characterized by missing regional links and stagnant household access.

Furthermore, in their analysis of household service provision across Africa, Banerjee et al. (2008) conclude that stagnant trends characterize important infrastructure sectors such as piped water and flush toilets.

![Figure 17.2](image)

**Figure 17.2 Access to household services across urban Africa 1990–2005**

Source: Banerjee et al. 2008
As a result, the above stagnant trends obstruct positive health externalities resulting from adequate service provision. For instance, looking at sanitation conditions in cities as diverse as those in Nigeria, Cameroon, Zambia and Namibia one can distinguish the deteriorating trends that took place in the last 20 years, a fact also reflected through the increase in African city dwellers practising open defecation (Joint Monitoring Program 2012). The 2012 report from the WHO/UNICEF Joint Monitoring Program (JMP) shows that in the aggregate, across Africa there has been no progress on urban sanitation improvements over the past 20 years. Contrary to the increased access to improved sanitation in rural areas of the continent, the share of improved sanitation in Africa’s urban centres between 1990 and 2010 remains stagnant at 43 per cent. While Buckley and Kallergis (2013) show that there are significant problems with this indicator used to track progress on the sanitation Millennium Development Goal (MDG), it is noteworthy that sub-Saharan Africa is the region with the lowest access to urban sanitation.

A number of aspects of this trend are surprising. Perhaps the most important is that the stagnation in the provision of improved sanitation in African cities occurred during a period when regional per capita economic growth averaged 2.1 per cent per annum. Thus, over this period, average per capita income in Africa increased by over 50 per cent but access to basic services did not improve. This is particularly true for the urban poor. Disaggregating by income percentiles in urban areas reveals great discrepancies in access to basic services: over 90 per cent of the richest quintile in urban areas use improved sanitation and improved water sources. However, for the poorest fifth of the urban population these numbers drop significantly with only 42 per cent having access to improved sanitation and 59 per cent to improved water sources (JMP 2012).

**Education and employment**

Education and employment challenges facing sub-Saharan Africa in the years to come are arguably more daunting than in any other region. This challenge is magnified through pressing demographic trends. Leading up to 2015, the growth in the labour force is likely to be higher in sub-Saharan Africa than in any other region of the world. And while the region − helped by a decade of strong economic performance − has witnessed some development and improvement in labour market outcomes (ILO 2009), the progress in the achievement of decent work has not matched the pattern of growth, which has been slow and uneven. Once again the disparities among young urbanites are staggering. The most disadvantaged are the slum youth, and particularly young women living in slums. The non-employment rates of young women (neither in school nor in employment) are higher than those for young men, and as Figure 17.3 suggests, the percentage of non-employed young women in slums is often the double of its non-slum equivalent. As education is the essential ingredient to a more productive, innovative labour force, the fact that a larger share of the urban population is located in slums, with fewer educational opportunities, is not encouraging.

In sum, the data above provides a window, however opaque, into what is occurring in many cities across the continent. It showcases that health, infrastructure provision, education and employment conditions often remain at very low levels. This situation has occurred before the urban population triples in size, as it will over the next generation. What seems even more disturbing is that such dire conditions and their repercussions have a good chance of being long-lasting. Indeed, a standard myth of modernization, such as that offered by most World Bank studies of urbanization patterns, is that slums are but a station stop on the way to ‘bourgeoisification’ of the rural population. But migrants to African cities are often not short-term residents of slums. In many places, grandparents live with their children’s children in the crowded homes they came to many years ago. This trend is also reflected through the continuous growth of slums, which for sub-Saharan Africa remains the highest worldwide, with a 4.5 per cent increase per annum (UN-Habitat 2003).
Figure 17.3  Percentage of young women neither at school nor in employment in slum and non-slum areas, in selected sub-Saharan countries
Source: Gora Mboup 2004

Sub-Saharan Africa
Oceania
Africa
Western Africa
South Asia
Eastern Asia
Southeastern Asia
Latin America/Caribbean
Northern Africa

Figure 17.4  Growth rate of slums during 1990–2001 across regions
Source: UN-Habitat 2003
Land market constraints

Land market constraints are one of the most frequently cited problems with African property markets (Urban LandMark 2010). Whether they stem from ambiguous titles, joint ownership patterns, the significant amounts of public land holdings that are held off the market, or inconsistent planning regulations, such constraints have enormous and multiple effects on housing affordability. First, they often make it difficult to increase the height of buildings (floor to area ratio) located in central cities with the result that there is much less housing provided per unit of inner-city land. The constraints also can make it difficult for developers to amass enough property to undertake larger-scale site development. In short, when an important input in the production of housing is supplied in ways that are less responsive to price increases, housing becomes considerably more expensive and production less responsive to demand.

Such market constraints are typical of many African metropolises. For instance, in Ghana’s capital city, Accra, real estate prices are particularly high. A ranking of the cost of living in the 150 most expensive cities in the world—a system driven in large part by real estate prices—places Accra 75th between Melbourne and Houston, cities in countries with per capita income more than ten times higher than Ghana’s. Buckley and Mathema (2008) show that the rent payment practice there is onerous. Renters, who account for almost two-thirds of all households in the city, have to pay their rent in up-front payments for as many as three years.

The burden of such land market constraints can be considerable, and their effects on the urbanization process may be broader than just affecting housing affordability. As Nobel Laureate W. Arthur Lewis (1977: 39–40) put it:

Urbanization is decisive because it is so expensive. The difference between the cost of urban and rural development does not turn on comparing the capital required for factories and that required for farms. Each of these is a small part of total investment, and the difference per head is not always in favour of industry.

Thus, unresponsive housing supply may constrain the positive effects of possible rural–urban migration on economic growth. If so, then land market constraints may feed through to fulfil Lewis’s concern over the high cost of urbanization, and thereby constrain growth. In other words, the price effects of policy-induced reductions in supply elasticity can have significant effects on resource allocation and income distribution.

Once again, Accra is not an isolated example. As Urban LandMark (2010) has shown, land market problems plague many African cities. In short, rapidly growing cities’ dysfunctional urban land markets affect more than just the transparency of the land sales. If people cannot afford to move to the cities that provide the biggest opportunities for productivity gains, incomes remain lower and economic growth is reduced.

Changes in income distribution

While increasing inequality is certainly not a uniquely African-specific problem, it nevertheless remains one that has particular resonance given the much lower income levels. Over the past 20 years per capita income in Africa increased by about 50 per cent. But, given the increasing slum population and the conditions described above one does not have the sense these gains have been realized by slum dwellers: the evidence elsewhere is consistent with the common sense result that as income levels increase basic scarcities decline; see for example, Malpezzi and Mayo (1987). However, if we look at inequality trends in sub-Saharan countries, at least part of the puzzle disappears. For instance, in both
Nigeria and South Africa, which together account for almost half of Africa’s GDP, income inequality increased sharply from what in the latter case was already one of the world’s highest levels of inequality, and in the former case one of the more inequitable in Africa. According to the most widely used measure of inequality—the Gini coefficient—disparity in South Africa has increased from 57.8 in 2000 to 63.1 in 2010 (UNDP 2010). An even greater increase in a shorter period of time occurred in Nigeria where the Gini index shifted from 42.9 in 2004 to 48.8 in 2010 (UNDP 2010). For such shifts in income distribution to have occurred, most of the increases in income had to have gone to the already well off. In another 14 African countries income levels declined. Hence, the income gains for almost half of Africa’s GDP have not gone to those in the lowest income groups. For this population, it should not be a surprise that basic living conditions have not improved.

**Urban areas as platforms for economic growth?**

Earlier we followed the traditional urban economics perspective and the more recent viewpoint of economic growth to suggest that the agglomeration economies offered by cities are inextricably, if not causally, related to achieving sustained levels of economic growth. Together these perspectives suggest that cities are, somehow, springboards for sustained economic growth. But, when city roads become impossibly congested, clean water increasingly expensive, schools overcrowded, rent levels exorbitant, and health services overwhelmed by sickness due to the lack of drainage and basic sanitation, it is not clear that the springboard has much bounce.

The following section identifies how the current urban constraints discussed above feed into the ability of a country to achieve equitable growth. The same factors noted earlier—demographic trends, slum urbanism, the availability of basic infrastructure services, education and health, land market distortions and acute income inequalities—clearly play significant roles in making African cities less hospitable locations for realizing the agglomeration economies offered by greater density. Indeed, these conditions may well increase the scale of the diseconomies associated with denser populations. But two other determinants of growth, usually examined at the national and regional level, shape the ways African urbanization and urban policies take place; in particular, geography and institutions. Here, we focus on how the above determinants shape urbanization patterns and urban policy options. Cumulatively, we hope to show that both geography and institutions have played significant roles in the development of Africa’s urban policies, and the demands placed on the institutions that implement them. Of course, as the new growth perspective suggests, the point of identifying the specific obstacles to growth faced will differ by countries so that no single obstacle applies everywhere. Our point, once again, is not to suggest that African countries are alike or face the same overwhelming constraints. Rather, it is to argue that the way cities matter in growth is more important in more rapidly urbanizing low-income countries—the sort that is more typical of Africa than it is of other regions of the world.

**Geography**

Geographers have long noted the geographical perspective on Africa’s developmental concerns. With the work of Sachs and Warner (1995), among others, this perspective emerged in the economic literature. The World Bank’s (2009) *World Development Report: Reshaping Economic Geography*, perhaps for the first time brought the perspectives of this literature into broader policy discussions of economic growth, even if the report itself was severely criticized in the geography literature for overlooking much of the work of geographers in the typical imperialistically aggressive style frequently adopted by economists (Buckley and Buckley 2010). For instance, a review in *Urban Studies* by Bryceson et al. (2009) describes the report as a series of development myths, which help the World Bank to continue to maintain a lack of accountability to developing country populations. Similarly, in the *Journal of...*
Economic Geography, Scott (2009) calls the report a ‘signal failure’. Rigg et al. (2009) are gentler, concluding that it is merely ‘a disappointment’, but they also find it to be ‘academically narrow and historically shallow’ (Rigg et al. 2009: 130).

One of the main themes of the geographical perspective on sustainable growth has been the emphasis on the factors that effectively determine why populations move into cities. Is it because of the prospects of greater opportunities as suggested in the famous work by Harris and Torado (1970)? Or does migration to cities result from displacements due to civil conflicts, such as those in Côte d’Ivoire’s recent unrest, droughts, or other shocks to agricultural productivity, as described in such detail by Collier (2007) in The Bottom Billion?

Barrios et al. (2006) indicate that, unlike the rest of the world, African urbanization has been generated by a different process than what traditionally is thought to be the case. It is the result of ‘flight’ reflecting choices made under duress. That is, the motivation to migrate is not due to the unduly attractive cities of countries enthralled by urban bias, or even the higher productivity opportunities that may exist in cities. It is due to difficulties in the countryside. Annez et al. (2009) extend Barrios, Bertinelli and Strobl’s analysis over more time periods and countries, confirming and amplifying their findings that geography has indeed been a strong determinant of Africa’s urbanization. The analysis confirms Barrios et al.’s results that with greater degrees of statistical freedom and more evidence on the influence of institutions, African urbanization follows a distinctive pattern not observed elsewhere in the world.

To give an overall sense of the possible differences in these conditions between African and non-African countries, it is helpful to consider some of the factors in more detail. For instance, over the 1960 to 2000 period, sub-Saharan Africa experienced 11 civil wars in 48 countries in addition to chronic upheaval in the Central African Republic and Somalia (Collier 2007; Moyo 2009). In other words, in the order of one-fifth of African countries experienced civil conflicts while in non-African countries the likelihood of a civil war during this period was less than 8 per cent. The case of Nigeria, where internal displacement is an often-cited consequence of inter-communal and political violence, flooding and forced evictions are relevant. While some of the conflicts appear to be caused by overlapping and mutually reinforcing regional, religious and ethnic divisions, violence often stems from competition for scarce opportunities and communal resources in the countryside. As a result, and based on figures supplied to the African Commission on Human and Peoples’ Rights, the Federal Ministry of Justice put the overall number of people displaced by conflict and flooding at more than 1.3 million as of January 2011 (GoN 2011).

Furthermore, according to measures developed by Alesina et al. (2006), sub-Saharan countries account for 62 per cent of what are called ‘artificial states’ – states in which political borders do not coincide with a division of nationalities desired by the people on the ground. Alesina et al. (2006) show how borders often split ethnic groups into two separate adjacent countries and how straight land borders – that they assume are more likely to be artificial – are adversely correlated with several measures of political and economic success. Certainly, such discrepancies could have a significant effect on migration patterns, as artificial states have been shown to have much higher incidences of conflicts and population displacements that can induce movements from rural areas to urban centres. Once again, population movements away from distress are trying to reduce how much loss they will experience. Their movements will, they hope, make them better off than they would have been, but less well off than they were. Hence, their movements are not correlated with improvements in income over time, but rather with smaller losses.

In many ways, this relationship between urbanization patterns and conflict is circular: populations migrating to avoid destruction and severe circumstances are less likely to be able to exploit new more productive opportunities. But also, as shown by Miguel et al. (2004), slow economic growth and limited productive opportunities are negatively related to the incidence of civil conflict with a negative
growth shock of five percentage points increasing the likelihood of major civil conflicts by roughly one-half.

Climate conditions are also, and perhaps increasingly, responsible for the urbanization patterns witnessed in African cities. Barrios et al. (2006) suggest several reasons underlining the importance of climate in African urbanization. First, sub-Saharan African economies are more rainfall dependent as agriculture in the region accounts for more than twice the share of GDP than in other developing countries. Second, a smaller segment of African agriculture is irrigated and as a result, it relies more heavily on rainfall. Moreover, soil productivity in Africa is much more affected by drought conditions. Third, African geographic and soil conditions make it more prone to water shortages. And finally, Africa suffers from a variety of chronic diseases that affect labour productivity and which are exacerbated by a lack of rainfall.

These climatic conditions affect the regions’ productive agricultural output. As a consequence, per capita agricultural output and productivity in the region are still low compared to the global average, with adverse consequences for food security and social stability. The African Development Bank, for instance, estimates that Africa’s per capita agricultural output is about 56 per cent of the global average (ADB 2010). In short, given these motivations for urbanization as a way of avoiding even greater losses, it is no wonder that the resources needed to finance the more densely populated cities are scarce.

In some ways, accounting for geography provides an answer to the widely noted curiosity raised by the studies that pre-date the McKinsey et al. proposition that Africa is on the cusp of an economic renaissance. Perhaps the best known of these earlier studies is that of Fay and Opal (1999) who wrote of what they called Africa’s pathological urbanization pattern – one in which urbanization was not accompanied by economic growth. The answer given by both these earlier studies and the more recent empirical work is that urbanization in Africa has not been driven by the demands of growing economies but rather by ‘supply push’ factors. In many ways these results confirm a perspective that has long been suggested by historical observers, such as Landes (1998).

**Institutions**

Acemoglu and Robinson’s (2012) *Why Nations Fail* summarizes an extensive body of research undertaken on the role of institutions in development and sustainable growth. Their work argues that inclusive institutions lie at the core of sustainable economic growth. Institutions that do not ensure a level playing field will inevitably degenerate into what they call extractive political institutions. These institutions are more concerned with assuring the welfare of a small, protected minority than with creating opportunities for all. They argue that historically, throughout the world, but particularly in Africa, such extractive institutions have been one of the principal constraints on economic growth.

One way to reflect on African institutions from the Acemoglu and Robinson perspective is to consider measures of African governance offered by commonly used measures of democratic accountability such as the Polity IV Project. The concept underlying this measure is that the state’s authority is essentially based upon the capacity to exchange a widening of its ability to control and mobilize resources in return for broadened rights of popular participation.

An integral part of this process is the development of bureaucracies capable of regulating, taxing and mobilizing people in the service of state policy. At the city level, these bureaucracies are needed to manage urban agglomerations and their components, such as city infrastructure networks, land use planning and zoning regulations. The Polity IV measure takes into account such indicators by looking at the presence of institutions and procedures through which citizens can express their effective views on alternative policies and leaders (Marshall et al. 2011) or many of the frequently cited studies that rely on this and similar data on governance quality.

According to Polity IV, the measures of governance for 41 sub-Saharan countries in 2010 are low by both historical and relative standards, with a mean and a median of four. For example, 16 African
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countries in our sample have scores of two or lower on the Polity scale. For these countries governance is very weak.

Three other detailed data sets (Transparency International, World Bank Government Effectiveness Indicators and the Ibrahim African Governance Foundation) on governance in Africa confirm that governance conditions and government effectiveness remain low and in some cases, appear to have deteriorated. For instance, according to Transparency International’s ranking between 1998 and 2011, the median value for African countries fell from 3.3 to 2.7 (on a 10-point scale). For the latter period, the majority of sub-Saharan African countries rank in the 30th percentile of most corrupt worldwide, whereas in 1998 they were in the 56th percentile. In 2011, African countries accounted for the majority of those in the lowest performing quintile. On the World Bank’s Government Effectiveness Indicators for 2011, African countries had a median score of negative 0.83 on a negative 2.5 to positive 2.5 scale, with most countries since 1996 experiencing decreasing effectiveness.

Thus, by traditional measures of governance, many African countries do not have the sorts of inclusive governance patterns essential for sustaining equitable growth, and according to some of the data, governance measures have not improved and may well be deteriorating. While none of the measures of governance go beyond general characterizations of public policy – they do not, for instance, drill down to the local government level – it seems likely that high levels of corruption and lack of technically driven decision-making implied by the data would often complicate and hinder the ability to implement the sorts of complex urban systems which make up a modern city. Thus, it is not a coincidence that the coverage of citywide water and sanitation networks in many African cities satisfies only the small, most affluent subsection of residents.

Towards a reassessment of Africa’s growth trajectory

In sum, from both institutional and geographical perspectives, there are concerns with the way Africa is urbanizing. On institutions, the main worry is the very weak governance structures, which administer most African cities. This impedes the establishment of effective and responding governance structures and the creation of necessary institutional frameworks that help produce inclusive growth. As a result, at the city level institutions are less able to address the urbanization patterns generated by Africa’s distinct geographical circumstances. Without institutional improvements it seems likely that inclusive growth and development will remain elusive for many African cities. Much greater levels of accountability are needed in order to provide the necessary infrastructures, which are the hallmark of modern cities. This result suggests that serious efforts should be made to focus on the development of these institutions. If city infrastructure systems have the high social return investments that so much of the literature suggests is the case, as stressed by Hutton et al. (2007), their absence has spillover effects on economic growth as well as the traditional effects on health and well-being. In such circumstances, building local governance capacity would be an extremely important undertaking.

As far as geography goes, in the best of circumstances, when urbanization is motivated by the higher income potential of city living, the failure to provide the many basic services afforded by a city act much like implicit taxes on urban residents. That is, the lack of services is like an opaque and regressive tax, and, as we noted earlier in our discussion of Accra, likely reduces the ability to exploit productive opportunities. In the worst of circumstances, when urbanization is motivated not by potential income increases, but as a way to avoid even greater income losses in the countryside, these failures can indeed be very large taxes, and are borne not just by those who bear the immediate incidence. If they prevent or discourage productive opportunities from being exploited, all are punished. But recent empirical work suggests that the best of circumstances are not the motivating factor behind much of Africa’s urbanization. In many countries, much less benign geographical circumstances are playing a significant role in the dynamic.
If geographical conditions, climate issues, or urban policy failures prevent urbanization in Africa from being pursued out of individual self-interest, then urban bias should no longer be seen as the culprit for Africa's urbanization and impoverishment — as it was when exchange rate policies favoured the cities. In such a context, it makes sense to question whether Africa’s often increasingly dysfunctional cities can provide the platform for economic growth pointed to by recent studies.

**Conclusion**

In a recent article in *The Economist* (2012) entitled ‘Boomtown slum: Upwardly mobile Africa’, Kibera, one of the largest African slums, is described as ‘perhaps the most entrepreneurial place on earth’. Through a series of stories from the neighbourhood’s narrow and fetid streets, Nairobi’s poorest corner is portrayed as a thriving economic machine. Local residents provide most of the goods and services in a ‘forgotten’ part of the city that is nevertheless booming. The article continues, that ‘to equate slums with idleness and misery is to misunderstand them’. But even if we agree that slums do represent much more than misery and idleness, how can the cruel reality in which Kibera’s thriving entrepreneurs live be ignored? Moreover, how do these creative solutions to desperate conditions imply that better growth prospects are likely?

We have offered a variety of tentative answers to the question of whether Africa is poised for growth by focusing on current trends and constraints that in many cases can become obstacles to Africa’s urban development, contributing to higher rates of economic growth. Our reading of the data leads us to believe that the more optimistic views about African prospects should at the very least be tempered. Our assessment of the condition of most African cities is that they do not stand ready to serve as the platforms for growth traditionally provided by cities. Indeed, we believe that the tendency to confuse creative survival behaviour with triumphal ingenuity, as does the *Economist* article among others, can have dangerous repercussions for Africa’s urban future. Standing in awe of the urban poor’s capacity to survive does not address their circumstances, and surviving through almost unimaginable poverty does not mean increasing welfare.

If Africa is to take its place in the global economy, it must address the critical constraints that impede its ability to engage with the world economy, and this will often be through its cities. Ameliorating institutional performance, dealing with land market distortions, providing infrastructure in water, sanitation, energy and transport are all important prerogatives. These fundamental actions can then catalyse larger processes of economic development and unlock the potential described by the recent optimistic narratives on African urbanization. To do this, though, it is essential to realize that African cities are not just the home of the well-off in societies, as do many of the consumer-oriented tracts on Africa’s coming economic renaissance.

**References**


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Notes

1 In many ways this approach to development policy can be viewed as a perspective that attempts to move beyond generic development agendas that follow a one size fits all schema. Instead, this approach attempts to identify the specific and most binding constraints that impede moving to sustained economic growth.

2 There are a number of economic histories that cover this topic. See McCloskey (2010) and Clark (2009) for two somewhat idiosyncratic interpretations of the trend.

3 Jane Jacobs (1969) is of course the canonical reference on the way cities lead to the production of interaction and ideas. As Lucas (1988) shows, however, her ideas have become a key to the new growth economics literature developed by him and Romer (1986).

4 The 2012 JMP report mentions that during the period 1990–2012 the number of African urbanites practising open defecation has increased by 10 million.


6 See the World Bank’s most recent Urban Policy Paper, 2012 for examples and similar arguments.

7 The ranking is from *Global Cost of Living Rankings 2006/7* by Finfacts: Business and Finance Portal. The per capita income comparisons are from the *World Development Indicators*, 2006. As for the cost of real estate, a recent World Bank study (2007) indicates that the rents of Class A offices in Ghana are 40 per cent higher than the average for ten other Sub-Saharan countries.


9 This index measures the degree of inequality in the distribution of family income in a country. The index is calculated from the Lorenz curve, in which cumulative family income is plotted against the number of families arranged from the poorest to the richest. A ranking of 1.0 describes complete inequality; while a score of zero implies complete equality.

10 See Rodrik et al.’s (2002) ‘Institutions rule: The primacy of institutions over geography and integration in economic development’ for an example of economists’ typically triumphalist perspective on the relative importance of these two factors.

11 The Polity IV Project compiles measures of government political regime characteristics and is used frequently in analyses of economic growth and development, see among others Acemoglu et al. (2001). It allows democratic ‘patterns of authority’ and regime changes in all independent countries. Its ratings of democracy are based on the general qualities of political institutions and processes. These ratings have been combined into a measure of regime democratic governance with a range from 0 to +10 with scores above 5 corresponding to a functioning if imperfect democracy, and measures below –5 corresponding to autocracies. Values below 5 are defined as anocracies, countries in which public decision-making is undertaken largely by a small group of elites.


13 Based on data from Transparency International, available: http://www.transparency.org/, accessed 27 November 2012. Data from Ibrahim Index of African Governance for our sample from 2000 to 2012 yield show similar deteriorating results, once we exclude the sharp improvements in three countries that have emerged from civil war. Otherwise, they show no change.

14 There has been one study, by Miguel et al. (2004) which relies on the ratings of democratic institutions up to 2005 by Freedom House to argue that governance in Africa has improved. However, a subsequent Freedom
House report indicates that since that time there has been a deterioration in the ratings, Freedom House (2012).

As Banerjee et al. (2007) document, a significant number of African economies have not been expanding basic urban infrastructure services fast enough to keep up with urban growth. The result is stagnant trends in the coverage of services, such as water and toilets, from the levels achieved in the early 1990s.
What is certain is that in the future we cannot continue to expand cities the way we have in the past. An unprecedented effort is required to accommodate the urban population of 2050 in a consistently livable way. It requires uncommon political courage and financial wizardry — hundreds of billions of euros will be spent in investments worldwide, and the way these will be spent can make the difference between a sustainable perspective and a catastrophe. It also requires new ideas, new knowledge, new models, new technologies, new forms of organization and ways of working, and a new urban policy. The world urgently needs a plan for its urban future.

(Feddes et al. 2013: 7)

This quote animates the material implications of the massive urban transition the world is witnessing at the moment. Cities in the global north that soaked up the first wave of urbanization (1750–1950) are straining under creaking infrastructures. Moreover, if large infrastructure systems are not close to the end of their lifecycles, requiring replacement, then they are unfit for a low-carbon or resource-efficient economy (UNEP 2013). The resource intensity of urban infrastructures laid out during the industrial era is deemed incompatible with the levels of resource efficiency required to keep high-income, typically OECD countries, compliant with the Kyoto protocol targets of reducing CO₂ emissions by 80 per cent by 2050. Hence the injunction by Feddes et al. that liveable cities require ‘new ideas, new knowledge, new models, new technologies, new forms of organization and ways of working, and a new urban policy’.

Existing cities in much of the global south are marked by severe infrastructural deficits or backlogs for a variety of reasons. In these cities there is a need to maintain, retrofit and repurpose aging infrastructure as is the case in the north, alongside a more pressing need to install new infrastructures to cope with continued urban growth and the lack of connectivity suffered by large proportions of the population, often urban majorities, especially in sub-Saharan Africa. Furthermore, with the potential growth of new cities and towns in large swathes of Asia and Africa, there is also a class of settlements that will require large-scale new infrastructure systems that could fit the mould of ‘next generation’ or ‘leap-frog’ disruptive systems that are resource efficient and regenerative (Girardet 2010; Suzuki et al. 2009).

As we will demonstrate in this chapter, there is a massive financial shortfall to address the various categories of infrastructure investment: new build, refurbishment, and retrofit to meet basic needs, let
alone new standards of resource efficiency. The shortfall is exacerbated by the long-term underinvestment in network infrastructures to keep up with demand and to ensure necessary upkeep in a context of continued robust urbanization in Asia and Africa. In large parts of sub-Saharan Africa investment into infrastructure declined during the bleak structural adjustment era (1980−2000) and is still well below the levels it should be as a proportion of gross domestic product (African Development Bank 2013). The dearth of affordable infrastructure finance for investment is compounded by the lack of fiscal powers of urban governments in the regions of the world with the greatest need (Smit and Pieterse 2014). When national governments drive infrastructure investment decisions they tend to bypass the most important local needs. There are also more pernicious problems in the worlds of infrastructure finance: most of the institutional players who provide such finance, either local or international, operate on the basis of very stringent criteria to minimize and control ‘risk’. These understandings define institutional efficacy and credibility in ways that militate against the adoption of new ideas, taking on poor users or involving citizens in the planning, delivery, maintenance and renewal of infrastructures.

In the wake of the environmental critique of the role of cities in reproducing unsustainable and unjust patterns of resource consumption and pollution, there have been moves to rethink the role of infrastructure systems as a mechanism to change the metabolic and distributional dynamics of cities (Hodson et al. 2012; Guy et al. 2001). An outcrop of this literature is an institutional argument that fragmented infrastructure networks need to be better articulated, coordinated, and ideally, integrated (Ranhagen and Groth 2012). This goes against the grain of the modern industrial practice of ever-greater sectoral specialization and technological sophistication. Thus, in the global north there is a frantic technological race to redefine network infrastructure systems to address the demands of more stringent environmental regulations (especially in the European Union (EU)). In contrast, in the global south there is a race to secure sufficient and affordable finance to address massive infrastructure backlogs that have stacked up amidst decades of poor planning, uneven attempts at privatization, under-investment and limited financial resources due to small tax bases.

In this chapter we explore these dynamics more closely in order to clarify a number of urgent research questions and fields. The next section provides a synoptic overview of infrastructural needs across the global south, but with greater attention devoted to the specific challenges of sub-Saharan Africa. The exploration of infrastructural need is connected to the challenge of affordable finance to pay for new infrastructural outlays alongside routine maintenance and repair. On the finance front we hone in on the fundamental problem of affordability thresholds in cities where the majority of urban dwellers do not have sufficient or stable incomes in order to pay for continuous services. The dual and intertwined problems of infrastructure availability and financing shortfalls are further exacerbated by a number of institutional constraints at the city scale. By triangulating these problems, we present a number of fundamental dilemmas that characterize the field and remain under-represented in the literatures on infrastructure assemblages and infrastructure management. The chapter does not offer solutions to these dilemmas but rather suggests that we have a massive research and practice challenge ahead of us if we are going to improve our conceptual understandings of the intersections between southern urbanism dynamics, infrastructural flows, and the political economy of urban governance. But first it is important to confront the enormity of the infrastructural challenge in cities of the global south.

**Infrastructure and finance deficits**

There is considerable agreement across the literature that network infrastructures are inadequate, outdated and routinely failing worldwide, creating cascading vulnerabilities for cities, regions and nations (Boston Consulting Group 2010; Doshi et al. 2007). Addressing these vulnerabilities requires substantial investments. The OECD estimated that for productive infrastructure sectors including
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road, rail, telecoms, electricity (transmission and distribution), and water, total cumulative infrastructure spending requirements globally would equal USD53 trillion by 2030. Significantly, this estimate does not include electricity generation and other energy-related infrastructure investments, such as inputs like coal, gas and oil that would increase the investment requirements to USD71 trillion (OECD 2006). In 2007 it was estimated, in a study led by Booz Allen Hamilton, that between 2005 and 2030, USD40 trillion would be required to maintain, modernize and expand critical urban infrastructure networks (Doshi et al. 2007). Similarly the Boston Consulting Group (2010) reported that the global projected infrastructure spending between 2005 and 2030, would equal a figure of USD41 trillion (see Figure 18.1).

More recent research, led by Booz and Co., found that between 2005 and 2035, cities worldwide will spend an estimated USD84.84 trillion on the construction, operation and maintenance of infrastructure, including power production and distribution, water and waste systems, roads and transportation, and an additional USD43.63 trillion on supporting information and communications technology (Pennell et al. 2010). This estimate is more than twice as much as the original estimate. The difference in quantum is due to adjustments made to the GDP to control for purchasing power parity (WWF 2010).

Figure 18.1 Total projected cumulative infrastructure spend, 2005–2030
Source: Doshi et al. 2007: 4
The global infrastructure challenge is experienced more severely in the emerging south where both acute finance and infrastructure deficits predominate. Overall low- and middle-income countries are estimated to have a USD1 trillion infrastructure needs gap per annum as current annual infrastructure spending, of approximately USD0.8–0.9 trillion, only meets 45 per cent of the investment (World Bank 2012). This total spending needs to increase to approximately USD1.8–2.3 trillion per year by 2020 which includes (a conservative) USD200–300 billion for investment in more resource efficient and sustainable infrastructure (Bhattacharya et al. 2012). Table 18.1 reflects the severe underinvestment in infrastructure across the global south, broken down by region. By and large, regions are failing to meet at least half of the annual investment and maintenance needs, in spite of committing fairly significant portions of GDP to financing infrastructure, with the exception of the Latin America and Caribbean Region (LAC).

Against this broader backdrop, we now turn to the critical conditions in Africa. Projections suggest that Africa’s population will double from an approximate 1 billion in 2010 to 2.2 billion by 2050, meaning that about one in four people in the world will live in Africa (Cilliers et al. 2011; Africa Progress Panel 2012). This is the largest increase from a regional perspective globally and during this period Africa will transition from being 40 per cent urbanized to 60 per cent urbanized. Moreover, cities in Africa are characterized by decades of underinvestment in infrastructure due to a variety of factors, including ill-conceived privatization, a mounting debt burden, systemic corruption and administrative inefficiencies (Africa Infrastructure Country Diagnostic (AICD) 2010; Mutunga et al. 2012; UN-Habitat 2011). A useful proxy for understanding infrastructure deficits is the level of slum prevalence in Africa which was 62 per cent in 2010 according to the last State of African Cities Report (UN-Habitat 2010). As Africa’s urban population doubles over the next three decades, the absolute number of people in need of access to urban services will dramatically increase while it is anticipated that the proportion of slum inhabitants will remain the same. The call from Feddes et al. (2013) for a ‘new’ approach to urban development thus becomes more urgent.

An investment of USD93 billion per annum, approximately 15 per cent of GDP, will be required to address Africa’s infrastructure backlogs (AICD 2010). This will support an ambitious plan to build new infrastructure, refurbish derelict assets as well as operate and maintain all existing and future infrastructure. Currently, infrastructure spending in Africa is estimated to be USD45.3, only 7.1 per cent of GDP (World Bank 2012). Overall, two thirds is required for capital investment in construction and rehabilitation, while one third is required for maintenance. This price tag will cover the additional power generation and distribution, a fibre-optic backbone and broadband access, good quality logistics systems including rail, roads and ports that connect cities, improved irrigation, and access to water and sanitation, demonstrated in Table 18.2 (AICD 2010).

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Need ($bn)</th>
<th>Actual spend ($bn)</th>
<th>Spend as % of GDP</th>
<th>Financing gap ($bn)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latin America*</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>43.5</td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>37.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>East Asia</td>
<td>406.7</td>
<td>207</td>
<td>7.2%</td>
<td>199.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Asia</td>
<td>191.1</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>4.6%</td>
<td>145.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Middle East &amp; North Africa</td>
<td>78.5</td>
<td>43.8</td>
<td>6.9%</td>
<td>22.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sub-Saharan Africa</td>
<td>93.3</td>
<td>45.3</td>
<td>7.1%</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* According to figures from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC), the region requires annual investments of between US$128 billion and US$180 billion.

Source: World Bank 2012
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Table 18.2 Annual infrastructure investment requirements for sub-Saharan Africa, 2006–2015

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Infrastructure sector</th>
<th>Capital expenditure</th>
<th>Operation &amp; maintenance</th>
<th>Total spending in US$</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ICT</td>
<td>7.0</td>
<td>2.0</td>
<td>9.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Irrigation</td>
<td>2.9</td>
<td>0.6</td>
<td>3.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Power</td>
<td>26.7</td>
<td>14.1</td>
<td>40.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport</td>
<td>8.8</td>
<td>9.4</td>
<td>18.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Water &amp; sanitation</td>
<td>14.9</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>47.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>60.4</td>
<td>33.0</td>
<td>93.3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Note: This table is based on the conclusion that ‘Africa’s overall cost to build new infrastructure, refurbish dilapidated assets, and operate and maintain all existing and new installations is estimated at almost $93 billion a year for 2006 through 2015 (15 percent of African GDP)’ (AICD 2010: 59). However, with every year that passes since the baseline study was conducted, the size of the deficit obviously grows since only half of the required amount is being invested whilst demand continues to grow apace in urban areas.

Source: AICD 2010: 7

It is important to read Table 18.2 in relation to the dramatic prevalence of slum living conditions across African cities. The 2008 State of the World’s Cities Report demonstrated that not only does Africa have a much higher slum prevalence level, but the depth of deprivation is also more acute, if compared to Southeast Asia and Latin America. In other words, of the four dimensions of slum living: overcrowding, informal housing, insecure tenure, and lack of access to water and sanitation, 37 per cent of slums in Africa have 3−4 of these conditions, compared to 5 per cent in southern Asia and 8 per cent in Latin America (UN-Habitat 2008).

Apart from recognizing the low levels of access to basic services such as electricity, water and sanitation, it is important to acknowledge where and for whom these services are provided as they barely reach the two top quintiles of the population (Banerjee et al. 2009). The infrastructure needs of the bottom 60 per cent of urban residents are not reached because the modalities and availability of affordable finance and delivery are driven by the imperatives of cost-recovery and the prioritization of economically important spaces: nodes of commerce and movement of goods and services and the residential estates that house the middle classes and elites. We return to this issue later when we discuss splintering urbanism.

These aggregate figures obscure a number of important differences across the cities of low-income and middle-income countries, as well as differences between those countries endowed with natural resources and those that are not, and how that directly influences the extent to which urban economies can attract inward investments. For instance, if one contrasts the infrastructure deficits of Africa’s low-income countries with those of low-income countries in the rest of the world, it is clear that the situation, across various infrastructure sectors, is a lot worse in Africa. A similar picture of Africa’s relative deprivation emerges by comparing the differences between middle-income countries, with an exception for total road density; an anomaly that can be attributed to the road network in South Africa. (See Figure 18.2)

Similar to other regions in the global south, Africa confronts a series of obstacles in addressing the financial shortfall and policies are needed to remedy infrastructure backlogs and enable more equitable future urban growth. A combination of unpredictable regulatory systems, high transaction costs associated with administrative inefficiencies and delays, and the problem of limited potential markets due to the small middle classes that can pay for services and the largely informal basis of the economy create a complex set of obstacles.

That being said, significantly two thirds of infrastructure spending in Africa, approximately USD30 billion, is domestically sourced. Therefore, one of the most important financiers of capital investment is national and local government, and non-financial public institutions (AICD 2010). Particularly in
middle-income countries, public spending on infrastructure is from tax revenue and user chargers (ibid.). Public investment from governments and public enterprises is allocated mainly to the transport and energy sectors, followed by water and sanitation services, while ICT receives only a small portion (ibid.). Trends show that of the total amount of domestic investment, 50 per cent has been used to service urban areas, while 30 per cent is allocated to productive, economy and public infrastructure that underpins the economy, and 20 per cent to service rural areas (AfDB 2013).

Ideally, the allocation to these different urban infrastructure services should be more or less equal (AfDB 2013). However, logics of the status quo determine how much money is spent on what, and what gets prioritized over what. These budget choices are typically taken for granted and not contested. This applies at both national and lower levels of government, i.e. at the regional and municipal scales. Figure 18.3 illustrates how most municipal governments are torn between investing in network infrastructures that can address backlogs in basic needs versus providing the infrastructural platform for private investors to establish and grow businesses (Graham and Marvin 2001). This pressure is more
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acute where municipal governments are dependent on property rates income linked to the value of real estate. Often, in sub-Saharan cities, slum areas represent zero rates revenue and so the more middle-class areas grow, even if they are gated and far from other urban functions, the more overall municipal revenue grows. For this reason local politicians will often opt for growing their rates base, a preference reinforced by the fact that fast growing middle-class suburbs better represent an aspirational vision of the city. However, as demonstrated before, in a context of severe constraints on investment capital, if a certain form of urban settlement is prioritized, very little remains for the rest of the city. This problem is becoming increasingly acute as many African governments (national and local) are seduced by the idea of building entire ‘new towns’ to create enclaved living, working and recreational settlements of international businesses and service workers. Examples of such new towns are springing up in Nairobi, Luanda, Lagos, Addis Ababa and Kinshasa, amongst others (de Boeck 2012).

The problem is not only local. Because central governments have a high level of control over investments, inefficiencies at the local or urban level are extremely common (AICD 2010). In fact, the AICD (2010) report suggested that by simply improving the efficiency of government, a savings of USD17 billion could be effected, a considerable contribution to meeting the shortfall.

The remaining finance that makes its way into urban infrastructure in Africa is an accrued amount from external funders comprising official development assistance (ODA), financiers from beyond the OECD and the private sector (OECD 2006). The level of external finance support for infrastructure investment allocated, however, fluctuates from year to year depending on the global financial climate; in 2009 USD39.6 billion was invested, while that figure increased to USD55.9 billion in 2010 (ICA 2012). ODA is usually allocated to infrastructures that have a positive social outcome, while non-OECD financiers focus on infrastructure networks like energy or transport usually associated with a productive, positive outcome in the industrial and economic sector and usually concentrated in resource

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**Figure 18.3** Infrastructural priorities and trade-offs

*Source: Pieterse 2008: 82*
endowed countries. Private sector investment, on the other hand, seeks the highest commercial return for an investment, usually in middle-income or natural resource endowed countries and concentrated in the ICT sectors.

Externally derived finance comes with substantial costs, driving the overall cost of delivering and operating infrastructure upwards (Bhattacharya et al. 2012). Cost-recovery is not only significant for sustained operating and maintenance of networked infrastructure but for the ability to generate a return for investors that finance projects (ibid.). Africa however suffers from a ‘relatively high risk perception’ when it comes to infrastructure investment by international actors (AfDB 2013: 37). As such, the costs of financing associated with that risk increase and so does the expected rate of return depending on the type of project and phase it is in (demonstrated in Figure 18.4). This has significant consequences for the affordability of infrastructure services, reducing the number of projects actually being implemented. However, because each project has its own risk profile, it is important to question why ‘certain’ projects are approved while other, potentially cheaper, low-tech and low risk projects are not considered – which brings us back to the question of the mode of service delivery.

There is universal agreement across multilateral reports and analysis that administrative and governance inefficiencies are deep and intractable problems. For our purposes, however, the interlaced problems of widespread poverty, irregular household income and tenure insecurity are the most important considerations in thinking about the finance challenges associated with infrastructure provision in Africa. At the heart of this is the problem of affordability for urban households versus the

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**Figure 18.4** Risk and financing considerations at different phases of the life cycle of a stylized infrastructure project

*Source:* (Bhattacharya et al. 2012: 14)
guiding imperative of cost recovery or the ‘user-pays’ principle for service providers. Africa has begun to realize high economic growth rates for the last decade, but it has not had the positive and wide reaching impact conventionally expected from such growth. Rather, approximately half of all Africans still live in poverty and another 30 per cent (246 million people) find themselves surviving just over the poverty threshold of USD1.25 a day, but on less than USD2.50 a day (Africa Progress Panel 2012). Disappointing improvements in access to services thus persist, even though income levels and modern infrastructure coverage are positively related and access is determined by income at the household level (Banerjee et al. 2009). The gap between economic growth and anticipated service enhancement is exacerbated further by the fact that the price of a bundle of infrastructure services in Africa is exceptionally high when compared to the global norm, and in some cases double when compared to other developing countries (AICD 2010). This is addressed directly in the following World Bank report:

Projects are therefore un-bankable for investors due to risky revenue streams as a result of affordability issues coupled with policy uncertainties associated with political risks. There is an undeniable tension between the realities of urban Africa and the way in which service backlogs and future needs are dealt with through policy interventions. What is striking about the numerous policy reports about infrastructure is that none of them offer convincing answers about how fundamental rights to basic services can be addressed for predominantly poor cities with low affordability levels: ‘good practice’ as defined by mainstream development agencies eschews the provision of subsidies, insists on cost-recovery, yet has no answers for how employment security can be achieved in terms of the current global economic regime. Apart from the scale of need, the lack of access to stable wage-based or social security income for the majority of households is what sets the context in the global south (especially low-income countries) apart from the global north. This failing in the policy-oriented literature needs a response, but it is unclear whether the critical urban literature offers much by way of a convincing answer. It is to this academic material that we now turn our attention.

**Infrastructure assemblages vs. infrastructure managerialism**

Stephen Graham (2010: 10) draws our attention to ‘a remarkable growth in critical social scientific discussions about urban infrastructure’; a trend he designates as the infrastructural turn in urban studies. With this phrase he seeks to demarcate a growing body of work that redefines urban infrastructures as ‘complex assemblages that bring all manner of human, non-human, and natural agents into a multitude of continuous liaisons across geographical space’ (p. 11). The multi-agent dimension of assemblages
reinforces the idea that there are numerous relations to be maintained, reproduced and continuously worked at to avoid disruption or collapse. Thus, infrastructure networks are inherently unstable and in motion due to processes of continuous mobilization of institutional intent and coordination. This approach reflects a conception of network infrastructures that is inherently counter to the normalized discourses of governments and utilities which reference infrastructure systems as an inert system, a veritable black box only intelligible to professional experts and therefore beyond critical scrutiny.

A second dimension of the infrastructural turn is the work that seeks to critique the apolitical rendering of infrastructure planning, operations and finance as merely technical matters that are optimized according to rational calculations done by professional experts. This vein of critical scholarship encapsulates the numerous studies that reveal how ‘the “unbundling” of urban infrastructure provision; the erosion of comprehensive urban planning and the construction of new consumption spaces; the emergence of infrastructural consumerism; and the widespread shift towards extended and auto-mobilized cityscapes’ (Graham 2000: 186). Considering the world-wide obsession with making places attractive for private inward investment, it is not surprising that the phenomenon of splintering has been reproduced with such virulence and widespread impact in both the global north and south. The net effect has been a shift with differing levels of intensity towards the privatization and commercialization of service provisioning whereby more vulnerable parts of society are bypassed due to their inability to pay for networked services (Graham and Marvin 2001).

A third and important strand in this work is the foregrounding of infrastructure planning and management as a critical (national) security issue. This arises from the vulnerability of large infrastructure networks to sabotage by terrorist, anarchist, hacker and other anti-state forces. These risks are accentuated with the introduction of smart grids that rely on large data management farms which can be subjected to cyber attacks. The other risk factor is environmental, specifically the impacts of greater climate variability that can cause storm surges, droughts and other forms of extreme strain which can paralyse networks when they are overwhelmed (Satterthwaite 2011). The combination of these factors has reinforced a militaristic outlook which seeks to protect and securitize valuable assets even if this is at the expense of democratic oversight or achieving greater levels of access (Hodson and Marvin 2009).

There can be no doubt that these expansive and relational readings of network infrastructure assemblages profoundly enrich and expand our understanding of the complexity and politicized nature of instantiating, maintaining, retrofitting, protecting and expanding urban systems amidst heightened levels of policy uncertainty and growing demand. Yet, despite the powerful analytical purchase that this work provides to reveal why and how ‘the needs of vulnerable groups and communities’ (Graham 2010: 15) are not addressed, it does not offer much help in navigating the policy challenges associated with, for example, affordability issues in Africa as discussed before. Rather, the critical social scientific literature on infrastructure that Graham references tends to prioritize the unbundling and fragmentation dynamics at play without fully grappling with the scale of the affordability problem in the global south. Arguably, in Africa where access remains profoundly limited, the tendencies towards fragmentation are a lesser concern, even if also constitutive of the larger problematic. Consequently, as the literature is structured at the moment, one has to travel to another conceptual universe to make sense of the ‘policy fixes’ that are proposed by thought leaders from the urban management domains in development studies.

The most comprehensive framework for understanding and addressing the infrastructural challenges in Africa is set out in the tome *Africa’s Infrastructure: A Time for Transformation* (AICD 2010). This is a weighty and data-driven volume that seeks to offer the most comprehensive account of infrastructure...
investment and management failure, alongside a suite of policy recommendations on how the large finance deficits can be addressed in the context of massive growth in demand but accompanied with large-scale poverty (AICD 2010). The report is a telling example of the kind of analytical and political confidence that accompany the ‘policy-fix’ genre of developmentalist discourses (Pieterse 2010). The volume is not really fazed by the seemingly insoluble contradictions between the need for much greater rates of infrastructure investment, weak (local) government regulatory capacity, lack of income to pay for services amongst very large swathes of local populations, and most importantly, the lack of bargaining power of African cities all too desperate for any kind of investment, even if it exacerbates the negative political economy dynamics that characterize urban systems of access and disconnect.

Thus, the *Africa Infrastructure Report* proposes six critical policy reforms to address the systemic challenges of persistent slum urbanization and sub-optimum economic platforms. One, national governments should drive a clinical analytical framework to inform the prioritization and sequencing of infrastructure investments across the national territory but underpinned with a commitment to ‘good land policies and universal provision of basic services’ (AICD 2010: 139). Two, help cities to deal with powerful vested interests that are unwilling to be subjected to land-use and taxation regulations. Curiously, the report does not explore the well known fact that in many African countries there is such an overlap between political and economic elites, which fold into national elite structures, especially in capital cities (Chabal 2009). Three, the report suggests that city governments need to come to terms with the fact that ideal suburbs cannot be willed overnight. In pursuit of rational development premised on ‘well-defined property rights and land titling’ it may be required, in the short run, to ‘finesse’ land titling and use occupancy as a basis for land registration and taxation (AICD 2010: 140). At the heart of this policy argument is the question of differential minimum standards with regard to water-sanitation-energy packages, but with little explanation of the democratic foundation or rights implications of such an approach. It is of course necessary to be pragmatic about what can be done with limited resources and weak institutional systems, but what this then means in terms of minimum standards of access, allocation and regulatory standards of the state must be a much more urgent, and fundamentally, political issue, to address; matters the report leaves up to the reader to impute.

Four, echoing the arguments of the 2009 *World Development Report*, national governments are called upon to prioritize territories that are important for the national economy (World Bank 2009). In the context of the report it implies a focus on urban over rural, but within this same logic, it implies areas within cities that are part of lucrative value chains of the more established and networked pockets of the city. Given the exigencies of economic agglomeration dynamics it is hard to refute this logic but it is equally reckless to not recognize that it will ineluctably reproduce the intra-urban inequalities, of which the authors of the report are all too aware (see AICD 2010, Chapter Three). Thus, what is neglected is an evaluative framework for prioritization that can serve as a starting point for democratic engagement between citizens and interest groups who will live in different ways with the impacts of these prioritizations – some will be included in the infrastructural functioning of the city and others not. In those agonistic discussions there is a critical need to move the frame of reference well beyond the requirements of formal economic sectors and actors to incorporate the whole economy, i.e. informal economic life, social economies, care economies and the prosaic livelihood practices of especially slum dwellers and the working classes (Bayat 2000; Friedmann 1992; Narayan and Kapoor 2008; Pieterse and Simone 2013; Simone 2010). Five, establish a comprehensive understanding of formal and informal land market dynamics with an eye on realistic and effective ‘planning for the extension of urban settlements, taking into account transportation, connectivity, and environmental factors’ (AICD 2010: 140). Here, interestingly, the report does argue for a more inclusive and grounded approach to urban planning and investment, opening the door to criticize other tenets of the urban reform agenda, but also to elaborate on how the non-formal core of African cities can be brought more centrally into the logics of urban policy and public life. The sixth and final agenda promoted by the report is predictably
the importance of fiscal reform to improve inter-governmental flows — both volumes and frequency — alongside local taxation reforms to raise potential revenue and maximize opportunities for cost-recovery. Again, what is curious here is the lack of an explicit treatment of non-formal financial flows that make so much of African urban economies tick.

As we intimated at the outset, it is clear that urban poverty and associated slum urbanism will continue to be a major feature of city life for at least the next four decades. It is difficult to place store in the policy thinking of the World Bank, and various other multilateral development agencies, as far-reaching enough to effect a dramatic departure from current patterns. There seems to be an unshakable, even if irrational, belief that rational government with sufficient commitment and political will can get a handle on the problem and systematically introduce effective planning, regulation and management to ensure the virtuous circle of development, in the parlance of the Africa Infrastructure Report, comes to pass. However, this perspective fails to engage with the cumulative effects of informalized economies, settlements, social-cultural systems and political cultures that underpin persistently low levels of affordability.

Our argument is that large-scale infrastructural deficits and limited household incomes combine with a political economy that favours the formal private sector. Moreover, extractive accumulation creates a dynamic context within which urban majorities effectively build their own cities. To be sure, these practices of ‘autoconstruction’ are highly provisional, often precarious and totally inadequate from a socio-economic rights perspective, but they represent a dynamic condition of adaptive urbanism. It feeds into a series of economic and social reproducing logics that can be summarized as a stylized vicious circle of uneven development in evidence across most cities in the global south (see Figure 18.5)

It is beyond the scope of this chapter to fully explore and address these dynamics through which the urban poor construct their access to infrastructure and services, but it does foreground the inadequacy of both the infrastructure assemblages’ literature and the ‘policy-fix’ managerialism to point to

![Figure 18.5](image)

*Figure 18.5* Stylized urban development logics in sub-Saharan Africa

*Source:* Pieterse 2013
alternative infrastructural pathways for cities in the global south. This gap suggests important research and theorization work that remains to be done. We will now draw the chapter to a close by reflecting on what this research agenda might involve.

**In conclusion: towards a new research agenda**

The research agenda stems from the conclusion that cities can be thought of as the assemblage of four inter-related operating systems: infrastructure, the economy, land-use and governance (Pieterse 2011). The infrastructure dimension can further be differentiated between bio-technical network infrastructures (e.g. roads, transportation, information-communication technology, energy, water and sanitation, food and ecological system services) that tend to operate on a regional or city-wide scale and socio-cultural infrastructures (e.g. cultural services, education, health, public space, libraries, food gardens, green spaces, housing and the arts) that are organized according to a locality-based logic. In an interdisciplinary approach, these can be read as dynamic assemblages through a landscape urbanism lens to allow one to isolate the plurality of material and symbolic interdependencies across these systems.

Given the dearth of systematic data, knowledge and interpretation about the dynamics of infrastructure systems and geographies in much of the global south, which almost always embody the conjoining of the formal and informal, it is important that we create a foundation for research and practice. Assuming the interdisciplinary disposition suggested before, we believe the following kinds of questions, trained on specific cities, deserve sustained attention: what would a map of the various technical systems and their reproducing logics, especially technology, say? What are the spatial dynamics (e.g. service delivery catchments) of these technical systems? What is the nature of the economic demand for specific infrastructures and services and how does it shape priorities and investments? What are the fiscal underpinnings – demand, expenditure patterns, taxation instruments and reinvestment requirements – of the formal infrastructure system that is in place and how is the service being structured to cope with future demand? Similarly, what are the financial underpinnings of the informal service delivery systems? What do the institutional maps – institutions, organizations, actor networks, cultures and intermediaries – of the various infrastructure networks look like? Where does power coalesce and get contested across those maps? What are the frontiers and zones where innovation in relation to meeting the dual imperatives of access and resilience (i.e. becoming resource efficient) is likely to occur? How do these innovation niches connect up with various proactive and pragmatic coalitions for systemic change?

This is obviously not an exhaustive list of questions but it does point to the kind of knowledge bases that we need to systematically assemble across various institutional sites if we are going to better understand the politics and pragmatics of urban infrastructure and finance. The opening quote to this chapter suggests that the ‘world urgently needs a plan for its urban future’ (Feddes et al. 2013: 7). Those who often speak in the name of the world – political elites standing shoulder to shoulder with corporate elites – have already hatched all manner of plans as reflected in so-called city reports of consulting firms such as McKinsey, Boston Consulting Group, Booz and Allen, Siemens and Accenture. The problem is that their plans are firmly rooted in a traditional teleological modernization frame, albeit with a green twist, that assumes that with technological innovation and political will one can address the problems of environmental degradation and slum urbanization. In our reading of the field, we see these visions as generally uncontested because the critical literatures fail to adequately engage with the material difference that poverty, low and irregular incomes, weak states and dysfunctional institutions make in understanding and transforming urban infrastructures. Hopefully, a more grounded and systematic research agenda that takes its cue from the lived realities of urban systems in the global south and connects to the vital worlds of practice, will enable us to recast the debates about infrastructure and finance in order to discern pathways to more just urban futures.
References


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Notes

1 Originally calculated at 350 trillion although this amount included expenditure on real estate.
2 Precise estimates are difficult to make due to gaps in the data (Bhattacharya et al. 2012).
3 The Africa Infrastructure Country Diagnostic (AICD) project is the most authoritative source on infrastructure trends in Africa. It is a project that is financed by a multi-donor trust fund to which the main contributors are the Department for International Development (United Kingdom), the Public Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility, Agence Française de Développement, and the European Commission. The research is driven the World Bank.
4 Based on 2006 costs (AICD 2010)
RE-EVALUATING THE INFLUENCE OF URBAN AGGLOMERATION IN SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

Population density, technological innovation and productivity

Deborah Fahy Bryceson

Urban agglomeration has not figured prominently as a theme in African development thinking until recently. Quite the contrary, the dominant discourse, and the one that prevailed throughout the twentieth century, depicted sub-Saharan Africa as an overwhelmingly rural continent with a low-density population trapped in an impoverished, stagnating subsistence agricultural sector. From the outset of colonialism, this perception permeated government and academic circles. Post-colonial African development policy continued to be wary of urbanization. Urban growth and agglomeration in sub-Saharan Africa was deemed undesirable and detrimental—a curse rather than a blessing. Deeply etched in the design and implementation of international donor aid strategies, wave after wave of rural development programme experimentation aimed at forestalling urban growth, in the name of maximizing national development and welfare for the majority rather than for a privileged urban elite.

This position ignored the work of early development studies theorists. Grappling with the issue of economic growth, economists focused on productivity differentials between rural and urban areas in developing countries. In W.A. Lewis’s (1954) stylized model of rural–urban migration, people left their rural home areas where labour productivity and wages were low to work in more productive urban areas. Over time, as the urban areas became more densely populated and labour competed for employment, it was assumed that earnings across space would begin to equalize, assisted by remittances and investment flowing back to the rural areas. A synergy between rising agricultural productivity and urban industrial take-off was postulated, which became foundational to modernization and development studies (Lewis 1955; Rostow 1959; Bairoch 1968; Kuznets 1973). But Lewis’s model was premised on rural areas with labour surpluses, where land usage was subjected to the diminishing returns from population pressure—notably densely populated parts of Asia, not Africa.

Despite glaring evidence of African rural youth’s eagerness to migrate to urban areas, Lewis’s model was disregarded. Instead an African exceptionalist position was adopted in which Lipton’s (1977) concept of ‘urban bias’ was enthusiastically embraced. African urban elites’ political influence was seen to be swaying public investment disproportionately towards urban areas at the expense of rural dwellers. With the notable exception of apartheid South Africa, the narrative for most sub-Saharan countries was one of the rural population, most saliently youth with some education, facing
comparatively poor prospects in the countryside increasingly migrated to towns, resulting in growth of a bloated informal sector of underemployment, deepening poverty and economic malaise in rural and urban sectors. This was reflected in various mainstream development literature, which became integral to the logic for imposing structural adjustment programme (SAP) conditionality (World Bank 1981; Bates 1981; Jamal and Weeks 1988; World Bank 1994; World Bank 1995). Interestingly the World Bank (2000a) publication Can Africa Claim the 21st Century? dropped the foundational ‘urban bias’ tenet of SAPs without explanation, referring instead to the advantages of urban agglomeration when Africa found its way in the neoliberal global market.

The World Bank’s World Development Report 2009 (WDR 2009) entitled Reshaping Economic Geography, pivots on assumptions about the relationship between productivity differentials and population density and the dynamizing role of urban agglomeration derived from the New Economic Geography literature. Applied to developed and developing countries without exception, its theoretical argument marks a radical departure from international policy that consistently maintained sub-Saharan Africa’s exceptionalism.

This chapter reviews the unfolding debate about the role of urban agglomeration in African development, tracing its past long-term disregard as well as its present elevation into a major polemical argument for urban change and economic growth. The puzzling diametrically opposed axioms of former development policy practice and recent conceptual coupling of urban agglomeration theory with development theory are interrogated. The first section contrasts prevailing assumptions from colonial and post-colonial states’ perspectives with the World Bank’s endorsement of urban agglomeration as an ‘engine of growth’ for optimizing economic growth in the second section. Thereafter, the theoretical insights of Ester Boserup (1965, 1981, 1987) and Jane Jacobs’s (1961; 1969) extensive work on the interaction between population density, technical innovation and productivity in sectoral transformation are reviewed, given their relevance to urban agglomeration. Their stress on the creative influences of population density from evolutionary economic history and agency-based perspectives are contrasted with that of the World Bank’s emphasis on optimization of productivity. The third section interrogates recent sectoral transformative processes, including the impact of structural adjustment, market liberalization and most recently mineralization of sub-Saharan African economies with respect to the altered urban migration patterns, using the example of Tanzania, before concluding.

Colonial historicism’s rejection of urban agglomeration

Under colonial rule, indigenous local economies and trans-regional markets were restructured to produce and deliver primary agricultural and mineral commodities for international export. Economic policy of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was centred on how to resolve the ‘labour problem’. Functioning labour markets were relatively rare given circumstances of land abundance, low population density and labour scarcity. In many parts of the British, French and Portuguese colonial empires, the colonial state acted to facilitate or coerce a labour supply by subjecting the African rural population to various forms of taxation, enforced labour and male circular migration systems deliberately designed to be temporary. Short-term contracts required men to return to their home areas thereby discouraging or prohibiting family movement. African urban agglomeration was anathema to colonial policy in many countries. Governance through a three-tier racial system essentially ordained rigid occupational and locational divides between the races: ‘black’ Africans were expected to be farmers in their rural home areas, unless coopted for temporary large-scale labour force participation in mining or agricultural plantation production; ‘brown’ middle-men, usually Asians or Lebanese, were traders and service sector providers mostly based in urban settlements; and ‘white’ Europeans were the government administering civil servants and professionals (Bryceson 2006a).
Throughout the colonial period the motive force for African labour supply was primarily the state rather than the market. British colonial governments relied heavily on indirect rule of Native Authorities for local-level governance whereas the Portuguese were known for more explicit forms of coercion (Pitcher 1995). As the winds of decolonization swept through Africa in the 1950s, colonial governments felt threatened by the thought of the urban agglomeration of so-called ‘detribalized natives’ removed from the strictures of traditional rural moral authority. It was widely believed that urban migrants would generate a moral vacuum of anonymity, unemployment and crime. In the prevailing nationalist era of racial contestation, the spectre of chaos loomed large in the colonial mind (Bryceson 2006a).

Post-independent African governments and international development agencies, paradoxically, adopted and consistently maintained an anti-urban position but not the racist constructions nor paranoid reasoning of colonial governments. The political euphoria of national independence was accompanied by a heavy influx of urban migration. Africanization of the civil service afforded choice jobs for the first generation of urban migrants, but quickly thereafter educated youth with high expectations of job attainment faced disappointment. National governments were confronted with a growing ‘school leaver problem’ that posed a new risk to urban political stability (Boserup 1990). In this vein, African governments and donor agencies were of one mind that urban migration should be held in check as much as possible to avert the political menace of urban poverty and unrest.

The mainstay of most African national economies remained rooted in agricultural or mineral export. During the first two post-independence decades, ambitious attempts to achieve import substitution were launched but most efforts to nurture industrial take-off remained embryonic in character and failed to generate sufficient labour absorptive capacity to provide jobs for educated school leavers, let alone the large numbers of unskilled migrants who sought employment (Bryceson 2006b). By the 1970s, amorphous urban informal sectors were coalescing in African capitals. In this political and economic climate, donor agencies avoided investing in urban development programmes, which might be interpreted as encouraging urban migration and undesired urban growth.

Urban agglomeration as an ‘engine of growth’: NEG location theory and mathematical modelling

Such policies stand in stark contrast to the World Bank’s World Development Report 2009, which conceptualized the city as the mecca for skill acquisition and productivity. The economists who authored the report perceived agglomeration as an imperative for development. Key to understanding their reasoning is the way they define agglomeration, migration, specialization and trade as an integral part of market forces through which material development is achieved (World Bank 2009: 1). In this way, a sense of inevitable manifest destiny permeates the report. Equating population concentration with market expansion dispels the criticism that urban agglomeration is linked to urban bias policies and constitutes a drain on sub-Saharan development, the position argued by the World Bank in their World Development Report 1999/2000: ‘cities in Africa are not serving as engines of growth and structural transformation. Instead they are part of the cause and a major symptom of the economic and social crises that have enveloped the continent’ (World Bank 2000b: 130; Fay and Opal 2000).

The WDR 2009’s challenge to the long-standing anti-urban bias in development circles is infused with the ‘new economic geography’ (NEG), a theoretical paradigm spearheaded by economists drawing on Losch’s (1954) location and Christaller’s (1933) central place theories, reminiscent of the mid-twentieth-century quantitative modelling literature of economic geography (Chorley and Haggett 1967; Gould 1969) while ignoring geographers’ subsequent anti-positivist critique (Livingstone 1992).² Bypassing the nuances of geographers’ use of central place theory, NEG theory has become highly influential in economic and development thinking over the past two decades (Henderson 1988; Krugman 1995; Fujita, Krugman and Venables 1999; Fujita and Thisse 2002; Glaeser 2008). Spurred
by the award of the Nobel Prize in economics to one of NEG’s foremost theorists, Paul Krugman, in 2008, the WDR 2009 waxes lyrical about the discovery of increasing returns to scale associated with urban population agglomeration. Noting that the world’s population was just reaching a demographically unprecedented 50/50 split between rural and urban population, the WDR (2009: 3) states its commitment to ‘elevating space and place from mere undercurrents in policy to a major focus’.

At the outset, the report begins with the assertion that policy attempts over past decades to control urban growth and to spatially spread economic growth ‘prematurely’ have been misguided (WDR 2009: 4–5), observing that uneven economic growth is inevitable. ‘Agglomeration is identified with economic concentration and is measured by the rate of urbanization at the local scale and growth of economic and population density in towns and cities’ (WDR 2009: 8). Three dimensions of economic growth are delineated then stylized as the ‘3-D approach’ namely: density (population agglomeration, urban areas), distance (migration, transport) and division (specialization, borders, social conflict). The three ‘Ds’ are conceptualized as conduits facilitating or impeding market access according to scale. Density is seen as the most important dimension at the local level, synchronizing market forces ‘to encourage concentration’ (ibid.: 7) defined in economic terms as ‘the economic mass per unit of land area, or the geographic compactness of economic activity’ (ibid.: 49) measured by the level of output/income generated per unit of land area. Densification is identified with increasing concentrations of both labour and capital. The goal of good policy is stated to be the achievement of ‘agglomeration economies’ because ‘being near other people produces huge benefits’ (ibid.: 13).

Comparing the nature of rural and urban productivity, the Report extrapolates and embellishes Lewis’s argument, positing that returns to labour in land-intensive agriculture are constant whereas capital-intensive industrial manufacturing and services deliver increasing productivity returns to scale based on an ‘unending potential for growth’ enhanced by skill acquisition and the ‘clustering of human capital’ (WDR 2009: 161). The belief is that the market will bring prosperity to all but in the short term the returns to labour and improvements to living standards will be unevenly distributed. The authors’ zeal for adopting a dedicated market path to sectoral transformation is unambiguous:

> The challenge for governments is to allow – even encourage – ‘unbalanced’ economic growth, and yet ensure inclusive development … through economic integration – by bringing lagging and leading places closer in economic terms … [which] can best be done by unleashing the market forces of agglomeration, migration, and specialization, not by fighting or opposing them. (WDR 2009: 20–1)

In this formulation, the market is both the cause of and the solution to uneven development. The belief that migration and market exchange over time will equalize living standards was an absurdly optimistic position in view of the fact that it was being argued as the 2008 global market crisis unfolded, bringing protracted economic uncertainty and declining living standards to hundreds of millions. The dramatic lessons of that period, namely the gross imbalances of unfettered market capitalism and the lack of a self-correcting mechanism, were omitted from the WDR 2009.

The Report’s recommendations on policy interventions are sketched schematically as: institutions (policy measures designed to be universal), infrastructure (spatially connective policies and investment, e.g. transport) and interventions (spatially targeted programmes). The recommended application of these measures is temporally and spatially dependent on the stage of urbanization in the country. Thus ‘incipient urbanization’ of developing countries, which would be applicable to most African countries, is seen to be best served by ‘spatially blind’ policies applied nationally. It is anticipated that individual migration is the best remedy for evening out spatial imbalance rather than geographically targeted measures. At an intermediate stage of urbanization, policies to enhance connectivity between spatially
imbalanced areas are recommended, and finally at the stage of advanced urbanization geographically targeted measures can and should be applied to areas of intense deprivation such as urban slums.

This laissez-faire market approach has no room for the exercise of foresight and planning. Measures directed at slums are put off to the point that they are necessarily remedial rather than preventative. Mention, let alone analysis, of the impact of agglomeration on social welfare is studiously avoided. In his review of WDR 2009, David Harvey (2009) finds the absence of reference to the on-going subprime mortgage crisis remarkable. Similarly, the omission of any environmental considerations relating to urbanization’s effect on climate change is viewed as extremely myopic (Rigg et al. 2009; Scott 2009).

In effect, the WDR 2009 is constructing a normative model of economic transition, which treats all social and environmental influences and outcomes as externalities beyond consideration.

The NEG’s and WDR 2009’s developed country bias, evident in their heavy reliance on illustrative examples from western countries, overlooks the central role of the urban informal sector in sub-Saharan Africa and constitutes an enormous blind spot. There are no studies to date that link the informal economy with agglomeration economies (Moreno-Monroy 2012). This is likely to relate to donors’ changing attitude towards the informal sector. During the 1970s, the entrepreneurial spirit of the informal sector (ILO 1972; Hart 1973) was applauded and often juxtaposed to the plodding inefficiency and corruption of government parastatals and ministries. Now, however, most international donors, led by the World Bank, have switched their focus to the informal sector’s tax-evading character, which is a defining feature of the sector and currently deemed to be subverting economic growth. International donor policies are now directed towards the sector’s elimination through implementation of tighter tax regulation and formalization of business enterprises. Nonetheless, given the economic dynamism of the informal sector in urban Africa and the global south, the circumvention of the role of the informal sector in the WDR 2009’s analysis of urban agglomeration is paradoxical.

With its many analytical shortcomings, the WDR 2009 should be read as a medium for World Bank policy advocacy rather than scholarship. Angus Deaton et al.’s (2006) review of World Bank institutional performance, makes reference to the World Bank’s frequent habit of advancing untested theories as convincing evidence to support their policies in promotional publications, notably the annual WDRs (Bryceson et al. 2009; Fine 2010).

Economists, not least those adhering to the NEG approach, aspire to analytical rigour through mathematical model-building. However, the achievement of methodological rigour and the integrity of economists’ model building fundamentally depend on the quality of the quantitative data used in the model (Jerven 2013). Very little statistical data is collected and collated at the level of the urban unit, and labour census counts and productivity estimates are notoriously problematic given the diffuse nature of the diverse forms of income earning in the informal labour force in so many developing country settings, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa (Bryceson 2010). It is no accident that the WDR 2009 cites data and case study material primarily from developed countries. They do not have the relevant or rigorously collected data to support their arguments for sub-Saharan Africa, a fact that is true for many other parts of the global south.

Last but not least, it bears noting that the WDR 2009’s use of central place theory and the locational conceptualizations associated with NEG theorists were largely repudiated by geographers decades ago as being over-reliant on quantitative modelling and simplifying, reductionist assumptions that ignore the complexities of urban growth (Livingstone 1992; Bryceson et al. 2009; Mariangatti, Shepherd and Zhang 2009). Seemingly oblivious to this critique, the WDR 2009’s combination of deductive neoliberal economic reasoning, mathematical modelling and the selective use of distorted historical case study illustrations drawn primarily from developed countries has resulted in analytical myopia. Furthermore, urban economic statistics on labour productivity are rarely available to prove or disprove such theories. From an economist’s perspective, Fine (2010) sees the WDR 2009 as an exercise in disciplinary imperialism of economics into the corpus of geography theory and is scathing in his
criticism of the WDR 2009’s manipulation of deductive modelling to argue the case for neoliberal mono-economics:

the model is the thing, manipulated as necessary to tease out outcomes to correspond to stylized facts (core-periphery patterns of development, for example) or novel results for orthodoxy, pushing the consequences of deduction beyond reasonable limits given what is absented from consideration (not least the role of the state and policy … let alone the exercise of political power at the global level).

(Fine 2010: 8)

**Population agglomeration as catalyst of innovation: evolutionary narratives of sectoral change and economic agency**

On a quite different analytical trajectory from that of the World Bank’s mono-economics, the work of Ester Boserup (1965, 1981), an economist, and Jane Jacobs (1969), an urban planner, methodologically grounded their analyses of population densification in detailed empirical observation to discern patterns of technological innovation and productivity. Far from equating technological innovation with markets, they treated population growth and density as an independent variable, which catalysed human agency within various social and economic organizational frameworks. In contrast to the WDR 2009, human agency, of both an individual and aggregate nature, is central to their analyses of sectoral change and population agglomeration.

**Boserup: population density and technology**

Boserup focused on the triangular relationship between population density, agriculture and technology in land-abundant closed systems without a market or the possibility of external technology transfers. Arguing that population density in rural areas was influenced by food availability, the incidence of war and disease control, she however rejected the Malthusian theory’s notion of famine as the inevitable check on population growth. Instead Boserup (1965) posited a virtuous cycle in which rising population density acted as a stimulus to technological innovation which afforded greater food production and thereafter increasing population density (Bryceson 1990).

She linked the low prevailing population density in African rural areas to conditions of land abundance and labour scarcity, where rural producers operated on a minimization of labour principle. In other words, farmers forestalled adopting labour intensification in smallholder agriculture until land scarcity necessitated it. As land scarcity took hold, the agricultural fallow period was shortened from forest to bush falls. Boserup observed that in the first couple of decades of post-independence, land abundance continued to prevail in most African countries. Hence, the heavy stream of rural to urban migration was not a response to land shortage. Instead young migrant men were intent on gaining autonomy from the rule of male patriarchy within the rural community.

Boserup (1987) noted that processes of urban agglomeration in the European countryside had arisen in the Middle Ages as food production became subject to shortening fallows and labour intensification. Urban settlements tended to grow in proximity to densely populated rural areas where food surpluses were being generated. This has not been the experience of urban spatial growth in Africa. After national independence, town-country balances did not evolve as they had in Europe. African smallholder agriculture, in many places, was not successfully ‘feeding the city’ (Guyer 1987). Potential food trade synergies between the countryside and town did not develop to any noticeable extent as they did in pre-industrial Europe largely due to the introduction of subsidized imports of North American and European staple food surpluses to feed African urban areas beginning in the 1960s and 1970s. Staple food importation
greatly cheapened the cost of food for African urban dwellers while short-circuiting African farmers’ markets for their food surpluses and incentives to increase production. Boserup (1987) saw the consequent stagnation in African smallholder peasant agriculture as the main cause of male out-migration and spiralling urban underemployment. The structural adjustment policies of the 1980s further exacerbated this tendency contributing to widespread deagrarianization in Africa (Bryceson 1996).

Urban growth and creative innovation

Fuelling the population debate, Jane Jacobs (1969) argued that agricultural productivity surges were most likely to follow rather than precede urban growth. While Boserup (1981) focused on rural population conditions in which technology was invented or adopted from outside, Jacobs took urban areas as her starting point, tracing how large densely populated urban centres made high levels of labour specialization and diversification possible. Through a multitude of empirical examples in her writings (Jacobs 1961, 1969, 1984, 2000), her stress was on how catalytic expansion of the production of goods and services took place in such settings, with the ultimate outcome that urban populations were availed rising labour productivity, welfare and living standards. These are themes that are relevant to the present realities of urban Africa with respect to urban migration, the informal sector and general welfare.

Jacobs dissected the functional content and source/destination of innovations in urban trade and industry, identifying six types of ‘reciprocating growth’ which imparted dynamism to cities as centres of innovation and production, namely:

1. ‘export support’ defined as goods and services that facilitate or expand the export and import of products to and from the countryside via the city;
2. export augmentation, which refers to goods and services produced in the city that are used as inputs in situ for other city production;
3. import substitution, namely goods and services that replace externally imported goods;
4. new product innovation comprising goods and services destined for the in situ internal city market creating new products; and
5. revival of old products which encompasses goods and services conserving old skills and combining new and old work.

The value of this perspective is that it traces the origin and destination of products produced, transacted or consumed in urban areas along rural to urban value chains and beyond, making the patterns salient, and linking them to urban growth and economic viability outcomes.

Jacobs (1961) argues that innovation and productivity are stimulated by high concentrations of population that are socially and organizationally diverse. A continual proliferating array of services and products depends on the collision of people from different walks of life, income levels mingling in neighbourhoods made up of buildings of an array of ages, types, sizes and upkeep that constitutes layered complexity and sometimes chaos. Such variety engenders valuable inefficiencies and impracticalities that are the source of ongoing experimentation. Unlike the World Bank’s emphasis on agglomeration as a market process propelled by profit, Jacobs argues the case for cities as social organisms that stimulate creative innovations based on the perception of gaps in existing services and products and the development of new needs. In her later work, Jacobs (2000) gave prominence to the environmental underpinnings of cities, arguing that human beings are part of a natural order that must necessarily be reflected in city life, stressing versatility and diversity rather than over-specialization in resolving the provisioning of people’s need for goods and services.

In concluding this section, both Ester Boserup and Jane Jacobs saw population density as a positive force for innovation across time and space. In sharp contrast to the WDR 2009’s deductive model, they
amassed detailed empirical observation to inductively identify patterns demonstrating how population density and agglomeration impact on settlements within specific historical and spatial settings. In this way their work is devoid of mono-economic tautologies in which markets are considered always overdetermining with respect to productive output regardless of time and place. Avoiding a deductive agglomeration position grounds urban economic analysis in the empirical reality of everyday urban life, challenging the crass mono-economic stance of the WDR 2009.

**Lurching from distress to discovery: urban agglomeration and creativity in sub-Saharan Africa**

Having reviewed contrasting conceptual prisms for understanding the interaction of population density, technological innovation and economic development, we need to return to the past and present reality of African population density and urban agglomeration trends. The historical origins of sub-Saharan Africa’s low population density are varied. Diamond (1998) notes that in the transition from hunting and gathering to agriculture, the African continent was disadvantaged compared with the enormous landmass of Eurasia that is longitudinally rather than latitudinally extended, which greatly facilitated the spread of innovation. Unlike the Mediterranean, which was endowed with a critical range of animals and crops suited to domestication and human dietary requirements which could be transferred east or westward through latitudes of similar temperatures, the African continent’s plant and animal endowment was far more restricted. Only 7 per cent of the world’s wild grass species had potential for grain production. All of Africa’s original plant material giving rise to food crops originated north of the equator, and the Sahara desert and Congo forest were barriers to their transmission southwards. Thus, there are biological reasons why sub-Saharan Africa has been historically under-populated.

Furthermore, the Atlantic slave trade took its toll on the continent’s population. An estimated 11 million people were seized and shipped to the Americas during the sixteenth to nineteenth centuries (Lovejoy 1983). In 1750 when the Atlantic slave trade was fully in progress, 85 per cent of the world’s population resided in Europe and Asia with population densities of 24 per km² and 19 per km² respectively. Africa on the other hand accounted for an estimated 11 per cent of the population density of approximately 3 per km² while the Americas and Oceania accounted for a negligible 2 per cent of the world total (Cipolla 1979).

Paradoxically, the trade in slaves, ivory and gold catalysed population agglomeration, with the emergence of several significant urban centres on the West African coastlines and at important trade crossroads such as Timbuktu. Similar urban trading settlements on the East African coast date back to the eleventh century when slaves and gold were exported in an Indian Ocean trading circuit (Anderson and Rathbone 2000).

Thus, a continent where low population density prevailed for centuries did not preclude the emergence of cities and towns. Urbanized settlements of over 10,000 in population were of four major types:

1. cities commanding religious awe (Burton 2002);
2. settlements located on environmental boundaries where trade naturally takes place, such as the boundary between forest and savannah regions;
3. war-ravaged citadels which attracted dense populations seeking protection from slave raiding, a feature of the landscape arising from the Indian Ocean slave trade (Sheriff 2002); and
4. the coastal port cities locked into international trade of luxury goods, notably slaves and ivory, which tended to represent the most dense and cosmopolitan populations.

Following European colonial annexation of Africa, in 1900, only 8 per cent of the world’s population resided in Africa, a continent that accounted for 20 per cent of the world’s land mass (Caselli et al.
The colonial intrusion of the twentieth century marked disruption of sub-Saharan Africa’s historical long-distance trade patterns and the erosion of the autonomy of local rural economies, replaced by agriculture and mineral-exporting activities destined for international export. For the sake of concrete illustration I will focus on Tanzania, a country that had a population density of only 4.2 persons per km² in 1900, rising to 11.2 at the time of national independence in 1961, with only 7 per cent of the population residing in urban areas.

It was the port cities that almost invariably took the position of primate cities in the colonial urban hierarchy. In Tanzania, this was fulfilled by Dar es Salaam. After independence, as Africanization of the civil service was underway, Dar es Salaam retained significant primacy in the country’s urban hierarchy, but after 1970 and the regional decentralization of government administration, urban growth rates were most rapid in the newly established regional capitals. During the 1980s and 1990s small town growth started superseding the growth rates of Dar es Salaam and the regional capitals (Bryceson et al. 2012).

What is significant to note during the years since the country’s political independence is that the population growth rate was exceptionally rapid. At independence in 1961 the population was 10,584,000 whereas the recent 2012 census recorded a total of 44,929,002, evidencing a population growth rate of 2.9 per cent relative to a 1.6 per cent growth rate between 1900 and 1961 (Tanzania National Bureau of Statistics 2013). Such an increase in population growth would not have been possible without the expansion of medical health services, indicating that development was being realized in demographic terms. Clearly, the quadrupling of the national population over a 50-year time span has greatly reduced circumstances of low population density. In effect, the size of the labour force is definitely no longer the constraint holding back productivity. Capital rather than labour is now the major impediment, which is greatly worsened or improved by the country’s international terms of trade.

Tanzania has experienced two growth spurts in its post-independence history, the 1960s and the period since 2000, both coinciding with good terms of trade. In the 1960s and early 1970s prices for Tanzania’s agricultural exports were high relative to energy, which is significant bearing in mind Tanzania’s heavy dependence on oil imports. The oil crisis of the 1970s had a devastating effect on Tanzania, given the country’s large size and the rising costs of transport of its bulky agricultural exports. The 1980s and 1990s constituted a long period of economic malaise exacerbated by the imposition of structural adjustment policies that eliminated farmers’ subsidized seed and fertilizer packages, reversing strides made in agricultural productivity, and resulting in declining yields of maize, the country’s main staple food (Bryceson 1990).

During the economic hiatus of the 1980s and 1990s, as farmers’ agricultural earnings plummeted, the government turned a blind eye to the growth of artisanal mining, especially of gold, which was technically illegal. As the international price of gold soared during the financial crisis, Tanzania’s economic prospects markedly improved with employment expansion and a spurt in small town urbanization. Now approximately 685,000 people are engaged in artisanal mining in the country’s small-scale gold sites, concentrated in a ‘ring of gold’ which follows the bifurcation of the East African rift valley south of Lake Victoria. The gold mining settlements have been exceptionally fast-growing and it remains to be seen how many will prevail as permanent, expanding settlements (Bryceson et al. 2012).

At present the settlements, as points of in-migration from all over Tanzania and beyond, are cosmopolitan and chaotic. It’s likely that Jane Jacobs would have heartily approved of the proliferating development of goods and services taking place. Meanwhile, Ester Boserup would probably feel vindicated as well. As peasant agriculture has deteriorated, the labour constraints of low population density have been superseded by rural underemployment, propelling many to seek alternative livelihoods, as illustrated by the hundreds of thousands who have migrated to artisanal gold sites (Bryceson et al. 2012; Bryceson and Jonsson 2014). Tanzania’s national and urban economies have been heavily impacted by rising oil prices and the relatively stagnant prices of agricultural raw materials in the 1970s, but the recent unprecedented rise in the world gold price has given the country a window
of opportunity. While capital constraints have been significantly alleviated, the issue remains whether the demographic and economic synergies of the present will lead to investment in infrastructure and innovation that can bring about an industrial take-off, placing Tanzania in good stead once the gold boom has passed.

While it is true that Tanzania could be considered fortunate with its newly found mineral wealth, this is not unique. At the turn of the millennium, more than a third of the world’s major metallic mineral-producing countries were located in Africa (International Council on Mining and Minerals 2012). The expansion of mineral production and its associated employment opportunities have acted as a catalytic force in proliferating locations of urban agglomeration in many African countries (Bryceson and MacKinnon 2012). Beyond the rural–urban migration patterns of past decades, large-scale and especially small-scale mining has triggered complex urban dynamics and diversity that need to be reflected in the theorization of African urbanization and economic growth.

Conclusion: rethinking agglomeration theory

In this analytical review of agglomeration population density theory in both rural and urban areas, my aim has been to critique the World Development Report 2009 in the light of the work of Ester Boserup and Jane Jacobs. Both stressed the importance of population density for innovation, and did so on the basis of astute observation of the nature of economic development. Boserup saw population density as a major impetus for agricultural transformation in closed agricultural systems. Now, the World Bank’s policy insistence on market liberalization and the consequent impact of globalization has left few areas of the rural world untouched. Global markets make or break the economic viability of agricultural work. The major constraint in agricultural transformation becomes capital rather than labour. This state of affairs has prompted millions of Africans to migrate from the rural areas to urban areas, where, in most cases, they join the ranks of the informal sector.

The principles of Boserup’s and Jacobs’s work live on but there is now a need to update their analysis in the light of the enormous surge in urbanization and industrialization in China and India, and the
fact that contrary to WDR 2009 claims, Africa has been urbanizing in the absence of industrialization. However, the recent mineralization of several countries in Africa, as illustrated by Tanzania, may provide the possibility of a new transitional path. Labour is being absorbed and technically trained in the large informal artisanal mining sector spanning the continent. Will this be a platform for African industrialization? Time will tell.

References

Agglomeration in sub-Saharan Africa


D.F. Bryceson


Notes

1 This chapter does not cover the South African urban agglomeration experience, which has been historically different from the rest of sub-Saharan Africa due to the early influence of mining, industrialization and twentieth-century apartheid policies.

2 By the 1970s geographers were staging a counter movement against the positivist quest for a few core axioms around which processes and patterns of human spatial interaction could be explained. Harvey (1973, 1982) was a leading figure stressing the importance of human agency in urban development and change from a Marxist perspective. Since then postmodernism in geography’s rejection of positivist empiricism and celebration of uncertainty is further removed from any notion of optimizing ‘rational economic actors’ mechanistically gravitating towards urban agglomeration (Lyotard 1984).

3 The World Bank defines an ‘urban agglomerated area’ as a location that has a population density that: (1) exceeds 150 people/km², (2) has reasonable transport access to a sizeable settlement (e.g. 1 hour by road), and (3) the nearby sizeable settlement has more than 50,000 inhabitants (WDR 2009: 54).
THE URBAN INFORMAL ECONOMY
Enhanced knowledge, appropriate policies and effective organization

Martha Chen and Caroline Skinner

Introduction
Understanding urban informal employment is critical to designing urban plans and policies to reduce urban poverty. Despite predictions to the contrary, recent urbanization in many countries has been neither driven nor accompanied by industrialization. Indeed, in some countries, cities are de-industrializing. The net result is that the majority of urban workers in developing countries earn their livelihoods in the informal economy. Meanwhile, urban renewal schemes in many cities around the world are actively destroying urban informal livelihoods. Practices that exclude informal workers from participating in cities are the norm in many parts of the world. There are daily reports of slum and street vendor evictions and also everyday forms of harassment of informal workers. In brief, urban informal livelihoods are under threat and deserve more focused attention from urban scholars and practitioners.

This chapter aims to highlight recent efforts to improve measurement and knowledge of the urban informal economy; to promote more inclusive urban policies and practices in support of the urban informal workforce; and to promote organization and collective action by urban informal workers. It summarizes recent statistics and scholarship on the urban informal economy. It also draws substantively from the experience and knowledge of membership-based organizations of urban informal workers as well as the data analysis, primary research and policy analysis of the global action-research-policy network Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing (WIEGO).

The first section presents recent estimates of the size and significance of the informal economy. The data suggest that informal employment, rather than being the exception, is the dominant mode of work in the developing world. In the following section we summarize research on the urban informal economy since the term ‘informal sector’ was first coined in the early 1970s. The third section details policy trends for home-based workers, street vendors and waste pickers and illustrates inclusive approaches to urban housing and basic infrastructure services, urban planning and land allocation and municipal procurement systems. Although many city governments actively exclude or effectively neglect the informal economy, these cases suggest that an alternative – more inclusionary – approach is possible. This is followed by a review of the evidence on organizing and collective action among urban informal workers which argues that urban informal workers are increasingly becoming organized and better able to articulate their needs. We conclude by suggesting how statistics and research on the urban informal economy might be improved; identifying common features of inclusionary urban
planning, policies, and programmes; and underscoring the need for urban informal workers to be organized and have a collective voice.

The urban informal economy: size and composition

Over the past decade, important advances have been made in the availability of data on the informal economy. The International Labour Office (ILO), the International Expert Group on Informal Sector Statistics (called the Delhi Group), and the WIEGO network have worked closely together to develop and promote an expanded statistical definition that captures all aspects of the informal economy and those who work in it, including both informal self-employed and informal wage employed. This expanded definition of ‘informal employment’ was adopted by the 2002 International Labour Conference and the 2003 International Conference of Labour Statisticians. A growing number of countries are using this official statistical definition of informal employment in the collection and tabulation of national labour force data and the ILO-WIEGO database on informal employment now contains data for nearly 50 countries.1

In spite of the advancements made in defining and measuring informal employment, the possibility of using the available data for research on urban informal employment continues to be limited. The data now available internationally are often limited to informal non-agricultural employment and are not disaggregated for urban and rural areas. This is because additional methodological work is required to apply the definition of informal employment to agriculture and because countries define urban and rural areas in different ways which limits the availability of harmonized data across countries.

Non-agricultural informal employment

Analysis of the data compiled by the ILO and WIEGO suggests that informal employment represents a significant share of non-agricultural employment in developing regions: ranging from 45 per cent in the Middle East and North Africa2 to 51 per cent in Latin America to 65 per cent in East and Southeast Asia to 66 per cent in sub-Saharan Africa (excluding South Africa and other countries in Southern Africa with a relatively low prevalence of informal employment) to 82 per cent in South Asia (Vanek et al. 2013).

There is significant variation by country within the regions: from 31 per cent (Turkey) to 57 per cent (West Bank and Gaza) in the Middle East and North Africa; from 40 per cent (Uruguay) to 75 per cent (Bolivia) in Latin America; from 33 per cent (urban China) to 42 per cent (Thailand) to 73 per cent (Indonesia) in East and Southeast Asia; from 33 per cent (South Africa) to 82 per cent (Malaysia) in sub-Saharan Africa; from 62 per cent (Sri Lanka) to 83 per cent (India) in South Asia. In those countries and regions where agriculture still employs a large share of the workforce, the share of total informal employment in total employment is likely to be higher still (Vanek et al. 2013). In some countries in South Asia and Africa which measure informal employment in agriculture, informal employment represents 90 per cent or more of total employment: notably, Ghana and India (ILO 2002).

Non-agricultural informal employment is about equally split between wage employment and self-employment in urban China, Latin America and the Caribbean, East and Southeast Asia, and South Asia; but dominated by self-employment in sub-Saharan Africa (Vanek et al. 2013).

In many regions and in urban China informal employment is a more important source of employment for women than for men. In sub-Saharan Africa 74 per cent of women’s employment (non-agricultural) is informal in contrast to 61 per cent of men’s; in Latin America and the Caribbean,3 54 per cent in contrast to 48 per cent; in South Asia, 83 per cent in contrast to 82 per cent; and, in urban China, 36 per cent in contrast to 30 per cent. However in all regions men comprise a greater share of the informal workforce because women’s labour force participation rates are lower than men’s.
The urban informal economy

Urban informal employment

There are limited data on urban informal employment, either as a share of total urban employment in a country or as a share of total employment in specific cities.

Share of total urban employment in India

As noted above, countries define urban and rural areas in different ways which limits the availability of harmonized data across countries. Moreover, even within countries, few analyses of national labour force data disaggregate urban and rural employment and fewer still further disaggregate urban or rural employment by formal and informal. One exception is a recent analysis of three rounds of national labour force surveys in India: 1999/2000, 2004/5, and 2009/10 (Chen and Raveendran 2012). In 2009–2010, around 80 per cent of all urban workers in India (79 per cent of men and 81 per cent of women) were informally employed. Among the urban self-employed, 74 per cent were own account workers (who do not hire others), 21 per cent were unpaid contributing family workers, and only 5 per cent were employers. Of the urban wage employed, one-third (33 per cent) was formally employed and two thirds (67 per cent) were informally employed (ibid.).

Share of total urban employment in eleven cities

Statistical compilations for specific cities are not readily available and tend to be prepared only on special request. This is because the sample size at the city level is too small in many labour force surveys, requiring special effort to link labour force data with census data to prepare appropriate sampling weights. The French research institute DIAL, in partnership with national statistical offices, recently undertook a special survey in eleven cities/ten countries that generated city level estimates (Herrera et al. 2012). Table 20.1 below summarises the DIAL findings.

In these cities, among non-agricultural workers, over seven in every ten working persons are working in the informal economy. As with the national level data on non-agricultural employment, these city-level data suggest that women are disproportionally employed in the urban informal economy.

Table 20.1 Informal employment as share of urban non-agricultural employment by sex: 11 cities/10 countries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Cities</th>
<th>Total</th>
<th>Women</th>
<th>Men</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Antananarivo (Madagascar)</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>67.1</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niamey (Niger)</td>
<td>76.2</td>
<td>83.4</td>
<td>71.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Abidjan (Ivory Coast)</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>89.7</td>
<td>69.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dakar (Senegal)</td>
<td>79.8</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>73.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ouagadougou (Burkino Faso)</td>
<td>80.2</td>
<td>86.9</td>
<td>75.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cotonou (Benin)</td>
<td>81.2</td>
<td>89.3</td>
<td>72.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bamako (Mali)</td>
<td>82.1</td>
<td>91.1</td>
<td>74.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lomé (Togo)</td>
<td>83.1</td>
<td>90.3</td>
<td>75.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lima (Peru)</td>
<td>58.5</td>
<td>63.9</td>
<td>53.8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hanoi (Vietnam)</td>
<td>46.2</td>
<td>48.3</td>
<td>44.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ho Chi Minh City (Vietnam)</td>
<td>53.4</td>
<td>55.1</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average (unweighted)</strong></td>
<td>71.2</td>
<td>77.6</td>
<td>65.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: Adapted from Herrera et al. 2012: Table A.1*
Specific groups of urban informal workers

Only one group of workers who are largely informal — domestic workers — is routinely identified in official national statistics and this group is often under-enumerated and misclassified. The WIEGO network is actively working with the ILO and national statisticians to improve the identification of specific groups of informal workers in official statistics. As a result, a better picture has emerged of the significant number of women and men in four urban occupations which are largely informal: domestic workers, home-based workers, street vendors, and waste pickers (see Figure 20.1).

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**Domestic work is an important occupation, involving a sizeable proportion of the urban workforce.**
- **urban employment**
  - Africa: 3 to 9% in 7 West African cities and 1 East African city
  - India: 4 %
  - Latin America: 6% in Lima, 8% in Buenos Aires, and 5.5%, on average, for the region as a whole
- **urban informal employment**
  - South Africa: 23%
  - Brazil: 9%
  - India: 5%
  - Buenos Aires: 16%
- **urban employees/wage workers**
  - Buenos Aires: 10%

**Home-based work, which cuts across different branches of industry, is an important category, representing a significant share of urban employment in some countries**
- **urban employment**
  - India: 18%
  - Buenos Aires: 3%
  - South Africa: 6%
- **urban informal employment**
  - Africa: 11–25% in 8 cities, 21% in Ghana
  - India: 23%
  - Latin America: 3% in Lima, 5% in Buenos Aires

**Street vendors constitute an important share of urban employment in Africa, including South Africa, but less so in Latin America, India, and Vietnam**
- **urban employment**
  - India: 11%
  - Latin America: 3% in Brazil, 1% in Buenos Aires
  - South Africa: 15%
- **urban informal employment**
  - Africa: 12–24% in 8 African cities, 14% in Ghana
  - India: 14%
  - Vietnam: 11% each in Hanoi and Ho Chi Minh City
  - Latin America: 2 % in Buenos Aires, 9 % in Lima
- **urban self-employed**
  - Buenos Aires: 4%

**Where waste pickers were identified, they represented less than one per cent of the urban workforce.**
- **urban employment**
  - Africa: 0.1–0.4% in 7 West African cities
  - South Africa: 0.7% (both formal and informal waste pickers)
  - India: 0.1%
- **urban informal employment**
  - India: 0.1%
  - Latin America: 0.6% in Lima, 0.5% in Brazil

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Figure 20.1  First-ever data on specific groups of urban informal workers
Source: Vanek et al. 2013
The urban informal economy

In India in 2009–2010, these four groups combined — domestic workers, home-based workers, street vendors and waste pickers — represented 33 per cent of total urban employment (35 per cent of male and 24 per cent of female urban workers) and 41 per cent of urban informal employment (44 per cent of male and 29 per cent of female urban informal workers). Virtually all workers in each of these groups are informally employed.

In sum, although there are significant differences between countries and regions, these estimates show that, rather than being the exception, informal employment is in fact the norm in most developing cities. Further, although the informal economy is associated with low productivity and low incomes, it nonetheless contributes to the economy. The informal economy produces high-end goods and services used in the formal economy as well as low-cost goods and services consumed by the poor and middle class. At the household level, informal activities are often what sustain families living in poorer parts of cities and towns. This suggests that urban informal work plays a role in both alleviating poverty and growing local economies.

Recent estimates indicate that the output share of informal enterprises (excluding agriculture) in non-agricultural gross value added (GVA) is significant: ranging from one-half of non-agricultural GVA in countries in west Africa to 46 per cent in India to 29 per cent in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA) region, and 25 per cent in the Latin America region (Vanek et al. 2013). But these estimates do not include the contribution of the informal workforce outside informal enterprises. To precisely measure the contribution of the total informal economy will require better estimates of the contribution of informal enterprises as well as estimates of the contribution of informal workers outside informal enterprises: in formal firms, in global value chains, for households (i.e. domestic workers), in agriculture, and in secondary activities.

Mexico is the only country that has estimated the contribution of the total informal economy, inside and outside informal enterprises. In Mexico, the total informal economy contributes just over 30 per cent of total GVA. The contribution of informal employment outside informal enterprises (17 per cent) is greater than the contribution of informal enterprises (13 per cent) (special tabulations by the National Statistical Institute of Mexico cited in Vanek et al. 2013). These estimates underscore the significant contribution which the informal economy makes to the economy of Mexico and the need to measure the contribution of both informal enterprises and of informal workers hired by formal firms and households.

Given its sheer size, and its significant contributions, more attention needs to be paid to the urban informal economy in local economic development and among urban scholars, planners, and policy makers. In what follows, to give a sense of both what is possible and what is needed, we summarize recent developments in research on, policy responses to, and organizing in the urban informal economy.

Urban studies and the informal economy

The urban informal economy has been a field of enquiry for some time. Keith Hart (1973), through his detailed analysis of the subsistence activities of the urban poor in Ghana, not only coined the term ‘informal sector’ but also countered the commonly held view that these ‘traditional’ activities would disappear by being absorbed into the modern capitalist economy with industrialization. He argued that informal activities possessed some autonomous capacity for generating growth in the incomes of the urban poor. Hart’s pioneering study sparked greater research and policy attention on the topic.

In retrospect, the literature of the 1970s and 1980s on the informal economy has been categorized into two broad traditions (see Moser 1994; Rakowski 1994 for reviews). On the left of the spectrum is the structuralist position, from which informality is seen as a crisis of capitalist development, demonstrating the inability of capitalism to absorb the mass of unemployed, with research often detailing the exploitative relationship between the formal and informal economies (Moser 1978 and
Castells and Portes 1989 exemplify this position). On the right, the neoliberal position adopts a celebratory view of informality, seeing it as a process of deregulation ‘from below’. From this perspective, the relationship between formal and informal economies is either not considered or assumed to be benign (De Soto 1989 exemplifies this position). The themes raised in this earlier period − the role of the state in producing informality and/or helping or hindering livelihoods (and the related issues of over-regulation versus under-regulation) and the relationship between the formal and informal economies − persist in contemporary literatures.

In the last two decades, urban theorists and observers have paid much more attention to processes of informalization as closely associated with rapid urbanization. Again there is a central tension. Davis (2006: 186) for example describes the informal sector as a ‘living museum of human exploitation’ while other urban observers hold a more positive view which sees, as Beall et al.’s (2010: 2) overview of African urban scholarship states, ‘order and efficiency in what to the untrained eye seems to be random and out of control’. This perspective, Beall et al. elaborate, ‘pays attention to the resilience and intrepid agency of Africa’s town and city dwellers as they seek to create for themselves meaningful identities, lives and livelihoods in the interstices of fast-changing and intersecting urban worlds’.

No matter what view is held, the policy trends are clear. As is outlined in greater detail in the next section, city governments approach the informal economy with a mix of regulation, relocation, and in many contexts outright repression. There is a plethora of literature outlining these trends − see among others Bromley (2000) and more recently Bhownik’s (2010) global overview of public policy responses to street vending, Scheinberg (2012) and Samson’s (2010) review of the extent to which waste pickers are excluded from municipal waste management schemes and Sudarshan and Sinha’s (2011) overview of inadequate policy responses to home-based work.

What is behind these exclusionary policy trends? Three prominent debates shed light on this. The first debate is on the role of powerful interests of private sector players − property developers, retailers, and garbage removal and incinerator companies among others − whose interests are served by exclusionary practices (see for example Harvey 2012 for a broader overview). The second debate is about the ‘World Class Cities’ discourse. As Robinson (2002) points out, city officials and bureaucrats remain pre-occupied with competing for domestic and foreign investment and ‘world class city’ status. Informal activities are seen as undesirable, as obstacles to achieving ‘world class-ness’ or ‘modernity’, and their contributions to local economies go largely unrecognized. As Robinson (2002: 251) argues, the notion of the ‘world class city’ is a narrow policy goal that imposes ‘substantial limitations on imagining or planning the futures of cities’. The third debate focuses inwardly on the planning discipline (see Roy 2005 and Watson 2009a, 2009b for an overview). Roy, for example, (2009: 10) argues that urban planning inscribes the informal by designating some activities as ‘authorized’ and others as ‘unauthorized’. She argues ‘planning itself is implicated in the very production of (the urban) crisis’. Kamete (2012) argues that informal livelihoods are seen by the discipline as ‘spatial pathologies’ that urban planning systems are mobilized ‘to correct or eliminate’.

These literatures suggest that a multi-pronged approach is needed − one that is mindful of the political economies of exclusion, that proposes an alternative vision of cities of the south but also helps us to find ways to ‘work with informality, supporting survival efforts of the urban poor rather than hindering them’ (Watson 2009b: 2268). A key element of this is to identify and analyse cases where informal workers have been included in urban plans. It is this gap that the next section aims to fill.

**Inclusive practices for specific worker groups**

Home-based producers, street vendors, and waste pickers are all age-old occupations in which large numbers of urban workers around the world are still employed, especially in developing countries. Few have secure work; most have low and erratic earnings and few are protected against loss of work and
income. Most operate outside the reach of government regulations and protection; yet many are harassed or repressed by the police or other local authorities and excluded from economic opportunities. In this section, we provide promising examples of inclusionary urban plans and policies for these three worker groups.

**Basic infrastructure services for home-based workers**

Home-based work cuts across different branches of economic activity and represents a significant share of urban employment in some countries: from 3 per cent in Buenos Aires to 6 per cent in urban South Africa to 18 per cent in urban India. The vast majority (70 per cent or more) of home-based workers are women, except in South Africa where women represent less than one quarter of home-based workers.6 The majority of home-based workers are informally employed: 60 per cent in Buenos Aires and 75 per cent in urban South Africa (Vanek et al. 2013).

Delivery of basic services — shelter, water, sanitation and electricity — is critical for most informal workers but particularly so for home-based workers whose home is their workplace. UN-Habitat statistics suggest that there has been progress in basic service delivery with an estimated 227 million people having been provided basic services between 2000 and 2010. At the same time, however, absolute numbers of slum dwellers have increased (UN-Habitat 2008: x). UN-Habitat estimates that 862.6 million or 32.7 per cent of the urban population in developing regions are still, as of 2012, living in slum conditions (UN-Habitat 2012a: 157). Even for the fortunate minority who receive basic infrastructure, too frequently insufficient attention is paid to how the location, mode of delivery and design of new housing projects impacts on livelihoods. Another worrisome trend is the intensification of forced evictions driven by, among other factors, large-scale urban renewal projects, the hosting of mega-events, and the recent global recession (see UN-Habitat’s 2012b compilation of existing evidence).

When slum communities are evicted or relocated, home-based producers in those communities temporarily lose both their home and their workplace. They are often relocated to housing with fewer basic services and to locations at a greater distance from markets for raw materials and finished goods or from the contractors who sub-contract work to them. Before her slum community was relocated, a home-based garment worker in Ahmedabad, India, lived within walking distance from the contractor who sub-contracts work to her. Now she spends over 40 per cent of her meagre daily earnings on transport to take raw materials from and return finished goods to the contractor (Davidson 2012).7

In many countries in South and Southeast Asia — including India, Laos, Nepal, Pakistan and the Philippines — organizations of home-based workers have negotiated housing and basic infrastructure services (water, sewage, lighting) for their members. Most notably, in several cities of India through its Mahila (Women’s) Housing Trust, the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) has negotiated public-private partnerships for slum upgrading and otherwise provided basic infrastructure services (water, sanitation, electricity and roads) to large numbers of home-based workers and other informal workers (see Rusling 2010). In one such partnership in Ahmedabad City, the municipal corporation partnered with SEWA and community organizations in managing solid waste collection and in maintaining and repairing infrastructure. As part of the agreement, the Ahmedabad Municipal Corporation promised not to evict residents of the participating slums for ten years (Rusling 2010).

**Urban planning and land allocation for street vendors**

Street trade is a consistent feature of urban retail systems in cities worldwide. Street vendors offer a wide range of goods and services in convenient and accessible locations, and contribute an essential service to the poor by offering low-cost goods in small quantities. The share of street vending in total non-agricultural employment typically ranges from 2 to 9 per cent; in South Africa, this share is 15 per
cent (Wills 2009) while in other African countries, it is as high as 20 per cent (ILO 2002; Herrera et al. 2012). In India, street vendors constituted 14 per cent of total urban informal employment in 2009/10 (Chen and Raveendran 2012). Women represent the majority of street vendors in many countries, especially in Africa (63 per cent in Kenya, 70 per cent in South Africa and 88 per cent in Ghana), and on average earn less than men (ILO 2002; Herrera et al. 2012; Wills 2009). Everywhere, the vast majority of street vendors are informal: from 72 per cent in South Africa (Wills 2009) to 94 per cent in Buenos Aires (Esquivel 2010).

An online analysis over a year of the news coverage of street vending issues found that, on average, there is one case of a violent eviction of street traders somewhere in the world every day (http://wiego.org/news-events). For example in September 2011, more than 7,000 street vendors were forcibly evicted from the streets of Kampala in Uganda with bulldozers razing their stalls. In Nigeria, state governments have authorized their own specialized law enforcement units (such as the Lagos State ‘Kick Against Indiscipline’ squad and the Abuja Environmental Protection Board) to carry out violent evictions of street traders.

More common than these large-scale evictions, however, are various types of low-level harassment of street traders that stems in part from uncertain policy and legal environments. This type of everyday harassment typically requires vendors who do not have licences or permits to pay bribes to local authorities and subjects them to confiscation of merchandise. But many cities have not issued licences to street vendors in recent years. Also, where licences are issued (as is the case in a number of cities in Asia) the number of vendors considerably exceeds the number of licences (see Bhowmik’s 2005 review of evidence from ten Asian cities and Itikawa’s 2010 study of São Paulo, Brazil in which she finds the number of legal trading posts covers only 10–20 per cent of all the workers occupying public spaces). In many countries there is a hostile legislative environment. There is a recent trend on the African continent, for example, for not only banning street vending but also treating purchasing from street vendors as a criminal offence (e.g. in Malawi, Nigeria and Zambia). In China questions have been raised about the on-going harassment of street vendors by urban management officers called chengguan (See for example Human Rights Watch 2012). There are however also encouraging trends particularly in India and South Africa of street vendors negotiating with cities to find solutions for inclusive and effective management of street trade.

India is one of very few countries to have developed a national policy on street vending. Adopted in 2004, the objective of the National Policy on Urban Street Vendors (Government of India 2004) is to promote a supportive environment for street vendors to earn their livelihoods, while reducing congestion and maintaining sanitary conditions in public spaces. Sinha and Roever (2011) outline the role played by the National Association of Street Vendors of India (NASVI) and SEWA in securing this policy. They also show that, although there are challenges with implementation, the policy has played an important role in advocating for street vendors’ rights in numerous Indian cities. In September 2012, again thanks to the advocacy of NASVI, SEWA and other organizations, a draft street vending law, the Protection of Livelihood and Regulation of Street Vending Bill, 2012, was presented to the Parliament of India. The law holds the potential of giving the national policy legal standing and could impact positively on the estimated 10 million street vendors operating in India (see Chen et al. 2012 for further details). The proposed Bill is currently under review by the Parliament of India.

Building on the recommendations of the national policy, the city of Bhubaneshwar in India developed a public, private and community partnership model for street vending after years of conflict between street traders and local authorities. This has entailed dedicated and legally sanctioned vending zones in public space, as well as attractive fixed kiosks, partially funded by formal businesses. There was an inclusive planning process, from joint planning of the conceptual model to the realization of 54 vending zones (see Kumar 2012 for further details).
In Durban, South Africa, street vendor organizations in the Warwick Junction area, a market of some 7,000 vendors near a major transport node, worked over ten years with the city council on inclusive street vendor management. Vendors were organized in street committees, and by product group. With a sympathetic city government, vendors were able to have a significant input into the urban planning process, resulting in innovative space design and management. Major interventions included partial closure and covering of a city centre street, the construction of new pedestrian footbridges linking the train, taxi and bus termini to the city centre that were wide enough to accommodate vending, the provision of storage, and vending kiosks with water and electricity. A dedicated traditional medicine market was built and tailor-made facilities provided for those selling bead work and clay. This was combined with trade support strategies (see Dobson and Skinner 2009 for further details).

**Municipal solid waste management and waste pickers**

Millions of people worldwide – a large number of them women – make a living collecting, sorting, recycling and selling valuable materials that someone else has thrown away. Waste pickers constitute about 1 per cent of urban employment in many countries (Vanek et al. 2013). They contribute to public health and lower the costs of solid waste management borne by municipalities (UN-Habitat 2010; Scheinberg 2012). Further, recycling is one of the cheapest, fastest ways to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and use fewer virgin resources (Tellus Institute 2008).

Despite progress made in highlighting the contribution of waste pickers to recycling and climate change mitigation, waste pickers in many contexts work in deplorable conditions, receiving little or no support from local authorities and facing continual threats. Waste pickers are often subject to arbitrary pricing by middlemen and to harassment on the streets. Further, there is a global trend of privatizing the collection, transport and disposal of waste and recyclables. At a meeting of waste pickers from 34 countries held in Pune, India in April 2012, privatization (usually leading to waste-to-energy schemes) was highlighted as the greatest threat to livelihoods. There are however also encouraging trends particularly in Latin America and India of waste collectors forming themselves into cooperatives. This places them in a stronger position to secure better prices from middlemen, negotiate with local authorities for access to waste and appropriate facilities but also defend their rights.

Peru and Brazil have both passed progressive national laws that support the formalization of waste picking and encourage cooperatives. In Peru, Law 29.419, which regulates the activity of waste pickers, was passed in 2010. This law, which was developed through a participatory process involving representatives of the waste pickers’ movements, encourages formalization via incentives to waste pickers’ cooperatives (reduction of taxes; capacity building programmes) and promotes integration of cooperatives into municipal recycling schemes. Brazil has a whole set of laws at the local, federal and national levels that mandate the inclusion of waste picker cooperatives/associations in solid waste management (see Dias 2011a for further details). For example, a 2006 presidential decree commits state institutions to segregation of waste at source and donation of the waste to waste picker cooperatives and/or associations; and 2007 national guidelines for basic sanitation include a provision that gives preference to hiring waste picker associations or cooperatives.

Belo Horizonte, Brazil and Pune, India offer examples of successful integration of waste pickers into municipal waste management schemes. In both cases strong co-operatives of waste pickers have tirelessly negotiated access to waste materials, the establishment of facilities to sort and process waste, and better prices for the waste their members collected.

The Asmare Association of waste pickers was established in 1990. By 1993 they signed an accord with the Belo Horizonte Council which secured their role as the City’s preferred partner for source segregation programmes. The Municipality’s waste management department agreed to provide
recycling containers, warehouses to sort and trucks to collect materials while Asmare agreed to run the
warehouses. Asmare members sort and sell materials collectively in order to obtain a higher price, but
each waste picker is remunerated individually based on what she or he has collected. In 2000, legislation
was adopted that institutionalized the relationship between Asmare and the council. The programme
has now been extended to include door-to-door collection in some parts of the city and waste pickers
are currently negotiating with the Council so they are directly reimbursed by the council for services
they provide (for a full account of this case see Dias 2011a and 2011b).

From the early 1990s self-employed waste pickers in Pune, India organized themselves into a union −
the Kagad Kach Patra Kashtakari Panchayat (KKPKP) − and started to offer waste collection services
to residents. Waste pickers collect waste, retrieve and sell the recyclable materials and deposit the
remaining waste in municipal containers or compost pits. The waste pickers are contracted by residents.
After some time, the Pune Municipal Commissioner authorized the KKPKP to provide these services
and gave them equipment and space. In 2007, KKPKP established a worker cooperative, SWaCH,
which signed a more formal memorandum of understanding with the Pune Municipal Corporation.
The programme started in two municipal wards and by 2012 it had spread to 80 of a total of 143 wards
(Chikarmane 2012: 8). It is estimated that through this system 90 tonnes of recyclables are collected and
reclaimed each day (Chikarmane 2012: 8).

An association of waste pickers in Bogotá, Colombia − the Asociación de Recicladores de Bogotá
(ARB) − has filed numerous legal cases to preserve their occupation in response to the city government’s

\[\text{Figure 20.2 Waste picker pulling cart, Belo Horizonte, Brazil} \]
\[\text{Photo: Demetria Tsoutouras}\]
The urban informal economy

attempts to privatize solid waste management. ARB achieved a landmark victory in 2003 when the Constitutional Court ruled that the municipal government’s tendering process for sanitation services had violated the basic rights of the waste-picking community. Subsequent cases have appealed to constitutional provisions, to argue that cooperatives of waste pickers — and not only corporations — can compete in waste recycling markets. A December 2011 ruling halted a scheme to award USD1.7 billion worth of contracts over eight years to private companies. The court mandated that the cooperatives of waste pickers had a right to compete for the city tenders. In March 2012, the ARB submitted its bid to the City (see Chen et al. 2012 for full details). It took the municipal government a year to review the bid, reconcile differences of opinion within the government, placate vested interests, and come up with a policy for integrating waste pickers into solid waste management in Bogotá City. In March 2013, the waste pickers began to be paid by the City for collecting and transporting waste.

What are the core common lessons from these examples of inclusive urban planning and practices? One is that there are powerful vested interests — property developers, large retailers, private waste management companies — competing for urban land, urban services, urban customers and city contracts. Another is that informal workers need to be organized in order to compete with these vested interests and to demand from the city their fair share of urban land, urban services and city contracts; and representatives of these informal worker organizations need to be integrally involved in urban planning processes.

Urban informal workers: organization and collective voice

There has been a recent surge of interest in the politics of those working informally and a move away from the assumption that informal workers lack agency (see Lindell’s 2010 edited volume among others). Bayat’s work in Iran (1993, 1997, 2000) and the Middle East and North African region (Bayat 2000) is important in this regard. He argues that the emerging politics of informal actors is quite distinctive, suggesting that it constitutes a ‘quiet encroachment of the ordinary’. He depicts these novel forms of political engagement as ‘a silent, patient, protracted, and pervasive advancement of ordinary people on the propertied and powerful in order to survive hardships and better their lives’ (1997: 57). Bayat argues that these actions are marked by ‘quiet, atomised and prolonged mobilization with episodic collective action’ (ibid).

However, there are examples from around the world of less atomized mobilization and more sustained forms of collective action. Recent organizing of informal workers in developing countries dates back to the founding of a multi-sector trade union of women informal workers (SEWA) in India in 1972. With over 1.3 million members in ten states of India, SEWA is not only the largest trade union of informal workers in the world but also the largest union in India. It also has developed one of the most innovative forms of organizing. SEWA pursues a dual but integrated strategy of what it calls Struggle and Development: that is, union-style collective bargaining and campaigns to raise awareness, air grievances, and demand change; and development interventions to promote alternative economic opportunities and build assets. To promote this joint strategy, SEWA engages in organization, capacity building, asset building and empowerment through a sisterhood of institutions, including: the trade union to which all the members belong; a cooperative bank, an insurance cooperative, and 100 or so producer and services cooperatives; production and marketing enterprises that help cooperatives of associations of women producers reach local, domestic, or international markets; a housing trust that provides health, child care and insurance services; and an academy that provides research, training and communication services (see www.sewa.org, Rose 1992, Bhatt 2006, and Chen 2008).
During the 1980s and 1990s, a significant number of organizations of informal workers were formed, including: local and national cooperatives or associations of waste pickers in Argentina, Brazil, Colombia, Ecuador, and India; national associations of home-based workers in Bangladesh, Philippines and Thailand; national associations of street vendors in many countries; a regional alliance of home-based workers in Southeast Asia; and a regional confederation of domestic workers in Latin America and the Caribbean.

Since 2000, there has been a steady increase in the numbers and geographic scope of organizations of informal workers, including: the formation of national associations of waste pickers in several Latin American countries (Bolivia, Brazil, Chile, Ecuador, Nicaragua, Peru, Uruguay and Venezuela); a Latin American regional alliance of waste pickers; a national association of waste pickers in South Africa; a regional network of home-based workers in South Asia; and a global alliance of waste pickers. Founded in 2002, StreetNet International is a membership-controlled federation representing over 500,000 street vendors, informal market vendors and hawkers in 48 affiliated organizations in 40 countries in Africa, Asia, the Americas and Europe. Increasingly unions in the south are organizing and/or supporting the organization of informal workers: for example, the Ghana Trades Union Congress provides support to organizations of street vendors, head loaders and other groups of informal workers in Ghana (see Bonner and Spooner 2011 for more details on these organizing efforts).

Lindell’s (2010) recent edited volume on collective agency, alliances and transnational organizing in Africa collates existing material but also adds significant new empirical insights to the issue of informal worker organization. The volume highlights the emergence of new organizations on the continent, and confirms the formation of institutional alliances between formal and informal worker groups. The
The urban informal economy

Precise dynamics of these processes differ from place to place and in terms of their scalar characteristics. National alliances of informal workers have arisen in countries such as Kenya (Mitullah 2010), Tanzania and Zambia; as have a few regional organizations like the Zambian association of cross-border traders (Nchito and Transberg Hansen 2010).

Some organizations appear to wield significant political power (e.g., the organizations of women market traders in Cotonou, Benin, and the Zambian association of cross-border traders); others less so (see, for example, Brown and Lyons’s 2010 study of the impact of trader associations in Accra, Dakar, and Dar es Salaam). What this empirical work does show, however, is that although Bayat’s ‘quiet encroachment of the ordinary’ might well be one form of mobilization among informal workers, increasingly there appear to be other organizational strategies that include, as illustrated in the third section of this chapter, collective negotiations for inclusive urban planning, basic infrastructure services, and municipal contracts.

Conclusion

Given its sheer size, and its significant contributions, more attention needs to be paid to the urban informal economy in local economic development and among urban scholars, practitioners and policy makers. Further, given that most of the urban poor are working and most of the urban working poor, especially women, are engaged in the informal economy, more attention needs to be paid to urban informal livelihoods in efforts to reduce urban poverty. In this chapter, we have presented promising examples of recent progress made on measuring and understanding the urban informal economy, in promoting more inclusive urban plans and policies in support of the urban informal workforce, and in organizing and exercising collective voice amongst urban workforce. We conclude with some reflections on what still needs to be done to ensure that the urban informal workforce, especially the working poor engaged in it, receives the attention that it deserves in urban studies, practice, and policy circles.

Future urban statistics and research

Improved statistics on urban informal employment are important, as data have power. Policy makers like data more than other kinds of information. What the data presented in the first section show is not only that informal employment continues to be an important part of the urban labour force but also that improvements in data collection are possible. What, then, is needed going forward? First, it is important that informed users of urban statistics encourage national statistical services and the international statistical community to further develop statistical concepts and methods to better measure the urban informal economy and to identify separately all categories of urban informal workers. Second, it is also important that informed users of official statistics make the data and related data analyses readily accessible to researchers, policy makers and advocates in user-friendly formats, as we have done in this paper. Further detailed documentation is needed of cases where informal workers have been included into urban plans, with particular attention being paid to how private sector interests have been confronted, and the implications of these cases for activists and the practices of urban professionals (with a particular focus on planners, architects, urban designers and engineers).

Future urban planning and policies

As summarized above, inclusive planning and policy approaches to the urban informal economy are possible, even if difficult. What are the core elements of inclusive urban planning processes and practices?
• Recognition of where informal workers fit in — and how they contribute to — the urban economy and into specific value chains or sectors
• Recognition that the common policy stance towards the informal economy should combine regulation, protection, and promotion, rather than regulation, relocation, and repression
• Recognition that many existing laws, regulations, and rules serve to exclude, rather than include, the informal economy and need to be reformed to match the reality of informal work
• Recognition that informal workers need to be organized and that their representatives need to be integrally involved in urban planning and legal reform processes
• Recognition that inclusive planning is planning with rather than for informal workers.

This is not a case of finding technical solutions but rather, as Kamete (2012: 9–10) argues, a process where ‘the governors and the governed actively engage in negotiating workable, equitable and inclusive responses to informality’. She goes on:

This is not a specialist, scientific function restricted to the usual suspects: planning experts and the bureaucratic kindred mandated to develop new standards of normality. Rather it should be open to all, including those working in the informal economy, the goal being crafting of comprehensive and inclusive strategies that are applicable to the local context and are socially just.

(Kamete 2012: 9–10)

Finally, there is a need to recognize that inclusive planning will require a fundamental change in mindsets. As Ela Bhatt, founder of the Self-Employed Women’s Association (SEWA) puts it (in conversation with Martha Chen):

The challenge is to convince the policy makers to promote and encourage *hybrid economies* in which micro-businesses can co-exist alongside small, medium, and large businesses: in which the street vendors can co-exist alongside the kiosks, retail shops, and large malls. … Just as the policy makers encourage bio diversity, they should encourage economic diversity. Also, they should try to promote a *level playing field* in which all sizes of businesses and all categories of workers can compete on equal and fair terms.

**Future organization and collective voice of urban informal workers**

We have demonstrated that urban informal workers have begun to come together to demand better conditions. Their organizations have given collective voice to some of the world’s most impoverished informal workers, such as home-based workers, street vendors and waste pickers, and achieved important victories. The legal and policy victories in Ahmedabad, Belo Horizonte, Bhubaneswar, Bogotá, Durban and Pune would not have been put into place without the informed and sustained policy efforts of membership-based organizations of informal workers and their allies.

Despite these gains, many of the organizations of urban informal workers are still in their early stages. Thus, building and strengthening organizations of urban informal workers is both an end in itself — as informal workers achieve a sense of empowerment and are able to support each other — and a means to leveraging wider impact on the local, national and international stage. Organizing can begin to address the vulnerability, insecurity and dependence commonly experienced by the working poor in the urban informal economy whose lives are controlled by powerful economic and political forces.

But organizing alone is not enough to bring about needed changes. Workers need representative voice in those institutions and processes that set policies and the ‘rules of the [economic] game’. Ensuring
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a voice for informal workers in relevant urban planning, policy making and rule-setting processes requires supporting the growth of their organizations, and building capacity for leadership, policy advocacy and collective bargaining.

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Notes


2 Public sector employment as a share of total employment is still quite high, although decreasing, in the Middle East and North Africa region: as high as 20–25 per cent of total employment in some countries. When public sector employment is excluded, informal employment represents around 80 per cent of private sector employment (Ragui Assaad, personal communication).

3 No direct estimates of informal employment were available for the Caribbean countries; however indirect estimates were included for some of the countries of the sub-region.

4 Of the 47 countries whose data are in the annex tables, 32 identify domestic workers in their official statistics: all 16 countries from Latin America and the Caribbean, 8 (out of 12) from Africa, 5 (out of 7) from Asia, 2 (out of 6) from Eastern Europe and Central Asia, and 1 (out of 3) from the Middle East and North Africa. It is difficult to determine how many of these countries under-enumerate or misclassify domestic workers. In the case of India, the country table indicates that 2 per cent of informal non-agricultural workers are domestic workers but a further analysis of Indian data, detailed in this section, found that 4 per cent of all urban workers are domestic workers.

5 Both the data analysis and the report on Mexico were prepared by Rodrigo Negrete and Guadalupe Luna of the research unit with the support of Tomas Ramirez, Mario Moreno and Efrain Munoz from the Labour Force Unit of the Instituto Nacional de Estadistica, Geografia e Informatica (INEGI), Mexico.

6 This is in part because some sub-contracted taxi drivers and truck drivers (mostly men) report that they are home-based and many tradesmen work under sub-contracts from their home.


8 In 2009 the city announced its plans to build a mall in Warwick Junction threatening the livelihoods of vendors in the area. The proposal was met with stiff opposition from the traders and civil society. In part due to being challenged in court, the city abandoned these plans but has since then put far fewer resources into maintaining the area. (See Skinner 2009 for more details on the rationale behind and opposition to the city’s proposals.) The ten years of experience of inclusive planning however remain a useful reference point.

9 This section draws on recent documentation and analysis commissioned by the global network Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing, including: a database (the WORD database) of over 600 organizations, an analysis of that database by Shirley Miller (2012), an annotated bibliography of organizing in the informal economy by Antti Vainio (2012). All of these publications are available on the WIEGO website: www.wiego.org.
Introducction

When New York Times columnist Thomas Friedman published *The World is Flat*, arguing that the increasingly technologically connected world was leading to unprecedented opportunities for historically poor countries and undermining historical hierarchies of economic wealth and opportunity concentrated in the United States (US) and Europe, it sparked a heated debate (Friedman 2005). Critics argued that Friedman was exaggerating the changes underway and neglecting new processes that are restructuring global hierarchies but not reducing them (Christopherson et al. 2008), while others pointed out that work and employment are in fact increasingly concentrating in cities around the globe, not becoming more decentralized (Florida et al. 2008). But by 2013, Friedman was making the argument even more forcefully, saying that we’ve moved from a connected world to a hyper-connected world. A host of increasingly ubiquitous technological developments – Facebook, Twitter, 4G, iPhones, iPads, high speed broadband, ubiquitous wireless and Web-enabled cell phones, the cloud, Big Data, cellphone Apps – that didn’t exist when he wrote *The World is Flat*, he argued, had enabled a whole new ‘global education, commercial, communication, and innovation platform’ (note the flat analogy again!) that is empowering individuals across the globe in whole new ways (Friedman 2013). Yet does Friedman’s vision of a hyper-connected flat world economy accurately reflect the conditions in parts of the world where large portions of the population lack electricity or the basic necessities of life, much less iPhones, iPads or one of those ‘ubiquitous’ wireless and web-enabled cellphones?

This chapter argues that, though economic opportunities are in no meaningful way becoming actually ‘flat’ – in fact economic inequalities seem to be rapidly accelerating in most countries of the world and on a world-wide basis – the development and diffusion of digital technologies has enabled processes of economic restructuring that are already dramatically changing patterns of work and employment in cities of the global south. Labour processes that fundamentally utilize these new digital technologies in real time are leading moreover to new patterns of work and employment that include substantial new opportunities for cities of the global south. Rather than being dependent on markets and technology in the north, new job opportunities are emerging in cities of the global south that are rooted in complex networks, rather than clearly delineated hierarchies of the past (with all dominant centres of power and control rooted in cities of Europe and North America). New livelihoods are emerging, as people and firms in southern cities take advantage of substantial ‘long-tail’ opportunities.
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(by selling what may be small quantities of products but in a massive global market), find and develop new internal markets, take advantage of increasing south–south trade, and are even innovating new technologies and business models that are subsequently being diffused from the south to the north, the reverse of long-held patterns of urban diffusion.

It is important not to exaggerate the current status of these new jobs and employment conditions. While there are certainly growing examples of world-leading companies and highly skilled technology workers emerging in many cities of the global south, adoption of digital technologies remains incomplete in many traditional industries, and much of what has been adopted to date seems to be providing at best incremental improvements, rather than transformative opportunities (Murphy et al. forthcoming; Murphy 2013). But the trend towards more innovative and transformative work rooted in innovative uses of new digital technologies seems to be strengthening, and seems likely to accelerate in the future (Bilbao-Osario et al. 2013; Graham and Mann 2013; Lehdonvirta and Ernkvist 2011).

This chapter provides some windows into these processes through a selective examination of new patterns of technology-enabled work (hereafter referred to as eWork) in sub-Saharan Africa (SSA). While SSA remains the poorest region of the world, there are signs of substantial innovation and development in eWork in cities throughout the continent. If such new opportunities can happen in SSA, the evidence suggests that such trends are likely to be even more widespread in other cities of the global south, and that the new technology-enabled work opportunities deserve our attention. The chapter begins with a review of changing conceptions of global divisions of labour. It then traces an evolution in the new millennium of an increasing innovation in technology-enabled work on the African continent, focusing on four broad areas of development: outsourcing, ‘long-tail’ opportunities, innovations in internal markets and south–south trade, and examples of increasing innovation in Africa with diffusion to the global north. The key point is that the resulting processes are creating complex hierarchies built around city-based networks that, while not ‘flat’, are certainly challenging old notions of urban hierarchies.

From international division of labour to eWork

For much of the twentieth century, analysts of work in the global south across the political spectrum adopted theoretical frameworks that privileged developments in the north as driving change in the global south. Modernist perspectives envisioned that all countries would go through the same evolution as that experienced by most European countries, evolving from agriculture, first into simple and then subsequently more sophisticated manufacturing, and eventually to tertiary service sectors (Huntington 1965, 1971). In this perspective, the influence of countries in the north was seen as a benign or progressive force, facilitating development along this linear path. In contrast, dependency theorists analysed the exploitative dimensions of international relations, arguing the ways that the employment and economic structures of countries in the global south were oriented towards extracting resources and economic surplus for the benefit of northern countries, but still explained evolution of employment structures in the global south in terms of domination from the north (Frank 1966; Rodney 1972). Other theories that moved beyond these limited frameworks, including world systems theory (Hopkins and Wallerstein 1982; Wallerstein 1979, 2011), import substitution industrialization (Hirschman 1968; Puga and Venables 1999), the highly influential New International Division of Labor theory (Fröbel, Heinrichs and Kreye 1980), and theories about export-oriented development (Balassa 1978; Tyler 1981) all provided some more space for independent agency of countries and companies in the global south. Yet, they all had frameworks rooted in a perspective that the dominant and most powerful centres of economic power were established in northern countries, and that the development experience of such countries was critically important for understanding new development of work, employment, and broader economic change in the global south.
Signs that this familiar hierarchy was beginning to change began to emerge as early as the 1970s, when the economic power of oil exporting countries was revealed in the OPEC oil embargo (Rustow 1982) and accelerated in the late 1980s and 1990s, with the increasing integration of the former Soviet Union, China and India into the global economy, and the rapid diffusion throughout the globe of increasingly sophisticated digital technologies, particularly the internet (Castells 1996). Growth rates in the United States began to stagnate. China and India began to emerge as economic drivers on a global scale (Bardhan 2012), and large countries including Brazil, South Korea, Russia, and to a somewhat lesser extent South Africa, emerged as important economic players in their own right (Amsden 1992; Brainard and Martinez-Diaz 2009; Carmody 2012).

Perhaps more important than simple economic size have been the signs of world class productivity and technological sophistication emerging from countries in the global south. Workers in automobile factories in Mexico, Brazil and elsewhere were achieving higher rates of productivity than competitor plants in the north by the 1990s (Shaiken 1994). India and China began competing in highly skilled occupations and industries, not just in low-skill areas (Saran and Guo 2005; Saxenian 2005). South–south trade has accelerated, and China has now surpassed the USA and Europe as Africa’s largest trading partner (Carmody 2011).

Sub-Saharan Africa has by and large been invisible in global awareness of these economic changes. Indeed the majority of sub-Saharan Africa’s population lives in rural areas and depends on agriculture, much of it still subsistence agriculture. Exports of primary commodities still account for the largest proportion of foreign exchange in most countries (UNCTAD 2012). Africa remains the least urbanized continent in the world, with only an estimated 40 per cent living in urban areas (United Nations 2012). Africa also still has a relatively low penetration of ICTs overall, lagging behind the rest of the world in a number of many key ICT penetration and input and output metrics. In 2010, while Africa accounted for 14.8 per cent of total world population, it accounted for only 10 per cent of total mobile phone subscriptions, 1.2 per cent of all internet subscriptions, and only 0.6 per cent of aggregate total international bandwidth. ICT exports from Africa accounted for only 1.5 per cent in ICT services and 0.2 per cent in ICT goods, while ICT imports were only 1.2 per cent in both services and goods (Ewing et al. 2012).

These patterns of low ICT access in Africa, however, are shifting. Between 2001 and 2010, six out of the ten most rapidly growing economies in the world were African countries. And while much of this was driven by primary commodities, especially mineral and oil extraction, telecommunications expansion has also been rapid. By the early 2010s, Africa as a continent had the most rapidly growing expansion of cellphone use (Etzo and Collender 2010; Porter 2012). Total internet connectivity on the African continent expanded rapidly after 2009. Before 2009, the only major underwater fibre optic cable connecting Africa to the rest of the world was the SAT3/SAFE cable, which opened in 2001 and connected countries along the west and south coasts of Africa to Europe and India, but bypassed East Africa. As late as 2008, this remained the only major international connection for the continent, with a capacity of only 340 gigabits/second. But multiple cables have been launched since 2009, with TEAMs (capacity 1280 gigabits/second), Seacom (1280) and EASSy (4720) all providing important East African connections. With four additional cables in West Africa, and another four more high capacity fibres connecting various parts of the continent planned for completion by the end of 2014, Africa’s isolation from global internet circuits is rapidly decreasing, at least as measured by the international internet fibre optic connections, though terrestrial connections remain much less developed. Furthermore, expansion of access is highly uneven, and there is a wide range of levels of ICT diffusion and use in different African countries. One useful indicator of this is the International Telecommunication Union’s (ITU) ICT Development Index, which combines 11 indicators of ICT Access, ICT Use and ICT skills. Out of 155 countries ranked, the country with the highest ICT Development index in the world in 2011 was South Korea, with an index of 8.56. The United States ranked 15th with a score of 7.48. In contrast, African countries ranged from a high of 4.37 in the Seychelles (rank 70th) and 4.18 in...
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Mauritius (74th), to scores of 3.42 for South Africa (91st), 2.67 for Botswana (108th), and 2.32 for Kenya (114th), to lows of 0.97 in the Central African Republic (153rd), 0.94 in Chad (154th), and 0.88 in Niger (155th) (International Telecommunications Union 2012). There is also tremendous variation within countries in accessibility, with capital cities typically having much higher connectivity than small towns or rural areas. Thus, in the discussion of new forms of emerging eWork that follows, keep in mind that these new possibilities should be considered extreme cutting edge or ‘bleeding edge’ developments that point to shifting possibilities, but the scale of such developments remains small at the moment and the future uncertain.

Outsourcing in Africa

In February of 2000, executives from the Dallas-based firm Affiliated Computer Services (ACS) came to Ghana with the idea of establishing a new facility. ACS manages data for other large firms, primarily in the health care and financial services industries, and at that point already had non-US sites in Mexico, Guatemala and the Dominican Republic. Reviewing skills of the labour force, labour costs, infrastructure and telecommunications charges, they decided that opening a new facility in Accra was possible, and could be integrated effectively with their other non-US sites. They opened their Accra operations in 2001, with agents doing data entry, transferring information from scanned forms sent from the USA into a database. It was the first operation in Accra to provide such tele-mediated services to clients abroad, and it grew rapidly – reaching more than 1,000 employees within 12 months and more than 2000 in a couple of years, making it by some accounts the largest ICT services provider and second largest private sector employer in the country (Grant 2009). Moreover, wages were double what a typical office worker could typically get in Accra.3

For the government of Ghana, that initial experience of ACS represented a dramatic new potential for job creation opportunities in Africa. With new information technologies, and the growth of international outsourcing of various types, why wouldn’t a whole range of companies consider coming to Ghana? With such labour intensive industries, and the potential for such rapid growth, supporting the development of this type of tele-mediated work seemed a natural step and subsequently Ghana developed a broad-based strategy for promoting outsourced services, as part of a strategic ICT for development initiative (Dzidonu 2003; Hewitt Associates 2005).

Ghana, of course, was not alone in sensing this opportunity to capitalize on the Business Process Outsourcing (BPO) trend. Kenya, Botswana and Mauritius were among the Anglophone countries that developed major outsourcing policy initiatives in the 2000s, while Senegal joined Mauritius in appealing to the Francophone market. South Africa’s BPO industry was already well developed by the early 2000s, though the majority of it was serving a domestic South African market (Benner et al. 2007). The country adopted BPO as one of its strategic investment sectors in the mid-2000s as well. In all cases, the policies adopted to expand this industry included a combination of investment in broadband infrastructure (and in some cases electricity and building infrastructure or the creation of entire business parks), expanded ICT workforce training, deregulation of telecommunications and related sectors, and targeted subsidies to outsourcing firms.

Many policy proclamations predicted dramatic employment growth in these sectors. In Ghana, for example, the eGhana project estimated in 2005 that they would increase ICT-based jobs from the existing 2,000 jobs to as many as 40,000 over five years, and increase export-led revenues generated by the ICT industry by about USD750 million (Hewitt Associates 2005). Botswana’s National ICT Framework, initially developed in 2004, envisioned creating 15,000–17,000 new jobs in BPO and related international financial services industries (from a base of about 500), in the process doubling their overall ICT sector (Government of Botswana 2004). Mauritius’ cyber-island initiative hoped to create 20,000 jobs and generate USD1 billion in revenue by 2008 (Knowledge@Wharton 2003). And

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indeed, these initiatives did have some success. By 2007, Mauritius had attracted BPO operations for such large prominent firms as Accenture and Agence Presse Ltd, and a 1,000-person US-based call centre outsourcer providing customer service for prominent firms Orbitz and CheapTickets.com. South Africa had developed a 2,000-person call centre serving AOL clients in the USA, and in Ghana, a domestic company called Rising Data Solutions established in 2001 had expanded to have over 400 employees and seven distinct overseas contracts.

In most countries, however, the actual employment growth was substantially less than originally hoped for and early signs of success failed to accelerate. Mauritius was perhaps the most successful, experiencing steady growth, but total employment in 2013 in ICT and BPO operations was estimated at 15,000, significantly less than the 20,000 target of six years previously, and the sector contributed 6.5 per cent of GDP, or about USD750 million, rather than the target of USD1 billion. Ghana’s high-profile Rising Data Solutions company folded by 2010. Even in South Africa, much of the growth in its call centre sector has been serving domestic clients, as customer service and sales jobs through tele-mediated interaction replaces in-person jobs in industries such as travel, and the high-profile AOL call centre closed after the company failed to renew the three-year contract.

Why weren’t African countries more successful in attracting substantially more of this ICT-enabled outsourcing work? One reason is simply that the wage rates in this sector, while significantly below wages in the countries in the global north where this work originated, were surprisingly substantially above wages in India, the largest destination for BPO work. Table 21.1 provides some basis for comparison, showing average wages in call centres in India, South Africa, the United Kingdom and the United States.
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<tr>
<td><strong>Typical eWork Salary, Local Currency or US$</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Low-end</td>
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| **Typical eWork Salary Equivalents** | |
| US$, Market Rate 2007 | |
| $2,857 | 7,619 | 4,371 | 2,498 | 3,543 | 9,524 |

| US$, PPP 2005 | |
| $7,438 | 19,835 | 11,287 | 6,450 | 7,602 | 20,436 |

| % of GNI per capita | |
| 51% | 137% | 857% | 490% | 65% | 175% |

| % of Average Annual Salary, Manufacturing | |
| 114% | 304% | 113% | 305% | 542% | 87% |

| Calculation Factors | |
| Market Exchange Rate 2007 | 6.3 | 6.3 | 9,608 | 31.5 |
| Market Exchange Rate $2005 | 5.1 | 5.1 | 9,073 | 28.94 |
| PPP conversion factor $2005 | 2.42 | 2.42 | 3,721 | 14.68 |
| GNI Per Capita | 5,570 | 5,570 | 510 | 5,430 |

| Average Annual Salary, Manufacturing | 15,768 | 15,768 | 98,496 | 459 |

Notes:
* Figures for Botswana (Pula), Ghana (Cedi) and Mauritius (Rupee) are based on interviews conducted by the author. Figures for India, South Africa, UK and the US come from the Global Call Centre Survey (www.globalcallcenter.org) and were converted to US dollars by the authors of that report (Holman et al. 2007).
† 2007 Market Exchange Rates are an average for all of 2007, as generated from Oanda.com: http://www.oanda.com/fxhistory
‡ 2005 Market Exchange and PPP conversion factor rates are the World Bank’s most recent updated rates, as published in 2008 World Development Indicators
¶ These figures come from the ILO: http://laborsta.ilo.org/ The figures come from official government labour force surveys in each country. Botswana, India, Mauritius and South Africa report monthly figures which were multiplied by 12. The UK and US report hourly rates, which were multiplied by 2040, assuming full-time, full-year work, with no overtime.
United States, based on a uniform call centre survey conducted in each country in 2004. Indeed, wages in these African countries are only 10−25 per cent of call centre wages in the US and UK. But they are not significantly less than in India, where call centre wages in 2004 averaged only USD200 a month.  

The higher relative wages in Africa compared to India for call centre operations means that outsourcing operations in SSA can’t compete on price alone. This has proved to be a challenge in many countries, however, as a combination of poor infrastructure and major cultural problems have been difficult to overcome. At least until 2009, the lack of substantial broadband infrastructure has been a major hindrance; the lack of a fibre-optic cable serving East Africa precluded most companies from considering Kenya, and even Ghana found that having only a single connection was a hindrance, as most major outsourcers are concerned about having multiple possible connections, in case one cable goes down.  

Unreliable electricity supply is also an issue of concern, requiring expensive back-up generator systems. The linguistic and cultural challenges that need to be overcome are also substantial, as the case of Rising Data Solutions in Ghana attests. During a research visit to their Accra facility in 2007, executives in the firm confirmed that they were having trouble attracting higher-value in-bound customer service contracts, due to client concerns about the quality of service, and thus were forced to accept more out-bound telemarketing contracts, which are typically paid on a ‘per-sale’ basis. One contract the company had at the time involved trying to sell a somewhat complex web-base design and web-search optimization service to small business customers in the USA. The phone numbers their agents were phoning at the time were primarily in the Los Angeles area, where some 35 per cent of the population is foreign born, mostly from Latin America and Asia, and a very large portion of the small business owners speak English as a second language at best, and of course for most of the Accra-based agents, English was also a second language. It was clear, in listening in on some of the calls, that the agents and potential customers frequently struggled to understand each others’ accents and efforts to explain this complicated service were exacerbated by substantial differences in familiarity with finer details of web-services, as well as differences in US and Ghanatian (linked with British) terms. Actual sales were rare.  

South Africa has had greater success in providing a better quality−price combination, and has prioritized attracting British-based outsourcers, given closer economic and cultural ties than the USA and the relative ease of being in the same time zone for communicating daily with company executives in the sending country (Lacity et al. 2012). Mauritius has also had a little easier time as an officially bilingual (French and English) country with substantial historical and cultural ties with India as well, it has been able to diversify market opportunities (Mistry and Treebhoohun 2009). It also seems to have found a market niche in catering to smaller ‘second-mover’ companies searching for much smaller call centre operations and a more customized service than the large, multi-thousand-person call centres of Fortune 500 firms that dominate India’s call centre industry (Holman, Batt and Holtgrew 2007).  

**New opportunities**

Thus, while there are some substantial new employment opportunities in international outsourcing industries, overall growth has been somewhat less than the earlier hyperbolic projections. Yet what is also clear is that the basic information technology tools and infrastructure, including international internet access and computers, are becoming more widespread and inexpensive, opening a much wider array of economic opportunities than simply providing outsourcing services to major companies in the north. Furthermore, the much higher diffusion of cellphones than computer access in the continent has led African innovators to be pioneers in developing mobile applications and services. Overall these new opportunities include initiatives of connecting directly with consumers around the globe, more significant African-based markets and increasingly examples of innovations in African cities diffusing to countries in the north, rather than the other way around.
The notion of the long tail was first introduced in 2004 by Chris Anderson in an article in *Wired* magazine (Anderson 2004). Anderson had served for six years as editor at two prominent scientific journals, *Nature* and *Science*, and then 17 years at *The Economist*, before taking over as editor of *Wired* in 2001. Later expanded into a book (Anderson 2008), *The Long Tail* argued that the massive growth in access to consumers made available by expansion of the internet was transforming markets. Anderson’s analysis focused primarily on opportunities for relatively large companies, like Amazon.com, who were developing retailing strategies selling relatively small volumes of individual commodities or hard-to-find items to many customers, rather than typically mass markets of a reduced number of popular items. Yet many small companies have also emerged, using inexpensive distributed infrastructure of the internet to find those ‘niche markets’ hidden in the long tail of consumer demand. This has opened up many previously unimaginable employment opportunities in African countries and elsewhere, as workers and entrepreneurs located anywhere in the world can directly access potentially billions of customers throughout the globe through direct markets.

The most prominent example of this is in the area of *paid crowdsourcing* or *task marketplaces*. In the first case, a single company outsources tasks to anonymous internet users, typically through a range of web-based companies that specialize in these services. Such tasks may include data input, data verification, market research, copywriting, and even more complex cases of graphic design and software development. In *task marketplaces*, in contrast, multiple companies and individuals post requests for tasks to be completed to a central digital marketplace, again with the ability to access potentially millions of possible internet users to complete the tasks. The majority of these specialize in professional services, software development and graphic design, with the most well-known sites including elance.com and guru.com. But some also specialize in ‘microwork’ — small tasks that can be completed in a matter of minutes or even seconds, such as verifying whether two images are of the same product or transcribing a line of handwritten text. The most prominent example of such micro-tasking sites is Amazon’s Mechanical Turk, which as of June 2013 had over 200,000 ‘human intelligence tasks’ available for anyone to complete, with rewards ranging from USD54.72 for providing accurate captions to a two-hour-long movie, to USD0.01 for simple transcriptions (e.g. phone number, email, store name) from an image. Other prominent examples include Crowdflower, coinworker, ClixSense, InboxDollars, neobux, and literally dozens of others. The World Bank estimated that there are over 100 task marketplaces on the web (Lehdonvirta and Ernkvist 2011). One study estimated that in a period of ten years up to 2009, over one million workers had earned USD1–2 billion via crowdsourced and micro-task work allocation through at least 50 different paid crowdsourcing vendors, with an estimated annual market of USD500 million in 2009 (Frei 2009).

Crowdsourcing and micro-tasks are now being integrated into other products as well. Soylent, for example, is a crowd-powered interface that embeds workers from Mechanical Turk directly into Microsoft Word. While not yet commercialized, the idea is to allow users to install an add-in to Microsoft Word that creates a menu-based interface enabling users to solicit crowd contributions to perform various document editing tasks, such as document shortening, proofreading, and various human-language macros, a process for automating various word-processing tasks such as formatting citations or finding appropriate figures to match text descriptions (Bernstein et al. 2010).

What new employment opportunities does the development of crowdsourcing and micro-tasks provide for countries in the global south? At the moment, the opportunities are small, but rapidly expanding. While these crowdsourcing vendors don’t typically provide a geographic breakdown of their workers, there is evidence from just one site that while the majority are probably in the USA and India, people in more than 70 countries in all continents (except Antarctica) had performed work, and that for 30 per cent of respondents, Mechanical Turk was their primary source of income (Ipeirotis 2010). In guru.
com’s database of freelancers available for work as of June 2013, there were over 2,800 people in Kenya, 2,425 in Nigeria, 1,921 in South Africa, 376 in Ghana, 193 in Mauritius, and 41 in Botswana. On elance.com, while the largest number of registered freelancers are in the USA, the rest of the list of top 25 countries are a strikingly different hierarchy than might be expected. India, Pakistan and the Philippines are 2nd through 4th. Kenya and South Africa are 9th and 10th, ranking right behind Australia (8th) and ahead of China (11th). Egypt (18th) and Nigeria (21st) also make the top 25.

Other interesting initiatives include more socially motivated uses of micro-tasking. Samasource, for instance, was founded in 2008 with the goal of targeting micro-task work to poor women and youth, combining training in computer skills with access to job opportunities through micro-work contracts to high tech firms in Silicon Valley. With offices in San Francisco and Nairobi, Kenya, they claim to have trained and employed over 3,500 people in four countries (Kenya, Uganda, Haiti and India). In another initiative, researchers at the MIT Media lab developed systems for mobile crowdsourcing, making micro-tasks available to people with only traditional cellphones and SMS systems (Eagle 2009; Gatara 2013). The programme began in Kenya, and has since expanded to work in more than 100 countries, mostly in the global south, with 235 mobile operators, though its emphasis has shifted from providing employment opportunities towards helping companies ‘engage 3.48 billion [customers] in emerging markets’.

The ‘long-tail’ phenomenon doesn’t provide opportunities just for digitally based work, but can also open up new opportunities for small businesses in more traditional industries to access new niche markets and cut out middlemen. This essentially involves an acceleration of the ‘fair trade’ movement, enabling more direct ties between producers in the global south and consumers around the globe (Moore 2004; Raynolds et al. 2007). One of the more inspiring examples of this is the direct sale of enhanced used-tyre sandals from the Korogocho slum area in Kenya. Sandals made out of used tyres had been a staple shoe for the poor in Kenya (and many other countries) for many years. In 1995, Benson Wikyo partnered with a young American from Michigan named Matthew Meyer, to create the Wikyo Akala Project, focused on manufacturing enhanced sandals out of recycled tyres, but for six years the business struggled, with its primary market only ten miles away in downtown Nairobi. With the February 2001 online launch of www.ecosandals.com, everything changed. Within hours of the site’s launch, it had been viewed on six continents and within months, the project’s sales grew six-fold. Within the first year of going online, without spending anything on advertising (but with positive media coverage, including a prominent CNN profile), their revenue had increased 25 times (Curtain 2002). Still operating in 2013, the company is entirely owned and operated in Kenya and still producing out of the slum area, but with the ability for online custom orders to be shipped anywhere in the world, and with a sophisticated Facebook site and YouTube video presence introducing potential consumers to the individuals who share in the profits generated by the sales.

While each of these examples of new African eWork opportunities, created through directly accessing potential customers through the web, by themselves are small, when combined they represent both significant aggregate employment and substantially greater potential going forward. By finding potential small niche markets within the massive global marketplace of potentially billions of customers, these ‘long-tail’ opportunities enable at least some skilled entrepreneurs and enterprising freelancers to access significant new employment opportunities.

Internal and regional markets

While the previous section provided examples of new employment opportunities emerging with substantial international connectivity, those developments were primarily still oriented towards markets in the global north. With the rapid growth in other countries of the global south, however, along with
expansion of domestic markets, there is also emerging a whole range of ICT-related innovations focused on domestic and African regional markets.

One example of this is seen in the business process outsourcing field. In South Africa, the vast majority (an estimated 91 per cent in 2004) of call centres serve a domestic, not international, market (Benner et al. 2007). The pattern seems to be somewhat similar in Ghana and Botswana, where the largest call centres are in telecommunications firms serving mostly cellphone customers in domestic or African regional markets.13 There is also a dynamic network of domestic African ICT firms emerging out of innovation hubs in various urban centres around the continent, mostly focused on serving domestic markets. In Nairobi, for example, the iHub is a dynamic network of entrepreneurs and investors, housed in an incubator space that provides a community workspace and a physical networking space. Founded in 2008, by 2013 the iHub had over 11,000 members and 152 member companies with a total of over 733 jobs, and was regularly hosting more than 100 technology-related events a year. Examples of innovation companies and products serving local and regional markets abound, and show a range of innovative opportunities, including: The mPoultry system, designed to help farmers adapt to losing up to 80 per cent of their poultry stock as a result of unnoticed environmental changes, by developing a device that measures temperature, light and humidity and transmits real-time results to farmers’ cellphones; MedAfrica, a mobile app that helps increase health awareness among consumers, and increases interactions between health practitioners and patients (Hersman 2012).

While Kenya seems to be a leader in technological innovation in SSA, at least outside of South Africa, other similar innovation hubs have arisen in other cities around the continent and innovative new start-ups are emerging elsewhere as well. Similar innovation hubs include: MEST in Accra,14 Bongo Hive in Lusaka,15 iLab Liberia in Monrovia,16 Co-Creation Hub Nigeria in Lagos,17 ActivSpaces Cameron in Buea18 (Gathege and Moraa 2013). Many of these have come together in continent-wide networks, including AfriLabs19 and AfricaHubs,20 designed to share lessons, innovations and models of effective incubation practices. The AfriLabs network included as of 2013 a total of 19 hubs in 13 different countries which consider themselves ‘islands of innovation’ with the goal of fostering and promoting local technological innovation and commercialization, while the more decentralized AfricaHubs network, through crowdsourcing, had identified by 2013 some 96 reported technology hubs, hacker spaces, business incubators and university tech labs across the continent. In terms of companies, as in much of the rest of the world, some of the most successful companies are emerging in the gaming and entertainment industries. In Nairobi, for example, Ma3Racer is a Matatu (the name for Kenya and neighbouring nations’ ubiquitous privately owned minibuses which are the primary form of public transportation) racing game developed by a company called Planet Rackus, that has reportedly been downloaded at least 150,000 times in over 200 countries, and that won a USD10,000 prize in the 2013 Pivot East Mobile Apps and Developers Conference (Hersman 2012). In Accra, Leti Games21 was founded in 2009 with the goal of bringing a unique African perspective to the world of comic and games-based superheroes, focusing on the mobile market in Africa, and was reportedly the second full-time game studio in sub-Saharan Africa outside of South Africa.22 Its first product, iWarrior, draws on themes, art and sounds associated with forests in Africa, with the goal of protecting your village, livestock and garden from the incoming wild animals (Sey 2011).

The most dramatic example of the growth in ICT-related innovations serving domestic markets is the development and rapid expansion of M-Pesa in Kenya. Kenya has become the world leader in mobile-payment systems, and as The Economist noted in 2011, it is easier to use your mobile phone to pay for a taxi in Nairobi than in New York (The Economist 2013). M-Pesa is a type of mobile money, allowing individuals to make financial transactions using cellphone technology. Cellphone companies have long allowed individuals to purchase prepaid airtime and to send this credit to other users. It was a small step for recipient users to then further sell that time credit to a local broker in exchange for cash
or goods and services, thus essentially effecting a transfer of purchasing power from the initial sender to the recipient. In 2007, Kenya’s leading mobile phone operator Safaricom launched M-Pesa, a cellphone-based system based on money, rather than airtime. It allows users to use phone-based systems to deposit money into their account on their cellphone, send cash using SMS technology to other users, and to redeem deposits for regular money.

By August 2009, only two and a half years after the launch of the service, about 7.7 million accounts had been registered, with 23,000 agents spread throughout the country providing money/phone conversion services, and more than two-thirds of Kenyan households reporting that at least one member of the family used the service (Jack and Suri 2011). Although Safaricom stresses that it is not a bank, the lack of penetration of regular banking services in most of the country and the increasing ubiquity of cellphones throughout urban and rural parts of the country mean that M-Pesa essentially provides some banking services for a large portion of the population. While the total value of money circulating through the M-Pesa system is a small fraction of that in the formal banking sector, the number of daily transactions in 2008 was over 100 times the number of formal banking transactions, indicating the usefulness of small financial transfers for a vast proportion of the population (ibid.). While the full economic impacts of this system remain to be seen as of 2013, the potential impacts are quite large in a number of important areas, including: facilitating trade, making it easier for people to pay for and receive payment for goods and services without having to travel long distances or carry large amounts of cash (e.g. taxi drivers) and making transfers across large distances extremely cheap; potentially increasing net household savings by providing a safe storage mechanism; and potentially mitigating risk by enabling individuals and households to spread risk and allowing the timely transfer of small amounts of money, perhaps responding more quickly to deteriorating situations or preventing them from causing long-term damage (ibid.). There is also some growing evidence that mobile money can change power relationships and bargaining power, potentially increasing the economic growth of small and medium enterprises, especially in poor slums and neighbourhoods of urban areas where banking services are nearly non-existent, as well as providing new economic opportunities for rural residents (Higgins et al. 2012).

While Kenya remains the world leader in mobile payment systems, at least as of 2013, systems are expanding all over the world. Safaricom has expanded their mobile payment systems to Tanzania, South Africa and Afghanistan, with plans to expand to India. Other systems in Africa include Airtel Money, operating in at least 16 African countries, and MTN MobileMoney, which included operations in Uganda, Ghana, Cameroon, Côte d’Ivoire, Rwanda and Benin (Kshetri and Acharya 2012). The market for mobile banking in Africa seems to be substantially higher than in the Asia-Pacific, with mobile payments expected to reach USD3.8 billion in the Asia-Pacific and USD22 billion in Africa (Akam 2011; Oketola 2010).

South–north innovation adoption

There are also examples where innovations developed in Africa are spreading to markets in the global north. One example is Ushahidi, a Kenyan innovation for crowdsourcing the collection, dissemination and visualization of data that has now become a global platform especially for disaster response and relief efforts. Ushahidi was developed following the post-election violence in December 2007 and January 2008, as a way to gather, document and visualize reports of violence around the country, in the context of a government ban on reports of violence. The original platform was built in less than a week, using open source software, and enabled people to send an SMS text message with details of incidences that could then be geo-coded and mapped (Okolloh 2009). The platform has evolved, primarily through the work of Africa-based developers though with cooperation around the globe. It has been used prominently to facilitate disaster
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relief, including following the 2010 earthquake in Haiti, the 2011 tsunami in Japan, and the Missouri River floods of 2011. It has also been used to collect crowdsourced information about maternal mortality in India, health conditions in Bogota, environmental conditions in Indonesia, and cultural events and ecological attractions in Phoenix (USA), elections in Bulgaria, and literally hundreds of other uses in dozens of countries.23

South Africa has been the source for a number of world leading technologies that have become global standards. South African-born Mark Shuttleworth founded the company Thawte in 1995, which developed a sophisticated digital certificate and internet security system that by 1999 had captured 40 per cent of the global market for secure internet certification. He sold the company in 1999 to Silicon Valley-based VeriSign for USD575 million (Benner 2003).24 In the early 2000s, South African raised and University of Cape Town-educated Chris Pinkham led a team of South African-based software programmers and built Amazon.com’s Elastic Compute Cloud (EC2), a central part of their cloud computing platform which allows users to rapidly scale up deployment by being able to rent virtual computers to run their own computer applications. This is the basis for Amazon’s Web Services, which by 2013 was earning the company an estimated nearly USD1 billion a year, and also eventually became the platform for Amazon’s own retail website (Clark 2012).25 Kenyan-based financial and micro-finance software company Craft Silicon, since its founding in 1998, has grown to have offices in India and the USA, and is exporting to Latin America and Europe with contracts with over 200 financial institutions in over 40 countries (Onyango-Obbo 2012).

While the scale of these African-based global innovators is still small, at least when compared with Silicon Valley or Indian companies, their experience does demonstrate real examples of world-leading innovations emerging from African technology-based entrepreneurs and technology developers. And opportunities for further expansion in technology-related enterprises are evident in the growing networks of venture capital funds expanding investment in African start-ups — in the ten years up to December 2012, private venture capital funds in Africa outperformed US venture capital.26

New work and new hierarchies of opportunity

It is important not to exaggerate the impact that new information and communication technologies are having on work and employment opportunities in Africa. The emerging new work opportunities described above may be innovative and growing rapidly, but they remain small with a still limited scope of impact. There is also significant evidence that new technologies in Africa, rather than being transformative, may be having limited impact on traditional industries and can also reinforce existing unequal power relations and conditions of dependence (Carmody 2013; Murphy 2013).

There is also reason to believe, however, that the continued trend towards less expensive technological access might actually accelerate opportunities for new employments and innovations in eWork and related field in Africa. To date, the innovations have been rooted in the increasingly cheap access to communications and computing technology — the world of digital bits. However, new advances and price decreases in 3D printing — which enable the creation, by small printer-sized units, of three-dimensional solid objects in virtually any shape from digital models — are beginning to move the decentralized, networked model of digital communications into the world of manufacturing (Anderson 2012). For example, the Kenyan-born Dr. Colestous Juma, Harvard Professor and Director of the Science, Technology and Globalization Project at Harvard Kennedy School, is leading an initiative to bring 3D printing to select African institutions with the belief that the technologies will democratize innovations, foster creativity and facilitate entrepreneurship in a range of industries.27 While the extent to which this vision will become a reality is not yet clear, it is clear that digital technologies are continuing to change rapidly, and that the decreasing costs of these technologies are enabling expanded access for people who have historically been excluded. The world that is emerging is far from the
‘hyper-connected’ flat world envisioned by Tom Friedman, as inequality in access and opportunity remain ubiquitous, and innovations in ICT-related fields are highly concentrated in the cities of the world, rather than spread across a decentralized rural landscape. Nonetheless, the increasing global, networked interconnectivity is creating opportunities for new forms of work in Africa that have no historical precedent before the current technological era, and thus require new approaches to understanding the processes shaping their emergence and growth — approaches from perspectives that don’t privileg...
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Notes

3 Based on primary research by author from 2004-2007.
5 Author’s interviews with various centre operators, April-June 2007.
7 Table 21.1 also provides a few different ways of assessing the relative attractiveness of salaries in call centre jobs, which is more relevant for workers, though less so for international outsourcers. One way is to convert salaries using Purchasing Power Parity (PPP) conversion factors, rather than currency market exchange rates. The PPP conversion factors are developed by the World Bank in an effort to more accurately reflect cost of typical market goods in each country, and give a rough figure of relative value of wage levels based on what they can purchase locally. Thus, while the low-end of call centre employment in Botswana pays only USD2,857 a year at market exchange rates, this would be the equivalent of USD7,438. Using PPP, at the upper end of the industry, workers in Botswana and Mauritius can earn the equivalent of approximately USD20,000 a year. This makes the quality of employment seem somewhat better. Another way of looking at the value of these jobs is to compare them with what other job opportunities in the local labour market might pay. It is difficult to assemble comparative data for this from across multiple countries. One easy way is simply to compare annual pay with the per capita Gross National Income (GNI) in the country. Here, it is clear that eWork in Ghana pays significantly more (five to eight times more) than per capita GNI. In Botswana and Mauritius, eWork seems to provide more of an average wage, with low-end entry-level wages paying only 50-65 per cent of the per capita GNI, with higher-end positions paying some 40-75 per cent more than per capita GNI. Still, in interviews with agents, as well as managers, eWork jobs were seen as relatively attractive, since they were in an office environment and involved working with computers. The value of this can be seen to a certain extent in comparing wages in eWork positions to typical wages paid to manufacturing workers in each country, also shown in Table 21.1. The lowest paid positions in eWork in both Botswana and Mauritius pay more than the average salary in manufacturing, with top level earnings in eWork paying three times as much as manufacturing.
8 Author interviews, 2005 and 2007.
9 Based on author interviews in Mauritius, 2007.
10 The term crowdsourcing refers to obtaining needed services, ideas or content from a large group of people, especially in online communities, rather than from traditional employees or suppliers (Howe 2006).
13 Based on author interviews, 2007.
24 Shuttleworth later went on to become the first African in outer space, as the second self-funded space tourist (Freeland 2005).
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PART IV

Politics, transformation and the southern city
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In the post-colonial global south, the range of actions implied by scholars is far wider and inclusive than that traditionally understood as urban politics. ‘The political’ encompasses anti-colonial configuration, fought in nationalist struggles and by liberation movements; a politics post-independence committed to building a developmental state; the reconfiguration of this project as ‘crisis’, torn asunder by internationally driven structural adjustment programmes that redefined access to the city and its services. The political also includes contemporary struggles for democratization, in a context of decentralization, where a fierce battle for social protection is a central, normalized part of the neoliberal urban project.

In recent decades cities, rather than nations, have come to the fore as crucial sites for the analysis of politics. But what kinds of political spaces for popular urban representation exist in democracies in cities of the global south? How do elected officials and urban managers imagine their roles and those of citizens in governance and urban transformation? How, after the moment of the election results, is political legitimacy constructed and struggled over? As the chapters in this section demonstrate, urban politics defies conflation with electoral democracy, or equation with formal, state-driven processes. Encompassing and extending beyond ideas of quiet encroachment, contention, resistance and cooperation, politics in southern cities brings into analytical view diverse political subjects and city spaces that are multiple and fragmented. This more generous conceptualization incorporates a fluidity of identities and scales of action that open up what politics mean through how citizen–state relations are constructed and negotiated. It generates ways to understand urban revolution and the gritty ways in which it is lived and fought.

Arguing for contextual analysis of existing practices, Kristian Stokke, in the first chapter in this section, unpacks normative interpretations of the rapid turn to democracy across the global south — from ‘Pink Tide’ revolutions in South America to the Arab Spring across North Africa. He suggests we pay attention to the substance of political process, its (re)construction of city institutions and the substantive processes that fundamentally shape the nature of urban political inclusion and exclusion. Such engagements rework our understanding of who are the driving forces of revolutionary change and how and where subjectivities are produced, and politics practised.

Salwa Ismail turns to micro-small-scale politics to reflect on the revolutionary potential of North African cities. She lucidly demonstrates the ways in which a micro-politics of the everyday shapes urban revolution, bound up in popular neighbourhoods and their contentious relationships with the state. Richly accounting for the ways in which life in popular quarters is lived and organized, in spite
S. Oldfield

of and in counter to the state, this chapter speaks back to too–easy notions of middle-class, ‘Facebook’- driven uprisings in Egyptian and other North African cities.

What do new institutions and rights mean in practice? How does society meet, confront and challenge city powers to shape governmentality? In close conversation with Ismail, Claire Bénit-Gbaffou and Sophie Oldfield argue against a simplistic reading of a ‘right to the city’. Drawing on research on mobilizing for housing and urban resources in peripheral parts of Casablanca, Nairobi, Cape Town and Johannesburg, they demonstrate the various ways in which urban context shapes politics, and point to the hard toil required to challenge the urban socio-economic and political status quo, struggles at the heart of substantiating claims for rights.

Clearly contentious politics is one register of many in which to engage urban political dynamics in the global south. Diana Mitlin and Sheela Patel ground their analysis in the project of reconfiguring the lives and roles of citizens who live informally and who are largely excluded from formal city governance systems and processes. Through a focus on Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and its politics of cooperation and city engagement, their story explores the ways in which SDI works with the state and mobilizes for better service delivery in informal areas of cities, and, moreover, expands the inclusion of the poor in urban decision-making though structures of their own making.

Yet, politics in cities of the global south are not only driven or shaped by institutional changes in city governance or by mobilization by disenfranchised residents living on the ‘peripheries’ of southern cities. Many political practices in cities of the global south sit between polarities of poor and rich, formal and informal and practices of the state and movements in peripheral areas. Illustrated in the intertwined mixed-use areas of Delhi and other Indian cities, Solomon Benjamin focuses on ‘neighbourhoods–as–factory’, his analysis of occupancy urbanism. In the porous bureaucracies of southern cities, city administrators, politicians, and small–scale businesses grapple and argue, jostle and seek a space in which to make a living; negotiating a politics of urban land and property. The final paper in this section by AbdouMaliq Simone brings our attention to a politics of, what he calls, the ‘missing majority’, those making ends meet between skyscraper and slum. Remaining beyond the gaze of regulators, Simone asserts the centrality of the unacknowledged majority for conceptions of urban politics, despite the fact they are not easily categorized, regulated or made visible in our conceptual models.

From Cairo to Istanbul, Rio de Janeiro to Cape Town, from Jakarta to Mumbai, cities of the global south are fertile ground for politics. Protests and movements, the overturning of authoritarian regimes, the building and substantiating of democracy are shaped in and by cities. At the intersections of formal systems of governance and the practice of city institutions, and in the everyday actions of non-governmental organizations, social movements, and citizens, ‘the political’ proves critical terrain for shaping subjectivities, neighbourhood mobilizing and citywide, even national, reform and revolution. From visible urban contestation to a politics of the everyday, from state–driven projects for democratization to individuals ‘getting on’, southern cities are spaces of transformation and its political contentions.
SUBSTANTIATING URBAN DEMOCRACY

The importance of popular representation and transformative democratic politics

Kristian Stokke

Introduction

The last three decades have seen a global spread of democracy as many countries in Latin America, Eastern Europe, sub-Saharan Africa and Asia have undergone transitions from authoritarian rule to electoral and liberal democracy. Recent years have also produced a general shift from centralization to decentralization in discourses, institutional arrangements and practices of governance. Whereas decentralization is reconfiguring the spatiality of state institutions and political practices, democratization is redefining the relationship between state and society. At the same time, economic globalization and the global spread of neoliberalism have pushed public administration from statist towards market, community and network forms of governance (Scholte 2005). Taken together, these processes have transformed the possibilities and dynamics of popular political inclusion. On the one hand, the public affairs that come under democratic control have been reduced and depoliticized as decision-making and implementation have shifted away from democratically elected governments. On the other hand, democratization and decentralization have created new and transformed local political spaces for different actors with highly diverse interests, capacities and strategies. This is not the least the case in the urban south, where institutional reforms towards democratization, decentralization and neoliberalization create both opportunities and obstacles for popular participation and representation at the scales of cities, wards and neighbourhoods. Cities are also spaces of diversity and vibrancy in society, both in terms of identities and associations, yielding complex and contextual forms of popular politics (Kitharo et al. 2010; Rossi and Vanolo 2012). Cities in the global south can thus be thought of as laboratories of democratic governance and transformative democratic politics.

These introductory remarks bring up two key questions regarding the substance of democracy at both national and sub-national scales: to what extent do democratization and decentralization in the context of neo-liberalization yield popular representation, and how can formal democratic institutions become a basis for more substantial democracy? Reforms towards democratization and decentralization have been based on normative assumptions about the positive impacts of institutional changes on popular participation and representation and on state transparency and efficiency. The transition approach to democratization is based on the belief that democracy can be designed and that the introduction of formal democratic institutions will produce popular inclusion and political accountability.
(Bastian and Luckham 2003; Grugel 2002). Likewise, decentralization reforms have been based on the expectation that bringing government closer to people in spatial and institutional terms will make government more responsive and effective (Mohan and Stokke 2000).

In contrast to these assumptions, there are a number of studies that show that recent institutional reforms for democratization and decentralization have tended to be elitist and formal rather than popular and substantive, thereby limiting their political and socio-economic relevance to ordinary people. Critical assessments of democratic transitions have shown that most post-transition states have not achieved well-functioning democracy but remain somewhere between dictatorial rule and substantive democracy. They can thus be more accurately described as formal, electoral, minimalist, illiberal, patronal, clientelist, semi-authoritarian, oligarchic or guided democracies rather than liberal or substantial democracy (Levitsky and Way 2010). Such transitional democracies are not necessarily moving towards liberal democracy, but appear to be relatively stable hybrid forms of rule (Carothers 2002). Likewise, studies of decentralization have pointed to a number of shortcomings that limit its democratizing effect, including the prevalence of administrative deconcentration (rather than democratic decentralization), technocratic governance and market privatization; tendencies towards elite capturing of devolved institutions; and problems of fragmentation and lack of organizational and political capacity in civil society. Contrary to the aforementioned assumptions about democratization through decentralization, it can thus be argued that localization of politics, in conjunction with neoliberal development, often depoliticizes the governance of public affairs rather than strengthening popular participation and representation (Harriss et al. 2004).

This depoliticization of public affairs means that it is necessary to ‘bring politics back in’ − to politicize local democracy − both in academic analyses and through political struggles. As an analytical agenda, bringing politics back in means to pay close attention to the different ways through which people can participate or be represented in the governance of public affairs, and to the strategies and capacities of various actors to use and transform minimalist democratic institutions in a more substantive direction. The present chapter pursues this analytical challenge through conceptual discussions of representation and transformative politics. The chapter advocates, first, a rethinking of popular representation to identify the diversity of arenas and channels where people do or may exert influence on public affairs. Second, the chapter also highlights the importance of transformative democratic politics, that is, the use of basic democratic institutions to influence policy-making and to institutionalize deepened forms of representation. While the chapter is theoretical in orientation, it points to the need to examine substantial democratization − improved popular control of public affairs − as contextual and continuous political processes that involve a broad range of actors with diverse identities, interests and capacities and operating within complex and context-specific political spaces. The arguments that are presented in summary form here rely on more extended analyses that may be found in Harriss et al. (2004), Törnquist et al. (2009) and Stokke and Törnquist (2013a).

Rethinking popular representation

What kind of political spaces for popular representation exist in contemporary democracies in the global south? One entry point for answering this question is found in the character of recent democratic transitions. The so-called third wave of democracy and the associated ‘transition approach’ in democracy studies have focused on the crafting of basic democratic institutions, especially civil and political freedoms and multi-party elections, under the assumption that such institutions will produce popular inclusion. There is no doubt that democratic institutions are vital to political participation and representation, but recent experiences have also shown that there is no automatic link from the former to the latter. This has led critical democracy scholars like Beetham (1999) to the conclusion that the narrow focus on institutional design has taken attention away from questions of democratic substance,
or to put it differently, there has been a tendency to confuse the means and aims of democracy. The universal aim of democracy, according to Beetham, is popular control over public affairs on the basis of political equality. Different institutional means can contribute to this aim, including free and fair elections, but electoral democracy is not the only option and certainly no guarantee for liberal or substantial democracy. Hence, the key question in critical assessments of real world democracies is how and to what extent the goal of popular control over public affairs is achieved, not whether electoral democracy has been institutionalized (Törnquist et al. 2009).

Democratic theory makes a distinction between two general approaches to achieving popular control over public affairs; indirect representation via mediators and direct participation. Whereas the former approach is based on the notion of a democratic chain of popular sovereignty extending from rights-bearing citizens through mediating representatives into institutions for public government, the alternative model revolves around people’s direct involvement in decision-making and monitoring of public affairs (Pateman 1970; Saward 2010). Recent years have seen a global spread of formal liberal democracy based on the idea of indirect representation through elections, but the substance of these is challenged at all levels in the democratic chain. First, it is a common experience across diverse contexts and scales that the public affairs that are to be democratically controlled have become more narrowly defined in the context of economic globalization and neoliberal governance, and that political controls by elected bodies have been weakened and replaced by governance through markets, communities and networks (Scholte 2005). Second, it is also often found that the channels of representation are poorly developed. Mass based political parties are typically professional, top-down and personality-oriented organizations with weak links to their constituencies, partly as a reflection of the shift from rule by democratic governments to neo-liberal governance (Randall 2007). Counterhegemonic popular mobilization and organizations in civil society are often fragmented, under-resourced and sometimes function as sub-contracted service delivery agencies for government rather than autonomous political movements (Chandhoke 2011; Dagnio 2011; Obadare 2011). Third, the question of political inclusion of people as citizens is also problematic due to the way some groups are excluded from membership and rights as citizens. It is often observed that cities in the global south are marked by a distinction between rights-bearing citizens and groups of denizens who are excluded from formal and actual citizenship. The latter group is placed in a relationship to the state as subjects of governmentality rather than being the basis for democratic politics (Chatterjee 2004). These general tendencies mean that the chain of democratic control, extending from citizens via democratic channels into institutions for governance of public affairs, is challenged at each of its constitutive links at the same time as liberal democracy has achieved a global hegemonic position. Democracy as a form of urban governance is thus the norm but its meanings and forms vary and are contested. They thus require closer scrutiny and research.

Recent years have also brought new attention to participatory models for democracy, promoted both through neoliberal forms of governance and through popular movements resisting neoliberalization and promoting deliberative models of decision-making (Fung and Wright 2003; Hickey and Mohan 2004). This has created a paradoxical convergence between neoliberal and post-Marxist discourses around participation in local civil society (Mohan and Stokke 2000). The participatory approach has, however, also raised critical questions, especially about who gets to participate, and in what conditions, in decision-making on public affairs within the invited spaces of neoliberal governance. There are also critical questions about how and to what extent popular struggles are scaled up and institutionalized as new (invented) spaces for democratic participation (Miraftab and Wills 2005).

While much more could be said about direct participation and indirect representation as overarching approaches to realizing the universal aim of democracy, the general point that I want to make is that the question of popular control over public affairs in real world democracies today is highly complex and calls for conceptual rethinking of representation, contextual mappings of actual forms of representation and critical studies of the political dynamics behind improved popular representation.
A framework for studying representation

Figure 23.1 summarizes one attempt to analytically rethink popular political representation, originally presented by Törnquist (2009). His point of departure is the universal definition of democracy as popular control over public affairs based on political equality. This points to three basic components in the study of popular representation: (1) the constitution of public affairs; (2) the construction of ‘the people’ (demos); and (3) the direct or indirect links between demos and public affairs. Obviously, the figure should be understood as a heuristic device rather than a fixed framework, and the content of each level is not pre-given or static, but a matter of political construction and contestation.

First, what counts as public affairs – the common concerns that are to be governed in a public way – is not objectively given but the subject of political struggles. The same holds true about the institutional arrangements for governance of such affairs. In general terms, it can be argued that the period from the Second World War to the 1970s was characterized by the hegemonic position of different forms of statism: welfare states in the global northwest, state socialism within the eastern bloc and state developmentalism in the global south. Whereas statism supported extensive definitions of public affairs and public governance, crises of statist models and the growth of neoliberalism in the period since the 1970s have supported more limited definitions of public affairs and shifted institutional responsibilities toward market, community and network forms of governance (Scholte 2005). The global hegemony of neoliberalism and its transfer through structural adjustment programmes have especially reduced the public affairs that come under democratic control in the global south. Provisioning of more limited public goods, for example healthcare, education and social security, increasingly rely on private or sub-contracted providers with associated problems for democratic participation and accountability. Mapping actual popular representation and participation thus needs to go beyond the conventional focus on public government and examine popular participation and representation within the broad range of institutions that are involved in governance of public affairs.

Second, the definition and delimitation of ‘people’ (demos) also requires critical rethinking. Earlier scholarship on democratic representation has typically been based on relatively fixed notions of national communities linked to the territorial state and on cleavages in society as an objectively defined basis for interest aggregation and representation. It is, however, increasingly recognized that communities and senses of belonging are social constructions that are both a basis for and a product of citizenship, rights and political representation. Discursive distinctions between insiders and outsiders in communities at different scales form the basis for citizenship as legal status and rights, while formal and actual citizenship also shape identities and senses of belonging (Jayal 2013). Likewise, political representation is intrinsically bound to constructions of group identities and interests. While earlier studies often saw representation as a matter of standing for a pre-defined constituency, representation is now commonly understood as practices of constructing social groups and claiming legitimacy as a representative for constructed identities and interests (Saward 2010; Stokke and Selboe 2009). There is thus a complex politics around the constitution of demos that includes both ‘politics of membership’ (i.e. the discursive constructions of insiders and outsiders in regard to political communities) and ‘politics of rights’ (i.e. the political struggles over citizenship as legal status and rights).

These are not issues of mere academic interest, but bear directly on social inclusion and exclusion in everyday life, not the least in the urban south. Chatterjee (2001, 2004), for example, demonstrates that mass politics in post-colonial societies has produced a distinction between those who are included as rights-bearing citizens and those who remain as subject populations. Whereas citizens constitute the core of the democratic chain from society to elected governments and are able to participate in structures of governance such as public meetings and civil society organizations, subject populations are targets for state policy and subjected to the rationalities and techniques of governing. Chatterjee thus highlights a twofold relationship between people and the state, one linking rights-bearing citizens
Figure 23.1 An analytical framework for the study of popular democratic representation

Source: Törnquist in Törnquist, Webster and Stokke 2009: 11
and civil society to democratic states, and one linking developmental states to target populations (e.g. illegal slum dwellers or more generally people whose lives are characterized by various forms of ‘informality’) (Roy and AlSayyad 2004). In South Asia, Chatterjee observes that there is a persistent prevalence of state governmentality over subject populations, rather than the democratic chain from rights-bearing citizens to elected governments. This creates two kinds of strategies among urban poor to seek influence over public affairs: to gain recognition as citizens with influence through democratic politics or to be construed as target populations for participation in development projects. The construction of social groups as subjects and citizens thus has clear impacts on the prospects, forms and reach of popular representation and control.

Third, the mediating links between people and public affairs also requires rethinking and contextual analyses. While proportional representation in elected government bodies at different scales is often seen as the principal mechanism for political authorization and accountability, actual popular representation is not confined to the institutions of electoral democracy (Törnquist et al. 2009). Representation by way of political parties remains important and deserves continued attention, but popular representation is also mediated through social movements, trade unions, non-governmental and community-based organization in civil society. Representation may also be by way of informal leaders such as patrons, religious leaders and ‘traditional’ authorities. This broadened notion of democratic channels is depicted as three types of mediation in Figure 23.1. It should be noted that these are not mutually exclusive channels. On the contrary, there are several examples of overlap and combinations. There are, for example, often close relations between civil society and political parties, especially in social democracies where popular organizations have worked with political parties for democratization of the state and implementation of their demands (Sandbrook et al. 2007). Likewise, there are strong links between political parties and informal authorities in many electoral democracies in the global south (Cammack 2007; Sidel 2004). Understanding actual popular control over public affairs thus requires critical attention to the diversity of channels of representation, as mediating links between the multitude of identities and interests in society and the diversity of private, communal and public institutions involved in the governance of public affairs.

The attempt at rethinking popular representation that is outlined here is not confined to a particular political scale. While studies of representation have tended to give a certain primacy to the national scale, decentralization reforms have brought new attention to questions of representation and participation at sub-national scales such as the urban. I have already pointed to tendencies towards depoliticization of public affairs associated with neoliberalism, minimalist electoral democracy and exclusion of subject populations, but there are also examples of more successful local democracy (Fung and Wright 2003). The institutionalization of participatory budgeting in Brazilian cities, especially pioneered in Porto Alegre, is a foremost case in point (Baiocchi 2005; Baiocchi et al. 2011). This model is characterized by a two-tiered structure where people both participate in neighbourhood deliberations and elect representatives to successive rounds of budget deliberations at the city scale, demonstrating that direct and mediated representation can be interlinked rather than mutually excluding approaches to popular representation. The institutional structure for participatory budgeting connects public deliberations with the formal political system (Baiocchi et al. 2011). It also creates stakes that are attractive enough to sustain popular and elite participation in demanding processes of deliberative decision-making, while also containing the tendency for deliberation to be dominated by powerful actors (Fung and Wright 2003).

If Porto Alegre and similar cases provide interesting lessons in successful local democracy, the point is not to transfer an idealized blueprint model to other contexts, but to identify the actors, alliances and strategies that were crucial in the making of successful cases and to discuss whether there are parallel factors and dynamics that can foster similar tendencies in other contexts. This brings attention to the politics of fighting for and implementing institutional changes towards substantial democracy, or in other words, transformative democratic politics.
Transformative democratic politics

The previous sections have observed that recent democratic transitions, combined with decentralization and neo-liberalization, have created new and widened spaces for political inclusion, but also problems of depoliticized public affairs and flawed popular representation (Harriss et al. 2004; Törnquist et al. 2009). This means that there is a need for substantive democratization; a process towards improved popular control of more widely defined public affairs on the basis of political equality. But how will this come about? In a recent anthology on democratization in the global south, Olle Törnquist and I argue that it is possible to make advances on the basis of formal democratic institutions, even in deeply flawed democracies (Stokke and Törnquist 2013a). While acknowledging the importance of structural constraints on democratization, we insist on the centrality of ‘transformative democratic politics’. By this we mean political agendas, strategies and alliances that use formal and minimalist democracy to introduce politics and policies that may enhance people’s chances of both using and improving democracy.

Transformative democratic politics entails a gradualist approach to democratization based on a relational understanding of state and society. This can be contrasted to more one-sided state-centred and society-centred perspectives on democratic change. State-centred approaches to democratization, on the one hand, include both elitist crafting of universal liberal-democratic institutions and the more conservative focus on building strong institutions of rule of law and state authority ahead of political liberalization (Carothers 2007; Mansfield and Snyder 2007). These strategies give primary attention to the design of appropriate institutions under the assumption that political actors will adjust to new institutions and become democrats. Where they part ways is over the question of sequencing of institutional reforms, i.e. whether institutions to secure political stability and rule of law should precede political liberalization in order to reduce the likelihood of destabilizing social protests and conflicts or whether political liberalization should be given high priority from the outset (Mansfield and Snyder 2007). Neither of these state-centred approaches prioritizes critical attention to power relations and popular forces in society.

Society-centred approaches, on the other hand, place emphasis on actors and relations in civil society and their effect on state institutions and politics. This includes both the argument that social capital (trust, networks and associations) is a source of democratic governance, and the argument that civil society organizations and popular movements are drivers of democratic participation and representation (Avritzer 2002; Putnam 1993). The state is seen as a reflection of power relations in society, and as a structure of domination that is to be resisted or captured. In contrast to these state- and civil society-centred perspectives on democratization, the notion of transformative democratic politics implies a gradual and relational process, i.e. an understanding of democratization as a continuous and cumulative process based on a mutually reinforcing interplay between democratic institutions and practices in both state and society (Carothers 2007).

The meaning of transformative democratic politics can be illustrated with reference to the political dynamics behind Scandinavian social democracies. Berman (2006) argues that the making of the ‘Scandinavian model’ was first and foremost shaped by social democratic ideology, politics and policies. This primacy of politics ‘meant using a democratic state to institutionalize policies that would protect society from capitalism’s harshest effects and promote the well-being and security of its weakest and most vulnerable members in particular’ (Berman 2006: 206). The defining political features behind the Scandinavian model include an emphasis on citizenship-based liberal democracy, democratic channels for popular representation and participation, and a strong tradition of mobilization from below by popular movements and political parties for institutional reforms from above.

If the basic similarity that unites the ‘Scandinavian model’ is social democratic politics, one question that follows is whether this has any relevance for the contemporary global south and at sub-national
scales of politics. The major counter-argument is that the historical emergence of social democratic politics in Scandinavia was dependent on specific social, economic and political constellations, including relatively limited social inequalities, bounded communities and economic systems, strong state regulations and pre-existing conservative and liberal welfare systems. In contrast to the territorially bound growth and welfare politics of the original Scandinavian model, the contemporary period is marked by economic globalization. As capital has become much more mobile, the prospects for national fiscal and trade restrictions, growth-oriented pacts between labour and capital supported by the state and comprehensive social welfare programmes have also been challenged. In fact, it can be observed that domestic and international pressures have also transformed the Scandinavian model in a neoliberal direction, thus making it less exceptional in an international comparative context. It could thus be argued that Scandinavian transformative politics are too historically and contextually unique for fruitful comparative purposes.

Stokke and Törnquist (2013a) argue, in contrast, that globalization and the challenges of economic growth and democratization are making several of the original dynamics of transformative social democratic policies and politics more needed and possible. The contemporary coexistence of liberal democracies and global market liberalism provides both political spaces and a social basis for popular movements. This may be seen as a parallel to the situation in the global north in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, leading some scholars to label the current period as the second version of the ‘Great Transformation’ analysed by Polanyi (Berman 2006; Polanyi 2001). This is not to deny the existence of substantive political and economic obstacles. On the contrary, it has already been observed that the preconditions for strong organizations, public institutions and positive government are less favourable in the global south today than they were in north Europe in the first decades of the twentieth century. State capacity to implement policies has been weakened and democratic governance has become a matter of technocratic management. Fragmented citizen associations, social movements and trade unions have largely failed to penetrate and renew political parties. This means that while civil and political freedoms have been institutionalized, democracy has been constrained. Nevertheless, unfavourable political economic structures, democratic deficits and weak state capacities were also the order of the day in Scandinavia in the initial part of the twentieth century. As implied by Berman’s ‘primacy of politics’, the development of social democracy came about through politics and policies against historically rooted structures rather than emerging from favourable structural preconditions.

Transformative democratic politics in the global south

Do we see major tendencies towards transformative democratic politics in the contemporary global south? If transformative democratic politics refers to fruitful links between popular organizations, political parties and the state in the context of formal democracy, there are certainly a number of interesting cases at both national and city scales. Sandbrook et al. (2007), for example, point to the cases of Costa Rica, Mauritius, Chile and the Indian state of Kerala as prominent examples of social democratic developmental states. These are, the authors argue, not historical accidents, but products of strong movements of different kinds, producing context-specific welfare states and growth models. Sandbrook et al. (2007) also find that these social democratic developmental states have generally not succumbed to the imperatives of neoliberal globalization.

In Latin America, the election of left-of-centre governments with ties to social movements and trade unions since the turn of the century – the so-called pink tide revolutions – has brought about interesting experiments in transformative politics and welfare states (Riesco 2009). Many recent regime changes have, however, also been followed by critique as the new governments have failed to meet the high hopes of substantive changes. In explaining the emergence and performance of pink tide governments, Bull (2007, 2013) points to the centrality of strong links between popular
movements and left-of-centre political parties. The Latin American pink tide has relied on the unification of diverse movements and close links between social movements and social democratic parties, but many pink tide governments have later been characterized by attempts at co-opting, repressing or delegitimizing social movements. This is in contrast to the historical experiences in north Europe, where social movements led by radical labour organizations gained and used state power both to institutionalize corporatist channels for participation and to pursue their interests. Based on such comparative lessons, Bull (2007) thus argues that transformative effects of movement/state-relations are contingent on three key factors: first, the degree to which the political-economic context allows sufficient policy space to satisfy the demands of the social movements; second, the capacity of the state to manage social transformation; and third, the degree to which the strategies, internal structures and relations of popular movements enable them to play a part in formal democracy. The latter two features – the capacity of the state and the structure and strategies of movements – are found to be especially important in explaining divergent trajectories of Latin America’s pink tide governments. Bull (2007) argues that contemporary transformative politics in Latin America occurs within the context of institutionalized practices of clientelism that threaten to subordinate any movement that intersects with the state. This makes many movements reluctant to participate in formal politics and policy-making, thereby limiting the prospects for institutionalizing channels for substantive democratic representation and transformation (Dagnio 2011). As a result, Bull (2007) observes the paradox that many of the most vital dynamics of popular politics are found outside and often in tense relation to the state, despite the celebrated democratic transitions and pink tide revolutions throughout Latin America.

The key lesson for transformative democratic politics from the Latin American pink tide is about the need to institutionalize substantive popular representation in order to ensure continued popular political integration, as opposed to mere clientelist or populist incorporation from above. This is a key lesson that is supported by other cases that could be described as paradigmatic failures of transformative democratic politics. Stokke and Törnquist (2013b) draw attention to two such cases – Indonesia and Sri Lanka – where promising initial efforts at transformative democratic politics were replaced by descent into authoritarianism in Indonesia in the 1960s and the growth of semi-authoritarianism in Sri Lanka from the 1970s. These cases, they argue, highlight the failure of state actors and popular movements to institutionalize substantive popular representation, resulting in a top-down mode of incorporation rather than bottom-up integration of people into politics. In a situation where the chosen development model failed to support sustained economic growth and social welfare, this model of populist and clientelist incorporation paved the way for the growth of authoritarianism.

Returning to the urban scale, the next question is about the prospects for transformative democratic politics at the local level. Heller (2013) observes that the precursors to Scandinavian social democracy originated in local democratic arenas and local politics is also where he finds current prospects for substantive democratization in the global south. At the general comparative level, Heller (2001, 2013) observes that diverse constellations of state power and popular politics in South Africa, Brazil and the state of Kerala in India have produced very different trajectories of decentralization and local democracy. While South Africa has been marked by high-capacity local states and hegemonic party politics, Brazil and Kerala have been characterized by political competition that has pushed left parties to work closely with civil society organizations and social movements, thus building political movements in support of transformative democratic politics at the local scale. This is especially visible in Brazil’s institutionalization of local participatory democracy, most famously pioneered in the city of Porto Alegre.

The growing literature on participatory reforms in Brazil supports the conclusion that local popular democracy in Porto Alegre and elsewhere is neither the outcome of institutional design by committed political elites nor the product of civil society activism alone. Its characteristics and dynamics should rather be understood as the outcome of an interplay between activism in civil society and mass-based
political parties with access to local state power and an ability to construct a common agenda of democratic participation and inclusive development (Abers 2000; Baiocchi 2005).

Abers (2000) observes that participatory budgeting has emerged gradually as an alternative political strategy, in opposition to established populist-clientelist politics, for gaining state power through local elections. The Partido dos Trabalhadores (PT) has drawn on earlier initiatives from neighbourhood associations to develop institutional arrangements for large-scale popular participation in decision-making and monitoring of public projects and investments. In the case of Kerala, Tharakan (2004) similarly points to the long history of productive political relations between the Communist Party of India and popular movements, providing access to local state power that was used to implement comprehensive land reforms in the 1970s and decentralized participatory planning in the late 1990s. Equally important is the use of such party/movement-alliances to construct spaces for participation, both as focal points for popular struggles and an institutional basis for further reforms. Schönleitner (2004: 45) thus concludes, on the basis of a comparative analysis of local sector-policy councils in Brazil, that democratization through local deliberative spaces ‘requires a positive interaction between an appropriate institutional design that ensures deliberative equality, government commitment to deliberation and civic participation in local deliberations’. This resonates with the general conclusion made by Webster et al. (2009) that improved popular representation is contingent on a combination of empowered citizens, popular organization building and institutional nodes of popular representation.

Despite fruitful alliances between political parties and popular movements and institutionalization of local participatory democracy in places such as Kerala and Porto Alegre, it must also be mentioned that the high hopes placed on participatory democracy have not always been fulfilled, especially in Kerala. On the contrary, Tharakan (2004) points to a process of divisive party-politicization of associational life that has deepened pre-existing problems of mobilizing marginalized social groups and providing significant socio-economic transformations. Baiocchi et al. (2013) provide, likewise, a more nuanced interpretation of the Porto Alegre case. Focusing on the evolution of participatory institutions, the authors argue that there has been a pronounced shift both in the quality of participation and the underlying relationship between social movements and the Workers Party. While the earlier years were marked by close links between movements and the party, social movements and unions have come to occupy a subordinate role as the party has risen to national power. At the same time, participatory institutions have become arenas for ‘listening and dialogue’ while movement concerns have been downplayed. The authors thus observe that Brazil’s experience with institutionalizing participation reflects a clash of logics between social movements and the state and, in the process, demonstrates the need for continuous political renewal and critical analytical engagement with contextual political dynamics.

**Conclusion**

The point of departure for this chapter has been the coexistence of spaces and obstacles to effective political inclusion in the context of democratization, decentralization and neo-liberalization. Problems of depoliticization of democracy and flawed popular political representation draw attention, I have argued, to the local and urban scale of politics. Going beyond the common focus on elitist and state crafting of institutions for democratic representation and participation, the chapter has advocated an understanding of democratization as a gradual, relational and continuous process. It has also argued that it is necessary to pay close attention to the diverse arenas, channels and forms of popular representation that allows people to exert influence on the governance of public affairs. It is especially important to examine democratic transformative politics that seek to institutionalize more substantive popular representation and to use this as a basis for progressive policy reforms. Historical and contemporary experiences point to the importance of productive relations between popular movements, political
parties and the state, both at the local and the national scale. They also point to the importance of the local scale of politics, as especially seen in Porto Alegre and other Brazilian cities and municipalities. Given the challenge of depoliticization and flawed representation that was identified at the outset, the argument and conclusion of the chapter is that substantiating democracy requires democratic transformative politics, that is, the use of basic democratic institutions to pursue popular interests and to institutionalize deepened forms of representation.

References


The revolutionary events of January 2011 in Egypt bring to the fore dimensions of contention and oppositional political action anchored in urban space. One aspect of the mass protests that brought about the forced resignation of President Mubarak was the occupation of central public space by a large mass of people demanding the fall of the regime. Over 18 days, millions of Egyptians from diverse socio-economic backgrounds occupied central public squares, organized marches and sit-ins and devised imaginative forms of oppositional activism. The scale of mobilization was unprecedented, though the preceding decade had witnessed growing resistance to the Mubarak regime. The immediate spark for the Revolution was a call, spearheaded by youth activists and dissident groups, for a public demonstration against increased police violence and repression.

In media accounts and in some scholarly writings, the middle classes are identified as the main actors in the Revolution with educated youth cast as the leaders and virtual space as the primary site of interaction and mobilization. Terms like ‘Facebook Revolution’ and ‘Revolution 2.0’, coined as shorthand descriptions of the January 2011 events, project a particular class identity and outlook onto the mobilizations (see Sutter 2011). In such characterizations, virtual space trumps physical space. Further, when physical space is discussed, public squares and central city spaces are given particular attention such that much of the revolutionary activities are located or placed in Tahrir Square and other central squares in main cities such as al-Qaid Ibrahim Square in Alexandria and al-Arb‘in Square in Suez. The public square fits well with the view of the middle-class character of the Revolution. Indeed, the middle-class characterization and the Tahrir-centred narrative are part of an account that glosses over, or denies altogether, the place of popular quarters and the role of urban popular forces in the protests and in the Revolution more generally. It is precisely these popular-level actors and places that are the focus of this chapter.

In considering the revolutionary events of January 2011, with particular attention to actions and actors in popular urban areas and among the popular classes, a number of questions arise. How did the urban-based mass protests link with existing patterns of urban political action? What forms of contentious action undergird and animate the protests? Can we identify, in this spectacular event of revolutionary action, particular social forces with specific claims to the city? In answering these questions, I will focus on urban popular forces and their modes of inhabiting the city, and on features of everyday-life politics wherein informality is a vector of power and resistance. The chapter will demonstrate how the infrastructures for mobilization and protest lay in the micro-processes of everyday life in popular neighbourhoods, in particular in their community forms of organization and modes of action.
In my account of the politics of the urban everyday, the question of informality is central to understanding the reconfiguration of the city and the modes of action developed by segments of the population virtually excluded from public provision of housing and marginalized in the circuits of private real estate development. Informality, as a dimension of urban reconfiguration, should be situated against the backdrop of the implementation of neoliberal economic policies beginning in the 1980s and taking fully developed form in the 1990s. In Cairo, informally built neighbourhoods emerged as extensions of the city to meet the housing needs of young families, migrants and city inhabitants displaced as a result of the dilapidation of buildings. Located on the edge of the city or growing within existing old neighbourhoods, informal settlements constitute a large proportion of urban housing for the poor and disadvantaged.

To get a sense of the location and place of new popular quarters within the macro urban setting, we should take note of key features of urban development in the modern period. In a schematic manner, the city’s diverse spatialities arise from historical patterns of growth and distinct urban forms. A conventional line of distinction is drawn between the Old City neighbourhoods — which existed as discrete social and political units under the Ottoman administration (sixteenth to nineteenth centuries) and were referred to as hara (in contemporary use meaning alley, but in historical use referring to a district or quarter) — and the European-styled city centre and residential neighbourhoods that were established in the mid-nineteenth century as part of the project of modernization. The modern city centre and the garden-city type districts of Cairo were the domains of the political and social elites and the colonial powers, while the Old City neighbourhoods housed the popular classes and preserved their spatially-grounded forms of social and political organization.

In the post-independence period, after 1952, new residential and housing areas for the working classes arose through state planning. These areas were mainly large industrial zones with popular housing units (masakin sha’biya) in the form of low-income apartment blocks for workers in outskirts of Cairo such as Helwan. State-planned residential areas were laid out along class lines, with middle and upper-middle-class districts catering to the professional elites forming the social base of the new regime. With urban expansion resulting from population growth, dislocation and resettlement, state provision of public housing faltered. By the mid-1960s, state-subsidized rental units were in decline, and by the early 1970s the public sector had moved into the production of medium-cost and luxury flats for private ownership. Large-scale development of informal construction thus emerged in response to the increased popular need for urban housing and the state’s failure to meet that need. As a result, responsibility for much urban management and housing provision was assumed by ordinary citizens. In Cairo, this translated into the appropriation of public land and extra-legal construction on agricultural land on the urban fringe. By the 2000s, informal housing settlements have come to house over half of Greater Cairo’s population and have emerged as the new popular quarters.

Urban development and growth based on unregulated auto-construction and giving rise to struggles for access to services and utilities has been linked with rights movements and particular forms of contentious action in other cities of the south, as, for example, with squatter movements in Latin American and South Asian cities. Comparatively, it has been argued that the urban poor in Cairo formed passive networks that represent ‘non-movement’ in their pursuit of rights (Bayat 2000). Rather than confronting the state and governmental power, the actors in these networks are seen to pursue a strategy of ‘quiet encroachment’ (ibid.). This optic, however, does not capture the diversity of oppositional politics that develops in a multitude of city spaces, including, but not restricted to, popular neighbourhoods.

One of the arguments that the chapter puts forward is that outright contentious action and organized opposition may appear marginal and limited in occurrence, but conflictual relations structure everyday interaction between inhabitants of informal and popular neighbourhoods and government. Rather than privileging confrontation or social movement organization in accounting for the development of
oppositional action, I suggest that we consider how modes of inhabiting the city which develop in the pursuit of a living in it equip subjects with capacities and resources that could be mobilized against government. Practices of place-making (Escobar 2001) and autonomization (i.e. practices and institutions that achieve relative independence from state government), in addition to the feelings cultivated in interaction with agents of government, are key to reading the everyday-life politics of urban popular forces. I propose to consider a number of interrelated dimensions of the everyday to elucidate the infrastructures of action, understood, here, as the accumulated resources and capacities and the cultivated dispositions that are contingently deployed towards a given goal and in a particular situation.

The following discussion looks at the practices and relations that are constitutive of the urban everyday and that enter into the formation of the oppositional subject. I begin by sketching the spatially grounded conflictual relations that emerge in ordinary citizens’ encounters with government and that are constitutive of oppositional subjectivities. In a second section, I look at place-making practices that ground popular forces’ claims to the city. The discussion then turns to community forms of organization and autonomization vis-à-vis government. Against this background, I discuss the social architecture of everyday life in the neighbourhoods, highlighting elements of the social relations organizing interaction and exchange among popular forces and between them and government. In the concluding section, I suggest that the revolutionary potential of the city lies in the politics of the urban everyday.

**Encountering everyday government: the making of oppositional subjects**

To understand the full import of the infrastructures of action that develop in everyday practices surrounding the inhabiting of neighbourhood spaces and the negotiation of norms of interaction and their enforcement, we need to bring in the terms in which institutions and agents of state government are present or absent and how and where inhabitants encounter them and what patterns of interaction emerge in the encounter. Over the last three decades, key structuring factors of government–citizen encounters have been the retrenchment of welfare provision and the expansion of security politics. The politics of security has entailed increased monitoring and surveillance of subject-citizens, in particular of residents of informal quarters who have been construed as potentially subversive and projected as carriers of a host of social ills. In official and mainstream media discourse, these city spaces, referred to as ‘ashwa’iyyat (haphazard), appear as the sites of deviance, criminality and social breakdown. There are parallels between official representations of the youth of informal quarters and popular-class neighbourhoods in Egypt, and ‘gang talk’ expounded by the post-apartheid government in South Africa (Jensen 2010) and by post-authoritarian governments in Brazil (Holston 2008). In the Egyptian case, ‘baltaga (thuggery) talk’ performed similar functions to ‘gang talk’ — identifying the danger posed by segments of the urban population inhabiting particular city spaces. The figure of baltagiyya (thugs) is deployed to speak of a security threat that is elevated to the national level. Law 6, known as ‘the Balthaga (thuggery) Law’, was passed in 1998. The Law enhanced police powers, articulating with the ongoing normalization of emergency laws that had been in effect since 1981 (Ismail 2006). Articles of Law 6 furnish the police with powers of arrest and detention of citizens suspected of undermining public order through displays of aggression or physical strength or through intimation of the intention of causing harm (ibid.). At the core of the legislation is the body of the young man which is identified as the object of discipline and punishment.

In his examination of the war on gangs in post–apartheid South Africa, Jensen (2010) draws attention to the parallels this war has with counter-insurgency strategies. Similar resemblances can be discerned when looking at the Egyptian police’s campaigns of public order aimed at popular neighbourhoods, and, in particular, at their young male inhabitants. The police’s use of spatialized campaigns embodies assumptions about the youth population — as dangerous and threatening — similar to those that guide
counter-insurgency strategies. Under the ‘maintenance of public order’ rubric, police disperse youth congregating at street corners or coffee shops. Additionally, the campaigns involve the surveillance of young men’s activities and regular stop and search operations (known as *ishtibah wa tahari* and literally meaning ‘suspicion and investigation’). The practice is aimed at a category of subjects labelled ‘suspicious individuals’ (*mushtabah fihum*). Under police powers of *ishtibah wa tahari*, young men are stopped and subjected to investigation procedures which often entail their being taken to the police station and detained for a period of time ranging from a few hours to several days, with the possibility of having to appear before the public prosecutor charged with any number of infractions. In some cases, police fabricate charges – in particular, drug possession – to justify the arrest and detention of young men. Police falsification of drug charges has been a common procedure and is understood as a mechanism of control of young men. This was confirmed by a former deputy head of the Narcotics Unit who asserted that in the 1990s, in Cairo alone, police fabricated about 73,000 drug-possession cases on an annual basis (see Ismail 2006: 150). A commonsense understanding within popular neighbourhoods is that police officers keep drugs in their offices to plant on anyone who refuses to cooperate with them by acting as an informant or on those whom they regard as potential troublemakers (Ismail 2006: 149–50).

The monitoring, surveillance and containment practices of state government agents targeting the inhabitants of popular areas of the city are formative experiences for subject-citizens. The encounters with government agents elicit embodied emotions in the subject which orient the cultivation of dispositions towards government. In this sense, encounters with government could be approached as orienting the cultivation of complex dispositions that can be used to perform certain kinds of subjectivities. For example, in response to police practices of monitoring and control, youth hone a range of practices and ways of dealing with them from evasion, dissimulation, and acquiescence to outright defiance.

The experiences of *ishtibah wa tahari* and of detention are formative of young men’s subjectivities. Through these experiences, they apprehend the disciplinarian elements of their relations with government. They also interpret the terms in which they are constructed and the spatial grounding of this construction. In narrating their encounters with the police, humiliation was the emotional term used most often by young men to describe the embodied feelings that arise in interaction with the police. Police raids on coffee shops, patrols of streets and alleyways, physical intimidation like pushing, roughing-up and shoving are humiliating practices that are experienced as an assault on the subject’s dignity, sense of self and identity as ‘sons of the country’ or as ‘free workers’. In such encounters, certain emotions and affective dispositions are cultivated: anger, disgust and revulsion towards the police. This emotionality anchors and connects subjects and I would argue that it has informed both the formation of the oppositional subject and the enactment of oppositional subjectivity in the spectacular events of 25 January 2011.

Citizens experience state power both in the operation of spatial and temporal techniques of surveillance and discipline and in the forms of subjectivation that these techniques effect. This spatio-temporal power operates, among other things, through the management of mobility and circulation, but does so in a differentiated manner in which rule is modulated in relation to its objects (drawing on Ismail 2011). In their narratives, young men drew sketches of the subject of suspicion as someone poorly dressed with a scar on the face or hand. In a number of accounts of police use of the practice of suspicion and investigation, youth related that they were stopped by police officers and either questioned and possibly detained or let go on the basis of their appearance. In an *ad hoc* discussion that I had with a group of young men from Bulaq al-Dakrur (a neighbourhood located on the western edge of Cairo), one youth in the group explained that he was spared arrest by police following a street fight to which he was a witness because he was well-dressed on the day of the incident and because he was judged by the officers to have a ‘clean appearance’. Tellingly, young men distinguished between spaces where they were more likely to be treated as subjects of suspicion or as lesser subjects and spaces where they were accorded respect. For young men from popular neighbourhoods, being stopped by the police had
become a common experience. Police checkpoints at bridge crossings and entry points into the neighbourhoods inhibit young men from moving freely in the city. Thus, mobility is enframed by police practices of surveillance and monitoring and, in the process, spaces are configured, with zones of safety and zones of danger emerging as part of the topography of the city. Hierarchies develop in configurations of space and the norms inscribed in them. Hence the subject’s positionality changes as s/he moves around the city. Young men learn that outside the neighbourhood, there are greater risks of becoming the subject of stop and investigation (ishibah wa tahari) and thus they refrain from circulating in the spaces of government.

Conflicting relations with government are inscribed in the lived spaces of the popular neighbourhoods. Various aspects of everyday life in these neighbourhoods are subject to a wide range of governmental regulatory practices exercised by the police along with other state agents. It is important to note that policing practices cover and at times merge with the regulatory/disciplinary and the security remit. In Egypt, various specialized police departments are in charge of the management and oversight of a broad spectrum of the social sphere including outdoor markets, the use of public utilities, transport and public morality. Their intrusion into the details of everyday life is far reaching. For example, municipality police raids on outdoor markets punctuate the rhythms of the everyday. Vendors in the markets position watchers to monitor possible police operations and warn of incoming police raids. At the sight of the police vans, they retreat to the alleyways, hide their goods in residents’ homes and chases ensue. These episodes are regular occurrences wherein the action of state agents undermines the pursuit of a living: merchandise is confiscated, scales are seized, and fines issued.

Encounters with state agents are formative and defining elements of the political in everyday urban life. The political, here, should be understood as involving power relations and contestation and as entailing interaction with government. This form of politics has many facets: informality and illegality that, as argued by Roy (2005) and McFarlane (2012), among others, is an effect of certain governmental practices; disciplinary control enacted through surveillance and monitoring; exclusion and marginalization resulting from blocked access to services and resources and from discursive practices that stigmatize the inhabitants of popular neighbourhoods. However, there are still other facets to the politics of everyday urban life. I will turn now to another set of practices that are productive of everyday urban life, namely place-making practices and autonomization.

**Place-making and autonomization**

Place-making and community-making practices lay the foundations of insurgent citizenship (Holston 2009). Place-making practices (Escobar 2001), as practices of familiarization (Roy 2009) and appropriation of space, may not aim to challenge the power of the state directly, being primarily efforts to settle in the city. Yet, by their very nature as processes of achievement and accomplishment, they lay down the infrastructures of action, understood, here, as the underlying material foundation, resources and capacities required for action. Place-making practices include territorialization of sociability and of identities. These practices are productive of both old and new popular neighbourhoods. Characteristics of the urban form of Old City neighbourhoods and of new popular quarters, for example the alleyways, facilitate place-making practices. The proximity of homes contributes to particular dynamics that make visible certain aspects of life in the neighbourhood. Sociability networks form among neighbours where the production of private and public space challenge conventional divides. As one of my informants depicted it: the homes are inside one another (al-buuyut guwwa ba’daha) and ‘our life is hanging on the line like washed clothing’. In this space, the alleyways are lived as an extension of the home. They are both public and private where the public is one’s neighbours and community, but they are also one’s intimates and thus the space is rendered private through the social relations that it anchors, be they relations of solidarity or of discord.
Sociability is centred on the alleyways, as is the case with young men gathering at street corners or at the multitude of neighbourhood workshops that specialize in diverse service and production activities such as auto repair or carpentry. Out of the sociability circles organized around work and home, male fraternities are formed and a territorially inscribed identity is constructed, best captured in the figure of Ibn al-hitta or ‘son of the area’. Male fraternities, as a form of associational life that furnishes nurturance and solidarity, are sites where informality, as disposition in the sense suggested by McFarlane (2012) – that is as an attitude that can be assumed to accomplish a particular goal – is cultivated. This can be observed in the preference accorded by these men to bonds of friendship and male solidarity over formal rules and state laws in a host of arrangements, including employment and market transactions. Place-based identities work to frame modes of both individual and collective action. Here ‘the popular’, as marker of cultural practices and of identity and everyday civilities, mitigates the ideologies of public order and control (we can see resemblances between these practices and civilities and the ‘incivilities’ discussed by Holston as expressing insurgent citizenship). As noted above, the Ibn al-hitta identity founds a sense of self that rejects police practices of humiliation and that guards the alleyway spaces against their intrusion. Police patrols in the alleyways may occasion moments of defiance revealing the spatiality of embodied dispositions on the part of the subjects. For example, young men standing by the entrances of their homes or at the corners of their alleyways adopt an assertive posture, refusing to step aside for patrolling police officers. In one account, a young man standing by the front door of his home, signalled his refusal to be cowed by looking the police officer in the eye. In not lowering his gaze and not averting eye contact, the young man displayed a self-assertiveness and assuredness that counters the objective of disciplining and controlling young men’s presence in public space.

Place-making practices undergird the defence of place as noted by Escobar (2001). In neighbourhoods where residents face municipality and governorate attempts to demolish homes and remove inhabitants rather than develop or upgrade homes and connect them to services, practices and discourses of place orient rejection of these attempts. In such practices and discourses a mode of life and a community are brought forth. Thus, it is in terms of the ties and relations that inhabitants have with each other that they refuse removal to new settlements. In places, such as the central Cairo neighbourhood of Bulaq Abu al-Ila, where there have been recurrent efforts to dispossess the residents, a place-based imaginary animates the struggles against adverse conditions that include stigmatization and precariousness. In this imaginary, popular identity is grounded in the spaces of the neighbourhood and drawn in distinction from other modes of living in better-off areas of the city, characterized by ease, anonymity and indifference to others. While life elsewhere as depicted in narratives and as inhabiting a shared imaginary could be the object of one’s aspirations, it is also the subject of reprobation and reproach for selfishness and lax morals. In contrast, relations and ties of place are invoked to assert connectedness and a sense of security that familiarity and knowledge ensure. As Escobar (2001: 140) puts it

place continues to be important in the lives of many people, perhaps most, if we understand by place the experience of a particular location with some measure of groundedness (however, unstable), sense of boundaries (however, permeable), and connection to everyday life, even if its identity is constructed, traversed by power, and never fixed.

The defence of place articulates in discourses that counter the stigmatization of popular-class neighbourhoods and their modes of living. Accounts of everyday life in the neighbourhoods by no means romanticize or idealize the hardships and struggles. However, they interrogate the images and claims that are productive of subordination and exclusion. These accounts challenge the charges of baltaga and the devalorizing representations made about the ‘ashwa’iyyat (haphazard communities) in the media. An illustrative example is the interrogation of the discourse of baltaga (thuggery) whereby the figure of the baltagi emerges as one who is on the pay of the police, who collaborates with them as an
informant and whose use of violence is condoned if not promoted by them. Residents of popular
neighbourhoods commonly contend that drug dealers work under police patronage and that police
appoint thugs to run their areas’ informal mini-bus routes in exchange for acting as informants. It is
important to note here that the ethos of male fraternities and of everyday communities requires refusal
to work as informants for the police. Indeed, this is a necessary condition for the affirmation of valorized
popular-class masculinity with its code of chivalry requiring acts and conduct that conform to ideals of
reliability and generosity (gad’ana and shahama).

Often, identity contests are played out in the production of subordination and in urban subalterns’
resistance. There is a dialogic dimension to the production of identities and enactment of subjectivities.
In refuting the stigmatization that comes with the label of ashwai’yyat, the subjects find grounding for
their identity in popular traditions and norms. Integral to this is the production of valorized popular-
class subjectivity. This self-fashioning is shaped by place-based struggles for rights and for recognition.
For example, in the aftermath of the fall of Mubarak, the redeployment of the talk of baltaga as part of
a moral panic discourse about increased violence and the breakdown of social order articulated with the
delegitimization of revolutionary activism and in particular of the involvement of popular-class youth
in protest action (based on a survey of writings and debates in Egyptian media). Blaming certain
incidents of violence on baltagiyya, the media and officials routinely identify popular-class youth as the
culprits. Thus, the October 2011 Maspero events of violence, where Coptic protestors were attacked
and a number of them were run down and killed by military security vans, were pinned on youth from
the Maspero district of Bulaq Abul al-Ila, a lower-class neighbourhood in central Cairo. The official
public rhetoric propagated during this incident and countless others articulates with policies aimed at
the dispossession of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood (see Ismail 2013). In the public order
discourse, Maspero was portrayed as the habitat of criminals and dangerous subjects. In the planning
and development discourse, Maspero was represented as a space of empty lots, public lands, and shacks
and ‘ashwai’yyat. As such, Maspero is viewed by the planners as prime real estate, pure physicality and
devoid of social life, particularly of inhabitants. Under the banner of tatwir (development), the
governorate’s design is to turn areas of Maspero into leisure ground, commercial plots, hotel complexes
and parks. Merging the discourse of planning with that of public order and security underwrites the
planned dispossession of city districts like Maspero. Equally revealing is that the tactics used to
neutralize resistance in districts slated for removal include police raids and arrest and detention of
young males in the community. This has the effect of ‘emptying the area of its young men’, as noted by
families and neighbours in Ramlet Bulaq, another district that is struggling against the threat of
dispossession resulting from a real estate grab by a multinational company as well as the Cairo
Governorate’s plan for a Global Cairo as envisioned in the Cairo 2050 Plan.8

In this context, the public self-presentation of the neighbourhoods is imbricated in their defence of
place and of their right to the city. Hence, in fighting against government plans of eviction, Bulaq
residents organize campaigns calling for upgrading and development and rejecting removal. The rights
claims they make are justified not only on the basis of their long tenure in the area, but also on the
grounds of patriotism, civilization and so on. Indeed, in the aftermath of the events of January 25, there
are indications that the language of rights and citizenship is gaining currency in the struggles of
popular neighbourhoods.

Through their everyday encounters with agents of the state, popular neighbourhoods are ensnared
into the web of power and control. Yet, they establish institutions and forms of organization that afford
them a degree of autonomy from the state. Auto-construction and self-help in obtaining services and
access to utilities contribute to disengagement from government in the sense that the acquisition of
housing and of basic needs represent achievement or accomplishment despite governmental neglect and
failure of responsibility. Equally important to the maintenance of relative autonomy for the communities,
are the forms of governance and ways of doing things that develop in the everyday. For example,
mechanisms and frames for dispute resolution, such as majalis ‘urfiyya (customary councils) are put in place and sought out to avoid having to resort to the police and the courts (see Ismail 2006). Similarly the enforcement of norms of propriety and morality is carried out by the community. This could take the form of ostracizing individuals who transgress against social norms and may extend to putting pressure on them to leave the neighbourhood. Often this type of action pertains to issues of sexual morality. Male fraternities not only provide nurture for their members but also function to oversee the observance of morality and to safeguard neighbourhood security.

Eschewing government by creating alternative institutions and working agreements on a wide range of issues — for example making use of public and common space for, among other things, work purposes — are a form of autonomization. Often, tacit understandings are at work in managing interaction and exchange where no written regulations exist. Such understandings include the regulation of tradesmen’s and vendors’ occupation and use of space for their trade or vending activities. At the same time, social hierarchies are played out and clientelist relations formed, as will be explained below. It is to the social architecture of everyday relations that I will turn now.

The politics of the urban everyday: intermediation and clientelism

As noted above, citizens pursue various modes of action aimed at avoiding government. To this end, they refrain from circulating in its clearly marked spaces where police officers set up checkpoints or security committees (lijan amniyya), and establish parallel institutions of government. At the same time, invested in community institutions and community forms of organization — as elements of the social architecture of everyday urban life — are social hierarchies and relations of power in which relationships with the state are implicated. Individuals who play the role of mediators in dispute resolution are often figures of authority by virtue of their wealth, positions of patronage and the relations that they cultivate with state institutions, in particular the police. Within this social architecture, certain types of relations organize the everyday: intermediation, intercession and clientelism. Intermediation and intercession emerge as mechanisms of relating and dealing with government. Practices of mediation extend from the resolution of internal community conflicts without seeking recourse to state institutions, to intercession with government not only through the good offices of community notables, but also through elected political representatives. Indeed, in popular neighbourhoods, the role of a political representative was increasingly defined in terms of the ability to mediate and intercede with government, and in particular with the police. Judgement concerning this ability entered into the decision to elect a particular candidate to the People’s Assembly. It was common for residents of popular neighbourhoods to explain their voting choices under the Mubarak regime in terms of their ability to call on their representative to free a member of their family or an employee being held in the police station under the suspicion and investigation provision. Intercession to free or clear a suspect, or retrieve confiscated licences, is the act of relay with government expected of a ‘representative’ (Ismail 2011).

Accounts of intermediation between inhabitants of popular neighbourhoods and agents of government reveal how interaction with the state and ‘state-created domains’ necessitate that subjects use one another as resources. They may at times pursue cooperative strategies, while at other times they may take on a hostile posture towards one another (Klaits 2005: 649). The exchanges of favours serve to reinforce the social hierarchies, but also bring differently situated subjects into relations of interdependence and require them to form alliances and common fronts in their dealings with state government (Ismail 2011). Capacities for intercession and mediation are mobilized in one’s family, friends, neighbours and employees. Workshop proprietors may spend part of their day mobilizing their connections to obtain the release of an employee detained under the provision of ishtibah wa tahari (suspicion and investigation) (interviews with workshop owners in Gammaliyya, Cairo, April 2010).
Subjects call on their contacts in better-off circles to mediate with the police to secure the release of a detained relative or employee. These contacts are also mobilized to secure access to health services. In considering these relations, it becomes apparent that these capacities and resources are built into social hierarchies and are productive of differentiated citizenship where, as noted by Holston (2008), subjects do not have resources to benefit from the law as do those who command power and wealth. In this sense, the subject’s networks determine her ability to negotiate with state domains and to navigate local relations of power. This could be observed in everyday conflicts and disputes wherein the possibility of obtaining redress for wrongs is contingent on the kind of ‘back’ (dahr) one has. Resort to the police and the courts and relations with the state in general are imbricated in the social hierarchies. To have no ‘back’ or to have weak ‘back’ means that the subject lacks the ability to call on state powers in conflict with those higher up the social ladder. However, informed by their understanding of state agents and their modes of operation, the subjects develop certain strategies of levelling that are used in interaction with others occupying similar positions in the hierarchy. This occurs where relations of power among family members and neighbours are unequal. This is illustrated by the deployment of false accusations in conflicts among neighbours and family members, for instance. Filing false charges at the police station in the case of dispute is a strategy that aims to equalize force and gain leverage, but also to bring the powers of the state to one’s side. The state, through its police agents and court system, is deeply enmeshed in the social relations of power. ‘It’ takes sides and renders ideals of justice, fairness, retribution and truth questionable in view of the impossibility to attain them. The state is not external to the social relations of power and hierarchies and, in a sense, reinforces them. Indeed, the social hierarchies determine how one is likely to fair (Ismail 2011).

As observed by Roy (2005), state policies are productive of the distinction between the formal and informal and by extension it can be argued that they are constitutive of differentiated citizenship (Holston 2008). One form that this differentiation takes is the formation of ‘wanted citizens’. A ‘wanted citizen’ or muwatin taht al-talab is a citizen who commits an infraction known to the authorities—perhaps encouraged by them. Generally, the subject commits the infraction after reasoning that her choices were non-existent. In a context where all public services are informally commercialized, procuring a public document such as a passport, registering a property, or simply carrying out any legal transaction requires that one commit an illegal act. Citizens ensnared into illegality become wanted, at the mercy of state agents and representatives (Ismail 2011). The criminalization of citizens that obtains through state-drawn lines between the formal and informal serves as a technique of government, mapping spaces as outside the law, left in suspense and abeyance until further notice when they are called to account. In the context of the Syrian Uprising, for instance, the regime undertook a campaign of regularization to remove infraction areas which targeted neighbourhoods active in the protests. In this case, rather than the protests being propelled by the threat of losing passively acquired gains through informal housing and work, it was popular mobilization against the regime in the spaces of infractions (mukhalafat as they are known in Syria), which unleashed the wrath of the coercive apparatus backing the regime. An added dimension in the Syrian case is the regime’s instrumentalization of sectarian identities in a manner which inscribed difference in identity in urban space and divided subaltern groups (Ismail 2013).

Just as differentiated citizenship is effected through state policy and the law on property rights and entitlement to social goods, differentiated subalternity is engendered through state practices of spatial control. Through such practices, divisions among subaltern groups are maintained and instrumentalized to inhibit the formation of alliances and coalitions. A wide range of tactics are deployed to undermine a coalescence of interests. This is true in the case when inhabitants in Cairo neighbourhoods facing eviction are classified into various categories of entitlement to compensation. For example, different entitlements are accorded depending on whether or not the home slated for demolition has a registered electricity connection. It is also the case when the ethnic and religious divides are transformed into...
trenches for the ruling regime as witnessed in Syrian cities. In cities such as Damascus and Homs, poor quarters composed mainly of Alawi-s – many of whom were either in the military or joined impromptu militia which were organized during the Uprising – were mobilized to quell the protests and marches taking place in their predominately Sunni neighbouring quarters. By virtue of a particular history of clientelist relations with the regime, a subaltern group was positioned as a buffer for the regime against other subaltern groups (drawing on Ismail 2013).

The revolutionary potential of the city

Reflecting on the Uprisings in Egypt and Tunisia, Ahmad Kana (2012: 360), citing Henri Lefebvre, suggests that ‘the revolutionary process in the Arab region – and perhaps in the wider global south – can take advantage of the progressive, even revolutionary potential of urban space’. Kana continues that the Arab uprisings inspire a rethinking of the city that goes beyond the stereotypical representation of the global south city as a kind of pathology (ibid.). In a similar vein, my purpose in this chapter has been to elucidate dimensions of the revolutionary potential of the city by drawing attention to how the infrastructures of mobilization lay in the micro-processes of everyday life at the quarter, neighbourhood level and how interaction with government was formative of the oppositional subjectivities enacted in the revolutionary protests of January 25 2011 (Ismail 2012).

Looking at the mobilization of popular forces and their participation in the January 25 Revolution, we find that the infrastructures of protest lay in the micro-processes of everyday life that developed, at the quarter level, in community forms of organization and in popular youth’s modes of action and interaction with state government. The political agency of subaltern forces is not merely reactive. It does not arise only when threatened by government action as Bayat (2000) suggests. Indeed, such a reading of subaltern agency downplays the terms in which everyday forms of organization and modes of governance and positioning vis-à-vis government furnish mobilization resources and generate shared understandings and feelings that are constitutive of the oppositional subject who may act individually or in concert with others even when no immediate interests are threatened. Youth fraternities, charitable organizations, and neighbourhood-based provision of security not only allowed for a degree of disengagement from state government, but also were frames of collective modes of everyday life. In other words, far from living an atomized life or pursuing their means of living individually, popular forces built community institutions, and fought over and negotiated normative rules. Additionally, a political know-how derived from the daily experience of government guided the participation of youth from popular quarters (drawing on Ismail 2013).

I suggest that the everyday chases, evasions and clashes in the markets and alleyways of popular neighbourhoods and in and around football stadiums are interconnected nodes that laid the ground for the revolutionary action seen in Tahrir Square and its back streets in 2011 and beyond. Youth protestors gathering in the alleyways moved within networks of family and friends and were spurred to join or spurred others to do the same. Earlier modes of protest were reproduced and reinvented. For example, we can see a recall of earlier patterns of protests in the marches out of mosques, clashes on main thoroughfares, dispersal and seeking refuge in side streets (Ismail 2012). In these patterns there is also a replay of everyday interaction and interchanges: the chases in the outdoor markets between the vendors and the police, the duels in the stadiums between the Ultras football fan groups and the security forces. Importantly, the emotionality embodied in the action was cultivated in earlier spatially inscribed encounters. An important and integral element of the revolutionary action as it unfolded in popular neighbourhoods was the assault on police stations. In total, 99 police stations were burnt down, and 25 of these were in popular quarters in the Greater Cairo region. We should consider the interconnections between the everyday episodes in the markets, the raids, and the experience of ishtihab wa tahari and how they were constitutive of a structure of oppositional subjectivities—subjectivities that were enacted
During ‘the days of anger’ not only on Tahrir Square but also on the streets and alleyways of popular urban neighbourhoods.

What should be highlighted from this attention to the micro-level of action and everyday forms of organization are the chains of interdependence and links formed among urban subjects in popular quarters, in alleyways, at police checkpoints, in football stadiums and so on. These structures of everyday interaction furnish resources and capacities and establish infrastructures for the kind of revolutionary action witnessed in the public squares of Egypt.

References


Notes

1 For a succinct overview of episodes of contention in the previous decade see El-Ghobashy 2011.
2 Thus, in an interview, Egyptian leftist analyst Hazem Qandil asserts in reference to what he identified as ‘the shanty-town dwellers’: ‘fortunately this menacing human mass was entirely absent from the revolt, which probably contributed to its civilized and peaceful character’ (see Kandil 2011, emphasis added).
3 My discussion of everyday-life politics in this chapter draws on extended periods of fieldwork and on shorter field research visits in popular neighbourhoods in the Greater Cairo Region, such as Bulaq al-Dakrur and al-Gammaliyya, between 1999 and 2013.
4 For historical accounts of the city’s development during the Ottoman and early modern periods see Raymond 2001.
5 Greater Cairo refers to the metropolitan region comprising the three governorates of Cairo, Giza and Qalyubiyya.
‘Popular forces’ is the category used in studies of the Arab Middle East to refer to diverse social actors who are distinguished primarily from the dominant social, political and cultural elites.

Governorate refers to an administrative division. It is equivalent to a province. Governorate is the translation of the term مُحافظة used in Arabic to denote an administrative unit or division.

The 2050 Plan which was introduced in 2008 envisioned the transformation of Cairo into a high-tech world city on a par with the global capitals of the world. The Plan outlines a multitude of projects including the building of central tourist hospitality districts with luxury hotels and shopping centres, the turning of historic areas into open-air museums, and the construction of a business centre with office towers. Key to the plan is the gentrification of central Cairo leading to the demolition of entire districts and the removal of their inhabitants to public housing compounds in desert sites. Remarkably, informal neighbourhoods built on privately owned agricultural land such as Bulaq al-Dakrur are also targeted for a ‘decongestion’ scheme that would see wide boulevards and parks cut through them. Though the Plan has been viewed as unrealistic and as unlikely to materialize for lack of requisite large-scale finance and investment, its schemes seem to animate the continued efforts on the part of the Cairo governorate and real-estate investors to dispossess the inhabitants of central districts such as Bulaq Abu al-Ila to make way for hotel and commercial tower complexes on the Nile. See the discussion and critique of the Cairo 2050 Plan on the blog Cairo From Below available http://cairofrombelow.org/cairo2050/, accessed 27 June 2013.

The assessment concerning the ability to intercede applied to candidates running as members of the former ruling, and now dissolved, National Democratic Party (NDP) or as independents. Being a member of the ruling party was not in itself sufficient to ensure the links necessary for mediation. Thus, wealthy candidates running as independents were often elected because they funded philanthropic activities and enjoyed connections with state agents.
CLAIMING ‘RIGHTS’ IN THE AFRICAN CITY

Popular mobilization and the politics of informality

Claire Bénit-Gbaffou and Sophie Oldfield

Introduction

The groundswell of mass popular activism in contemporary cities – in particular in the global South – has (re)inspired an academic literature on ‘the right to the city’ (Purcell 2002; Brenner et al. 2012; Harvey 2012; Schmid 2012; Samara et al. 2013), and has crystallized the emergence of global social movements claiming a ‘right to the city’ (Purcell 2003; Portaliou 2007; Mayer 2009), more or less rooted in localized political initiatives (see Fernandes 2007 for the Brazilian case for instance). Developed in articulation with dynamics of urban neoliberalization (Harvey 2008; Brenner et al. 2012), academics and activists do not necessarily directly or even implicitly refer to Lefebvre’s initial concept of the ‘right to the city’ (Mayer 2009); although both call for ‘some kind of [radical and fundamental] shaping power over the processes of urbanization, over the ways in which our cities are made and remade’ (Harvey 2012: 5).

Following Mayer’s (2009) caution against the ‘proliferation of this rights [to the city] discourse’ (see also Purcell 2002), here we do not directly use the term ‘right to the city’. In an academic context, we feel that – between a slogan and a concept – the term is more analytically useful when its contribution to understanding specific urban social and political dynamics is carefully unpacked in relation to a specific intellectual question or project – see for instance Purcell (2002), Harvey (2008), Brenner et al. (2012). Equating any form of collective mobilization that takes the city as its object and assuming that those mobilizations are ipso facto claiming a ‘right to the city’, reduces its analytical relevance, a trap Samara et al. disappointingly fall into in their recent book Locating Right to the City in the Global South (2013). In parallel, policy initiatives that attempt to construct more equitable or inclusive cities on the basis of strengthening urban dwellers’ ‘rights’ are not always usefully analysed through a ‘right to the city’ lens (ibid.; see also Morange 2011, in contrast to Parnell and Pieterse 2010).

Our aim in this chapter is to understand more narrowly, practically, and perhaps theoretically, to what extent ‘rights’ to the city are (or are not) a strategic tool for collective mobilization to access urban goods, spaces and resources in cities of the global south. Interested in literature that takes the notion of ‘rights’ seriously, in line with Fernandez in Brazil (2007) or Bhan in India (2009), for instance, we wish to examine the legal dimension of ‘rights’ and their impacts in securing different forms of access to urban spaces and urban goods. But this approach needs to explicitly take into account how the formality of definitions of rights unfolds in urban politics and collective mobilizations marked by high levels of informality. Indeed, our understanding of differentiated, unequal, discrete levels of urban citizenship...
in cities of the south (Chatterjee 2004; Benjamin and Raman 2011; Holston 2008; Mamdani 1996; Yiftachel 2009), questions the ability of ‘the majority of the people’ to claim and access rights in a legal sense. Here we explore the way contemporary urban social movements mobilize the notion of ‘rights’ in African cities particularly, marked by the importance of informality: where, as Chatterjee (2004) has demonstrated, ‘being informal’ in the city determines, or at least strongly influences, the ways urban dwellers articulate their (individual and collective) claims to the city.

Analyses of social movements and the contemporary literature on the ‘right to the city’ often underestimate the complexity of informality and of ‘shifting to a language of rights’, assuming too easily that the main restriction to people’s mobilization of ‘rights’ is state repression, or more broadly lack of political opportunity in many urban contexts (Bayat 1997). In this type of approach, urban residents are condemned to a politics of ‘quiet encroachment’ or ‘everyday resistance’ because the outright expression of their rights would put them in danger. Highlighting the limits of the language of rights and citizenship to make claims, Chatterjee (2004) in his seminal work, *The Politics of the Governed*, opposes ‘civil society’ to what he terms ‘political society’, the context in which in fact ‘the majority of people’ exist, those living in informal conditions, be it for access to housing, to services or to employment. In this approach, ‘political society’ generally cannot claim rights: informal, and therefore often unrecognized by state administration, this category of urban resident has no rights; it can only negotiate favours with local administration and politicians, through temporary arrangements and by stealth (Benjamin 2004), practices of informal arrangement that clearly break the law. In contrast, what Chatterjee defines as ‘civil society’ is restricted to a minority, elite social group in cities of the south – the rate payers and property owners – those who can claim full citizenry as they do not necessarily need to infringe the law in their daily lives.

Nonetheless, urban mobilization characterizes contemporary southern city politics, more often than not involving parts of ‘political society’. In this chapter, we start our analysis from the assumption that to embark on social movement mobilization for rights is not easy or straightforward, because such actions necessarily disrupt and, at times, rupture existing political and social orders, placing residents in visible and vocal opposition with dominant powers from which they derive many of their means of survival. It is these trade-offs, and negotiations, between the extra-ordinary claim for rights and the everyday reliance on social and political networks for survival, that we explore here. We base our analysis on processes of mobilizations for housing and for security of land through a comparative conversation in four African cities: Nairobi, Casablanca, Cape Town and Johannesburg. In each of these contexts, social movement mobilization has become a feature of urban politics, asserting agendas for socio-economic and spatial change, and framing the ways in which rights and justice are articulated. Yet, what rights and mobilization mean and demand differ, framed in social and political, as well as geographical context: from the negotiated resolution from apartheid to democracy in the mid-1990s in South Africa, to the fissures of ethnic, identity-led mobilizations across Kenya in the mid-2000s, and the most recent 2011 movement for democracy and the reformation of royal power in Morocco.

In Nairobi, for instance, a protest by mothers against the detention of their sons in prison for mobilizing against the Kenyan one-party state creatively disrupts police action when these mothers strip and protest naked in Uhuru Park, a highly visible central location at the door-step of the globalizing Central Business District. In turn, the renaming of a peri-urban informal settlement in Casablanca highlights not only a right to housing, but also the social implications and costs embedded in renaming and challenging the stigmas of the rural and their interplay in a politics of urban injustice. In a peripheral neighbourhood in Cape Town, a mobilization to demand water makes visible – in large and old panties hung out on the fence of the municipality’s housing office in the neighbourhood – the spatial injustice of access and the absolute centrality of water in neighbourhood life; and, its corollary, the gross injustice produced when access is denied.
These stories are not interchangeable. It’s hard to imagine Moroccan women (or men) hanging out underwear to demand water, or for women to strip naked in a park in central Cape Town. But in each of these quite different urban, political and cultural settings, claims for rights take the form of a disruption of the usual, everyday, ‘traditional’ social order in the city. Rather than assume that the mobilization of ‘rights’ acts as a form of recourse and mobilization to claim redress (generally from the state), it is often more customary and efficient to use the register of favours and existing governance networks to try and claim access to resources. In exploring this type of interaction, we are not arguing that mobilization for rights has no bearing and no importance for the improved condition of the poor in the city generally: instead, we are interested in analysing when, and how, it becomes possible for political societies to use a language of rights to move beyond a politics of invisibility. A ‘right to the city’ is therefore meaningful, first, inasmuch as it is a mobilization tool for residents, a category for action, organization and public debate. And, second, movement mobilizations and their politics and practice disrupt any overly simple notion that the articulation on paper and in law of ‘rights’ – the heart of democracy – translates in some easy or linear way to everyday urban politics on the peripheries of African cities.

A politics of ‘rights’, urban mobilization, and informality

The ‘right to the city’ lays bare the clash of ‘exchange-value (profit oriented) and use-value (everyday life)’ and their continual contestation (Brenner et al. 2012: 3), processes Schmid (2012) suggests are a signature of the contemporary moment across the global north and south. Yet, Attoh (2011) challenges the right to the city literature to move beyond this quite conceptual and fuzzy – albeit at times strategic – ‘be-all’ notion of a ‘right to the city’; a sentiment mirrored by Parnell and Pieterse (2010: 146) in their assessment of ‘the universal right to the city as the moral platform’ and one ‘from which the developmental role of the state should be defined, and from which alternatives to neoliberal urban managerial positions should be articulated’. To take the ‘right to the city’ seriously – not as a Lefebvrian concept here so much as an instrument of political mobilization – we argue in this chapter that it is productive to reflect on mobilization and the ways in which individual and collective claims are formulated as ‘rights’, and enacted as a political category of mobilization. As well as challenging the rhetoric of rights, mobilizations and their claims also assert an agenda for justice, and its inverse, a critique of the spatialities of injustice, notions bound up in the ways in which informality is produced and shapes southern city politics.

Yiftachel (2012: 152) highlights the critical gap in the ‘right to the city’ literature that we address, suggesting that: ‘[M]ost critical urban theories … have not sufficiently accounted for the implications of … the proliferation of “gray spaces” of informalities and the emergence of new urban colonial relations’. Here, we also draw critically on Chatterjee’s work to reflect on the passages between political and civil society, and thus, the ways in which mobilization and organizing in peripheral ‘gray’ areas of African cities negotiate and move between a ‘politics by stealth’ and a ‘politics of rights’, a type of politics Chatterjee deems impossible in contemporary Indian urban society. This type of analysis is important in settings where the poor mobilize rights actively (Robins 2008; Bénit-Gbaffou and Oldfield 2011; Bénit-Gbaffou and Piper 2012), often in conjunction with (rather than in opposition to) other politics (in the South African context, for example, see Oldfield 2008); or where the language of rights has democratized and spread to a number of public arenas (see, for instance, Holston 2008 on Brazil).

Mobilizing rights, or, in Chatterjeean terms, moving from political society to civil society in a context still marked by informality, certainly has risks if it alienates or sidelines the everyday networks of patronage that prevail locally. Benjamin (2004) has shown how, for informal residents, mobilizing rights to housing in Indian cities through well intentioned formal NGOs, has in fact led to the eviction
of the poorest; while the low profile of the politics by stealth has been *de facto* more efficient in protecting the poorest from eviction (Benjamin 2004). In Casablanca, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Nairobi, the study of everyday politics on city ‘margins’ also demonstrates another degree of complexity, located in the ruptures of dominant and everyday local systems of regulation and distribution, and their social and political costs for low-income residents.

**The ‘right’ to protest and the framing of collective mobilization**

From post-apartheid protests in cities across democratized South Africa, to violent mobilizations within an ethnicized and challenged multi-party political system in cities and towns in Kenya, to the ‘quiet’ revolution brewing in cities across Morocco, contexts vary widely. In this respect, the differentiated legal and practical context shaping the right to protest, as practised and experimented with respectively in Casablanca, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Nairobi are a key element in our discussion.

Contexts for mobilization differ, of course, shaped by national legislation and the particular institutional and socio-political contexts in each place. In Nairobi, for instance, no authorization is required to organize a march or a public meeting. It is necessary however to alert the police in advance, and they can make recommendations on security matters. In practice, it sometimes works differently. For example, in the context of the 1997 post-elections violence in Nairobi, an opposition party, Orange Democratic Movement of Kenya (ODM), planned to have a meeting in Uhuru Park. On the day of the meeting, police and army officers formed a human chain all around the park to prevent participants’ access to the park. Both groups stood there for an unprecedented three weeks, day and night (Owuor, personal communication 2012).

In contrast, in Johannesburg and Cape Town (and elsewhere in South Africa), one needs to ask the Metropolitan police for authorization when planning a march (officially to organize security and traffic and pedestrian circulation). Sometimes marches are forbidden ‘for security reasons’, which leads to an increasing number of ‘illegal’ (unauthorized) marches − sometimes violently repressed by the state, leading at times to marchers’ violence (see Alexander 2010). And, in Casablanca, one needs to ask the regional authorities (the prefecture) for an authorization to march, as legislated by a 1958 law. However, jurisprudence from the Supreme Court does not consider ‘sit-ins’ as part of this category, as they fall under the right to strike at a work place. For this reason, many social movements use sit-ins in their struggle. However, the police often try to bar access to the public place where the sit-in is planned. Although sit-ins are not technically illegal, these protests remained unauthorized, thus authorities have the right at any time to ‘disperse’ collective groupings.

Clearly urban and national contexts vary: place matters − institutional contexts situate and define rights, shape mobilization, not determinately or instrumentally, but importantly nonetheless. Our objective here is not to present a systematic and comparative analysis of each city’s and nation’s democratization and political dynamics, but to stress how such contexts affect the forms urban mobilization takes and the differentiated articulation of rights related to urban spaces and access to housing in particular.

**Three stories of mobilization for ‘rights’ to housing**

Housing is not a right in equivalent ways across Casablanca, Cape Town, Johannesburg and Nairobi. In the South African Bill of Rights in the post-apartheid Constitution, for instance, ‘access to housing’ is articulated as an explicit legislated right (1996: Article 26.1) which the state must gradually ensure within its capacity and available resources. The substantiation of this right lies at the heart of many political mobilizations, from Abahlai baseMjondolo (see Pithouse 2008) to a series of court cases successfully won by legal NGOs against municipal or provincial government, which have
compelled the state to change housing policies and practices (Wilson 2011; Huchzermeyer 2011). In Kenya, the 2010 Constitution establishes the right to ‘accessible and adequate housing’ (Kenyan Constitution 2010: article 43.1.b), also taking into account the state’s limited resources and the incremental nature of the implementation of this right. By contrast, in Morocco housing is not a constitutional right and cannot easily be drawn on in court-case actions: but the mobilization of a collective right to housing is emerging based on claims from informal settlements and a broader movement for democracy. These institutional, legislative and political contexts shape mobilizations for housing in quite particular ways, as illustrated in the three stories of such mobilizations around housing below.

In eThekwini (South Africa), a movement called Abahlali Basemjondolo (the residents of the shacks, in Zulu) was born in 2005 to resist municipal attempts to ‘eradicate’ informal settlements, in line with a specific and repressive interpretation by the South African state of the Millennium Development Goals (Huchzermeyer 2011). Based in the Kennedy Road informal settlement, the movement soon attracted affiliates in a number of informal settlements in the city. When a Provincial Act (The KwaZulu-Natal Elimination and Prevention of Re-Emergence of Slums Act 2007) was passed that made it easier to evict informal residents in the name of urban development, the movement challenged the Act in the Constitutional Court (see Huchzermeyer 2011), using the Constitutional right to housing as its basis for action, and supported by rights-based NGOs and academics. While the matter was still being processed in court, the leadership of the movement was violently attacked in Kennedy Road, and forced to leave the settlement and go into hiding. Strong presumptions exist that the attack was coordinated and organized by the African National Congress (ANC) at local but also provincial level, and supported by the national and metropolitan police. Whilst the movement partially won the case – the Court struck down Section 16 of the KwaZulu-Natal Slums Act (Huchzermeyer 2011, p. 221) – a politics of fear and patronage characterizes this context. The legal battle has made progress on the ‘right to housing’, and the practices of brutal evictions slowed down for now: but the movement has been considerably weakened in the process (Kell and Nizza 2011).

In Casablanca, following the rebellion of 20 February 2011 inspired by and part of the Arab Spring, the youth and the unemployed mobilized for ‘decent housing’. Born initially outside traditional social movements such as trade unions and political parties, this movement began at a very local level, when the residents of two informal settlements, Skouila and Thomas, led a sit-in in front of the local government offices (the prefecture). The initial trigger was a strong feeling of injustice: not because the municipality was organizing the relocation of informal settlements’ residents, but because a number of residents fell outside of the list planned for relocation (the recasement) (Belarbi 2011).

This initial sit-in was transformed into a broader movement due to two contextual elements: the presence of two trade unionists who were also residents in one informal settlement (Sidi Moumen) and members of a Moroccan Human Rights Association, ATTAC (an anti-globalization movement); and the adoption by a radical political party (Annahj Eddimocrati) of a mobilization strategy around the right to and access to housing, in line with its initiative to ground the party in poor people’s everyday concerns. Their involvement led to the creation of a ‘Commission for Housing in Sidi Moumen Lakdim’, which proposed to centralize and coordinate all residents’ housing claims and forward them to the administration. The Commission followed up complaints by residents (against eviction, and failure to be registered on relocation lists, for instance) and organized marches and sit-ins in front of the regional offices (prefecture). Working locally originally, this Commission has become metropolitan in scale, operating across Casablanca under the title ‘Regional Commission for Social Support to Victims of Indecent Housing’. More recently, it has become the official partner of public authorities to deal with housing issues in Casablanca. This shift has also led to a change of discourse too: through the Commission, protestors use slogans, such as ‘You are the ones responsible for making sure your rights
are fulfilled’; ‘no housing, no citizenship’, drawing on the internet to circulate and publicize videos of their marches and protests.

In Nairobi, the housing question is a central one, and has been at the core of some of the ethnic political violence that marked the city in the aftermath of the 2007 contested election. De Smedt (2009) argues, for instance, that violence emerged in Kibera, a dense informal settlement, around landlord–tenant conflicts, a cleavage that also had ethnic and political dimensions. While claims to housing seldom use the language of rights, and generally adopt the path of clientelist local compromises or traditional informal resolutions (Lamba 2005), the increase in evictions, primarily led by private developers, has led to the creation of Muungano wa Wanavijiji (the ‘Federation of Slum Dwellers’), begun in 1996 in Nairobi initially. The Federation, affiliated to the global organization Slum Dwellers International, argues that forced evictions are in breach of well-established international norms and laws which obligate the government to provide affected communities with adequate and reasonable notice; genuine consultative forums; information on the proposed evictions; and adequate alternative housing or resettlement of those to be affected. It has not however adopted a confrontational or legal approach to public policies, rather seeking cooperation and compromise with the state, which has led to the developing of a number of ad hoc solutions based on residents’ saving schemes and in-situ upgrading projects.

Although different, these cases mark a rise in mobilization for housing for the poor at metropolitan, and sometimes even national, scales — moving beyond the neighbourhood level where most mobilizations for housing started. The conditions for this up-scaling are not fully explored here, but connect in some ways to the globalization of housing issues (through events, conferences, agreements and NGOs) and through the influence of global movements (such as Slum Dwellers International and ATTAC), or, indirectly, through globally inspired policies (such as the Millennium Development Goals, often used as by governments in the African context as a pretext to clear informal settlements and legitimize repressive Slum Acts: Huchzermeyer 2011).

All three contexts also witness the rise of the language of ‘rights to housing’, although the South African case is distinctive because rights are understood as legal, and used to contest repressive policies in court; in contrast, in the Moroccan and Kenyan cases, the language of ‘rights’ is more abstract, and probably less widespread amongst residents of informal settlements. In consequence, it is possibly used, not to confront the (less democratic) state, but to fit into the international language of human rights and international NGOs, and to put pressure on national governments.

Finally, present in all instances are local politics and practices of clientelism through party representatives or traditional chiefs, that draw on a mix of formal and informal politics (sometimes even violent politics) to craft compromises to conflicts around housing. In the cases discussed, the articulation between this daily politics of clientelism and the emerging, and varied, metropolitan-wide rights-based mobilization is complex. It is this articulation we turn to now to reflect on, particularly: how does one translate or express a shared, local, collective feeling of spatial injustice (related to the access to urban goods, such as housing or access to services and central city, for instance) into the language of ‘rights’?

In moving between informal politics and the formal politics of rights, we articulate two critical dimensions. The first rests on the processes of turning stigma (Goffman 2009) — feeling ashamed of one’s informal status or activities, and attempting to hide this status both from others and from the state — into a public expression or issue in order to convert it into a claim, a right, or a call for justice. The second dimension of this articulation is the complex negotiation of local clientelist linkages that render daily lives bearable, with the generally more external, ephemeral, and oppositional politics of rights, which often discard, expose or confront clientelistic links, at the risk of losing resources, if the new mobilization network does not last or succeed.
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From individual shame to collective claims: challenging dominant norms and discourses discrediting ‘the informal’

Drawing on three mobilizations which help us reflect on the ways in which issues of shame challenge mobilization, we explore in this section what is required to shift individual experiences into collective claims for rights. Central to these processes are ways in which mobilizations challenge the dominant norms and discourses that discredit and de-legitimize so-called ‘informal’ forms of everyday life and city living. We discuss water cut-offs and the ‘right’ to illegal reconnections in Cape Town; how the recognition of the ‘urban’ status of a settlement allows for new claims for services, in Casablanca; and lastly, again in Cape Town, the ways in which what is reputedly shameful – the inability to be clean – can be converted into a tactic to shame the oppressor and to assert and claim the right to water.

The ‘right’ to water? From a private shame to a public entitlement in Cape Town

How does a resident shift from feelings of shame and humiliation to feelings of entitlement and rights? This shift cannot be generalized, nor is it easy; here we reflect on the challenges of changing notions of what is private to open up debates and mobilizations around rights and access to public entitlements. These experiences are lived and contextualized in places and their dense social practices; moreover, mobilizing holds costs – from the personal to the neighbourhood.

In South Africa, the Bill of Rights in the Constitution provides the right to water (Republic of South Africa 1996). Yet, municipalities charge for water and are allowed legally to disconnect residents from their normal water supply in cases of non-payment. In these instances, municipalities are required legally to provide ‘free basic access’, a minimum amount per household per month (Peters and Oldfield 2005); they thus insert a ‘stopper’ (known as a ‘drip’ in some parts of Cape Town), a metal coin-like object with a small hole through which residents can access a minimal supply of this essential resource.

Figure 25.1 Right to Services March Cape Town, 2001
Photo: Sophie Oldfield
Mobilizing to challenge this policy and to access water requires group solidarity and collective strength, in this case shining a public light on individual households’ struggles to access water, issues more often than not hidden. These concerns and their politics and practices are bound up in dominant discourses that operate city-wide. There’s a debate in the neighbourhood, for instance, about what families should do if they have their water access restricted. Nearly everybody has water debts and hardly anybody can formally and legally reconnect by paying off a big portion of arrears and the reconnection fee.

For activists in the neighbourhood, it’s obvious: ‘reconnect, it’s so easy. Know your rights. You just need a “baboon spanner” and a “struggle plumber” to reconnect you.’ The leader of the local community organization reflects on ‘the long stories that people tell’, proclaiming that ‘you shouldn’t be ashamed’. In contrast, some community leaders and families suggest you should live within the free basic water allocation, conserving your water usage, individually embodying the public city logic of ‘careful’ use, of living ‘responsibly’, within your means, as a ‘good citizen’ should. Fearful and conscious of the possibility of legal recourse and criminalization, some families choose to live on the drip, to supplement their water access by going to the informal settlement in the neighbourhood, a place where there are standpipes and water is not metered. This involves requesting permission, begging for access to the water tap, carrying water back to your home, feeling individually the humiliation of this ‘step down’ from formal service. The cut-off from water is public in other ways too. The law enforcement vehicle, in tandem with the sub-contracted company paid to disconnect the water, place your status in full view of neighbours. They pull out their equipment, open up the water meter on the street, and publically insert a stopper to limit the household’s access to water. Neighbours and residents observe; in consequence, many families feel humiliation. They cannot afford to pay their water debt, or to pay the reconnection fee. They opt to survive on the water dripping into the bucket, slowly, all day long, but the immediate effect is a water shortage: the inability to do laundry, the need to cook, to cut out cleaning. They live on the drip, in private, limited to a bucket or two of water a day, feeling the paralysis and disempowerment of such limited access, a public challenge to these often hidden, yet challengingly public, individual struggles.

The activist community leader is ambiguously positioned too. As a formal representative on the municipal sub-council, she cannot break the city’s laws. She’s caught in a game in which she cannot reconnect water publicly, so sends residents to others for help. In the sub-council, she can report maintenance problems and water leaks, but structurally cannot challenge the city’s water policies directly or the broader social discourse that you are a criminal if you do not pay, or an irresponsible citizen, if you are not ‘water-wise’. The social dynamics that constitute the meanings of mobilizing, and their costs, are bound up in such local and national contexts and cultures. These are constituted in and operate in place-specific ways. In Morocco, for instance, a critical marker is that of the urban and rural, the focus in the following sub-section.

In a name: the nature of claims for the city, Hay Watani, Casablanca

Living in an informal settlement in Morocco carries a strong stigma (Zaki 2010) of being illegitimate in the city, shame because you are assumed to come directly from the village, where the ‘peasant’ is often mocked and caricatured as unable to understand the sophistication of urban life. Informal settlement dwellers, as well as rural dwellers, are often described as ‘animals’. Sometimes this categorization is used even by informal settlement dwellers themselves to emphasize what they consider inhumane conditions of life. An element of shame attaches to those who are rural, and to those parts of the city that are deemed rural — often described, by other residents but also by informal dwellers themselves, as places where ‘we live like animals’. This stigma has been turned in some instances into an accusation against the state, evident in broad terms by its failure to regularize or develop the
neighbourhood; or, more mildly when the stigma is not accompanied by a direct and immediate threat to the neighbourhood, by forms of collective mobilization from emerging patrons, who then take up the task of mediating with local government (Iraki and Tamim 2009). Although these tactics are not directly confrontational or legal challenges to an authoritarian regime, recognition by state authorities often helps frame collective expectations to claim rights as discussed next in Hay Watani of Lissasfa on the periphery of Casablanca.

An informal settlement on the western periphery of Casablanca dating from the 1970s, the neighbourhood includes approximately 750 houses living with incremental access to services such as electricity and water. Property owners created an association (Lissasfa Li Hay Lhaj Bouchaib El Watani) in 1996 and sent petitions to the municipality, a delegation to the service provider, and held sit-ins in front of municipal and service providers’ offices. They also tried to convince property owners located next to the settlement to allow for infrastructure installation without payment of compensation. In 2002 the Association organized for the municipality to change the name of their area, as they felt that their original name was too ‘rural’: it was douar Haj Bouchaib (douar meaning village). The request was accepted in 2010, and the neighbourhood was given the new name of Hay Watani (Hay meaning urban area). For residents the change of name corresponds to a change in social status, and allows them to make new claims towards the municipality and the state, in particular in relation to housing: ‘how can an urban neighbourhood (“hay”), that has become fully urban, still display such degraded housing conditions’, asks a leader in the tenants association, when arguing for relocation.

In Morocco in particular, urban−rural divisions shape rights and the ways in which they are mobilized, built on durable interconnected notions of legality and illegality, urbanity and rurality. Reflecting different social logics and meanings across the contexts considered here, stigma and shame are not always, of course, impediments to mobilization, but also the agents or tools movements draw on to disrupt the status quo, to reshape a public debate, or to draw attention and to challenge authority, as evident in the brief discussion on struggles to claim rights to water in Cape Town below.

Shaming the city – reverting a stigma to realize a right to water

Not fixed, stigma can, of course, be challenged. The discussion below in a Cape Town township neighbourhood demonstrates the ways mobilization for rights also invokes and questions. To get the City to put in water and sanitation for the settlement, and to challenge their response that there’s ‘no budget for it’, the neighbourhood organization dreamed up an effective strategy: to use Council buildings in the neighbourhood to access all the settlement’s water needs – toilets, drinking and cooking water, and washing in particular. All 100 informal settlement families brought their washing, used the council toilets all day, collected water for cooking, hung their washing to dry on council fences. Women especially were encouraged to hang their largest and oldest underpants, to emphasize graphically the indignities of living without water and to challenge the shame people feel in living in dirty soiled clothing. In doing so, they reversed the stigma, drawing attention to the shaming instead of the municipality and its employees. Council work stopped, the crèche closed; harried to their limits, the administrators called their bosses in the municipal offices in the centre of the city. The following day, literally, what was previously unbudgeted for was possible – water standpipes were installed in the settlement (Oldfield and Stokke 2007).

Mobilizations can challenge notions of shame and create public debate. Shame may also be a weapon in mobilization, as in Uhuru Park in Nairobi where the 1992 mobilization by elderly women challenged social mores and norms, particularly when these women stripped naked and pointed their breasts at policemen young enough to be their sons and grandsons (personal communication, Sam Owuor, May 2012). Their actions pressurized the Kenyan government to release their sons from imprisonment for anti-government political activities. Across these contexts, mobilization provocatively opens up debate,
revealing and challenging the clientelistic practices that characterize informality, the focus of the next discussion.

**Breaking favours: challenging clientelism through mobilizing rights**

Many times, in mobilizing rights, movements challenge local clientelistic practices, negotiations that make things happen, that facilitate everyday life based on a system of favours granted to an individual or a group generally at a neighbourhood or local level. The several local stories we are basing our reflection on illustrate different aspects of the intricacies of these practices, beginning with Mukuru in Nairobi, turning to Bertrams in Johannesburg and Lahraouiyine in Casablanca.

**Going to court to fight a private developer – Mukuru informal settlement, Nairobi**

Mukuru kwa Njenga, an informal settlement in Nairobi, has a complex land management system: part of it is managed by a chief, who appoints a number of village headmen for each zone. Headmen manage land, keep informal records of land sales, and solve conflicts (Lamba 2005). These everyday land management systems have their limitations however; particularly, internal ones when different factions fight and a chief or headman’s legitimacy is questioned. Their limits are external also. Mukuru is located on private land, under which it is managed by another set of rules, and also subject to recurrent eviction attempts (ibid.). When private developer-led evictions started to occur in early 2012, residents could not turn to their chief or headsmen; and resistance to eviction and police repression led to the death of three residents. Subsequently, a group of residents, supported by Muungano wa Wanavijiji (the Federation of Slum Dwellers), organized a protest outside the nearest law courts. They petitioned the court to take action against the private developer for forcibly and violently evicting them in total disregard of a court order issued earlier, restraining the developer until the case they had filed was heard and determined. Interestingly, they did not mobilize around the right to housing, but rather on the right to human dignity: ‘residents argued that forced evictions contravened the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights, and that the Constitution provides for the right to protection against arbitrary interference to a person's privacy, family and home’ (Ogemba 2012).

The case gained a high profile, and the Prime Minister, Raila Odinga, described the demolitions as ‘inhuman and unbearable’, and stated that ‘it sends wrong signals to citizens who have hoped for better governance with the coming of the new Constitution’. He emphasized that ‘the Constitution guarantees the right to housing’ and that the evictions should be halted until measures are put in place to ensure that those affected have alternative places to stay (Zadock 2012).11

Clearly, the politicization of the ‘right to housing’ (and particularly its emergence in a political and policy field, beyond ad hoc politics of local clientelism)12 is linked to a number of factors that we cannot unpack fully here. Certainly, the rise of housing social movements, with global support and audience; the quest for international respectability and aid (following ‘good governance’ criteria); the political moment (in the context of nation building around the new Constitution); and the negative publicity around the brutality of police repression in response to residents’ court action, provide a favourable context for a shift from a language of favour and local arrangement, to a language of rights, laws, and appropriate policies. Interestingly, this language of rights does not necessarily contradict the informal arrangements with local chiefs, and appears more as a complementary, parallel strategy in a time of crisis. Not yet fully mobilized by Mukuru residents themselves (who still refer to relatively abstract and remote notions of human dignity), the notion of a ‘right to housing’ is entering the public domain. The way it will impact access to housing for the poorest remains to be seen, but certainly this case and its politicization has strengthened the capacity of slum dwellers to refer to it and use it in their repertoires of action.
In contrast, the two stories below – in Bertrams, Johannesburg and Chechnya, Casablanca – illustrate cases where mobilization of ‘rights’ by residents contradicts, conflicts with and potentially damages clientelistic relationships with local patrons or representatives. In both cases, mobilization of a ‘rights’ discourse emerged when the patron had betrayed a clientelistic agreement.

In the wake of the 2010 Soccer World Cup, in Johannesburg, evictions loomed around the Ellis Park Stadium and its upgrading. A group of residents in Bertrams (the area neighbouring the stadium) mobilized, and, as former anti-apartheid activists resourced with strong ANC networks, they approached a rights-based NGO, the Centre for Applied Legal Studies (CALS), to be protected from the evictions rumoured to be forthcoming. CALS wrote a letter to the municipality demanding the right to information and threatening action against unlawful eviction. Soon after, the residents abruptly ended their relationship with CALS, as, they argued, CALS was ‘undermining our government and the nation’; through ANC struggle networks, the residents had been approached and promised that they would not be evicted and that their houses would be refurbished instead (see Bénit-Gbaffou 2011). From the 17 houses, two eventually were demolished in the context of the widening of the road for the construction of rapid bus transit lanes. A mosaic celebrating the anti-apartheid struggle now sits in their place; ironic perhaps, as in this case collective mobilization was actively discouraged by patronage networks.

Figure 25.2 Bertrams ‘Seventeen Houses’ after renovation, 2009
In contrast, in Casablanca, the City constantly threatened to demolish the peripheral unregulated settlement of Lahraouiyine until mass riots erupted in 1996 (Belarbi 2011). The riot was not a response to the overall repressive municipal policy, but focused instead on demolitions that affected those dwellings whose residents had not paid sufficient bribes to local elected representatives, who had spared others from eviction. Sit-ins in front of the local representatives’ offices, but also violent riots and blockage of the main regional road were organized by residents and attracted much media attention. These actions were brutally repressed by the army. The settlement and its residents won the nickname ‘Chechnya’, as a symbol of both rough rebellion and brutal state repression. The state retaliated in a number of ways. It started gerrymandering local boundaries to fragment the movement. More directly affecting residents’ ability to access basic and much needed public resources, the state withheld the delivery of ‘residence certificates’. In response residents claimed their ‘rights’ to papers, ‘as citizens’ of the country. The critical administrative matter was only solved with the 2002 legislative election and the 2003 municipal election – in which local politicians mobilized explicitly for the delivery of papers (residence certificates) to their constituencies in this area. In the longer term, however, and in the aftermath of the 2003 Casablanca bombings (where the terrorists originated from informal settlements), the municipality has initiated development plans, in this case housing and infrastructure for Lahraouiyine.

In the first instance in Bertrams, Johannesburg, the clientelistic relation prevailed and led to the failure of an emerging mobilization against eviction. In the second in Casablanca, while mobilization of rights did not fully place the local clientelistic system in question, it shook it – before re-establishing its pre-eminence at the local level. Combined with political turmoil in the country, the state’s fear of rising violence (in particular in the form of radical Islamism and terrorism) linked to informal settlements and poverty, state neglect and degradation, mobilization such as that in Lahraouiyine has led to major public investment in peripheral areas.

Conclusion – the hard challenges of mobilizing rights

The complex articulation between economically impoverished – often-informal – residents’ everyday politics of access to resources, and collective mobilization to claim rights, is often overlooked: considered unproblematic in formalistic approaches to ‘rights’ in mobilization for the substantiation of democracy in developing, post-colonial African urban contexts; understood in overly broad and often depoliticized notions of a ‘right to the city’ – little more than any form of mobilization taking the city as its object; or, underestimated in importance and impact, when analysis prevails that focuses on the reproduction of ‘political society’ (Chatterjee 2004; Benjamin 2004).

In this chapter, we have reflected contextually on what it takes to claim justice and to mobilize rights to secure forms of access to the city. These collective and popular claims draw on diverse networks, and occasionally (rather than generally) new agents, that emerge in urban government and open new opportunities for residents in peripheral parts of cities to access resources. Certainly, Chatterjee’s heuristic dichotomy of political and civil society helps identify the structural challenges most people in cities of the south face to mobilize a rights discourse: what perhaps naïve, or depoliticized, understandings of ‘the right to the city’ miss. In bringing a comparative reflection grounded in everyday politics of mobilizing in neighbourhoods, we hope to frame the articulation between political society and civil society as a continuum rather than a strict dichotomy, in which in particular moments ‘political society’ draws on the language of rights (of ‘civil society’); and – when the national or local legal framework allows for it – on its more powerful instruments such as the courts. In parallel, evidence abounds that civil society also operates in a politics of patronage (Auyero et al. 2009) and draws on elements of mobilizing, characterized as ‘political society’ or ‘gray space’ (see Yiftachel 2009).

These discussions invigorate and ground the notion of ‘claiming rights to the city’, an important form of reshaping contemporary African urban landscapes. They stress the fact that claim-making is a
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classified process that is politically embedded in contextually specific political and social networks; and that the notion of ‘rights’ (cast in existing or emerging legal frameworks or broader notions of human rights promoted by global institutions or movements) can be used even by ‘political society’, in quite specific contexts, possibly creating the space for a broader discourse and imagination of ‘a’, or even of ‘the’ right to the city.

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Notes

1 This paper was written as part of the JURGURTA project, a Pan-African-French four-year project, organized by Philippe Gervais-Lambony at the University of Paris and drawing together urban scholars based in Johannesburg, Cape Town, Casablanca, Lome, Nairobi and Lagos with French researchers working in these respective cities. The paper grew out of a collective conversation with Aziz Iraki, Wafae Belarbi and Sam Owuor. Many thanks for their insights and inspirations. A different version of this paper is being published in French (Bénit-Gbaffou et al., forthcoming). The primary material for the city case study discussions draws from research by Bénit-Gbaffou on Johannesburg, Oldfield on Cape Town, Owuor on Nairobi, and Belarbi and Iraki on Casablanca, as well as secondary sources in these contexts.

2 As part of the wider 2011 'Arab Spring' mobilizations, for instance, the 'Movement of the 20th of February' in Casablanca and across Moroccan cities did not request authorization. Nonetheless, public authorities responded in uneven ways to these mobilizations. For instance, the march of the 20th February was not repressed, the one on the 20th March was not either (just after the King's speech calling for a constitutional reform), whilst the march of the 22nd of May was violently repressed, and the march of the 5th June was not. The effect seems to be to create uncertainty about whether protests would be tolerated or repressed (conversation with Aziz Iraki).

3 This relatively new right has obviously not yet had time to be mobilized as such by Kenyan social movements, which have developed claims on the issue of housing over the last decade.

4 For a broader contextualization on housing and community participation in Morocco, see Iraki and Letellier 2009.

5 Conversation with Wafae Belarbi and Aziz Iraki, May 2012.


7 Conversation with Sam Owuor; authors' analysis of Muugano wa Wanavijiji website, http://www.mustkenya.or.ke/, accessed 24 June 2013. For a broader analysis of Slum Dwellers International and its approach, see Mitlin and Patel, Chapter 26 this volume; for a critical analysis, see Huchzermeyer 2011; Roy 2009.


9 Personal communication, Iraki (May 2012).

10 In this context, the neighbourhood association and residents of the informal settlement won in court a right to services for the informal settlement (see Oldfield and Stokke 2006).

11 Raila's discourse interestingly contrasts to the one he held in Kibera informal settlement in 2007 when he was in opposition politics and looking for votes, a moment in which his stance on excessively high rental levels and the necessity to curb exploitative landlords carried a more clientelistic ring.

12 This positive sense of the term 'politicization' is often forgotten in discussions on urban politics (Bénit-Gbaffou and Piper 2012).
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THE URBAN POOR AND STRATEGIES FOR A PRO-POOR POLITICS

Reflections on shack/slum dwellers international

Diana Mitlin and Sheela Patel

Introduction

In 2012 the United Nations reported that 863 million people globally live in informal settlements (United Nations 2012), located primarily in cities of the global south. Although this figure is contested because we lack accurate and rigorous data, nonetheless, we know that citizens living in informal contexts lack tenure security, are inadequately provided with basic services and infrastructure, and have housing conditions that are neither safe nor secure. Global and national processes of economic restructuring and a related lack of employment opportunities and low pay shape global southern cities; moreover, informal settlement residents are often excluded from and marginalized in the city by class, and/or formality, processes leading to the increasing stratification of urban society in the global south. As a result of deprivation and disadvantage, many forms of community organization have emerged within informal settlements to negotiate resources from local government and to further the interests of informal settlement residents.

In this chapter we describe how in such contexts the urban poor struggle for resources and recognition. We focus in particular on one network of informal settlement dwellers, Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI), and the ways in which they organize and negotiate for urban inclusion. We explore the conditions in which these practices take place, demonstrating the ways in which the scale and nature of spatial informality, deeply embedded clientelist politics and broader processes of social stratification in cities shape SDI mobilizations. We begin the chapter with an elaboration of the problems faced by those living in informal settlements and a brief review of the literature on social movement organizing in the global south, outlining the context from which SDI has emerged as a network now active in 388 towns and cities across the global south (UPFI 2012). We argue that SDI strategies provide an insight into contextually designed mobilization practices that challenge and sometimes secure political inclusion in southern towns and cities. We highlight in this argument the ways in which SDI mobilization emphasizes collaboration with government as an alternative strategy for inclusion, opening up what we claim are new interpretations of the failure of governments to address poverty and inequality. At the same time they suggest new options for an inclusive urban future with the co-production of basic services providing the basis for the political autonomy of a network of residents’ groups, enabling them to negotiate for continuing reforms and redistribution. We draw on
this case to consider how residents define, contest and secure their legitimacy as urban citizens who are very much to be a part of an inclusive urban future.

The urban poor and the scale and nature of shelter problems

The problems faced by informal settlement dwellers are immense, although the problems of urban poverty extend well beyond the populations living in informal settlements and include many in formal accommodation too. Wherever urban dwellers are located, the vast majority of material needs such as food, water, fuel, transport and shelter can only be secured through purchasing them in markets. Urban poverty assessments, urban poverty lines and subsequent measures of the level and depth of poverty often fail to take adequate account of these non-food costs (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2013). For those living in informal settlements, the problems associated with income poverty are compounded by appalling living conditions including a lack of provision for water, sanitation, safe and secure neighbourhoods and lack of access to basic facilities including transport, schools and health centres. For example, in Nairobi 30 per cent of the population is living in informal settlements (World Bank 2006); a figure that is relatively low compared to other towns and cities in the global south. In Nairobi’s informal settlements, 68 per cent share a public toilet facility, on average with 71 other persons, and 64 per cent rely on water kiosks and buy water by the jerry can, spending an average of 3 per cent of their income on this essential resource (ibid.). In cities such as Nairobi, the lack of public investment reflects political interests of elites who benefit from selective infrastructure investments (see Gulyani and Talukdar 2008 for Nairobi and Swyngedouw 2004 for similar conclusions in the city of Guayaquil, Ecuador). In Nairobi and elsewhere, further disadvantages to living in an informal settlement include limited access to schools, healthcare and social programmes (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2013).

Residency in low-income urban settlements can itself be a reason for social differentiation and discrimination as informality is associated with criminal behaviour or people are looked down on simply because they have low incomes and few assets (see Perlman 2010 for Brazil; Henry-Lee 2005 for Jamaica; Marx and Charlton 2003 for South Africa; Solo 2008). These studies show that it can be difficult for the residents of informal areas to secure jobs and access to public services because of social attitudes towards their home address. Moreover studies such as Bhan’s (2009) examination of evictions in Delhi suggest an increasingly hostile approach to the presence of informal settlements in at least some cities. Further systemic political and social inequalities result from social relations according to gender, race and ethnicity. There is evidence to suggest that such stratifications have substantive impacts on access to multiple resources and influence individual and collective perspectives of self-worth, aspiration and hence agency. Appadurai (2004: 67−9) argues that low-income urban dwellers in India need to discover a culture that strengthens their capacity to aspire − both in terms of the way in which the urban poor as a group are recognized by broader society and their own individual ambition for themselves and their families. Social mobilization, he suggests, is one route to developing this capability.

Practices of protest and resistance in towns and cities of the global south

It is not surprising that there are struggles of the urban poor against the conditions that characterize poverty and informal settlement life in towns and cities of the global south. The discussion here may appear generalizing − and it is important to acknowledge immediately the limitations in drawing conclusions across widely differing local circumstances. It is also speculative, because consistent research is lacking and what we have are individual studies drawing from a wide range of disciplines and geographies. Despite these uncertainties, there do appear to be some consistent themes of which the most significant appear to be clientelist politics, increasing demands for improved collective consumption of goods and services, and the continuing ‘illegitimate’ status of those living in informal conditions by the formal city.
When Chatterjee (2004: 138–40) discusses political change in India he draws attention to the decline of trade unionism during the 1970s and 1980s and the rise of a ‘political society’ able to represent the interests of slum dwellers. Political society arises to bridge the gap between the state and groups who are living in the city but who are not fully legal, i.e. those squatting and with some degree of informal services for their basic needs. Political society is created by politicians due to extensive illegality (in settlement and employment) combined with government provision of welfare services (but not citizenship) to the urban poor. This politics has emerged to manage access to such resources while at the same time denying recognition of equal status and claim to those who are ‘informal’. Chatterjee (2004, pages 50 and 138–9), in keeping with much of the analysis of this politics, emphasizes the level of contestation and often violent nature of relations. He does not see the rise of political society as accidental, describing how trade unions were weakened by the murder and imprisonment of key activists both by the political right and the Indian state to weaken autonomous organizations of the urban poor.

The urban poor may have lost autonomy but they have not entirely lost agency. However Agarwala (2006) argues that there has been a change in strategy. The growing importance of the informal sector in the Indian economy, now thought to account for 82 per cent of workers in the urban labour force, has resulted in the efforts of informal workers to improve their lives, focusing on collective consumption goods and state benefits (reflecting the needs arising from their location in informal and/or un-serviced settlements) (Agarwala 2006: 422 and 428). Moreover Agarwala (2006: 431) notes the falling number of registered industrial disputes as formal workers are increasingly reluctant to contest labour market outcomes. It appears that the efforts of the urban poor to address their needs and interests are focusing on an increasingly narrow set of goods and services as other avenues are blocked.

What do we know about the political strategies (and associated activities) of organized citizens in informal settlements in towns and cities of the global south to improve their access to collective consumption goods and services? There is a range of relevant research about collective political strategies that include, for the purpose of this discussion, both settlement-focused localized initiatives and more broadly conceptualized social movement activities. We draw selectively here on a concentration of literature on South Africa (Ballard et al. 2006; Robins 2008), the Philippines (Shatkin 2007; Racelis 2008), Pakistan (van der Linden 1997; Hasan 2007; 2008), and India (Appadurai 2001 and 2004; Mageli 2004; Roy 2004). Several conclusions emerge. Residents follow active strategies to increase their options moving between clientelist relations and a rights or entitlements-based discourse as the occasion demands. Confrontation is tempered with negotiations as movements accept the need for reforms within the existing political framework rather than revolution and regime change. In some cities and countries, movement pressures have led to opportunities for participatory governance, and local and city-wide associations have taken advantage of these opportunities. However, there are limits on what has been achieved. For example, Avritzer (2006) argues that participatory budgeting, a much-cited example, may improve resource allocations but may not result in greater democracy if movements are not already strong. Internal challenges for movements are substantial and leaders may not be representative of their members (Devine 2007; Robins 2008). Relations with professional support organizations such as NGOs may be supportive but such professionals may come to dominate local decision-making (Benjamin 2004; Mageli 2004).

In addition to such explicit struggles, there is also recognition that there is much that is not explicit political action, but which is, nevertheless, collective and strategic in seeking to shift outcomes to be more pro-poor. Bayat (2000) highlights the ways in which residents, constrained when contesting adverse outcomes in Middle Eastern cities, find ways to acquire urban informal space, secure illegal services, and earn informal incomes. Bayat uses the term ‘encroachment’ to describe the ways in which they ‘wear away’ powerful and oppressive institutions (Bayat 2000: 548). In parallel, Benjamin (2004: 185) argues that the urban poor in Bangalore are most successful when they use ‘politics by stealth’,
negotiating to advance their claims and interests while avoiding a public challenge, in this case to secure land.

We argue in this chapter that there have been mixed consequences from this social mobilization. It has been recognized that in many cases the leaders of community organizations seek self-interested gains and support clientelist politics, represented through many-to-one relations between local residents and leaders (both inside and outside of informal settlements) that are characterized by limited longevity, dependency, personalized contacts and unequal exchange (Arias 2006; Kitschelt and Wilkinson 2007). However, arguably the critical problem is not the relatively small resources that such leaders manage to extract from this practice. Rather it is in the necessary maintenance of resource scarcity if such practices are to influence voting choices, the reinforcement of vertical relationships often accompanied by violence, and the fatalism that may result as progress becomes a matter of chance not long-term effort, commitment and application (see Mitlin forthcoming for a more substantive discussion). Together these literatures suggest that there is a complex range of political perspectives and strategies by collective agencies (formal and informal) seeking to address the needs and interests of the urban poor. They point to the potential but also the challenges particularly if substantive advances are to be secured because, while this literature identifies strategies, it also documents the relatively small advances that have been achieved.

In the remainder of this paper, we draw on SDI mobilizing as an alternative set of practices and strategies. We consider how affiliates of Shack/Slum Dwellers International (SDI), federations of landless citizens and shack dwellers, have established innovative upgrading and land development projects in towns and cities in more than 15 countries, negotiating state support for their own development activities and illustrating a ‘pro-poor’ citizen driven approach (UPFI 2012; Satterthwaite and Mitlin 2014). The following section briefly describes SDI’s approach, related efforts and outcomes.

How urban dwellers have reinvented the solution

Weru (SDI 2006) suggests that community leaders and professionals active in SDI came together due to their frustration with material conditions and the failure of existing strategies for change. The approach of SDI developed from the same streets of Mumbai that prompted Chatterjee’s reflections. For the women living on the pavements of Mumbai, positive development options were few and far between. In 1984 the Society for the Promotion of Area Resource Centres (SPARC) was formed and staff began to work with women on the pavements, supporting their ideas about how to improve their situation. In 1985, SPARC formed an alliance with the National Slum Dwellers Federation (NSDF), a male-led movement whose membership was drawn from local associations in informal settlements; and the following year NSDF and SPARC launched Mahila Milan (Women Together) a pavement women’s organization formed from six savings collectives. The four-fold approach they developed to advance their needs and interests (including savings, exchanges and federating, information-gathering and co-production partnerships with the state) is elaborated below and is now being replicated by SDI across the global south. Since SDI’s inception in 1996, the network of federations that make up SDI has grown from the six founding members (South Africa, India, Namibia, Cambodia, Nepal and Thailand) with the addition of Bolivia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia, Zimbabwe, Sri Lanka, Philippines and Brazil. SDI affiliates are national federations of savings groups based primarily in informal settlements that work with national support organizations (NGOs) (Satterthwaite and Mitlin 2014). Exchanges are now taking place with groups in many other countries.

The core form of organization within the slum/shack/homeless people’s federations is savings schemes, local groups that draw together residents (mainly women) in low-income neighbourhoods to save, share their resources and strategize to address their collective needs (see Figure 26.1). Savings addresses a critical immediate need for women (as they frequently lack the capacity to control finance
within the household but face multiple emergencies and other needs that require access to cash) and provides the opportunity to build collectives (Mitlin et al. 2011). As these groups aggregate to form a critical mass in cities and across networks organized nationally through federations, they develop an identity and agency to address their issues at multiple levels. Organizing among women has resulted in an emphasis on shelter-related activities. Most savings-scheme members do not have secure land tenure and are at risk of eviction. They are without access to basic services, such as regular good-quality water supplies and toilets. In this context, improved shelter is a priority. These local groups and the larger federations to which they belong are engaged in many community-driven initiatives to upgrade informal and squatter settlements, improving tenure security and offering residents new development opportunities. They develop new housing that low-income households can afford, and install infrastructure and services (including water, sanitation and drainage). They show the state how things can be done, and they seek a partnership with government agencies to expand their work. This approach emerged from decades of struggle in informal settlements, as well as the experiences of the women living on the pavements, in Indian cities. There was recognition that the outcomes of struggles for democracy, rights and entitlements had been limited — and a new approach was required.

The emphasis on local savings emerges from a commitment to strengthen social relations and collective practices between residents as women come together to pool their spare change and agree and operate rules to secure these funds (Mitlin et al. 2011). Women, more than men, see the multiple

![Figure 26.1 Meeting about a settlement survey, Pune, India, 2011](image)

*Photo: SPARC*
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benefits that arise from coming together in small groups and collecting available finance (pennies, cents and rupees). These savings groups seek to address the multiple forms of disadvantage, oppression and exploitation that women face. The immediate focus and localized orientation to collective savings provides women with a public role (as a local leader) and peer support (as they work together), challenging discrimination and limited social expectations. Savings-scheme members form active local organizations able to consider how best to address their own needs and those of their families. The accumulation of each member’s savings provides them with a fund for housing improvements and income-generation investments, and crisis loans if needed. Particularly significantly, the collective management of money and the trust it builds within each group increases the capacity of members to work together on development initiatives. The objective is that finance, rather than being a means of exclusion, becomes a trigger for the formation of strong local organizations. To facilitate this, SDI affiliates build city and national funds and, more recently, an international finance facility.

Each federation engages in exchanges as representatives from different savings groups visit each other to build solidarity and learn from experience. Most exchanges are local but international exchanges have also been important. Exchanges help to ensure that ideas come from the urban poor and are not imposed on them by well-meaning professionals (Patel and Mitlin 2002). Learning, rooted at this level, consolidates individual and collective confidence among informal settlement residents in their own capacities (McFarlane 2006). Consistent horizontal interactions build strong relationships between peers, adding to the effectiveness of local negotiations. As the exchange methodology developed, an additional component was added to include local and national government officials and politicians alongside savings group members on international exchanges to demonstrate what community-led development might offer and to legitimize community-led development approaches.

Community-managed enumerations, surveys and maps create the information base needed for mobilization, action and negotiation (Weru 2004; Patel et al. 2002; Environment and Urbanization 2012). Enumerations are censuses – each household is interviewed and data are collected on them and their needs, along with maps prepared to show all buildings and infrastructure. Affiliates take on the job of profiling each and every informal settlement in the city, building up their networks as they undertake this work. From information gathering, federations move to projects that members take on to improve shelter options, including investment in tenure security and physical improvements, providing examples (or precedents) that can be scaled up if state support can be secured. The precedents undertaken by savings schemes seek to demonstrate how shelter can be improved for low-income groups, and how city redevelopment can avoid evictions and minimize relocations. Through a set of specific activities related to planning of land, installation of services, and sometimes construction of dwellings, members of savings schemes illustrate how to improve their neighbourhoods. As they are exposed to these activities, some city governments and national governments become interested in supporting these community-driven approaches, recognizing their potential contribution to poverty reduction and urban development (Environment and Urbanization 2012). In part their responses reflect their own needs to know about informal settlements and provide policy and programme responses to the scale of need. For example, in Mumbai, the enumeration of households along the railway tracks enabled entitlements to relocation to be unambiguously established and hence the improvement of railway services to proceed (Patel et al. 2002).

The federations that are SDI affiliates seek a development partnership with government, especially local government. Large-scale programmes to secure tenure and provide services are not possible without government support. Informality and illegality have to be addressed if security is to be achieved. Various local state institutions control most aspects of shelter development including land-use controls (including zoning regulations) and building regulations, and these are often responsible for putting affordable housing beyond the reach of most citizens. For land and shelter improvements to be affordable, such regulations need to be renegotiated. The purpose of precedent-setting investments is
to demonstrate the kinds of regulatory amendments required for an inclusive city as well as to explore
the scale of finance required and the kinds of cost-sharing arrangements that are necessary.

SDI affiliates have achieved access to financial services, secure tenure and improved shelter and
regulatory reforms. More specifically, affiliates have achieved:

Secure tenure and improved shelter: Just over 200,100 households have secured formal tenure (either
individual or collective) as a result of the work of the network spread across the countries in which they
are active. Many more have achieved greater security but not formal ownership of the land. In terms
of formal construction, 55,000 families have houses, and 20,000 toilet seats have been provided most
in communal facilities; construction has primarily been in India and South Africa where subsidy
finance is available.

Financial services: The core SDI network involves over 13,000 savings groups with an average membership
of 30 per group. A key mechanism for investing in improved tenure and services has been the Urban
Poor Funds which are established by SDI affiliates as they begin to undertake precedent investments.
Just under US$5 million is currently in the savings accounts of the federations from daily savings
collections. These figures are an underestimate as funds are kept and circulated at a local level and not
deposited in national funds.

Policy and regulatory reforms: Across the network, there are 102 agreements with city authorities, which
establish a dialogue with potential for more equal relationships between the authorities and the
communities. There are also 24 agreements with provincial authorities and 15 with national
governments. SDI affiliates recognize that such agreements may offer little substance in terms of
support and that much work remains to be done once they are signed. However, they are significant in
accepting the legitimacy of the organized urban poor to be involved with governments in undertaking
development activities.

Building a pro-poor politics?

SDI’s approaches as elaborated above are strategies to deal both with the ongoing informality of shelter
and the prevailing mix of formal and informal politics that shape governance. SDI affiliates aim to
secure public legitimacy through evidenced self-reliance and demonstrated common benefits in urban
development models, active collaboration with government, grounded material experiences in
improved forms of service delivery, and a broadly based city-scale movement of the urban poor with
an engagement with the state. We expand on this below.

The extent and ways in which issues and groups are viewed as legitimate or illegitimate by social
and political elites and more generally by the urban citizens form an important part of the broader
context of engagement. The significance of legitimacy lies in its impact on representation, participation
and political inclusion; being seen as legitimate agencies with a cause helps to build political support for
a pro-poor urban agenda and avoids the marginalization of both groups and their development needs.
Securing public legitimacy is particularly important for the inclusion of the lowest-income and most
disadvantaged groups. Simply put, an SDI approach suggests that vulnerable groups cannot afford to
enter into conflict; the likelihood of violence is too great.6 SDI’s strategy is to build and positively
represent the skills and experiences of the urban poor; as they commit their own resources and efforts
development, their contribution is more likely to be recognized by those with a higher status and
higher income. They also build their own sense of self-worth and, in Appadurai’s (2004) analysis,
increase their ‘capacity to aspire’. The organizational processes challenge the negative representations
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of the urban poor that are ubiquitous and which have a disabling and marginalizing impact on political inclusion and pro-poor urban investments.

The dual self-reinforcing emphasis on women and savings creates organizations that both draw in and represent women. Contentious confrontational politics failed to engage large numbers of women in India who continued to face difficulties in their home, neighbourhoods and cities. However, experiences in India showed that the savings process enabled women to build their own credibility within their immediate families. Over time members of Mahila Milan changed the organizing strategies of the National Slum Dwellers Federation in India, shifting them away from confrontational tactics to ones suggested by women, and, which were found to be more effective (Patel and Mitlin 2010). These local self-help actions, together with a willingness to work with local government in the co-production of basic services, build up public legitimacy alongside greater self-confidence.

The emphasis on self-help and partnership with the state is reassuring to politicians and political parties who often fear the challenge of social movement organizations. Self-help communities gain public credibility as development agents through the use of their own resources to co-fund activities with the government and make limited government budgets stretch further. Rather than contest political ideologies, city federations present many opportunities for deal-making. In some countries, particularly India, the Philippines and South Africa, this is seen as controversial by other social movements that have chosen a more confrontational approach; in part related to this, there have also been concerns that the movement is at risk of being co-opted by the state. An alternative perspective has recently been offered by community leaders from one of the SDI affiliates, the Philippine Homeless People’s Federation. They suggest that informal settlement dwellers have been used in political campaigns (by both political parties and NGOs) that have not advanced their interests — and that savings and local precedents provide a chance to work together and illustrate new possible approaches that lead to city-wide alliances for change (Papeleras, et al. 2012: 464 and 473). The conclusion that this approach results in positive political engagement with the potential to advance the rights of the poor also emerges from McFarlane’s (2004) research on the SDI affiliate in India, and Swilling’s (2008) observations from South Africa. Affiliates themselves generally recognize the risks of their strategies. Community exchanges offer a way to secure alternative outsider perspectives on the specific positions that are being taken, and city federations in complex negotiations are offered regular support.

SDI affiliates do not simply seek access to state resources — in addition they seek to shift the negotiation process and its outcomes from simple claim-making on the state to co-production in the broad area of collective consumption i.e. goods that are consumed and or produced collectively, and hence which reinforce practices, build capacities and inculcate solidarity among the urban poor. Co-production refers to the practice of jointly providing public goods and services (see Joshi and Moore 2004 and Mitlin 2008). This material engagement in the substance of urban development creates an alternative urban practice that can, on the one hand, enable a discourse with technical specialists in local government and national state agencies, and on the other, provide a community space to compare and evaluate options and understand which solutions work for whom. The development of this practice is facilitated by the organizational form of SDI affiliates. The federations build links with residents in informal settlements across each city, and ensure that state provision for the alternative urban practice is replicated with a demand ‘from below’, while engaging with politicians to maximize support for such alternatives. The support NGOs engage the officials, explaining what is required and seek to expand the acceptability of such approaches; they also link to other professionals including academics to strengthen broad alliances for progressive social change. For the neighbourhood groups, this provides a learning process based on the interaction within savings schemes as they implement precedents, and supported by community exchanges as described above — in this way, learning builds essential skills and challenges the clientelist politics that are often problematic. Rather than being reliant on the state to produce solutions to welfare, communities learn to define their own programmes.
to address their needs. As precedents are completed, federation groups and other associations can lobby for support for the kinds of interventions that work for them.

The reasons favouring co-production, include the need to build strong local organizations, able to demonstrate alternatives that have local popularity and scale, draw in multiple resources and strengthen local organizational capacity for planning and implementation. Federation surveys and enumerations help to change the attitudes and approaches of governments and international agencies and challenge the ways in which these settlements are ignored in official city documentation. By providing verified data on these areas, federations both challenge this exclusion and shift the terms of the debate. Community data also provides federations with a negotiating advantage as, in many contexts, politicians and officials recognize the federations’ capacity to provide a fair and accurate information base widely accepted by residents; and this is required for upgrading and housing development, and for the inclusion of informal settlements in the maps and plans of local governments.

The methodology seeks a mobilizing process for the movement that balances depth and breadth. Community-managed enumerations, surveys and maps create the information base needed for mobilization, action and negotiation and are part of a mobilizing strategy, drawing in residents who want to participate in a locally managed identification and verification of their shacks and plot boundaries, and documenting of the presence (and lack) of services. Managing these processes strengthens existing savings groups and encourages new savings groups to form. Equally important is that once the findings are assessed, then local residents set collective priorities through neighbourhood and settlement meetings. Neighbours come together to look again at their settlement through the enumeration data and assess what needs to be done. These are not easy discussions but they are essential in developing an awareness of potential priorities, and enhancing practices of intra-community negotiating and agreeing on a way forward.

Federating and networking, together with mapping and enumerations, build a conscious identity of the urban poor as disadvantaged by the development of the city but able to do something about it. The strong emphasis on neighbourhood organizations provides an understanding of the need to organize in ways that complement party policies, ethnic affiliations and other allegiances to secure development and justice. This identity of ‘being informal’ is used to strengthen links between informal settlement dwellers across the city, building solidarity such that groups are able to negotiate with both formal and informal political interests in the city. The goal is to create a network that aspires to universal access to secure tenure and basic services − the universality seeks to challenge the partiality of clientelism, avoid residents’ associations falling victim to the divide and rule, and enables movement organizations to orientate their strategies and learning to improving living conditions for all. Savings-based organizing, in addition to strengthening perceptions and representations of legitimacy, provides the autonomy that Castells (1983) argues is essential for urban social movements in their work with local government and other state agencies.

The groups form alliances with a range of interested agencies including other community groups and professional agencies such as NGOs, university departments, and elite individuals who are concerned with the future of the city. Such alliances help to position SDI’s work and further legitimate people-centred development; they often present further opportunities to work with the state on an agenda for improving low-income settlements in the city. SDI does not believe that alliances and partnerships with these groups and the state imply ‘harmony’, nor that there are not underlying differences in interests (Fowler 2000), rather the choice of partnerships is strategic and a way to respond to deeper underlying differences in power and interests.

**Conclusion**

The exclusion of those living in informal settlements from many of the benefits of citizenship is systemic, generated in social discrimination, resource scarcity, elite accumulation strategies and
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electioneering. The scale and nature of poverty and disadvantage, a context of deeply embedded political clientelism and the broader processes of stratification have led to a number of specific and broadly consistent responses by urban poor groups (see Satterthwaite and Mitlin 2014). In this challenging context, SDI exemplifies a set of processes by which informal settlement dwellers define and then secure their autonomous agency, challenging political exclusion, and creating new and, we think, better development options.

What might be the reasons for this approach to doing politics? One is the considerable commodification of urban living. Increased incomes are only a partial help if families cannot access affordable adequate housing (or even tenure security) and basic services. In most towns and cities across the global south informal services for water, electricity and transport are much more expensive than legal provision — and securing better access requires an engagement with the state. A second related reason is that collaborative relations with the state are important for improved basic services because their provision is not a simple binary choice in which they are either available or not. Effective local services require citizens to be involved with the implementation of policy and negotiate changes in programmes and practices. For example, it is not just if there is a water point, but where it is located, and whether access can be secured despite local political elites who may control the facility in their own interests. A third related reason is the response of governments to different styles of politics. Challenging the state about the nature of service provision may be viewed as a threat because it also challenges the government’s legitimacy to make decisions and its capability to act in the interests of all. States do not, in general, take well to local groups that argue they have made the wrong choices and they may resist on a point of principle irrespective of the merit of particular claims. Hence the complex approach of building a federation, providing an information base on what is required, and emphasizing the potential of collaboration and partnership using co-production to protect the autonomy of the urban poor while accessing state resources. This is a considered and still evolving practice to find a strategy that leads to the acceptance and integration of those living in informal settlements within city governance. In the context of previous struggles, SDI leadership has sought a response that seeks to provide a platform for pro-poor urban policies and programmes that can go to scale.

It also appears that the mode of politics as well as the focus of protest and claim-making has changed. Confrontation is only a part of the story and organized communities are contesting adverse outcomes and advancing their claims in increasingly sophisticated ways (Mitlin and Bebbington 2006), pointing to a diversity of strategies through which activists take considered positions to further the needs and interests of those who are excluded (Bebbington et al. 2011).

From this discussion, we suggest that there is a need to focus attention beyond contentious politics. A focus on contention detracts from a more comprehensive understanding of relations between citizens and government agencies in towns and cities of the global south. While recognizing that the issues related to redistribution are likely to be contested, the approaches of SDI affiliates seek to minimize such responses through a strategic decision to avoid actions that may strengthen negative representations of the urban poor and be seen as threatening by the state. Rather there are a myriad of tactics designed to pre-empt and reduce conflict while advancing the interests and reputation of the urban poor.9

It is not simply that modalities of political action have changed; objectives appear to have shifted away from radicalism and towards negotiated reforms. Movement organizations appear to have learnt from the failures of the past, including the limitations of electoral democracy. Their strategies are complex: some accept inequalities in power and simply seek advantage where they are located using clientelism to advance their interests (Benjamin 2000); others seek fundamental change to adverse political relations (Hasan 2008; Swilling 2008; Boonyabancha et al. 2012). SDI affiliates have refined their methodology, drawing on a considerably wider practice and earlier experimentation. Strong local organizations, collaborative relations with government, autonomous knowledge and learning around both local conditions and the solutions that work for the urban poor, and city-scale mobilization of the
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Urban poor provide the basis to push for material redistribution and policy reform. But it is also designed to achieve two further and more substantive goals: first, to ensure that the urban poor are recognized as legitimate, valued and equal citizens, and second to avoid political dependency and to enable representative and accountable organizations to maintain their autonomy as and when they engage the state, now and in the future.

References

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Notes

1 Sheela Patel is the chair of the board of SDI. Diana Mitlin is a technical advisor to SDI and affiliates. This role includes internal monitoring and evaluations for affiliates and the network, assistance with the analysis and documentation of strategies and outcomes, advice on the financial analysis of major projects and programmes, and participation in joint SDI International Institute for Environment and Development (IIED) action-research activities. This discussion draws together experiences that have emerged over the last 22 years. During that period, Mitlin has made numerous visits to each organization and the community groups identified in this text.

2 The local manifestation of this global figure is illustrated for Pune (India) where despite positive economic growth in India, the proportion of the city living in ‘slums’ has grown from 7 per cent in 1951 to 23.3 per cent in 1976 and 39 per cent in 2001 (Bapat 2008: 4). At the same time, the number of people living in these settlements has increased from 37,000 to over one million (ibid.: 27).


4 Each federation works with a support NGO, staffed by professionals who assist in a range of tasks related to grant management, technical development services and documentation for a professional audience.

5 The figures reported below are from June 2011 unless otherwise specified.

6 See, for example, the account in Garrett and Ahmed (2004) for the potential consequences of clientelist political relationships.

7 An alternative critique is that all that is possible is radical change — and hence reformist movements will inevitably fail. It is not clear that there is widespread support for this position among the residents of informal settlements. From South Africa there is evidence from Ballard et al. (2006) that, whatever the preferences of the leadership, the members of urban movements, even those of radical movements, combine participation in movement activities with support for the African National Congress, i.e. a position of reform rather than revolution. A similar conclusion (also for South Africa) is supported by Thompson and Tapscott (2011).

8 See, for example, SDI’s MOU with the African Planning Schools and related activities (http://www.sdinet.org/blog/2011/01/11/sdi-partners-african-planning-schools/; accessed 16 June 2013).

9 Even social movement theorists from the global north have recognized that this dominant representation of movements challenging the state may be too limited and fail to acknowledge the difficulties associated with protest and the alternative tactics that have been used (Goldstone 2004: 340, 356), and the broader social relations and alliances that have been sought (Goldstone 2004; Goodwin et al. 1999: 35). It may be that the practice has changed. However, it may also be the case that the relationships, activities and subsequent events in the global south highlight factors that were always present in the global north but which were not so evident.
OCCUPANCY URBANISM AS POLITICAL PRACTICE

Solomon Benjamin

Introduction

As a framing device, occupancy urbanism disrupts the notion that master planning could be the sole defining reference locating forms of territoriality, demarcating illegal non-conforming development or conflating the history of the city with ‘modernity’ (Holston 1989; Sarin 1982; Sundaram 2010). Such perspectives name territorial processes beyond the plan as externalities: as ‘slums’, ‘the informal sector’, or as ‘piracy’; their underlying politics is viewed as a perversion, for instance as ‘vote banks’ and ‘patron clientelism’, and a criminalized ‘Urban Infra Power’ (Hansen and Verkaaik 2009) all driven by the ‘land mafia’. As deeply politicizing processes, the working of land embeds a range of diverse and often conflicting actors into urban administration, such as: settler groups, municipal councillors, firms, but also higher levels of the state and its associated agents. Challenging conventional assumptions about the politics of urban land in southern cities, occupancy urbanism draws attention to the complexities of political practice and helps us think about how particular parts of the state govern through law and regulation formed and directed in a world of practice.

The substantial impact of everyday practices on the politics of land shapes the territoriality of urban economies as well. Just as we should revisit given categories of land and bureaucracy, I argue here for reconsidering our assumptions and conceptualizations of economy. Modernist and developmental narratives pose the realm of small-scale firms and trading as ‘the informal sector’ (Portes et al. 1989, Hart 1973), locating such actors within a frame of exploitation, following ‘high and low roads to modernization’ (Holmstrom and Cardene 1994) and a modernist Fordist to post-Fordist linearity. Yet the majority of southern urban economies emerge from a different history, one far from the ‘disintegration’ of mass production. Narratives of hawking and informal economic zones, and of small firms posed in a narrow history of Fordist genealogy, miss out the actual terrain of power that lies within the firm and its engagement with an economy of land in southern cities. Drawing on occupancy urbanism, such territorial positioning opens space for us to examine the relationship between small firm trade and manufacturing economies dominating southern city terrain, for instance: the setting of the firm, its connection to the development of land and linked to this, a political consciousness located within and beyond a classical ‘labour-management’ frame (see Das 2005; Sanyal 1991).

At the outset, however, it’s useful to clarify that this is not to disregard Master Planning, constitutional provisions for decentralized governance, or global capitalism but rather an attempt to see these as one of the many realms that can operate to shape territoriality and associated political and institutional
spaces. As a way to re-theorize cities, this chapter makes two inter-related arguments: First that the substance of urban land lies in understanding its everyday practices that politicize administrations into a ‘porous bureaucracy’ (Benjamin 2004; Das 2012). These are fluid, often opaque, operating in ways that allow territoriality to happen on different, competing and conflicting, logics. Second, I consider the ways in which territory and economy are ‘co-produced’ in everyday social and political practice in southern cities (Tang 2012). Rather than rigidly bounded, firms operate in ways that show an economy deeply embedded in occupants of territory and formed through politicized bureaucracy. This sense of open-ended fluidity, and the possibility of reconstituting property in land and economy as an approach, helps reject the political confinement associated with the view that territoriality is the subject of meta-capital. Instead, it reveals the complex constitution of occupancy urbanism at the scale of plot, factory, neighbourhood, city; the logics that operate in practice, intermixed with (trans)national capital.

Through this argument, I draw on the world of practice to nuance notions of how urban economies operate and how in these contexts land is territorialized; both processes underpin political claim making in cities across the south. I explore first the ways in which land politicizes urban administration beyond policy and plan; then I turn to how this shapes and is shaped by small firm economies. Neither submission to the ‘plan’ or complete ‘resistance’, this focus emphasizes more open-ended conceptual categories to explore various realms of politics that constitute the urban. Illustrated in two contexts in Delhi, India − Nehru Place and a contestation between small businesses, hawkers, and home-based industrial areas in East Delhi − a focus on political practice depicts occupancy urbanism as central to territorial and economic urban strategies.

**Occupancy urbanism beyond policy and ‘plan’**

Occupancy urbanism explores the project of re-theorizing economy, territory and politics and builds an agenda specific to ‘southern’ cities (Roy 2009), contexts characterized by ‘unsettled’ property in land. O’Donnell (2008) and Massey (2005) direct our attention to the embedding of land settlement into politicizing municipal administration. While attempts at constitutionally mandated decentralization do shape urban spaces, in the contexts in which I am interested, political pressures have their genesis in more material processes − those of lobbying for improvements in basic infrastructure and services. The urban territory impacted by this politics is large, often 70–85 per cent of all urban territory, much beyond designated ‘master planned’ zones. Practices of socially embedded ‘working the administration’ have spanned more than one generation, a cumulative set of experiences central to ‘making things happen’. In practice in such contexts, many mainstream land-uses and economic activities fall outside strict town planning norms or practices. While some acts ‘work’ the land by mobilizing ‘loopholes’, many are mainstreamed, normal bureaucratic and administrative processes. This mix is a critical element in this chapter. Political opposition in the realm beyond the plan is more complicated, diffused and opaque. Furthermore, opposing or stalling an intervention happens in parallel with occupying that space, with settling in, and mobilizing public interventions to shore up counter-claims.

Menon (2012) locates political possibility in considering practices. She suggests we imagine these as a ‘thicket of contestation’ to emphasize a deep sense of autonomous possibility. Located in the living of myriad everyday practices in economy, of territorializing land, such possibilities require us to rework categories and take seriously other logics. Similarly, my own work looking at practices of land titles and the opacity of city realms (see Benjamin and Bhuvaneswari 2011; Benjamin 2012), and Shetty’s (2012) and Gupte’s (2012) rich ethnographic accounts of city life, critique the assumption of the coherence of city planning, a theme also evident in Raman’s careful ethnography of street traders in central Bangalore (Raman 2010). These ideas and approaches resonate closely with critical geographers Allen and Cochrane’s (2007) and Massey’s (2005) concerns with the openness of space, the construction of territory, and anthropologists such as Hull (2012) and Singerman (1995) with the world of practice.
In contrast, much of the literature on land development assumes a hierarchy of regulatory spheres that create a situation of de facto tenures (set in opposition to de jure frames). This attention builds on a liberal ideal of policy and administration to be ‘reformed’ and made ‘transparent and accountable’. The world of practices rejects a framework built around the ‘rule of law’ and a ‘rights’ based approach to policy. Here I adopt the more useful frame of legal pluralism to explore the set of overlapping practices that shape land development. Following Webber (2009), a perspective that ‘all law is customary’ helps us view such spaces with the substance they command formed in a wealth of deeply embedded political practices.

Drawing on Webber (2009) and Dupret (2007) helps to problematize the way ‘law’ is prescribed; and, to reject the idea of static legalistic boundaries mediated if not formed by the state. Webber’s (2009: 581–2) rejection of the conceptual split between ‘custom’ and ‘law’, with the latter conceived in positivist if not entirely state-centric terms, and an understanding of legal order as complex arrays of practices, conceives territorialization via actions shaped by a disaggregated ‘everyday’ state (Fuller and Harriss 2001; Mitchell 1991). Furthermore, by moving beyond a functionalist or pragmatist (Webber 2009: 581–3; Dupret 2007) explanation of law shaped by a range of practices (including those that contest each other), and rejecting practice being ‘acted upon’ under exogenous norms, allows us to consider various logics under which such territorialization happens in a dynamic transformative sense. These key points stress an understanding of law that allows for diverse realms and logics to operate at the same time.

The substance of why the settling of land politicizes occupant groups can be construed from an intersection of land and economy and the real (material) possibility to disrupt singular forms of property in ways that radically rework surpluses. The variety of tenure forms dynamically reworks and often unsettles singular forms of property in land.. Various constellations of occupying groups mobilize claims via, for instance, tax, electricity, or water receipts, development charges to municipal authorities, address proofs for school certificates, for instance – actions that implicate various parts of the city administration to strengthen claims to locations, but also lobby for higher levels of services (Bawa 2011). These claims also set in motion spaces for economies (see Anjaria 2011; Benjamin 2004).

Taking the everyday practice of the state more seriously (Harris and Fuller 1990; Mitchell 1991), I draw here on work in the ‘South Asian’ urban context that illustrates the complexity of local administration and its shaping by popular politics (Hull 2012; Björkman 2014). In my own writing I have termed this ‘porous bureaucracy’ (2004, 2005; and Hull 2012: 170, 245), reframed as counter-politics: a ‘politics of stealth’ (Benjamin and Bhuvaneswari 2001). Hull (2012: 162–6, endnote 14 on p. 70) examines bureaucratic politics in Islamabad, the new capital of Pakistan. On the one hand, within planned zones or sectors, much land politics confronts a highly disciplined regulatory system; on the other, outside these planning zones, political spaces witness more fragile control by the planning authority, allowing bureaucratic politics to be fluid and significantly less disciplined by the plan. Bernstein’s ethnography in Taipei’s City Hall presents another detailed illustration of such popular engagement with bureaucracy, where ‘Even seemingly straightforward implementations of regulation turned out to position the city government principally not within a web of laws but as part of a network of interdependent social actors.’ She emphasizes that while ‘[t]heories often emphasize the role of the bureaucracy in categorizing and defining the objects under its purview. The administrators I worked with, in contrast, emphasized the structural impossibility of clear-cut categorization’ (2008: 938, 946–7).

The ‘unsettling’ of property happens in close relation to a range of practices that constitute the property market, blurring and interchanging conventional lines between landlord, tenant, sub-tenant, and commission agent. Increases in real estate value are valorized across the spectrum of these practices. Here I would like to make two points. First such unsettling is constituted not just by individual actions, or outside of the state, but deeply implicates and requires a disaggregated view of the state. This is an embedded politics that blurs the line between society and the state via the politicization of bureaucracy, practices that fall outside the structure and logic of party politics, and the conventionally neat divide
between ‘civil’ and ‘political society’. Moreover, the territorial aspects of this politics are located mostly outside the logic of master planning. Operative within contested realms, these practices are not usually framed or instigated as ‘resistance’, or even as explicitly ‘political acts’ as Menon’s (2012) discussion of ‘escaping intelligibility’ suggests (see also Singerman 1995). Here occupancy urbanism forms an important lens to conceptualize this process of land settlement and the politicizing of particular administrative realms. Moreover, in the discussion below, I demonstrate how, characterized by diverse land tenures, this politicized realm opens up space for a particular form of economy – that of mostly small manufacturing and trade firms interconnecting their production.

**Territory, economy and politics**

At a time of severe crisis in how job-oriented growth is conceived, it is critical that we engage the form economic value addition and employment take and their interplay in an urban politics of land and bureaucracy. Practices of land tenure underpin a central contest in the economy: While mega projects are set in place via singular tenure categories, small firm manufacturing and trade economies within mixed land use settlements (spaces where most of the population live and work, and find political and economic space) operate in and are shaped by diverse tenure regimes. Real estate surpluses are distributed and reconfigured via particular forms of tenure regimes – in both small firm settings and in the largest of big business ventures (Benjamin 2007, 2008).

Of course how and to whom, and where these surpluses move is an issue of a larger financial architecture. In the larger firms, like Bangalore’s hi-tech economies in the early 2000s, these circuits included investments sought from large international donors and the global financial market. The securitization of such funds was facilitated even when large allocated land parcels remained, in part, occupied by smaller territorial configurations. Similarly, small firm locations, what I call ‘neighborhoods as factories’ (Benjamin 2004, 2005), are predicated on diverse tenure regimes that allow small firms to interconnect production and locate in close proximity. These tenures are political constructs, outcomes of the porous bureaucracy: an illustration of this is seen in internal administrative notes and orders made on ‘green sheets’ that mention ‘community’ contribution of both land and funds to extend an electrical trunk power line and its associated step-down transformer. For instance, a letter written by an association general secretary to pressure the municipal administration for street lighting, mentions the local politicians, tender details for the work procured via the ‘porous bureaucracy’, and a hint of the ‘stealth like’ negotiations carried backed by the Ex-Chairman of the Municipal Corporation.

In these contexts, occupancy urbanism as an approach helps explore the critical interplay of economy and land tenure regimes and their constitution in multiple logics across diverse city spaces. It is informed by at least three distinct but often overlapping issues that shape political opportunities, framing processes and organizational networks: territorial contestations, contesting economies and histories. Subsuming these elements erases the complexity of city processes, nuances of how economy operates and land is territorialized, both central to political claim making. Elden’s (2013: 15) argument about the concept of writing the history of territory is relevant here:

...a concept out of a complicated and multi-layer set of chronologies, fragments and aporias. Territory is a concept, as all concepts, with a history. It is also one with geography. Both the concept and the project are political: this historical work is part of a wider project that aspires to be a history of the present.

Such an approach avoids posing ‘territoriality’ as a prisoner of historicism, imposing an unrealistic linearity that fractures the city into disassociated spaces of ‘slums’ set in opposition to ‘gated complexes’, ‘piracy’, or the ‘informal sector’ (see Peattie 1987; Varley 2013).
The complexity of political practice and the intermeshing of territory and economy are well illustrated in an encounter with traders, or ‘hawkers’ in the urban economy in Nehru Place, one of Delhi’s major commercial shopping centres made famous for electronic hardware and software. While the offices planned in the main buildings are used primarily as electronic shops, smaller traders or ‘hawkers’ occupy the wide pavements and plazas below. On a bright sunny afternoon in early 2012, accompanied by participants of an artist in residence programme ‘City as Studio’, I noticed the banner shown in the accompanying image, Figure 27.1. At first glance it could pass off as evidence of ‘social movement’ organizing around the issue of livelihood. A closer inspection revealed quite another story: the high end traders in the main office buildings had organized a public meeting to push the city planning agency to act against what they saw as ‘unregulated hawking’ and the retail of ‘pirated products’.

Talking to a few of the small traders located on the pavements quickly attracted a group of 30 to 40 people and what unfolded was a complicated narrative of contested claims involving the large traders in the shops and smaller ones in the corridors below, who with an NGO, petitioned the Delhi High Court and the Supreme Court to prevent their eviction from this space.

The NGO’s main focus was a survey that intended to fix the locations of ‘legally sanctioned hawking stands’ (in this instance 240 were surveyed but more than 3,000–5,000 small traders, many claim, are at work in the city and have not been documented). Asserting there was no space for all, the administration of the survey in effect gave the NGO huge powers to define legitimacy, particularly the ‘legitimate 68 hawkers’. It also moved the politics of claim making to the attention of city officials and politicians, increasing its visibility, while drawing the NGO centrally into this power struggle.

This visibility was double-sided: while the survey provided some claims to have hawking stands, it also allowed the public planning agency to move others at will to locations outside the Nehru Place complex (see the Delhi High Court order LPA No. 766/2008). It is the fixity of place that defined land tenure type and, in turn, disciplined the political space. The court order specified:

The appellant-NGO, by way of their letter dated 13th May 2005 submitted a list of street vendors/hawkers after carrying out a survey. It was stated that the list was verified in several meetings. It was also stated that the appellant-NGO shall undertake responsibility and ensure that the street vending was regulated and monitored as per the code of conduct. Placement patterns/locations were earmarked. The said list gives names of 68 vendors along with goods being dealt with by them. (DDA and the NGO make a joint inspection about the feasibility/installation of stalls by vendors)… the DDA would provide a list of markets where space was reserved for informal sector (sic).

Placement on the grid of both ‘hawking zones’ and under the scrutiny of the law severely narrowed the political space within which the ‘hawkers’ operated. The legalities of the process also destabilized the 240 hawkers with petitions in the lower district courts, and also brought into the public eye, the approximate 3,000–5,000 small traders who now would have to be alert to inspections. Arguably, this also politically split them, increasing in particular bribery and the associated costs to retain their more favourable locations in the bazaar. Prior to the court cases, claims to economic spaces were implicated in a range of practices that circulated mostly within the licensing authority of the municipal corporation and via the petty ‘bribery’ circuits of the lower police inspectors. The NGO, and its partner university researchers, who produced maps of ‘hawkers and their territories’, were inserted through these materials into the court petition.

Yet even with this changed power equation, one cannot assume that Nehru Place would be cleared of small-scale hawkers — what larger businesses aimed for in their ‘cleanliness drive’. The larger and more
Figure 27.1 High-end traders organizing against what they term as ‘unregulated hawkers’

Photo: Solomon Benjamin
‘amorphous’ group’s deep and necessarily opaque connections within the municipal agency and also the planning agency would in most probability subvert the surveys, bypass the inspections as is usually the case. For these groups, middle level public administration could be used as a political relationship to open substantive space for negotiation – for extending market opportunities and territorial access, for negotiating the law in practice (Anjaria 2011). While one part of the law engaged the NGO, the documentation from the university researchers, the English media, the high-end judiciary, and high-level policy planning and administrative circuits, this was only one space in which it was possible to rework territory.4

Rather than a language of ‘rights’, this narrative suggests realms of contesting claims to territory which could be seen as a metaphor for Nehru Place itself. Built in the 1970s as one of Delhi’s first commercial centres, it was set out to ‘organize’ retail trade. There was no initial ‘flat’ unoccupied territory. Rather this ‘modernist’ building complex was constructed on the basis of occupation: including squatter settlements and other groups such as ‘gujjars’ who worked in dairies alongside other small firm economies (Chakravarty-Kaul 1996). Settled under an attempt ‘to decongest the city core’, these acts reflected a modernist narrative steeped in memory and nostalgia, in which the construction of the new commercial complex in effect reduced past diverse tenure forms into distinctive lease-based ones. By the early 1990s, however, this single leasehold tenure had not only expanded into a range of sub-lets, but also multiplied as other forms of occupancies in the corridors and the wide plazas around Nehru Place.

The more recent NGO interventions towards ‘hawking stands’ can be read as a counter to the emergence of these diverse tenure forms. Even if the hawking platforms are successfully built, they will most likely be one more form of occupancy materialized through parts of the state, intersecting and also lying separate to those that other occupants mobilize to maintain their claims. Nehru Place will most likely remain a site of multiple occupancies, of trade that involves an extensive re-working of the brand in electronics, and its dynamic appropriation and re-appropriations.

It is important not to frame this as simply micro-politics, hamstrung by an NGO politics with poorly conceived vision. Rather, multiple logics lie at the heart of these contestations. For instance, one important political realm in framing of ‘hawking zones’ is linked to large internationally connected business interests entering India’s retail sector. The international group KPMG and PricewaterhouseCoopers, as well as USAid, have played an active part in promoting research on regulating hawking. A report by the Urban Institute, a notoriously conservative private corporate-funded think tank, poses the crises of economy in how regulatory spheres constrain ‘growth’. When read closely, their analysis seeks to remove competition to formal businesses posed by unorganized traders.5 A language of addressing ‘marginality’ and building ‘rights’ through ‘training’ all reinforce a disciplinary grid that effectively marks small vendors and traders to shift them out of remunerative central locations (Blomley 2003). The relationship here between global competitiveness and planned territory, and its construction via the rule of law, is central. Here, an important, usually implicit, causality is posed as economy, shaping its waste or pre-history as informal and marginal. It is reworked as territory, part of formal planning, linked into organized party politics and shaped by explicit agendas of policy.

Land shapes the politicization of administration and vice versa, but both also open up space for forms of economy whose locations for innovation disrupt conventional views of the inevitable separation of, for instance, ‘hi-tech’ zones as clean demarcated territories, separate and distinct from the normal informalities of the city. In the following discussion, I explore small firm economies and issues of territoriality.
‘Fuzzy’ property as the basis of an inter-connected small firm economy

Evolving land markets on the rapidly developing city periphery provide the highest rate of returns. Congregations of firms with shared production evolve financial mechanisms that draw real estate surpluses into manufacturing, generating a self-reinforcing cycle (Benjamin 2004). At its face value, this causality of clustering firms, tapping real estate surpluses to fund further economic upgrading, would pose technological ‘progress’ as a linear cycle. Furthermore, the emphasis on municipal politics would emphasize elections that facilitate political lobbying, fuelling this process and liberal democracy. The fact that real estate-manufacturing funds found their way into funding public and much private upgrading of infrastructure via this form of ‘public participation’ could suggest the importance of a type of conservative ‘housing/economy by people’ policy, one that in Latin America had from the 1960s to the 1980s been the mainstay of slum upgrading and ‘site and services’ with attempts at ‘full cost recovery’. What then would complicate such a ‘reading’ of a congruence of land markets, economy and politics?

The emergence of small firms interspaced in these evolving land settings broadens the spectrum of practices to involve complex tenancies and also partnerships between land occupants and small manufacturers. To sharpen this point, let us consider another trajectory: a territory of small firms interspaced with residential tenancies is acquired under public domain, and allocated to a single large developer who under a policy promoting ‘public−private partnership’ can sell the consolidated territory to an internationally invested hi-tech conglomerate. Effectively, this constitutes a rearrangement, possibly even a reversal and centralization of land surpluses, reflective in successfully developed special economic zones (SEZs). Yet, such hegemonic control is difficult to sustain in practice.

If property is necessarily ‘fuzzy’ (Verdery 1998) then its ‘customary’ construction (Webber 2009) is central in two inter-relating realms – that of a co-produced economy via the ‘Neighbourhood as Factory’ (as we can see in East Delhi’s Viswas Nagar in the discussion in the next section) and the politics of the ‘porous bureaucracy’ – the latter extending into various forms of ‘politics by stealth’. Webber’s writings on the construction of legal orders help explain the political embeddedness of these phenomena in lower and middle administration rather than in an assumed rationality of the market. Here, as a critique of how public policy is constituted, it is important to consider the importance of ‘specification of norms’ without a totalizing anxiety of ‘coordination’ underlying the practice of legal orders (Webber 2009: 585–7, 589, 603). This allows us to consider how within public administration, techno-administrative procedures evolved cumulatively, where popular engagement underpins public practice just as more widely recognized ‘public policy’. As Webber writes:

practices provide a nexus of interaction, from which norms to govern those practices can be identified … Participants may economize in reasoning, accepting rules of thumb developed in past deliberations so that they do not continually have to deliberate from the ground up … and that a skillful application of rules depend on a sense of propriety of the fit between rules and their social roles, a normative sensibility, grounded in familiarity with the practices of a particular society.

(Webber 2009: 587)

As a way of conceptualizing legal orders, this account does not dilute or make redundant the realm of legislation; rather as Webber (2009: 589–90) discusses at length, it is the broader applicability and its political consequences across asymmetries of power that ground the legislative process in practices. Politics, thus, is at the heart of the process. In building on Webber’s account and in rejecting coordination of legal orders for economy (2009: 294), there is not one ‘coordinating sphere’, a critical set of ideas to consider East Delhi’s Viswas Nager in the discussion that follows.
Occupancy urbanism as political practice

**East Delhi’s Viswas Nager**

A home-based industrial area, East Delhi’s Viswas Nager emerged in the mid-1990s as India’s biggest cluster of cable and conductor manufacturing. Here, technological change was not the result of one firm ‘inventing’ but rather constant re-engineering. This was influenced from outside the neighbourhood precinct (other industrial clusters and trade markets, and trade fairs held in Delhi via a ‘copy’ culture-turned re-engineering). As important, it was within the close proximity of firms whose practices included stealing workers, and also collaborative relationships on receiving orders sub-contracted on a commission basis, due to production capacity or lack of specific skills. The lines between firms was made further complicated by the need to re-engineer capital machinery.

Yet, a vital aspect of fuzziness of property boundaries and complex tenures, and their social and political underpinning came from the interaction of how firms related to each other, and also, the forms of partnerships with occupants to land who had settled earlier, but did not have the technical skills to directly engage in the manufacturing process. These groups partnered with ex-foremen and market agents (who lacked capital) and with second-hand machinery often re-engineered to initiate production. The foreman and worker’s prior firms invested because they were not keen to break off relationships with a potential new and ‘known’ sub-contractor. Thus, complex socially constructed tenures were key to shape financing via real estate for these small-scale inter-related economies.

In a similar fashion, and in fact accentuated by the opportunity to invest in this attractive combination of real estate and factory, there evolved extensive relationships between the small firm economy and lower and middle level administration of various government departments. The usual way of viewing these complex connections is through an overly simplistic lens and language of ‘bribery’. Many of these relationships were part of political circuits of city councillors and members of legislative committees (both sitting and past) who had extensive, vocal, well-heeled and responsive constituencies. Many invested their own funds, incomes, including payments made to them, back into the neighbourhood economy via the ‘committee and lucky draw’ financing circuits. Both political and personal, as well as financial, daily contact made councillors and higher level legislative politicians deeply connected and in touch with these neighbourhood realities to shape law, and more importantly, to open up administrative space to allow for extensions of infrastructure and basic services and to initiate forms of ‘regularization’. This also included ways to counter ‘opposing laws and procedures’ that were initiated by an elite fearful of ‘slum growth’ and ‘non-conforming uses’ as a cancer on society.

Their regulation beyond ‘market’ reason reflect instead specificities of small firms and ‘neighbourhood as factory’ and their diverse and complex tenure forms. As Webber suggests, competing and complex property regimes produce ambiguity to allow for numerous undefined uses (Webber 2009: 598). Furthermore, the latitude of social–legal orders suggests that economic efficiency plays merely a conditioning role, with structure being determined by other considerations (Webber 2009: 601–2).

Certainly, an understanding of this complex mix of practice as simply (un)procedural, (un)regulated, or (in)formal is insufficient.

**Thinking beyond ‘neighbourhood as factory’**

Focusing on the constitution of economy and the logics of small firms in both trade and manufacturing that dominate city territory, occupancy urbanism as a political practice refuses to flatten institutional and embedded histories. Certainly in this field, poor ethnography poses the state as a homogenized entity either constrained to rework territory into being globally competitive, or by future locales of terrorism, or mobilizing digital panoptical technologies of mass control. Political possibility and economy lie outside of ‘local’ or city society so severely de–politicized. Part of the problem in this conventional analysis is that land is assumed to be a passive setting —
objectified in its transformation, as per a larger plan whose stage is set for actors with futures scripted elsewhere. Circumscribed functionally as ‘local’, municipal administrations are acted on by laws and regulations framed by higher authorities, and political disciplining by party systems, narrowing their roles as managerial or as mere representative politics. Yet, because much of the city territory in which most of the city’s population live and work falls outside of master planning-designated zones, neighbourhood and city-scale processes shape and are shaped by deeper transformative politics embedded in the multiple publics that are energized to lobby municipal, but, also other realms of government administration.

Land as real estate fuels such politicization. In arguing for a distinction between ‘capital and its logic of accumulation’ and ‘the market and other forms of property’ Nigam (2011: 92, 94) draws our attention to how we conceptualize economy and its embeddedness, and second, its legibility. I draw on his formulation to emphasize a common place and, in a sense, a radical everyday economy around small firms that underpins almost all city economy. Considering land in its diverse tenures as capital disrupts singular property forms, what Nigam calls the ‘language of bourgeois private property’. Circulated via diverse and complex tenure forms, land as capital shapes surpluses and fuels trade, especially manufacturing. This serves as a very different pointer than the classical and assumed standard of a large project, singularly controlled SEZs, aimed at homogenized markets. Instead, this radical terrain is made so by another aspect − its social and institutional embedding. Here too the complication lies in diverse forms of occupancies that shape access to its valorized surpluses in diverse forms and practices. In effect, both land and the politicization of administration are co-constituted, as Tang argues (2011, 2012).

These ‘gaps’ and ‘fuzzy spaces’ are essential constructive spaces that open up possibilities of practice in which there is no one inventor, actor, or author but a realm of co-constituting practices, which include multiple agents, people, historical events, accidents and disruptions. Here, the lens of occupancy urbanism disrupts any assumption of characterizing processes of territory and politics as being ‘local’ in opposition to global capital. Further, co-constitution complicates singular property in land and also small-scale firms. These realms, deeply embedded in complex and unpredictable ways, form the setting of a co-constituted economy whose logic remains mostly outside programmes promoting urban employment or ‘local economic development’.

Conclusion

Occupancy urbanism as political practice frames land and its historicity in its multiple logics. Moreover, the materialities of working land as capital (Nigam 2011) shape institutional and economic politics. The political openings they produce in reworking the rigidity of ‘the law’ disrupt and bypass the potential violence of the master plan grid. The city in these constituting realms takes on an exciting uncertainty, one of political possibility rather than closure and doom. A ‘layering’ of production, tenure and occupancy histories, rather than linearity, substantially complicates both an understanding of urban economy and politics. It rejects conceptually and empirically problematic terms such as modernity, informal production (as a residual ‘low-tech’ waste of proper ‘Economic Development’), and small-scale manufacturing as piracy, and highlights what is politically disempowering, the risk found in a range of false panoptical perspectives.

In its emphasis on ‘grounded’ understanding of the openness of political space, occupancy urbanism helps rethink urban economies and territorialities. Following Massey (2005), we move beyond perspectives that make hierarchical spatial practices relational to those of plan, policy, and programme. When writing city realms, our efforts at representation will not necessarily be complete and resolved, but will remain patchy (see Rancière 1999), where gaps and the ‘noise of unplanned’ may reveal openness and political possibility (Simone 2006).
In recognizing a range of contesting claims, and conceptualizing city territorialization beyond the frame of the master plan, we can explore the complexity of narratives encountered in quiet observation of practice (Benjamin 2012). These realms of material practice embed in and disrupt what are too easily distinctly divided notions of economy, territoriality, and politics. The politics of this project lies paradoxically in rejecting the fixity of narratives about cities, entering instead into realms of illegibility and opacity. Perhaps cities are inherently un-knowable and un-resolvable and perhaps this character underpins political possibility. If the contemporary was a sense of complete control by capital, the city beyond lies in the openness of political possibility. Hence, researching the city in this political project remains a matter of engagement, of seeking the substance of varied realms of material and relational practice.

References


Notes
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THE MISSING PEOPLE

Reflections on an urban majority in cities of the south

AbdouMaliq Simone

A strategic disappearance?

Imagine the near-impossible task of walking the length and width of huge urban regions such as those of São Paolo, Mexico City, Delhi, Karachi, or Jakarta. Much of what you would see would not fit easily into the usual images or understanding of built environments and social compositions. Certainly there are large areas of the poor, the rich, and the middle class. But there are also extensive areas where the mixtures are so intense that it is not easy to make definitive attributions. These are the domains of nurses, teachers, factory and service workers, police, storekeepers, technicians, drivers, and those who adamantly refuse to be officially employed.

Many of these heterogeneous domains remain in the historic urban cores as these residents hold-on, remake, fend off, and push out in ways that are largely ‘under the radar’ of the attention of public institutions, research, and investment. Public policy, social movements, and urban politics in general thus miss a critical component of contemporary urban life in these regions. These are districts that have the means to exceed sheer survival, and thus residents have often deployed the little money that is left over after making ends meet to various experiments aimed at improving their lives or opening up new opportunities. In the end it is not always clear what these myriad of small initiatives accomplish. They certainly do not mobilize large amounts of political clout, but perhaps simply keep open the availability of significant portions of the urban core to a wide range of uses and occupations.

If the experiences of cities and urban regions across a diffuse and often conceptually murky global south are to exert a critical effect on urban theory in general, a wide range of seemingly ‘missing’ people, spaces and practices must be considered. In these large metropolitan regions, the lives and terrain of a possible ‘majority’ — straddling and making ambiguous the distinctions among ‘upper poor’, ‘working class’, and ‘lower middle class’ — barely register in discussions of the probable and potential futures of cities. While this designation of the ‘majority’ is intentionally provocative and heuristic, these residents may indeed make up the bulk of the population in many metropolitan regions of the global south.

This disappearance is not simply attributable to conceptual omissions or an occlusion that stems from an inherently unstable and excessively heterogeneous population. For the political richness of such a purported disappearance entails all of the ways in which such residents have been complicit in bringing it about. For the poor and for the middle class there have been either obvious advantages or administrative exigencies at work in making them visible. For the poor, most claims for rights and services depended
upon making their presence an inevitable and significant aspect of a city’s development, usually in the face of an imposed scrutiny seeking to blame them for all that was wrong about the city (Gupta 2001; Auyero 2007). By contrast, transparency for the middle class was a critical platform on which to situate their claims of eligibility – the ‘normative citizen’ – and to steer the city to meet their needs for the clear accountability of property rights, individuated consumption and political authority that demonstrated their entrepreneurial capacity and commitment to ‘doing the right thing’ (Davis 2004; Centner 2010).

For the ‘majority’, it was important to construct built environments that facilitated mutual witnessing as a form of continuous renovation of the popular assumptions about what constituted economic well-being and social coherence. In other words, opportunities for residents to pay attention to each other were not created in order to ensure that their behaviours conformed to the prevailing standards of propriety and efficacy. Rather, this witnessing was the very condition for residents to continuously remake what those standards looked like. It was also a means to redraw the lines of social collaboration – i.e. to fold residents into new constellations of collective action that need not be stabilized in particular forms over time. On the other hand, as such continuous mutability did not obviate the ways in which residents continued to associate with particular structures of belonging – kinship networks, ethnicity, histories of origin and occupational grouping – their subjection within the various tools that government applied in order to read their lives meant that these associations were taken to ‘stand in’ for the entirety of their social economies (Elyachar 2005; Bayat 2009, 2012).

Even in today’s variegated neoliberal urban conditions, probabilities, accountancy and the stochastic modelling of risk are the things that really matter to urban policy makers. This is not only because they are the instruments that work with large assemblages of data and uncertainty to specify the positions, the hedges, and the arbitrage that are critical for any urban economy, but also because they are the seemingly proficient instruments of dissimulation. They cover up for the fact that no one knows quite what is going on. This efficacy is derived from the way they make everything count, everything accountable; the ways in which large volumes of raw data can be scrutinized in order to establish the visibilities, the patterns that are worthy of being discerned, that will constitute the locus of intervention (Crandall 2010). Everything else that falls outside of such modelling either does not matter (Callon et al. 2007; Cooper 2010; Foucault 2008) or is subject to ‘grubby’ governance (Chatterjee 2011). In the latter, various ethno-national or ethno-religious antagonisms clear the way for the spatial rearrangement of the city.

While forms of social belonging, often expressed through ethnic affiliation, are important facets of operating in cities, they coexist with a wide range of other associations and agendas. But it is often convenient for municipal power brokers to draw attention to ways in which those forms of belonging are threatened for the sole purpose of breaking up intricate collaborations among different ethnic and religious groups in order to grab land and other urban resources. For large numbers of residents in cities of the majority world, then, the dilemma is how to demonstrate that where they live and what they do matters, when the possibilities of translation, visibility and value become more problematic. On the other hand, it is important, and to a large extent has been important for a long time, to stay outside the count, not to get sucked into the game of who and what is eligible and who is not (Bayat 2009; Roitman 2005; Whitson 2007).

For the past five years I have been collecting stories from residents in intensely mixed-use, mixed-income central city districts in Jakarta. These are Senen, Kemayoran, and Johar Baru, where some 250,000 people live and work. This research, known as the Urban Lab, has been conducted with the University of Tarumanagara, the Rujak Center for Urban Studies, and various local residents associations, and has included several hundred household surveys, individual interviews, and community discussions (See Simone 2009; Simone and Fauzan 2012; and Simone and Fauzan 2013).
I have been particularly interested in residents’ accounts about the factors at work enabling them to continuously adapt to ever-changing economic and social conditions. One of the key facets of resourcefulness was the capacity of residents to enlist all kinds of people in their initiatives, and for residents to be enlisted in diverse roles, which in turn gave rise to different skills and capacities. This was not the enactment of a particular belief or ethical commitment to ‘openness’, tolerance, or a cosmopolitan sensibility regarding difference. Rather, such resourcefulness was largely the product of a locally honed pragmatics appreciative of the volatility and cruelty of urban life, a suspicion regarding overly prolonged commitments to particular ways of securing viable livelihoods, built on an intuition that cities afforded little stability and consistency. If households were to enhance incomes and opportunities they had to find ways of turning potentially disastrous conditions to their advantage (Abeyasekere 1987; Houweling 2002; Firman et al. 2007; Kooy and Bakker 2008; Silver 2008; Barker 2009; Hutabarat Lo 2010; Tunas and Peresthu 2010). Households often would not know for how long they could remain in their homes despite possessing some kind of ownership documents; jobs could be easily taken away with no explanation; political authorities could often come down hard on residents they suspected of being troublemakers.

Enduring urbanities or relics?

Currently there are major questions as to how to consider such histories and the persistence of intensely heterogeneous districts, primarily located within central cities or in the first ‘ring’ of suburban developments. Despite prolific claims on the part of municipal authorities and many urban policy
The missing people: an urban majority

makers that the lower middle classes have ‘left the building’ (the inner city), any cursory examination of many metropolitan regions would quickly dispel them. In Jakarta, while demographic surveys may indicate some central city population decline, this has been compensated for by substantial inflows of young workers unlikely to pay attention to official regulations requiring them to register their presence with the local authorities. Regardless of income, large numbers of ‘established’ residents provide them low-cost rental accommodation. This facilitates easy access to work and refuels the possibilities of commercial activities in the inner city that otherwise might be marginalized and displaced to the periphery.

Much of the built environment of the urban core has been constructed to seemingly defy clear readings of its use and the characteristics of those who occupy it. Intense densities and proximities among multiple and divergent uses have proved difficult to administer by municipal authorities but often provide a kind of ‘insulation’ from unilateral large-scale restructuring since authorities can never be sure whose interests are being affected. It is also important to emphasize that while residents do cooperate on various matters of concern – such as repair and cleansing – these are volatile places, full of people pushing and pulling to create space for small initiatives, seeking to differentiate themselves from each other in cities crowded with different efforts to both survive and get ahead. These are places full of accommodations, uneasy deals, and residents actively seeking to engage in provisional collaborations that continuously ‘keep them on the move’, as Subranto, a 49-year-old mechanic put it. In this way the similarities to Jane Jacobs’s rendition of cooperative neighbourhoods do not quite apply.

Nevertheless, these districts are treated and often experienced by residents themselves as some kind of relic. No matter how much the intricate intermeshing of residential and commercial activities in dense conditions with diverse actors has facilitated expanded accumulation and middle-class status, many residents worry that they will have to either move to the periphery of the city or to massive, cheaply constructed apartment blocks where it will be difficult for them to continue many of their economic activities. In Jakarta, most of these residents are staying put for the time being, but the fear of imminent and major changes in the urban landscape makes them more defensive and, as such, makes the experimental collaborations of the past now more difficult to put in motion. For urban researchers then, there may be a sense of having arrived at ‘the party’ too late, because the intensive capitalization of high-end central city property markets rapidly effaces whatever value these ‘missing people’ in these districts might have exerted.

Yet, if an intensified emphasis on the urbanized experiences of the global south is going to matter, then the specific histories, practices and conditions of this ‘urban majority’ have to be situated in an analysis appreciative of the ways in which colonial rule continues to linger in the sediments of urban institutions, spatial arrangements and governance practices of these cities. We must keep in mind that throughout the histories of many cities of the global south, both colonial and post-colonial, the onus of constructing viable built environments and urban economies was largely placed on the ‘majority’ itself – through well-known processes of auto-construction. This is not to deny that states were often active in the provision of land and housing schemes, but these usually paled in the face of needs and demands. With or without legal guarantees or political mechanisms recognizing the rights of residents as citizens, a sense of interconnection, of people being a part of the same place had to be materialized in the built environment where residents lived and tried to make a living. The very concretization of citizenship depended upon the densification of techniques for materializing relations, i.e. the intermixing of measures, angles, calculations, impulses, hinges, screens, surfaces, soundscapes, exposures, folds, circuitries, layers and tears as instruments for bringing things into association. This is a process where things get their ‘bearings’ by having a ‘bearing’ on each other (Isin 2007, 2008).

Urban authorities often tried to limit the growth of urban populations or defer the affordance of rights to exist in cities. Still, they needed to manage the city’s inhabitants in ways that made the actions,
intentions and aspirations of these inhabitants visible in terms of responsibilities and claims by individual persons or households. Largely influenced by various colonial legacies, citizenship was to be the condition where every inhabitant is accorded rights and responsibilities regardless of their status or history. But citizenship was often applied as a form of management without political substance. Citizens were individuals, and individuals were to be enclosed, self-sufficient entities (King 1976; Chattopadhyay 2006; Legg 2007). In part, this individuation derived from recognition of the intrinsic volatility of urban life, its tendencies to fracture and separate (Simmel 1972). Collective formations then were to be the aggregation of individuals, who would functionally work out divisions of labour, roles and hierarchies of authority. But this circumscribed concept of collective life made little provision for processes of imitation and contagion − the ways in which urban life engenders fascinations, curiosities and affective intensities (Latour and Lépinay 2009).

As such, the value and trajectory of effort embodied by these ‘nebulous’ spaces and populations cannot be assessed simply within the predominant terms of urban productivity, citizenship, rights, individuation, public, private or civil action. If such terms point to a range of specific devices that are applied in order to render actions legible and intelligible, and if intelligibility is an objective of governing, of deciding what is real and what is not, then the elaboration of the ‘unintelligible’ becomes an important method of creating spaces of operation (Read 2012). This is not the metaphysics of the ‘undecidable’. Rather, it is a politics of slowing things down, of instantiating possibilities to keep things open (Stengers 2010).

Residents of the districts I have been working with frequently cite a broad range of oscillating practices and orientations, and they frame this reality as ‘things are never what they seem to be’. For example, some residents adamantly hold onto what formal employment they have regardless of their satisfaction with it, while others constantly change theirs even when conditions are good. Residents claim never to pool money for collective projects with their neighbours but often work tirelessly to raise funds conjointly from other sources such as the sale of small parcels of land, buying goods at cheap wholesale prices and then selling them door to door for profit, and even from gambling. Sometimes the best plans are suddenly jettisoned for more impulsive undertakings, while on other occasions districts take on the most ‘normative’ of plans even though no plans have ever been put in motion. These are districts where residents have engendered long histories of mutual attunement and coordination without the existence of state institutions or discourses that facilitate these capacities. Sometimes residents who have lived together for years treat each other as newcomers, and in other instances newcomers act as if they have been working together all of their lives. These are districts where all of the components of a market or particular service − retailers, wholesalers, driver, carters, cleaners, repairers − must not only know the details of their own jobs, but the others as well; where there has to be a wide distribution of knowledge and coordination.

Here, people not only know how to do their own jobs, but the jobs of others as well. They may not put these skills into practice in the place where they labour every day or in the households in which they reside, but they both incite and become available for a variety of spaces in-between, where residents attempt to supplement incomes, experiment with different ways of using the city, making money, or working with others. While such practices may be evident in cities everywhere, many residents in inner-city Jakarta cite this practice as a necessity for being able to ‘make it’ in the city. It motivates them to embrace the use of different social media, including twitter, sms and internet as a means of continuing to push the boundaries of their lives.

Sometimes the practices bog down in general confusion and entail substantial losses. Still, in the process, residents elaborate an urban environment whose reverberations of diverse, intersecting matters − agendas, concerns, activities, calculations, affective intensities and compositions − make it difficult for any single set of actors to unilaterally restructure the textures and uses of that environment. Whether the ‘big players’ with the capital and political power to substantially remake the urban core are property
developers, municipal governments, finance capital, or mafias, the illegibility of such environments makes it difficult for any single actor to confidently assess the implications of their ‘moves’ in relationship to the districts of the ‘majority’.

Technologies of politics in crowded conditions

I have indicated that, for the most part, residents of Jakarta’s urban core did not so much seek to integrate themselves into an overarching framework of efficacy and normalcy as much as they attempted to put together a functional co-presence of different kinds of initiatives and orientations to the city. The mechanics of such co-presence have much to do with orientations to notions of territory, and the ways in which historically an urban majority circumvented the institutionalization of their residential and commercial settings as ‘territory’ in order to secure itself in the city. For territory is the creation of space as a locus through which authority is exercised, an arena of command; it is a vehicle that occasions the application of various strategies, such as mapping, ordering, measuring and demarcating, to establish terms of recognition and differentiation among inhabitants and spaces. Territory specifies the circulations and interchanges that are allowed and normalized through calculation – i.e. what can take place and under what circumstances, and what value different activities and persons have in relationship to each other (Rolnik 1999; Elden 2010).

But the very technical proficiencies that are key to the making of territory also render it a continuously mutable matrix of relations. This is demonstrated in the contemporary moment as notions of administration, anticipation, control and probability, while increasingly sophisticated technical operations become increasingly uncertain as well (Parisi 2012). The movement of people, energy, water, traffic, services, goods and information through the city is increasingly shaped and regulated by parametric design. This brings together different data sets related to these things, modulates the variable relationships among them, and alters their properties as a result – e.g. making water and energy and sanitation and financing and transport and municipal finance and economic development all impact on each other through recursive feedback loops. New, unpredictable and unfixable realities are produced in the very act of trying to better control things.

Not dissimilarly, urban districts of the majority, while certainly subject to various political technologies applied to administer and control them, nevertheless honed a facility over time to make varied use of the materials they had accessible to them. Things, bodies, expressions and places were not so much fixed to specific representations. Rather, they were deployed as potential components of usually temporary but continuous mobilizations of effort to maximize household access to opportunities. Few could ‘go it alone’, nor was it advantageous for households to commit themselves excessively to one particular set of affiliations and obligations. Additionally, these provisional assemblages were responses to the very volatility that shifting intersections of persons, economies, and ways of doing things themselves brought about. For staying put, for securing a place in the city was often predicated on the ability of households to actively experiment with what they saw and experienced transpiring around them. Using little bits of resources and efforts at a time, there was a continuous testing of the waters, finding new vantage points and circuits to which they might connect their residential history, skills, social networks and jobs (King 2008).

Everyday politics became a way of trying to go against the grain, but not too much, of coming up with ‘radical proposals’ to the dilemmas of not being able to count upon anyone or any institution for sure, but to make these ‘proposals’ bemusing rather than alarming. Here, a general atmosphere is constructed where places are always already inhabited by something more than what anyone had in mind. In urban contexts where the competition for jobs and resources could be fierce, where the uncertainties around security of tenure, employment and political stability are often rampant, it was important for households to aim for the ‘right pitch’, as Mina, a school principal explains,
the ability to sing in unison as protection against the larger forces that we all knew were there, but didn’t know quite what they were, even though we did our best to learn about them and have them see us as only their willing devotees.

But Rachman, a 55-year-old mechanic emphasizes,

if we all did the same thing it would be ‘one down’, ‘everyone down’ and so we understood that we would have to learn to like living in places where there was nothing to really like, but somehow, then, we were safe.

Residents were always getting something ‘more than [they] bargained for’ says Jo, a 60-year-old businessman. Living with this ‘something more’ in mind, and seeing it played out in the way in which the built environment was elaborated through all kinds of twists and turns, repairs and adjustments, renovations and demolitions, and seemingly incongruous mixtures of uses of materials, institutionalized a sense of disparate meanderings.

Here, the multitudes of small initiatives that people made to make all of the ends meet and to keep the mixtures from being too overwhelming made ‘staying in place’ itself an ordeal. Yohannes, a bus driver, points out,

[in our district] we knew each other pretty well; we knew what to expect and everyone knew that if they got too much out of line they would get what was coming to them; people knew that they were in for big trouble if they were to steal and cheat or get violent, but what was always a little bit strange was the way in which people would do all of these little things that were just a little bit unusual, the way someone might stop someone in the middle of the street they didn’t know and simply tell them a little something about something taking place somewhere else, or the strange way they might decorate their door, or the way they might walk the streets in the middle of the night looking for god only knows what, or the way they might invite total strangers to sit and drink coffee with them in the front of the house.

But as Abaye, the ‘unofficial’ manager of a fruit and vegetable market pointed out,

all these small things were simply a way for us to get up the courage and to get familiar with attempts to make something big happen, to look at the places where we worked and lived as something more than that, as full of hidden secrets and mysteries that could be turned into something useful and without it seeming that we were doing something big, because that would only get us into trouble, with our neighbours, the police and the authorities.

The insufficiencies of salary, the frequent interruptions in work careers, and the demands on labour markets required the ability to generate income from continuous renovations in the ways in which materials, networks, spaces, and actors were put together. New entrepreneurial initiatives require access to inexpensive yet reliable labour; the acquisition of assets often requires pooled resources that are not subject to competing loyalties or obligations from kin or neighbours; short-term work opportunities have to be accumulated in rapid succession, and different social positions can often complement each other in terms of their respective knowledge of the city and access to particular kinds of resources or favours. All of these facets are continuously replenished through different kinds of urban actors operating or living in close proximity to each other (Fawaz 2008; Wilson 2008; Jaurgani 2010; Sundaram 2010; Abramson 2011; Harms 2011; Raco et al. 2011).
In Senen, Johar Baru and Kemayoran, it is clear that residents employed a wide range of materials and practices in putting together their living spaces and livelihoods. Material inputs were purchased, scavenged, locally produced, bartered, hybridized and inserted into functional uses and also dispersed as ‘reserves’ to be ‘picked up’ by others for purposes to which they were never intended.

Local economies included family-held businesses that consolidated specializations in a given sector; others dispersed household members across different professions or commercial activities as a way to enjoin complementarities among them; some sectors were aggrandized, clustered in specific territories, and others were dispersed at varying scales and sizes. Some districts were overbuilt with little planning, with things constantly going wrong, but at the same time occasioning repair work and trajectories of mutual adaptation that drew upon and provided a platform for collaborations among residents that otherwise would not have opportunities to know each other.

Even when localities do not exude obvious forms of collaboration, when individualistic decisions regarding accumulation and the materialization of efforts seemed to predominate, there was continuous investment in situating household livelihood projects within intensely heterogeneous material conditions. Here, the material environment becomes ‘the message’ regardless of the other content regarding residents’ backgrounds, affiliations, assessments and priorities. While this heterogeneity is partly a function of oscillating stories of opportunism, accumulation and loss, of people negotiating mutual accommodations over how to acquire and develop land, manipulating discernible vulnerabilities, and availing space and opportunity as devices for supplementing income, it could exert a wide range of effects beyond the intentions that informed it (Holston 2009). The built environment itself became a particular instrument for making political claims.

The sheer diversity of the built environment and the activities that took place within it, and in close proximity to each other, precipitated discussions, compensations, repairs, alliances, trade-offs and short-term pooling of information, contacts, and resources that supplemented official income and earnings. At the same time, the composition of the built environment reiterated a sense of separateness among residents, the unavailability of any overarching reference point of easy commonality and, as such, these were localities of fractures that necessitated the constant reworking of lines of articulation (see also Telles and Hirata 2007, for Brazil). All of this was labour-intensive, but the work enabled localities to better ‘roll with the punches’ – to adapt to the volatile interactions of economic and political decisions taken at various scales.

In the central city districts of Jakarta that the Urban Lab has been working with, residents consolidated territorial and social distinctions while at the same time incorporating each other into different understandings about what it would take to survive the city. The commonality of these different understandings was that any practice, any idea, or agenda of inhabitation was never going to be sufficient. There would always be more to do. On the other hand, great value was placed on the notion of the incremental – i.e. to do things a little bit at a time, and each thing had its own time; even if one could build all at once, or buy someone out completely, such moves seldom took place because there was a sense that ‘time had its own time’. Wherever one was at the moment, it was good enough, for now, not in general, but for now. Having the sense that cities were incomplete projects was more important. As incomplete, nothing was foreclosed, wrapped or summed up.

Much of the interaction among residents never went anywhere or accomplished anything. But instead of this apparent failure acting as a deterrent, it tended to keep the game going. To avoid discouragement and capitulation, many urban dwellers did a little bit at a time. In fact, for many, the idea wasn’t to come up with a plan or to have an overriding aspiration. Rather they just tried to do something, anything, and see what happened, see how the waters got stirred, who was paying attention, who got excited or upset, who cared a lot about what they were doing and who didn’t care at all. If you could do a little bit at a time, you could often manage to stay under the radar, not draw too much attention to yourself, not make others jealous or provoke them to go...
after what you were trying to do because they either had more friends, power or money to take it away from you.

On the other hand, urban dwellers often did things, anything, to let others know that they were willing to take some risks, to put themselves on the line to change their conditions, to work with others. So it did not much matter what people put forward as their projects, whether it was to fix up the house, add a few rooms, start a small business, or pool some money with others to buy something on the cheap. What was important was to indicate a readiness to move, to get going. The specifics of what you put forward were not the relevant thing here. While residents did indeed often want to get somewhere specific, accomplish something concrete and tangible for themselves and their families, they were often also willing to let things happen. They would allow themselves to end up in circumstances they never expected and then learned to call those unfamiliar, even strange conditions ‘home’, or, at least a temporary home.

In addition, many realized that the impact of any single initiative could be increased through it becoming an aspect or component in the initiatives of others, not by virtue of being locked down in contractual relationships or mutual obligations. Rather, it was a way of making whatever you were doing something that could be made use of by others. Collaboration among residents then covers a whole lot of different options: sometimes residents would simply pay attention to what each other was doing in order to do something else. At other times, there might be collective discussions among relatives, friends, neighbours, co-workers or colleagues about how to put different skills or contacts together in order to support what remained largely individual projects.

The difficulties of everyday life in places like São Paolo, Jakarta or Karachi feed an intense hunger for justice and equity. But there is also a wariness of pinning things down too much, of instituting policies where capacities and conditions are calculated and compared. There is often a preference for keeping things incomplete. Everyday life may be full of antagonisms, misconstrued behaviours, evasions, tricks and manipulations, but they are also the conditions that give inhabitants something to work with, something to try and put right, something that brings people together who otherwise would keep their distance, and thus a platform for the incessant rehearsal of different ways to ‘work things out’. Now of course all of this is a lot of work and a strain for residents already overwhelmed with trying to make ends meet. But it is in these rehearsals where residents often feel that new vistas are opened up, where at least they are exposed to worlds otherwise inaccessible, even though there are no guarantees that they can take advantage of them.

The inversion of risk and the people to come

Between 1966 and 1998 Jakarta lived under military-run authoritarian rule. The urban population was intensely scrutinized, residents severely punished for different forms of activism, yet the conditions of life necessitated that residents do what they could to open up new opportunities for livelihood and to make something happen in an urban culture subject to stultifying bureaucracies. In addition, the Suharto regime and its ‘New Order’ were constantly afraid of Jakarta, and had little idea about how to successfully administer the urban population without completely incapacitating its productivity. It was a situation in which residents continuously had to take risks in order to live, to find some kind of enjoyment in life, and to simply get ahead without drawing too much attention to themselves (McGlynn and Sulistyo 2007). So risk became a critical dimension of the urban economy. Residents took risks in part because they knew that to survive they could not stay still. City life was too uncertain, yet the very risk-taking activities of residents contributed to the very volatility that they were hedging against.

Anna Stanley’s (2012) important work on the relationship between risk and capital accumulation rightly emphasizes that risk is not about danger or untoward events and vulnerabilities. Rather, it is a means of naturalizing distinctions. In other words, it explains and justifies why the most vulnerable and
insecure populations must disproportionately absorb the deleterious effects of capitalist production. Stanley emphasizes that instead of being the product of structural forces in a society, risk indicates that morbidity, ill health, impoverishment and accidents are rather the result of contingency, and that contingency can only be understood through a language of statistical calculation which discerns patterns and trends in an assemblage of aggregate data removed from the specific conditions that populations ‘at risk’ might face. Stanley goes on to point out that risk becomes knowledge, critical to practices of governance because it is a particular way of bringing a population into view. Here the state instrumentalizes and abstracts differences among people and situations from the ways in which they are produced by economy and politics. Such instrumentalization then permits accumulation to proceed without having to take into consideration the vast range of negative impacts it induces, or, more significantly, as illustrating the overall conditions which only capitalist production is, in the long run, capable of rectifying.

But as this chapter has tried to demonstrate, this notion of risk that Stanley (2012) elaborates can be inverted so that risk points to a capacity to make social relationships that were once relied upon to provide anchorage and exposition to everyday life into something else. In the time of the New Order, as Siska, a 60-year-old nurse puts it,

we would also try to pretend that we were up to something, because in this way the authorities would send their spies, but then we would try to find a way to make it worthwhile for them to do something with us, and that way, the military would send even more spies because they didn’t trust the first ones. So we got all these different police gangs to trip over each other, so we could then go on to really be up to something. It seemed that we lived a life of constant giving into them (the New Order), but we always took risks to make it into something else.

Taufiq, a 50-year-old statistician with the housing ministry, explains ‘you had to give them [New Order] something plain to see, like white rice, and once you had this in place, you could get on with dealing with people they would never expect you to deal with.’

Risk is usually considered a language of contingency that obscures the ways in which household realities are constructed, since it tends to abstract these realities in terms of particular appearances in statistical calculations. But the contingent could also be seen as a process of things not having to be what they currently are. As such, risk becomes a means of ‘freeing’ up livelihoods from a limiting commitment to specific modalities of self-recognition. Residents could get on with negotiating complicated interactions with different facets of the city without necessarily being hindered by the defence of ‘ultimate bottom lines’ or ‘territories of belonging’, or by taking on cascading social obligations which limited the kinds of perspectives and information residents had available.

Viable, if often limited, livelihoods were derived largely from a multiplicity of incremental manoeuvres undertaken to build upon and extend whatever a household had access to. These manoeuvres often relied upon positioning whatever assets the family had – financial, social or psychological – within new ‘neighbourhoods’ of association. As such, households would speculate on the very conditions that consolidated them as a social unit. In other words, speculative activities put into play the very conditions through which households recognized themselves as a life shared together – i.e. a sense of predictable bonds, shared assets and common collective performances.

In contrast, new initiatives often operated against the grain of what the household was accustomed to. They would have to signal their willingness to participate in schemes and with actors that they otherwise might have shied away from; they would demonstrate their willingness to perform roles with others that might be discordant with the way they performed their relationships with each other. Instead of the wider neighbourhood being an extension of household ethos, it was actively cultivated as a divergent arena of interests and operations, even when ties of belonging through ethnicity, common
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place of origin or religious practice were maintained. Households knew that they operated in a crowded field of various initiatives and that the best laid plans would probably require continuous revisions and adaptation to those of others in order to accomplish anything. Through this, many opportunities for work, improvement of living conditions, and insurance against various volatilities of urban life were secured. But as with all experimentation, there were inevitable fallouts and failures, some of which could not be compensated for, smoothed over or forgotten.

At times this sense of failure is reflected in the attitudes of a younger generation looking to justify their decisions to break with the neighbourhoods they grew up in. Randi, a 29-year-old dental technician complains that

our community always pretended that everyone had each other’s interests in mind, but then you would find your neighbour stealing your water, or your uncle overcharging you for the cement he brought to your house, or other neighbours who would gossip to the police if they thought you were being too successful; it was always nerve-wracking how everyone had to act as if they were one big family, but would take any opportunity to undermine each other.

But Adrian, a 25-year-old media professional, counters, ‘our neighbourhoods were ahead of their time; they did things back then that we only have the words for now, now that many don’t appreciate them anymore’.

These reflections are not offered to counteract those of Stanley (2012). Rather, they indicate a dynamic politics of ruse and dissimulation at work in the relationships between districts of an ‘urban majority’, forms of urban rule converging around the variegated technologies of neoliberalism, and urban analysis and policy formation in general. The supposedly counter-intuitive practices of residents, purportedly operating against their own long-term consolidation and thus interests, opens up considerations of a more complicated, if still unequal and limited, interchange of actions. We can see these as the differentials between actions from ‘above and below’, ‘global and local’, ‘municipal and parochial’ – with always the ‘majority’ denied the powers potentially incumbent in this status. But such a hierarchy doesn’t quite get to what is going on. The limitations in what these districts say to urban transformation in general are clear; we can just find so many ways of qualifying and dismissing them. But they still exert a kind of ‘thereness’ whose value and potentials are not clear, and thus not clearly finished. The experiences of these districts cannot be ‘averaged in’ to more generalized formulations.

Part of the issue is that these districts do not just exist for themselves. Not only do the entrepreneurial initiatives, schemes, and cobbled collective projects of various local actors need staging areas and impacts beyond the local districts, but local districts themselves have to be prepared to enfold the activities, investments and practices of external actors. They have to identify not only how to adapt to their presence but to find ways of using them to their advantage, although there can frequently be great variations in people’s understandings of what these advantages might be. To a certain extent, more powerful actors are always intruding upon what is familiar to local residents, always prompting new circumstances and challenges.

This has been the case even when localities welcome external associations and NGOs endeavour to improve the built environment or facilitate the development of new projects. Particularly in fluid central city areas where infrastructure remains viable, land is sometimes cheaply available, and turnover high in terms of commerce and residence, risks are always posed by the extent to which these insertions tip the balance of local economies based on intricate networks of relations and the flexible use of space and resources (Benjamin 2000; Arias 2004; Chuang 2005).

At times, insertions are problematic in terms of their legal standing and thus subject local practices in general to more diligent scrutiny by police and other authorities. At the same time, these insertions come from somewhere else, and are connected to somewhere else, and thus open possibilities of new
exteriors for existent local endeavours. By virtue of bringing new capacities, money and connections, such insertions can either speed along a more substantial and threatening transformation of the district or provide new kinds of insulation that defer more radical changes, and thus keeps things fluid and open for longer periods of time – as for example, a hedge against widespread gentrification or revaluation of property (Sassen 2008).

Different senses of time are at work simultaneously, producing a temporal as well as spatial heterogeneity. Residents largely succeeded in developing viable districts because they did things in their ‘own’ time; in other words, they did things incrementally, a little bit at a time, to see what might happen. They also had to demonstrate patience because they knew that their aspirations not only existed in a crowded field of initiatives put into play by other residents, but that there were blockages everywhere, and that these blockages could produce a sense of inertia. So if things did not work right away, residents had to find ways not to give up, to see, as Suryo, a 40-year-old office worker emphasizes, ‘small successes everywhere’.

But this sense of incremental rhythm and patience was also accompanied by a sense of urgency, by the exigency not to stand still, and now by the rapid changes underway in the inner city. There were also, of course, residents with long-term plans; those who methodically charted out a systematic course of action, such as buying up land or accumulating substantial financial savings or investing in the futures of their children or businesses. These different times had to find ways of coexisting, of being both related and apart.

Conclusion

Gilles Deleuze (2005) characterizes contemporary cinema as that in which ‘the people are missing’. For talking about people as being parts of a social class or ethnic identity or political aspiration is not adequate to either the potentials opened up by cinematic events nor the unfolding politics of urban life. As such, the people – in this case of the city – have to be invented. This, as the Filipino critical theorist, Vincente Rafael (2010) puts it, is a different kind of state of exception, perhaps akin to a miracle. Writing about Filipino vernacular experiences of freedom, the missing people discover themselves in the very inviting and welcoming of their arrival in a process that is never completed and is always underway.

In other words, the urban majority discovers itself not in dissecting its practices and identities, not at the ballot box, but by always taking on the challenge of paying attention to and absorbing ways of life that are not always recognizable, of creating urban spaces where nothing is summed up, where residents can try lots of different things without feeling like they are going to mess up the situation for everyone. People come together and discover each other – not because they had to, not because they were fulfilling their responsibilities as citizens – but because the opportunity arose in the midst of people doing other things. They may have been dealing with a broken water pipe, strolling leisurely in the streets at night, celebrating a religious festivity that brought together different crowds, gathering around a travelling food cart in a neighbourhood, or having a heated yet friendly discussion on public transportation.

The sense of urgency about dealing with the uncertainties of urban life today means that one cannot simply depend upon the inherited notions about people of the past – the old stories about modernity, development and progress. There must be a way of seeing between the lines, or ways of making lines between stories that are going in way too many different directions.

On the one hand, the proliferation of mega-developments and all-in-one complexes across the global south, where work, leisure, residence, schooling, shopping and services are densely intermeshed away from messy inner-city streets provide enough evidence to be convinced that city life everywhere is heading in a more unified direction. But with such evidence, it is all the more striking that minor
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differences among places and people can be so powerful and inequities so pronounced. Expanding slums, massive new and rapidly constructed housing developments at the urban periphery, and the still intensely mixed neighbourhoods of the urban core are juxtaposed with the ‘spectacular’ yet banal and homogenous built environments of neoliberalism. Poverty is being successfully addressed and ignored; well-being is increasing, as is the intensification of dissatisfaction and alarm. Let’s look at all of the containers through which urban life is enacted. There are images of people as objects of class position, cultural and religious identity, expressions of probabilistic behaviour, risk and development ‘careers’ and indicators of complex configurations of demographic, biochemical and biopolitical variables. Yet they are all inadequate ways of thinking, feeling and speaking about how urban life is experienced and acted upon. The challenge is how to think about lines of commonality, conveyance, and intensity among different facets of urban life that on the surface don’t seem to go together at all.

References
The missing people: an urban majority


PART V

Negotiating society and identity in urban spaces of the south
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This section explores the complexity and energy at the heart of the making of urban identities, social life and mobility, traversing social processes that redefine citizenship and urban space from São Paulo to Hong Kong, Singapore to Manila, from Lomé and Dakar to Nairobi and Harare and beyond. In opening up this terrain, a social lens on cities of the global south helps us rethink many of the ideas central to discussion in this Handbook: from the meanings of colonial legacies, the constitution of urban polarization, the consequences and causes of entrenched inequalities in space and important processes such as work, and the possibilities of citizenship. Offering narratives that confront traditional ways of thinking about the southern city, authors in this section demonstrate the ways in which culture and social life can be placed analytically at the heart of processes of urban change and dynamism.

Challenging narrow notions of state-driven citizenship regimes, Francis Nyamnjoh and Ingrid Brudvig draw our attention to the everyday flexible experience of ‘mobile Africans and African mobilities’. In this postmodern urban and regional geography, new networks and paths are forged that subtly build belonging and reframe pessimistic or fixed notions of migrant-citizens – intimate strangers – and xenophobia. Adding to this conversation on the centrality of African urbanity, Philippe Gervais-Lambony explores the complex construction of identity and its contentions, from Lomé, to Harare and south to Johannesburg. He emphasizes that this lens reveals not only struggles for a ‘right to the city’, but also a right ‘to remember’, to invoke memory to legitimate urban citizenship. Drawing on and calling for flexible scholarship, this work uses ethnography and fiction to take seriously the textured narratives that bring to our urban analysis memory, affect, and experience.

Cultural identities transform city spaces and relations between citizens. Teresa Caldeira’s beautifully crafted narration of public practices – hip hop, graffiti, tagging and writing, for instance – demonstrates the ways in which cultural production, rather than political movements, has re-shaped public space and notions of centre and periphery in contemporary São Paulo. Substantial but also deeply contradictory acts, dominated by young men, these practices reproduce gender inequalities – with transformative cultural practices ironically defining the place and space wherein young women find themselves in relation to masculinities that are exclusive. With its capacity for reinventing and subverting socialities, Jenny Mbaye’s chapter explores the ways in which hip hop remakes notions of ‘youth’ citizens and urban divisions in Dakar, challenging notions of the urban periphery, while providing opportunities for ‘youth’ to speak to public issues in a context where social norms presume their silence and respect. While this identity and practice draws strategically on global and North American hip hop, it is deeply
embedded in Dakar, and bound up in Senegalese and West African hip hop networks, demonstrating its southern rather than derivative energy.

Social and class-based relations are not just ‘cultural’ but also infuse the economic opportunities that drive the rapid expansion and dynamism of cities of the global south. Brenda Yeoh and Kamalini Ramdas turn to spaces of urban employment in Asia, where women work in factories, driven by the boom in export-oriented manufacturing and as maids in middle-class urban households across the region. Women are the largest number of legal and irregular migrants in Asia. While subject to exploitative conditions, they are nevertheless often able to resist oppression by refashioning notions of self and challenging imposed identities at work, at home and in the city as citizens.

Celebrating diverse southern stories, this section helps rethink urban and regional polarization, the axes of fracture embedded in tradition, authority and colonial legacies, as well as contemporary practices. The chapters bring into focus the complex ways in which cultural and social identities and practices remake the city, not as subsidiary to the economic and political, but as constitutive of it. Growing and critical, this body of work draws attention to the complex ways in which cities of the south are remade, across contexts of wealth and poverty, periphery and centre, through the reshaping of identity – gender, ethnic, and national; processes constitutive of the everyday urban experience.

The lived negotiation of urban social life and the ways it is made meaningful in cities of the global south are not static or decreed through law, or scripted in economic patterns and political processes. Instead, culture and social identities and their meanings are negotiated in mutually constitutive processes that interlink individuals and communities – youth, women, citizens and migrants – with the spaces of the city. Through such processes, agency and identity are progressively nurtured in relationships within homes, at work, and in city neighbourhoods through the quotidian activities that constitute everyday life. At times identity and social meaning are fought for in the public sphere, at others the struggle is in open opposition to the state, or wrested in spite of the state. The meanings of social life, the manner in which they are contested or embodied, and the ways they constitute the urban are not the predictable outcomes of structural configurations of power, or a romantic reflection of agency-through-revolt. The flows and processes of power cannot be read in formulaic fashion from a model of asymmetrical social geometry where the powerless are simply dominated by the powerful. Certainly, as Sophie Watson suggests here, we need to pay careful attention to the ways in which social identities and difference are ‘never universal or singular’, but constituted, produced, practised and lived in cities across the south and north. This is an agenda to which the chapters in this section respond in fresh and invigorating ways.
CONVIVIALITY AND THE BOUNDARIES OF CITIZENSHIP IN URBAN AFRICA

Francis B. Nyamnjoh and Ingrid Brudvig

Introduction

This paper explores how the concepts of ‘citizenship’ and ‘belonging’ are taking shape in urban Africa. As a study of insiders and outsiders, of intimate strangers and the politics of citizenship and autochthony, the paper discusses the tensions and possibilities of encounters between flexibly mobile Africans and bounded state-driven citizenship regimes. Centred on the pervasive ambivalence of cities as cosmopolitan places and spaces of uncertainties, the paper explores and interrogates the limits of citizenship – its root in the nation-state and its discursive embodiment in particular notions of rights which represent the framework for urban inclusion and exclusion (Isin et al. 2008; Isin 2012). Often isolated from the rights and privileges of the included or of those who ‘belong’, ‘outsiders’ tend to mediate barriers, borders and boundaries in fluid and dynamic ways, producing identities that run across cultures, languages, spaces and places in cities and national contexts. The efforts and processes they engineer at ‘composite’ or ‘frontier’ identities (Kopytoff 1987; Warnier 2007; 2012; Nyamnjoh 2011) often escape scholarship that uncritically reproduces taken-for-granted dichotomies and bounded notions of being and belonging (Gupta and Ferguson 1992, 1997; Geschiere 2009; Isin 2012).

An analytical focus on conviviality in the everyday narrative of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ and their relationships as ‘intimate strangers’ demonstrates the potential for a re-conceptualization of bounded notions of belonging (Nyamnjoh 2006a, 2011, 2012a). Conviviality rests on the nuances imbibed in everyday interactions – from the micro-trends of socialization to the macro-paradoxes of globalization and citizenship, in which individuals are teased between processes of accelerated flows and the intensifying reality of borders, divisions and violent strategies of exclusion. Conviviality may emerge from a resolution of frictions which, when negotiated into meaningful relationships, may actually facilitate mutual interests between individuals as ‘subjects’ and ‘citizens’ or between individuals and the state (Mamdani 1996). The potential for ‘flexible citizenship’ informed by ‘flexible mobility’ in and out of spaces and places in cities and national contexts – a reading of citizenship whose relationship with the nation-state is open-ended and convivial (Nyamnjoh 2007a; Isin 2012) – renders citizenship and belonging as truly cosmopolitan and in tune with the age-old reality of composite identities and societies in Africa (Kopytoff 1987). This chapter further demonstrates the implications of notions of autochthony and ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ on the study of mobility in and around urban Africa, arguing that the complexities and nuances of everyday lives of African migrants and mobile Africans are best addressed through a complementarity between formal academic accounts and other perspectives;
approaches and genres such as, but not exclusive to, narrative fiction (Nyamnjoh 2011; 2012a; 2013). In this chapter, we point to how such alternative narrative techniques create enlightening prospects for reflecting upon the complex and nuanced dynamics of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ and their manifestations in the everyday lives of intimate strangers in urban Africa.

Mobile Africa

Mobility and migration are the order of the day in African cities and urban spaces (De Bruijn et al. 2001; Adepoju 2002; Crush and Tevera 2010; Crush and Frayne 2010; Landau 2011). Mobility involves the migration of labourers, of guest workers, of seasonal workers, of professionals from within and from other countries, and of asylum seekers. Migration is often, but not exclusively, a survival response. The need to become mobile may be imperative when citizens and subjects in urban or rural spaces and places endure insecurities that limit their access to basic needs through normal channels. Further, when not simply relegated from ‘townsmen’ to ‘tribesmen’ by apartheid-type legislation and inequalities (Mayer 1971), without the certainty of regular employment or of a place to call home and without hope for a sustainable livelihood or of access to satisfactory medical and educational services, urban residents become uncommitted to locality in the long-term (Bank 2011). Despite family or other emotive commitments to locality, ‘home’ becomes an encumbrance when it no longer serves critical needs. One may respond to emerging insecurities by moving more frequently and within short notice, in which forging tactical alliances becomes an urgent task (Murray and Myers 2006: 119; Sharp 2008). Conviviality emerges through the formation of such alliances, as they are often crafted out of mutual need. Mobile encounters involve experiments with multiple, layered and shifting identities that are tried and tested through convivial interactions (Owen 2011; Nyamnjoh 2011; 2012a; 2013).

The experience of urban mobility is marked not only by encounters within cities, but also by the experience of travelling between and beyond cities. Dominique Malaquais provides the example of one man’s journey to demonstrate the significance of cross-border mobility to the African experience of migration.

He left Douala via bus to Equatorial Guinea. From there he traveled to Gabon mostly on foot. Then came Brazzaville. He was on his way to Kinshasa, where he planned to stow away in a boat sailing south. But there was no moving beyond Brazzaville, which, at the time, was mired in a hugely destructive civil war. For sixteen months he remained there, caught in the crossfire of militias – Zulu, Cobra, Ninja – named after cultures and places, lands and ideas, countries and continents away. When the guns fell silent, he made his way, through DRC, to Angola, where again he was waylaid, this time by a love affair that may or may not have involved a marriage. Disentangled from a relationship he did not wish to pursue, he proceeded to Namibia, where an attempted passage into South Africa failed. This prompted a redirection into Zimbabwe, which failed as well. From there, the traveller returned to Namibia, where he lost everything to a passer who reneged on getting him across the border. Eventually, a good Samaritan, a truck driver got him across, depositing him on the edges of Cape Town. There, for months, home became a refugee camp … The first experiences he recalls of South Africa were of negotiating the space between inside and outside, leaving and entering the camp anew.

(Malaquais 2006a: 37)

This man’s story is by no means extraordinary, for many migrants follow similar routes that wander between borders and across nations, as the experiences of the migrants depicted in novels such as Welcome to Our Hillbrow (Mpe 2001) and Intimate Strangers (Nyamnjoh 2010) would attest. Such journeys are often characterized by spontaneous changes in destination, by unexpected turns, and by constant
negotiation with one’s safety. Transit typifies both tales of travel and the experiences of urban life (Malaquais 2006a: 38). Many who recount such stories have no intention of staying put for long, for a destination is suitable for only as long as it is so. Further, migrants cannot assume that mobility starts or ends with them or their forebears. The journey may continue again at any unexpected moment, particularly once migrants meet the political gaze of a zealous state eager to redefine who may seek hospitality, protection even, within its borders. One must become an impromptu migrant, for the boundaries of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ are constantly and unpredictably shifting. The physical and social mobility of Africans is, therefore, best captured in the complexities, contradictions and intricate messiness of everyday realities.

*Figure 30.1  Market scene, Bamako
Photo: Francis B. Nyamnjoh*
While scholarly accounts on African mobility are rich, varied and commendable (De Bruijn et al. 2001; Adepoju 2002; Crush and Tevera 2010; Crush and Frayne 2010; Landau 2011), they stand to be enriched by a broad range of perspectives and narratives distilled away from the ivory towers of academia and its logic of practice. Quantitative and survey type studies proliferate, while there is a quasi-absence of ethnographic studies even of the worst type (Owen 2011; Nyamnjoh 2013). Capturing the intricacies of mobile lives beyond the imperatives of objectivity and its veneer of rigour entails an approach that privileges dignity, a common humanity and reflectivity as permanent work in progress (Nyamnjoh 2012b). This calls for greater modesty and open-mindedness in our pursuits as scholars, as we are challenged to be forever mindful that no one has the monopoly of insights and often, such insights might not be found in scholars but out there, amongst those on whom we base our scholarship. The standard expectations of what constitutes a scholarly text often do little justice to ‘the multivocal and multifocal dimensions of everyday negotiation and navigation of myriad identity margins’ (Nyamnjoh 2013: 1). In welcoming the fluid boundaries of belonging, we are led towards fiction and personalized accounts of belonging, as these intimate tales complement scholarly perspectives on mobility, thereby interrogating fixed notions of ‘us’ and ‘them’, ‘citizen’ and ‘subject’, ‘urban’ and ‘rural’, ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’. Participatory research methods, however profoundly engaging, should be harmonized with alternative accounts, formed through narrative dialogue and reflexive considerations to ensure a multiplicity of perspectives that are critical to the production of knowledge (Nyamnjoh 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2013).

**Insiders and outsiders**

While forces of globalization have fostered increased functional integration in the world economy, trends towards cosmopolitanism are, quite surprisingly, often impeded by hardened ideas of who belongs where, with whom and under what conditions. This is manifested through ‘a return of the local in unexpected forms and with equally unexpected force’ (Geschiere 2009: 1). The rapidly increasing mobility of people nationally and transnationally has generated a powerful renaissance of the rhetoric of ‘belonging’. Rooted in local politics, claims to belonging – and therefore to special rights to resources and freedoms – are not new, but have re-emerged with force in the latter part of the twentieth century. This has led to increasingly socially tenuous predicaments for those who inhabit African cities (Devisch 1996; Simone and Abouhani 2005; De Boeck 2008, 2009, 2010; Freund 2009; Landau 2011; Bekker and Therborn 2012; Ardayfio-Schandorf et al. 2012), as density and diversity are frowned upon in the interest of fantasies of purity, beauty and autonomy (Jacobs [1961] 2011). However, negotiating the boundaries of being an insider or an outsider should be, as we argue in this chapter, always a work in progress. Belonging is permanently subject to renegotiation, and is best understood as relational and situational. Hence the need to understand the interconnecting global and local hierarchies – be these informed by race, place, class, culture, gender, age or otherwise – that shape connections and disconnections, and produce, reproduce and contest distinctions between insiders and outsiders as political and ideological constructs which defy empirical reality (Nyamnjoh 2013: 2).

Seen as never quite belonging even if having lived most of their lives in a host-country or host-city, migrants in cities are often rejected or treated with ambivalence by those who see themselves as more local and more entitled to urban places, spaces and opportunities (Mayer 1971; Bank 2011; Devisch 1996; Simone and Abouhani 2005; De Boeck 2008, 2009, 2010; Freund 2009; Landau 2011; Bekker and Therborn 2012; Ardayfio-Schandorf et al. 2012). They are likely to be accused of compounding problems of joblessness, insecurity, poor sanitary conditions, spread of infectious diseases and demand for scarce resources within the city. This is a widespread predicament for mobile Africans within and beyond the continent of Africa.
By way of an example, Somali traders in Cape Town face daily insecurity and uncertainty as their informal trading businesses (known as spaza shops) are targeted by competing South African traders and criminal citizens at the margins of the opportunities that should come with legal citizenship. Criminal attacks on Somali shopkeepers are rampant, as they face the threat of opportunistic robberies, looting, orchestrated arson attacks and murders (Amit and Gastrow 2012). Attacks are perceived by shopkeepers as imminent, and as a result, daily life becomes characterized by intimidation and fear. Migrants are often excluded by both formal justice and informal community structures used to mediate conflict and punish crime. This has compounded a sentiment of generalized distrust and fear in the state and local population amongst migrant communities. As a Somali refugee in South Africa expressed, ‘You just never know what will happen next’. Attacks against Somalis have become widespread in cities across the continent since the late 1990s when Somalis began migrating away from civil war to seek refuge in Africa’s ‘greener’ pastures (Jinnah 2012: 2). However, urban refugees in general – from Johannesburg to Nairobi and from Kampala to Cairo – experience a range of protection problems and threats, including arbitrary arrest and detention, exploitation by employers, discrimination and physical abuse (Jacobsen 2006: 276). Hostility towards migrants in African cities is indicative of a narrowing of the concept of ‘belonging’ and its parameters. Current trends in the politics of citizenship in African cities have conjured a deepened anxiety towards ‘the Other’, leading to perilous xenophobic consequences and a logic of ever diminishing circles of inclusion that runs counter to the idea of the
nation-state and its underpinnings. Current trends towards imagined hierarchies of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’ also run counter to the politics and rhetoric of regional integration (Saunders et al. 2012). Rhetoric of nationalism and regionalism fuels a return to the local and the parochial, and is indicative of latent and intensifying politics of belonging in urban African cities.

The marriage of ethnography and fiction

The marriage of ethnographic research techniques and fictional narrative creates enlightening prospects for reflecting upon the dynamic interconnections of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’. Fiction techniques further contextualize the emergence of conviviality in the lives and experiences of characters, highlighting the context of their mobility and their experience of negotiating the parameters of ‘insiders’ and ‘outsiders’. Most scholarly accounts on African mobility and migration (including ethnography) are fictional themselves to the extent that they often fail to capture the complexities and nuances of mobile Africans and African migrants. Fictional literature succeeds in narrating the everyday, thus mitigating the empirical nature of so-called social scientific studies in which subjects are often represented as research subjects rather than characters with personalities, feelings and personal and social beliefs. Belonging has become a fervent desire expressed through a deepening nostalgia for ‘indigenous’ origination, a patrolling for ‘authentic’ citizens and a discourse of heterogeneous group identity. However, such notions are often left un-captured by scholarship through its reproduction of bounded notions of belonging. It is, therefore, through fiction and the use of narrative techniques that the experience of belonging in the everyday becomes compassionately studied through vivid account (Nyamnjoh 2011, 2012a, 2012b, 2013).

The nuances of ‘flexible identities’ fictionalized

There is great value in the twinning of ethnography with fiction to demonstrate the resurgence of identity politics and exclusionary citizenship in contemporary Africa (Nyamnjoh 2011, 2012a). The everyday reality of insiders and outsiders within the contexts of post-colonial Africa are explored narratively through works of fiction such as Intimate Strangers (Nyamnjoh 2010), A Nose for Money (Nyamnjoh 2006b) and The Travail of Dieudonné (Nyamnjoh 2008). By way of example, Dieudonné’s life story is used as a metaphor to capture senses of exclusion and degradation that are social realities for many in post-colonial Africa. After leaving his home in Warzone, Dieudonné journeyed throughout West Africa for 20 years until he finally settled in the capital city of Mimboland. He was initially arrested for being an ‘illegal alien’ and was threatened with deportation when a friend of the policeman happened to change his life course. Dieudonné explains, ‘Upon seeing me, he immediately thought I would be much use doing his garden than being bundled back to Warzone. So he struck a deal with his friend, who turned a blind eye to my irregular status, and I was allowed to stay’ (Nyamnjoh 2008: 74). We encounter Dieudonné who is living in exile in Mimboland and working as ‘houseboy’ to a patronizing expatriate couple. Caught in a dense web of urban predatory forces, Dieudonné embodies the ‘resilience of the everyday’ that characterizes experiences of living as an ‘outsider’ in African cities. His intricate origins, cosmopolitan character and the multitude of identities he has embodied, having lived for 40 years in Mimboland at the time of the story, cannot be described without denying their full intensity. His character is, instead, better expressed through narrative, recruiting the reader to reflect on his experiences throughout the story.

In another instance in A Nose for Money (Nyamnjoh 2006b), Prospère, an internal migrant worker employed by the Mimboland Brewery Company as a delivery driver, returns home to the devastation of his wife with another man. His fate is suddenly changed upon meeting two men on the side of the road desperate for car assistance after running out of fuel. Nyamnjoh writes,
Prospère decided to give them a chance, his fears notwithstanding. Drivers and road users in general are forced to show solidarity towards one another. If you fail to help a fellow driver out of his mechanical hiccups or fuel problems, tomorrow it could well be your turn. One good turn deserves another. Who could drive on these roads without the assistance of others? (Nyamnjoh 2006b: 33).

Prospère’s acquaintance with Jean-Marie and Jean-Claude, two counterfeiting and money doubling businessmen, is driven by the hope for mutual opportunity. Circumstances of conviviality that guide their relationship change his life prospects, which the reader experiences alongside their unravelling. A myriad of encounters, negotiations, and navigations of difference have influenced Dieudonné’s and Prospère’s lives, and they embody the idea of flexible mobility and flexible identities – the composite reality of being African in an urban context where individuals are challenged to embrace, internalize and celebrate multiple dimensions of being and belonging to steer (or become steered by) their life circumstances.

**Understanding ‘belonging’ beneath the cursoriness of labels**

The thrills and tensions, possibilities and dangers, and rewards and frustrations of social, cultural and physical boundary-making and boundary-crossing are narrated, for example, in *Intimate Strangers* (Nyamnjoh 2010). A complex fictionalization of ‘the everyday’, *Intimate Strangers* demonstrates the experience of navigating the waters of belonging in an African city as negotiator and navigator of various mobility and identity margins. It evokes empathy in the reader, as a reflexive reading creates a ‘mirror effect’; its messages may be wholeheartedly familiar to many. In the tale, Immaculate, an outsider, a stranger, and a *makwerekwere,* follows her fiancé to Botswana only to find him off in the United States and refusing to marry her. Immaculate is, however, determined to outwit victimhood. Her emotions ring awry, as she recounts

> I was disappointed, and jilted, and thinking about my parents. Everybody asked me to come home. But I thought, ‘Do I want to show them I failed?’ That’s what came into my mind … Tough as the going was, I was determined to stick in there and hope for the best. Like a proud hunter, I refused to go home until there was game to show and share. (Nyamnjoh 2010: 20)

Despite operating at the ‘margins of society’, she encounters a transnational researcher, Dr Winter-Bottom Nanny, who takes Immaculate on as a research assistant. Through her research on ‘maids and madams’, Immaculate learns how maids struggle to make ends meet and how their employers wrestle to keep them as ‘intimate strangers’. The reader is brought into Immaculate’s everyday world – introduced to what it means to be an intimate stranger – as the relationships that Immaculate forges with locals, citizens and with fellow outsiders of various backgrounds and social positions shed light on the experience of negotiating belonging in a foreign country. Through literary forms and emotional appraisal, the ‘tensions of being, belonging and becoming that bring together different worlds are explored through dimensions of servitude, mobility, marginality, transit and transition’ (Nyamnjoh 2013: 13).

**The irony of conviviality and its encounters**

Increasing pockets of opportunity in urban Africa have led to growing urbanization that is met by mounting exclusion of access to such golden prospects (Mayer 1971; Devisch 1996; Simone and
Abouhani 2005; Bocquier et al. 2009; De Boeck 2008, 2009, 2010; Freund 2009; Landau 2011; Bank 2011; Bekker and Therborn 2012; Ardayfio-Schandorf et al. 2012), as characters such as Immaculate, Dieudonné and Prospère experience. Despite this, conviviality is experienced in the very cramped nature of inner cities, emerging in the precariousness of living together under tense circumstances. Population density and diversity reflect the reality of cities as places and spaces of trust, interdependence, solidarity and mutual support (Jacobs [1961] 2011). Conviviality develops through the ironic interludes of intimate strangers, and convivial encounters are often steeped in dynamics of power and wealth disparities. By way of example, in The Travail of Dieudonné (Nyamnjoh 2008), Dieumerci reflects upon the contrasts in general living conditions in Nyamandem City as he travels by bus to meet his professors who happen to be Dieudonné’s employers in ‘Beverly Hills’. Dieudonné’s relationship with his employers, Madame and Monsieur Toubaaby – who are both professors at the University, known by their students as ‘Monsieur and Madame Ethnologie’ – demonstrates the disparities of wealth and power in society. Dieumerci describes their residence as ‘striking with exuberance and splendour – a beautiful lawn, immaculate flowers, and light bulbs on trees and hedges everywhere’ (Nyamnjoh 2008: 19). He reflects further that

To have so many broad streets, all well tarred, in a city overburdened with potholes, was, to say the least, to be filthy rich and damn lucky. To have electricity enough to forget switching off the streetlights at dawn in a city where everyone else suffered repeated power cuts was to be filthy rich and irresponsible. Every comfort in Beverly Hills seemed exaggerated in its superabundance, just like misery, the lot of most of the rest was overly present in the bleeding ghetto Dieumerci was coming from.

(Nyamnjoh 2008: 20)

This theme of contrasting the superabundance of the classy, fortressed, residential areas of African cities with the bleeding poverty and precariousness of the ghettos that beg for conviviality (Devisch 1996; Simone and Abouhani 2005; Bocquier et al. 2009; De Boeck 2008, 2009, 2010; Freund 2009; Ardayfio-Schandorf et al. 2012) is a common theme in Nyamnjoh’s novels. In Mind Searching (Nyamnjoh 2007b), an earlier novel first published in 1991, for example, he compares and contrasts Bastos and Briqueterie as follows:

In Bastos, houses are constructed in lines. The streets are broad and straight. They are named, although none of these names is familiar, because they are all French. At the end of each street is a letter box. The houses are numbered, which makes it easy for the mailman to deliver letters right to the door. Briqueterie on the other hand is totally different. It is a misnomer to call what one finds there ‘houses’. These are huts which all look as though they would fall apart at one moment or another. The streets are narrow, very narrow indeed. They are also muddy, because to say the truth, they are not streets in the real sense of the word. They happen to be footpaths which have gradually broadened up through the years. Everything in Briqueterie is muddled up. It is a place where A’s backyard is B’s front yard, and I must say this causes many problems. Take the issue of bathroom and latrines for example. You really need to go to certain parts of Briqueterie to know the way they smell. Imagine yourself eating with friends in your little hut, and imagine your neighbour answering nature’s call in a latrine just in front of your hut. You actually see him do it, but you can’t ask him to stop because he is in his backyard. And by the way, if he were to listen to you and stop doing it, where else does he go to answer nature’s call? Thus with such basic hygienic problems unresolved, how would we expect Briqueterie to have letter boxes on every street?

(Nyamnjoh 2007 [1991]: 66)
It is ironic that vast disparities in wealth and power often set the stage for convivial encounters between intimate strangers. Often relegated to the precarious margins of society, such as Dieudonné − wasted lives in many ways − are often determined to create something from nothing in how they make possible relationships that are otherwise deadened by the material scarcities and structural constraints which saturate their lives (Devisch 1996; Malaquais 2006b; Simone and Abouhani 2005; Bocquier et al. 2009; De Boeck 2008, 2009, 2010; Ardayfio-Schandorf et al. 2012). Conviviality emerges out of the necessity to earn one’s living, to surmount the tensions and divisions of inequality with attempts at flexibility propelled by the need to get by. Conviviality, in many ways, results from compliances with cultural implications of power. Its intricacies in the lived everyday are, in fact, steeped with tensions. Fiction captures the essences of conviviality as it is experienced in the everyday lives of intimate strangers and insiders and outsiders, thus enriching empirical research methods and the knowledge they generate.

**Intimate strangers**

Ousted from expected or taken-for-granted circles of belonging, migrants in African cities, such as Immaculate, Dieudonné, Dieumerci and Prospère, consolidate their own networks based on kinship, region of origin, economic ties and religiosity to maintain a certain degree of relative autonomy or reconnection with the familiar. Transnational networks have assisted migrants in African cities to become successful entrepreneurs and businesspeople in the informal economy, the constraints of exclusion or marginalization notwithstanding.

Determined to succeed despite hardship, migrants in African cities rely on innovation, business skills and methods of integration such as learning the local language or living adjacent to their businesses in order to enhance prospects for success. The mobile phone revolution and the rise of digital networking have also contributed significantly to the growing prominence of informal trade and livelihood opportunities in urban places (De Bruijn et al. 2009; Powell 2012). In the case of Immaculate, who was able to secure a job as a research assistant through an unanticipated encounter with Dr Winter-Bottom Nanny, success was contingent upon a combination of conviviality and luck. In the novel, Immaculate meets Dr Winter-Bottom Nanny − a middle-aged African-American woman from the USA whose research on the relationships between maids and their employers in Africa required someone who could assist, particularly with setting appointments. Immaculate describes,

Dr Long Bottom, who was out of the country on a conference when Dr Nanny arrived, instructed his student and girlfriend, Evodia Skatta − the one who helped me when I was desperately seeking accommodation after Mama Comfort asked me to leave, to talk to Dr Winter-Bottom Nanny about me. ‘There is one of our home girls here, a Tikar. She is facing difficulties. She knows much about maids and about getting by from the margins. Most of her friends are maids.’

(Nyamnjoh 2010:19)

The story of Immaculate demonstrates how intimate strangers’ convivial encounters with one another reflect new and emerging identities; new social paradigms and emerging configurations of urban rights and employment.

Contrary to local xenophobic sentiments that stigmatize foreigners, migrants actually contribute significantly to the development of local economies. Indeed, migrant traders and business owners might survive almost anywhere on the continent by bribing officials in order to avoid arrest and detention, which they may face as a consequence of their illegal presence, of operating without a work permit, or of whatever appears to be the bureaucratic order of the day (Campbell 2006: 136). In Johannesburg for example, Zimbabwean and other African migrants are commonly understood
to be ‘mobile ATMs’ for the local South African police (Landau 2004: 10). However personally strategic these operations may be, they represent a dynamic of conviviality amongst migrant communities in African cities. Conviviality is fostered by the dynamics of mutual need and the prospects of mutual gain. Conviviality in urban spaces is enhanced by the strategic maintenance of networks, the resilience of migrants to adapt to new cities by learning local languages and building markets within the informal economy and, critically, in the case of informal traders, their appeal to local consumers who are drawn to comparatively low prices and the job opportunities that arise for low-skilled local workers.

Cities in urban Africa may be seen as communities of ‘intimate strangers’, regardless of what the law and fundamentalist tendencies towards frozen articulations of belonging might suggest. The occupation of a shared urban space, and similarities of motives for journeying towards a life in the city, evokes an intimacy driven by collective experiences. However, intimacy is subjugated by the politics of belonging, creating tensions that forever hold ‘strangers’ an arm-and-a-half-length away. Urbanites are like porcupines, their quills spanning out to protect against even the most warm-hearted neighbours. Defensive quills create a ‘protective’ barrier, reasserting notions of ‘self’ and distancing from the ‘other’. Yet, every daily experience of the tensions and dangers of quills is a subtle call to detect and institutionalize on-going strategies towards conviviality for all porcupines involved.

Amongst elite residents in African cities in particular, ‘easy access to the global flows of ideas, information and images has profoundly reshaped the identities of well-to-do urban residents, as their sense of belonging and social allegiances become less rooted in specific localities and more tied to global consumer culture’ (Murray and Myers 2006: 5). As a result of the increasing privatization of social services, privileged middle and upper classes with global connections have increasingly cloistered themselves into the fortified enclaves of Western modernity that have materialized in cities all over Africa. As the propertied, the privileged, and the powerful have retreated behind the protective shield of gated residential communities, enclosed shopping malls, and other barricaded sites of luxury, the urban poor are often left to fend for themselves in urban environments that have deteriorated almost beyond repair.

(Murray and Myers 2006: 5)

Seemingly institutionalized separation of people based on the politics of belonging, compounded by harsh treatment of ‘outsiders’, has, in turn, pushed migrants to view local Africans with whom they interact as the inferior ‘Other’.

In The Travail of Dieudonné (Nyamnjoh 2008), Dieumerci describes the compound where Dieudonné’s wealthy employers live, noting the tall, exuberant villas, beautiful lawns and immaculate flowers, all surrounded by electric fences and protective iron gates commanding ‘Interdiction Formelle de Franchir la Barrière de Sécurité/Chien Merchant/Mbwa Mkali’ (formally prohibited to cross the barricade/fence/wall) (Nyamnjoh 2008: 20). The aesthetics of gating and gatekeeping are reflective of the inhospitality and shattered expectations that Dieudonné and his like experience in Mimboland. Political instability in his homeland of Warzone keeps him in exile, though ‘He misses his home village to the point of tears … his heart has never really left home’ (Nyamnjoh 2008: 153). Dieudonné’s character demonstrates that, contrary to what host governments and nationals may think, migrants are not always interested in permanent resettlement or in being assimilated into the cultures of host countries (Sharp 2008; Nyamnjoh 2011). Recognizing this would encourage greater acknowledgement of the conviviality implicit in the reality of intimate strangers for which African cities are renowned.
Resurgence of autochthony in urban Africa

Despite living in an increasingly cosmopolitan world characterized by detachment from locality, identity is often asserted as deeply local (Sichone 2008; Landau 2011; Werbner 2008, 2011). Obsession with the local, a paradox of globalization, has led to increasing claims of autochthony, as societies seek to establish or re-affirm an irrefutable, primordial right to belong (Geschiere 2009). Autochthony refers to the idea of ‘being born from the soil’ − it is a deeply rooted concept representing the idea of ‘authentic’ belonging, an authenticity not defined as relational, but as an essence. Modern trends towards autochthony, demonstrated most blatantly by the global securitization of national borders, represent a worldwide yearning for such an ‘authentic’ mode of belonging. When rhetoric of the ‘right to belong’ is employed in politically charged attempts to exclude ‘outsiders’, the effects are deeply problematic. However, autochthony also has powerful emotional appeals as it is intimately linked to perceptions of individual and group identity. It renders fixed identity when empirically identity is always emerging − as a permanent work in progress. Identity is circumstantial, spontaneous, even surprising at times. We see this in Prospère, as his hope for opportunity leads him to negotiate new and emerging identities, bringing about his acquaintance with Jean-Marie and Jean-Claude, two counterfeiting and money-doubling businessmen who change his fate (Nyamnjoh 2006b). Quite paradoxically, however, national identity in the so-called age of globalization is increasingly based upon fitting into a mould of ‘insiderness’. We are pressured to find a way to maintain roots in the soil despite the purported tornados or hurricanes of globalization. And if we are rootless, we are encouraged to re-root ourselves. In relation to cities in Africa, it is an invitation for the invention or re-invention of sons and daughters of the urban soils of the continent − a clarion call for the parochialization or indigenization of urban spaces in tune to an idea of belonging premised around a regressive logic of ever diminishing circles of inclusion.

Even in countries like Botswana where the notion of citizenship as linked to ethnic belonging had almost disappeared in favour of political and legal notions of citizenship such as those propounded by Mahmood Mamdani (1996, 1998, 2000, 2009), ‘there has, in recent years, been a resurgence of identity politics’ (Nyamnjoh 2006a: 3; 2007a; Werbner 2004). Throughout Africa, this is demonstrated by the widespread distancing of outsiders by insiders who commit to ‘social hierarchies’ real and imagined and perpetuate assumptions about the boundaries of belonging. Tensions over belonging escalate as various (often self-defined) groups seek equal rights, better representation, economic entitlements, cultural recognition and access to resources and opportunities. The growing importance of identity politics and more exclusionary ideas of citizenship are matched by the urge to detect difference and to distinguish between ‘locals’, ‘nationals’, ‘citizens’, ‘autochthons’, or ‘insiders’, on the one hand, and ‘foreigners’, ‘immigrants’, ‘strangers’, or ‘outsiders’, on the other (Geschiere 2009). The growing preoccupation with belonging in Africa and elsewhere leads us to question the foundations of citizenship and nationality as resting on the so called ‘Western mirage’ of the nation-state and the autonomous individual.

Autochthony in ‘real life’

The global spread of autochthony is manifested through localized struggles to define belonging. This upsurge emerges through varying trajectories in everyday life and is represented through fictionalized accounts such as Intimate Strangers (Nyamnjoh 2010). Defining group identity is based on representations of the ‘Other’ as conceptualized around imagined hierarchies of nationality and national communities. As Angel laments, ‘It is a shame we use the word (Makwerekwere) the way we do, to refer to a particular type of foreigner from distant parts of Africa. Our neighbours from South Africa, Lesotho, Swaziland, they are not Batswana, but they are not called Makwerekwere either’ (Nyamnjoh 2010: 9). Angel continues, ‘Batswana seem to feel more comfortable with them than with other people from farther
north – Zambia, Malawi, central, east of West Africa’ (Nyamnjoh 2010: 9). Autochthony, reflected by use of the term Makwerekwere to bitterly describe ‘outsiders’, is, thus, a political project produced through an uneven exchange of power – evoking Orientalist reifications of difference in order to consolidate notions of self (Mamdani 1996; de la Cadena and Starn 2007). That in given encounters some could be made the ‘Other’ reflects ‘the relationship of power, of domination and of varying degrees of a complex hegemony’ (Said 1979: 5–6) that are inherent in defining citizenship and making possible particular forms of belonging while excluding others. This has profound implications towards facilitating access to migrants’ rights, and further, towards upholding state commitments to facilitate access to rights in cities and urban spaces. As a result, the politically imposed parameters of citizenship have led to an ‘outsidering’ of those perceived to not belong and ways of being urban and cosmopolitan not legitimated or normalized.

A flexible path for global and mobile citizens?

Politicization and the ‘global conjuring of belonging’ are contemporary issues that leave few indifferent (Li 2000; Geschiere 2009; Comaroff and Comaroff 2009). The energetic impetus and political commitment behind quests to determine who really belongs and who does not conjures a sentiment of suspicion that is often manifested through xenophobic attitudes and assaults aimed at migrants. Such xenophobic tendencies are clearly an outcome of a narrowly nation-state-based citizenship (Stolcke 1995; Nyamnjoh 2006a: 40; Sharp 2008; Geschiere 2009). The perpetuation of illusions of belonging have proliferated ultra-nationalism, chauvinism, racism, and xenophobia which have fragmented ‘nation-states’ that are, in reality, increasingly culturally heterogeneous. With trends towards xenophobia and other perilous outcomes emerging out of this project of belonging, it becomes necessary to reconsider the very notion of citizenship based upon the foundation of the nation-state, for its suitability to a world of mobility is fast becoming futile (Isin 2012). In the case of South Africa, if the nation-state is already a ‘patchwork of different racial and cultural collectivities’, why cannot there be ‘even more of a patchwork, especially as difference, in reality, has been noted to enrich a lot more than it depletes?’ (Nyamnjoh 2006a: 80).

It has become obvious that

the cultural and social rights of migrants and other minorities cannot be adequately provided for by a nation-state-based or by an individual-based conception of rights and citizenship alone, in contexts where social relationships and social membership with “recognized” others are key to any meaningful rights or citizenship claims.

(Nyamnjoh 2006a: 229)

The fate of the nation-state is, and has always been, in the hands of immigrants and diaspora communities, which explains why the state is called upon to ‘justify arbitrary conferment or denial of citizenship along racial, cultural, geographic, class or gender lines’ (Nyamnjoh 2006a: 81). The future of the nation-state is, therefore, dependent on negotiations between migrants and the state. Perhaps the solution to addressing increasing barriers to migration in an ever-more mobile world rests in a conceptualization of the idea of ‘flexible citizenship’, a concept that is reflective of how migrants create new contexts for urban rights and citizenship practices. A myriad of encounters, negotiations and navigations of difference have influenced Immaculate, Dieudonné, Dieumerci and Prospère’s lives, and they embody the idea of flexible mobility and identities. A multi-local, and even transnational, identity is not new to African cities, but is rather reflective of historical mediations of identity across rural and urban communities. In the current era of cross-border mobility, flexible identities represent those whose lives intersect, and thereby connect, multi-nodal urban spaces across and beyond nations.
Flexible citizenship would be detached from the fantasy of the ‘nation-state’; ‘flexibility’ is grounded in the understanding that congruency between culture, race, ethnicity, society and borders is unreasonable and unattainable. Faced with the emergence of a growing global diaspora, the nation-state is increasingly forced to reckon with a growing number of people who benefit from opportunities such as jobs and security available in their countries of work and residency, while maintaining relationships with their country of origin and cultural kin around the world (Nyamnjoh 2006a: 81). The trends towards increasingly global, flexible and mobile citizens advise the need for a new framework of citizenship. We envision this to be characterized by ‘flexible citizenship’, informed by histories of relationships, interconnectedness, networks and conviviality rather than by rigid geographies. Identities informed by the messy reality of entanglements occasioned by accelerated mobility, for long an inconvenience, may well be the indicators for the future direction of citizenship and what it means to be urban and to belong in Africa and the world.

Conclusion

The rapid growth of cities has gone hand in hand with social confrontations over the use of urban space. New urban spatial arrangements are growing out of interpersonal networks and ‘embryotic’ forms of self-organization, which emerge as a symbolic form of resistance to a geopolitical economy that often excludes both foreign and local migrants (Campbell 2006: 133). Despite increasing integration into a globalizing world, cities have retreated into localism, where specialized and particularized interests create relatively autonomous sub and peri-urban communities. Social polarization results in urban spatial fragmentation, though ‘cultural identities and assertion of difference do not necessarily result in urban conflict’ (Murray and Myers 2006: 11). However, accelerated mobility and increasing social change do often play into the hands of reactionary forces eager to cash in on such dynamics to ‘pose as legitimate champions of the interests of their unsettled nationals or ethnic kin’ (Nyamnjoh 2006a: 228). Urban migrants lead us to consider the notion of ‘postmodern geographies’, which require ‘a daily reinvention of new pathways for living’. In doing so, new cartographies are imagined that inspire modern notions of citizenship and design our collective urban futures. Postmodern geographies of citizens should be addressed through ‘flexible’ scholarship, in which research methods embrace both ethnography and fiction to narratively capture the dynamics of the everyday experience of mobile Africans and African mobilities.

References


Notes

1 Interview with a community leader in Cape Town in South Africa. 4 September 2012.

2 A crude term used to describe foreigners from other African countries.
CONTENTIOUS IDENTITIES?

Urban space, cityness and citizenship

Philippe Gervais-Lambony

Which region do you come from?
I don’t know.
Don’t try to be a smart ass, the detective warned, Where do your parents live?
They are dead.
Where did they live?
What does it matter where they lived … Haven’t you guys ever heard of an urban African? I am one.

(Meja Mwangi 1979: 336)

What is it to be urban? This is not an insignificant question; over half the inhabitants of the planet today live in urbanized spaces. Yet, in many urban contexts, urbanity and citizenship are contested rather than synonymous categories. In this chapter I consider urban citizenship a matter of identification; in other words, I argue that collective and individual urban identities are socially produced, not only shaped in complex ways in time and in space but also politically significant, as illustrated above by the prominent Kenyan writer Meja Mwangi in the epigraph above.

Three contextual issues frame the question of urban citizens and identities in contemporary cities. First, processes that construct identities are more complex and multi-faceted than before. In consequence, identities fluctuate and multiply more than ever (Appadurai 1996), tied to a set of globalized networks in which individuals, goods, ideas and models circulate. Second, recent urban dynamics critically place in question the relationship between the urban and citizenship, evident in the trend everywhere toward increasing social inequalities and spatial separation. Third, the world’s metropolises, whether northern or southern, are engaged in policies to build their global competitiveness, which lead to the adoption of neoliberal policies that tend to be socially exclusive, favouring economic attractiveness. In African cities, the multiplication of public-private partnerships, the increasing territorialization of urban policies, for instance as Business Improvement Districts and spatially differentiated service management methods (see Dubresson and Jaglin 2008), and the eradication of informal neighbourhoods from spaces deemed economically promising, have drastic effects on the poorest residents (Bénit and Gervais-Lambony 2003). Excluded from the contemporary city, people in such spaces are either unable or able only with great difficulty to access basic urban services, and politically tend to be marginalized from decision-making.
In the context of these three observations, many scholars and observers emphasize the hollowing out of ‘urban citizenship’, the disappearance of the possibility of a common identification at the scale of the city. At the same time, however, movements demanding a ‘right to the city’ are growing in number the world over, mobilizing for the right to access the city and urban services, and for full recognition as urban citizens; in other words, for ‘justice’ in the urban context. In this regard, cities of the south, and African cities in particular, have some specificity. Recent evolutions have to be considered in the context of legacies of the colonial past, particularly the ‘traditional’ and rural, in inter-relation and opposition with, race and ethnicity on the one hand, and, urbanity and modernity on the other.

As urban scholars, how may we understand this complex context? First, socio-spatial and temporal processes are not simply sewn together; instead they are diverse; variegated across and within space, and unevenly and dynamically developed in time. Here I draw on three scales to reflect on urban identity and its diversities evident in: individual inhabitants, differentiated by class, race, gender, age and origin; neighbourhood variations within cities, marking as different one neighbourhood from another; and, diversity in the nature and pace of change within and between cities. Through these three entry points, I explore how territorialized productions of identity and diversity combine on various scales to contentiously shape experiences and meanings of urban citizenship.

This question is particularly cogent in the African context, a region of the world largely misunderstood in urban studies debates, problematically categorized as distinct for its rural-ness or non-urban-ness. Long produced in and embodying theoretical models mainly from the north, African cities have failed to fit into urban studies models, whether from the colonial era, or based on more contemporary developmental approaches, or analyses based on globalization theories (Robinson 2006). As Edward Said famously reminded: ‘Men have always divided the world up into regions having either real or imagined distinctions from each other’ (Said 1978: 39). Such ‘imaginary geographies’ produce the south as different from the north, too often erasing the interior diversity of southern cities, while simultaneously constructing and emphasizing their difference from our (northern) cities. To disrupt this tendency, this chapter does not postulate the existence of an ‘African city’ as exceptional or different. Instead, the chapter uses African urban examples to make a general argument, suggesting, as Gluckman (1961), that whatever and wherever it is, a city is a city and an urban citizen is an urban citizen.

Drawing from debates on territory in Francophone urban studies, the chapter first provides an analysis of urban identities and citizenship, particularly discussing the ways in which these are experienced and contested in African urban contexts. From understanding the construction of territory and identity as a top-down process, the chapter turns to the ‘right to the city’, a manifesto for a bottom-up process to (re)produce city space and territory. This approach also reveals the importance in this process of the production of memory, a theme to which I turn for two reasons: in general, to explore the constant transformation of urban space; and, in particular to examine spatial identity as always also based on lived and produced memories of time and space.

Urban citizens and the other: moving on from an old debate

The French word ‘citadin’ (roughly the equivalent of ‘citizenship’ in English) contains the root ‘cité’ (in English, city). Linking the urban to questions of citizenship brings to this work a political dimension. At the same time, the concept of urban citizenship itself engages all areas of individual existence, including of course a connection to space. It is impossible to consider urban citizens’ identities without reflecting on their spatiality, i.e. the effects of that which characterizes urbanized spaces. For this reason, the concept of urban citizenship, more simply translatable into English as ‘cityness’, goes beyond attention to mere sociological and political dimensions. It comes close to what Edward Soja (2000: 12) proposed as ‘synecism’, a term introduced to capture the most important human dynamics that arises from the very nature of urban life, from what can be broadly called cityness’ and which ‘connotes, in
particular, the economic and ecological interdependencies and the creative — as well as occasionally destructive — synergisms that arise from the purposeful clustering and collective cohabitation of people in space.

In adopting this approach, I ask four questions concerning the inter-relationship between scale, urban identity and citizenship:

■ Does an urban citizen exist in general? In other words, are there behavioural characteristics that describe the urban citizen of every city and which could be linked to the common nature of urban space?
■ Is there a form of urban citizenship specific to each city? In other words, is there a community of practice and behaviour reflected in a city’s inhabitants that might be explained by the specificity of an urban space?
■ Conversely, is the city by definition constituted of diverse social groups whose forms of cityness are diverse in part because intra-urban space is differentiated (and vice versa)?
■ Or, in the extreme, is the city anything other than the juxtaposition of individuals each with his or her own practices, representation and individuality, all of which are spatialized in every case?

There are no simple answers to these questions and that is precisely wherein the richness of the concept of cityness and urban citizenship lies.

This type of debate has a long history in urban studies. The authors of the Chicago School, for instance, proposed determining generic behavioural traits for urban citizens, arguing that these were reflective of the city’s anonymous, segmented social relations, and multi-faceted identities (Wirth 1964; Park 1952). But each city has its personality, and becoming one of its citizens does not occur until the individual codes have been understood and the symbolic has been assimilated. It is also clear that there are local urban forms of identity that manifest through a feeling of belonging to a city. In this sense, the inhabitants of a city constitute a ‘socio-spatial class’ (Reynaud 1981), i.e., a group that recognizes itself in its belonging to a territorial community linked to the city. Referring to ‘aloofness’, Fernand Braudel (1979: 432) suggested that ‘Every city is, and intends to be, its own world’ to distinguish itself from the countryside and from other cities.

Yet, by its nature, the city is diverse, a mix of social, ethnic and cultural groups. An urban citizen is often first and foremost a member of a neighbourhood community, another part of the city (which itself is criss-crossed by many interior boundaries and limits), or of a social or ethnic group. Each of these layers and identities shape urban citizenship in particular ways. Moreover, rural or urban migrants from elsewhere import practices that embody other forms of cityness. And, the social distribution of work is also part of the city. Lastly, as Calvino (1972: 81) eloquently expresses:

Zemrude takes its shape from the mood of the person looking at it. If you go along whistling, your head high, led by what you’re whistling, you will get to know it from the bottom up: balconies, curtains flapping, fountains. If you walk along with your head down, your nails dug into the palm of your hand, your gaze will be lost at ground level, in the gutters, downspouts, fish bones, trash. You cannot say that one aspect of the city is more genuine than the other…

There is indeed a city for each individual as no one is exactly like anyone else. Depending on the day, mood, and personal history, each individual experiences and lives a different city. This complex socio-spatial mix emphasizes a diversity of urban citizen practices.

In consequence, contemporary cities are confronted with ever-greater socio-spatial fractures. Yet, despite striking urban social divisions, existence of an urban-citizen identity on the scale of an urban
Contentious identities and cityness

Agglomeration continues to exist. A multi-scalar approach to urban identity and citizenship is therefore important, reflecting on the urban citizen: in general, as the inhabitant of a city, a member of a group in a city, and as an individual. These scales are not contradictory, they can be multiple, overlaid, produced by and shaping citizen identities in complex ways. This complexity, I argue, is clearly a general condition of the city’s existence — no less in the south than the north, as I now exemplify in the African urban context.

The right to be urban: African cities and contested citizen identities

In the African urban context, already complex identities overlay a colonial history and practice, one that excluded most ‘Africans’ from the city. This cast the notion of an urban African citizen a misnomer, the point Mwangi contests in the epigraph with which I began the chapter. Colonial authorities in Africa always considered local populations by nature as rural and ‘traditional’, distinct from European populations. Therefore they could not fully be urban citizens or ‘modern’, concepts intimately linked. The extreme case of this policy was, of course, apartheid South Africa. But, throughout the colonial period, urban citizenship on the entire continent has been a political issue; that which was denied to the ‘natives’ was quite simply the status of an urban citizen, their ‘right to the city’. As Lefebvre (1974: 236) suggests, this right ‘cannot be conceived as a simple right to visit…. [it] can only be expressed as a right to urban life’. More broadly in his conception, this translates to the right to ‘settle and live. The right to work (participant activity) and the right to appropriation (quite distinct from the right to ownership).’

This colonial past has greatly influenced the conceptualization of urbanization that has driven research on cities of the south more generally. From a sociological perspective, a large percentage of these cities’ population was and still is made up of recent migrants from rural settings; urban studies has built on this dynamic, traditionally approaching cities based on the division of the urban and rural. This tendency led to proposing a migrant/urban citizen contrast as a basis for the analysis of urban societies in southern countries. French author Jean-Marie Gibbal (1974) has been particularly influential in imposing this interpretation. He developed a typology based on individual practices that distinguishes rural people, new urban citizens, and urban citizens in the Abidjan of the 1970s. The evolution of African cities was therefore understood as a process of ‘citifying’ the cities’ inhabitants. Based on Gibbal’s work, Gilles Sautter proposed ways to measure this change, arguing: ‘Urban societies begin … to deserve their name from the time that a sufficient percentage of urban citizens born in the city are able to ensure that lifestyles and values that are specific to the city are transferred’ (Sautter 1972: 77).

One can only be struck by the development of similar reflections in French-language urban research in sociology, starting with the foundational texts of Georges Balandier in 1955 on Brazzaville and in English with the work of the Manchester School in the early 1950s, focused on the mining cities in Zambia’s Copperbelt (Mayer 1970; Mitchell 1956; Gluckman 1961). These parallel research initiatives asked the same questions at just about the same time, yet answered them separately. After attempting to determine the degree of inclusion in the city by measuring how great the ties with the rural area of origin were, they then overturned the ‘rurality myth’ (Bank 2011) and demonstrated that the urbanization process was not necessarily a break with the rural world, and that urban citizens’ strategies could very well be dual. In the French context, for instance, Chaléard and Dubresson (1989: 288) argued ‘There is indeed an urban citizen component with various rural strategies … [and] … there are also rural components with urban citizen strategies’. This analysis recognized the invention of a form of urban citizenship that did not correspond to a dominant western model, and contrary to the official colonial discourse, it affirmed African urban citizens’ ‘right to the city’.

But the question of African urban citizen identities is not only scientific and historic. At the time that the Kenyan novelist Mwangi wrote the lines in the epigraph of this text, post-independence Kenya
continued not to recognize (or poorly recognized) city-dwellers’ status. In the wake of liberation from colonial powers, national officials of independent African countries often deemed the growth of urban populations as not only a source of economic problems but also a political threat. The city had to be a modern place and urban policies were supposed to reflect this direction through eradicating ramshackle neighbourhoods, supporting prestigious architectural creations and modern transport infrastructure, while also promoting housing developments primarily intended for the urban middle classes. More recently still, the Zimbabwean government launched the ‘Murambatsvina’ operation (‘cleaning up the garbage’ in Shona) in Harare in 2005, a policy whose purpose was the eradication of everything that was not ‘formal’ from urban space, including informal businesses and sub-standard housing. Tens of thousands of families were thrown out on the streets and thousands of market stalls and shacks in illegal neighbourhoods were razed.

In a post-colonial context, these examples reflect the same (colonial) contention: denial of the right to the city, denial of the status of urban citizens, and exclusion of the Other. These policies and practices of exclusion go hand-in-hand with the increasing complexity of African cities. They are no longer the ‘dual city’, described by Frantz Fanon as

A city of the colonized or at least an indigenous city, the black village, the medina, the reservation is a rough place populated with rough individuals … A world without space, people one on top of another, boxes one on top of another.

(Fanon 1961: 454)
In contrast to the ‘White Man’s’ paved, lit, airy city, the contemporary African city, with its simple colonial structure, has become a much more complex mosaic; and, as mobility has become greater, metropolises have become multi-cultural (Hall 1996) with complex and diverse social structures. The city ‘without space’ continues to exist, but it is no longer the city that simply shelters ‘natives’ as distinct from ‘colonial settlers’.

Colonial and post-colonial authorities have produced categories of citizens, carving up or manipulating those articulated by social science researchers, to distinguish ‘citizen’ from ‘non-citizen’ inhabitants. This is a great danger in studies on urban citizenship because these categories often lead to stigmatization. The migrant rural individual, for instance, is often the first to be distinguished, with ethnic categorization more often than not in full play. Foreigners or non-nationals are another category of urban non-citizens. Successive waves from the 1970s to date of mass expulsions from the cities of West Africa attest to this (Spire 2011), but so do the attacks on and expulsion of ‘foreigners’ in South African metropolises in 2008 (continuing since then more sporadically). In cases such as these, exclusionary categorizations are also internalized and remobilized by citizen groups. Armed intra-urban conflicts, for example, are both the cause and the result of the production of ethnic identities in the case of Brazzaville, for instance, in the 1990s (see Dorier-Apprill et al. 1998).

Yet, the individual who is excluded from urban citizenship is not always the person we may think she or he is; far from it, as this comparison of two capital cities in Africa shows. In Lomé, the capital of Togo, villagers from the peripheries are currently engulfed by the city’s growth. In these contexts, practices of indigenous communities do not reflect urban citizenship much; for instance, appropriation of land has always been left to time-honoured inhabitants, in this case to ‘villagers’. This is the case of the Bè, members of the Ewé sub-group from the village of Bè, which existed prior to the creation of the city, but it applies also to the descendants of families of other ancient villages and communities of fishermen. These aboriginal groups are attached to their present neighbourhood the way they would be to their village. They say, ‘I am from Bè’ before they say they are from Lomé.

Are they urban citizens or ‘villagers’? In Lomé, the urban citizen’s mode of equating neighbourhood to village is widespread. But this type of phenomenon has been described as well in working-class neighbourhoods in London’s East End in the 1950s (Young and Wilmot 1957) or in the ‘ethnic’ neighbourhoods of North American cities (with the classic example of Boston’s Italian-American minority described by Herbert Gans in his 1962 work entitled The Urban Villagers). Yet, in many West African cities this relationship is posed in different terms: one can be a villager in the aboriginal sense. Functioning as a villager can be a means of inclusion in the city based on neighbourhood solidarity (particularly in many of the illegal neighbourhoods populated by migrants), and it can also be a rejection of the city and a claim to the right to maintain a rural identity. At the same time, it can operate strategically to ensure the dominance (often through the control of land) of one particular group in a particular part of the city of Lomé.

Conversely, in cities of purely colonial origin, like Harare, Zimbabwe, those who were considered indigenous were excluded completely from the city. Urban land, in this case, is never ancestral land, producing a different commitment and relationship. Nonetheless, the cities’ natives and Zimbabwean and foreign migrants can be distinguished. This last group is paradoxically the most urbanized to the extent that its members often no longer have ties with their rural area of origin. Natives of Zambia, Malawi or Mozambique, for instance, explain: ‘This is my home now, I can’t go back’. Another migrant group that rejects any idea of returning to some type of rural place of origins are single female heads of families. This status would not be accepted in rural areas, while the city makes it possible, so these women describe themselves as ‘true Hararians’. The paradox in Harare is, therefore, that the foreign migrant is often more anchored in the city than the native: international migration has strengthened, if not imposed, urban citizenship in this context (Gervais-Lambony 2003).
Length of time in the city still, however, plays a fundamental role in defining urban citizenship. In the case of Lomé, Moba youth (an ethnic group from the north of the country) born in the city to migrant parents are seen to distance themselves from the ‘village’, explaining, for instance, ‘My little brothers don’t want to go to the village, it doesn’t interest them’. The head of her family after her mother’s death, a young Moba woman had no idea what to do to get her young siblings to ‘go up north’ with her for the ceremonies she deems necessary, but that seem useless to them. This does not keep the young boys in question from stating very firmly that they are ‘Moba’, but their ethnic identification does not seem to be linked spatially to the ‘village’. They are ‘Lomean Moba’, an invention reflective of a new urban identity.

In Kenya, we see another twist on this pattern. The famous shantytown, Kibera, extends over 225 hectares near downtown Nairobi. The first inhabitants of Kibera were Sudanese Muslim soldiers of the King’s African Rifles, colonial soldiers whose officers had authorized their settlement on this public land prior to 1914. Refused legal title to the land by the authorities however, these early grantees gradually built shacks for themselves. Chased from the countryside, new urbanites moved to this area. Throughout the twentieth century, the Nairobi housing crisis pushed more and more people toward residence in slums such as Kibera. Today a minority, the ‘Sudanese’, claim indigenous status, but are deemed ‘foreigners’ by the other inhabitants of the shantytown. In this case, the contention of ‘indigenous’ identity overlies issues related to control of urban space.
These examples clearly show that urban citizenship intimately relates to building a territorialized identity, ties with spatiality that must be observed and understood.

**Territory, the right to the city and identity**

Urban citizenship as an identity reflects processes that work beyond the scale of the individual. As Norbert Elias (1939) has argued, the individual is part of a ‘social configuration’, which links intrinsically to others. But identity is still no less an individual choice, which marks the individual as an essential actor. ‘In every case, the individual is, from the outset, attached to a number of groups: the situation he finds himself in and the events that occur over time make the choices more or less difficult, dangerous, or painful; they never eliminate the option of having to choose’ (Martin 1994: 22). This is observed even when identification is imposed by external appearance, as in the cases of ‘territorial stigmatization’ described by Wacquant (2008). The consequences can be the internalization of stigma, or conversely, its reversal and affirmation of an identity of resistance. That is why identity is not static or simply acquired. One structure can in fact replace another quite simply when the individual changes category of age, social group or living space, or modifies an identity choice. That is also why identity is multi-fold. A number of identity constructions always superimpose themselves because everyone belongs to a number of groups at once (Young 2000), illustrated in the extract of a life history from South Africa below.

S. is the child of a migrant mineworker. His father was a Mozambican citizen who came to work on the Witwatersrand’s gold mines. Upon his arrival in 1949, he was employed and given shelter by a mining company in the Benoni municipality (situated to the east of Johannesburg in the East Rand, now the metropolitan municipality of Ekurhuleni). After living in a mine compound, he settled in Daveyton Township, following his marriage in 1953 to a Xhosa-speaking South African woman. S.’s mother was an urban dweller throughout her life; she was born on the East Rand, but her Tswana-speaking father had emigrated from Botswana to work in Johannesburg in the 1920s and her Xhosa-speaking mother had come to the East Rand from the Transkei, 1,500 kilometres to the south.

Let us first consider the multiplicity of S’s father’s identities. Being black, he had to live in a specific area. Being ‘foreign’, he was not subjected to a South African Bantustan authority, but belonged to that extraordinary category invented by apartheid: ‘native alien’. Being Shangaan, he belonged to an ethnic group originating from the north-west of South Africa and the south-east of Mozambique. Finally, as a mineworker, he belonged to a well-delimited social group in South Africa. These identities were not organized according to a hierarchical order; as an individual he chose one or the other according to circumstances, or had to refer to one or the other depending both on the place he found himself in, as well as the company with whom he associated.

The Witwatersrand was in fact a cosmopolitan region where ethnic mixing was common. It attracted migrants from the whole of South Africa, from the southern African region, as well as a variety of people from different regions of Europe. What real meaning then is attached to so-called ‘ethnic’ identities in such a context? Who is S.? A Shangaan-Xhosa-Tswana? A mineworker’s son? A black South African? An East Rander? The language spoken in his family is Xhosa. He lived in Daveyton, in a neighbourhood reserved for Xhosa-speakers and was taught in this language at school. This was a choice made by his father who gave up his Mozambican-Shangaan identity to facilitate integration.

In 1984, S.’s family bought a house in the Vosloorus Township, part of the Boksburg Municipality. S.’s mother died in 1996 and his father three years later; they were buried in Vosloorus. The father left his children the following instructions: ‘I want to be buried next to my wife in the Vosloorus cemetery and, since there is no room left in the vault, I wish to be cremated so that the urn may be placed next to my wife’s coffin.’ Cremation is unusual in the Dutch Reformed Church, the family church, and is almost unknown in rural South African or Mozambican traditions. Nonetheless, S., the eldest son was
obliged to carry out his father’s wishes against the traditions of the church, and more importantly, the family. His late father had made a strong identity choice, privileging his identity as an urban dweller over all others, the identity that linked him forever to his beloved wife. Now a local politician, S. is himself clear when talking about Ekurhuleni: ‘I have no other home’, an expression pointing to a produced and chosen territorial identity in this particular part of the city.

What makes identification possible is adherence to a discourse. Central in the acquisition of the identity, this discourse is a narrative ‘whose function is to make the intense feeling of belonging to a group normal, logical, necessary and inevitable’ (Martin 1994: 23). For our purposes here, S’s conclusion reflects the production of territory as well, a discourse on the city that links a space to complex processes of social construction. The term territory is key in French-language geography, much less so in English-language geography, even if it can be compared to the English term ‘place’.

On the one hand, territory is a space that an animal keeps for itself and from which it chases away other animals of the same species. This ethological definition mirrors notions of an individual’s space. On the other hand, the term territory, in its legal sense, designates the space over which an authority has jurisdiction, the model being the national territory, i.e., a group’s space. For example, Joël Bonnemaison takes his definition directly from ethology (Bonnemaison 1986: 103) to describe a territory that is also collective because it is ‘the geographic expression of dominance that an individual or a group exercises over a place or a space; this dominance is simultaneously political, social and cultural; it is at the root of the group’s or the individual’s identity’. In contrast, Claude Raffestin (1980) bases his definition of territory on politics, which he defines as a space produced by power. This places him closer to the definition of a large portion of the English-language literature: ‘Territoriality will be defined as the attempt by an individual or a group to affect, influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographic area. This area will be called the territory’ (Sack 1986: 19). For his part, Marcel Roncayolo (2002) firmly places territory in the domain of the collective because he conceives it simply as a mode of connection between individuals; in this case, territory is simply a form of social relation based on identification to the same ‘space’.

These various definitions are simultaneously similar and different. In common, they affirm territory as a social construct. In contrast, however, ‘one, which is objective, heads in the direction of territory designated by a name, associated with a power, a form of control that helps to establish its limits and institutionalize it’ (Di Méo 1998: 46). The other is based on the idea that territorial identities are produced, tied to city practices and depictions. The latter highlight, of course, discourses and demarcations dictated from ‘above’. But, poles apart, the difficulty comes from the contradictions between these two co-existing logics: territorial identifications can be imposed from the top or can emerge in ‘resistance’ (Castells 1999) to officially proposed identities, thus ‘legitimizing’ them, to use Castells’ terminology.

Nonetheless, the term territory indicates a specific relationship between people and their environment. In this context, then, urban citizenship has to be defined as a territorialization of urban space; in other words, urban citizenship is constructed in the alignment of a portion of space and an identity discourse. This places us on the level of belief: what is important is that urban citizens believe in the past, present and future possibility of this type of alignment. In this approach, our project is not to distinguish those inhabitants of cities who are urbanized (in the sense ‘specifically of the city’) from others, but to analyse the various forms and degrees of territorialization embedded in these identities. Territorialization is a process of enrolment in space in which the individual participates, drawing together history and personality, the various groups she or he belongs to, influential political powers and discourses, as well as the space in which she or he lives, has lived or dreams of living in.

But the passage from an individual identity to a collective territorial identity still needs to be better understood. It is too simplistic to assume that because I live in a space, I develop certain practices
similar to other inhabitants – my neighbours, for instance; and, that this implies the construction of a
community. The process of recognition and belonging to a space or a group is not self-evident. In fact,
the passage from the individual to the collective is inherently political, involving group organization;
‘territoriality is first expressed by the relationship between people before expressing itself through the
attachment to a particular place’ (Roncayolo 2002: 195). Moreover, politics is precisely a means of
passing from individual space-territory to the collective, because it involves the production of a
discourse about this space and group. Political parties, states, businesses, tribal chiefs, churches, unions
and institutions (starting with the family), for example, all manipulate identities in the sense that they
do their best to convince individuals that they belong to a group (which, moreover, is not always
territorialized).

At the local level, other forms of association also act in neighbourhoods to demarcate identity-
based territories, such as neighbourhood associations, religious communities, and gangs for
instance. Confronted simultaneously with discourses and a lived spatial experience, urban citizens
also produce territorialities. They participate in the process of transforming space into territory:
‘people do not simply pass through space, they develop memories, meanings and attachments to
particular places, where they establish social relations, engage in struggles over resources and
construct narratives that valorise those places, as they enter the cultural repertoire of the city’
(Bank 2011: 15). While cities create themselves in inventing their history, conversely, citizen
struggles are quite often struggles against forgetting. To conclude this chapter, I turn next to a
discussion of urban identity and memory.

From territorialization to city memories

Memories and discourses about the past are directly related to the production of identity and urban
citizenship. They are critical to debates about territorialization as well. Contemporary African urban
societies are increasingly complex; everywhere the distinction of class and ‘identity’ groups have
evolved and blurred identifications, layering on top of (rather than erasing) legacies of past segregation
and differentiation. Contemporary forms of segregation are not easily compared to old forms because
territorialization processes have diversified, impacting on urban governance.

Contemporary urban governance is in fact, marked by two important evolutions, both of which
involve the construction of territory. On the one hand (‘from on high’), we witness demarcation
processes, identifying local territories, for the purpose of creating the context and the conditions for
collective action, for unifying operators and users or consumers around an immediate objective (such
as access to services, facilities or enrolling voters). These processes are also intended to develop and/or
legitimize the rules that will make urban governance sustainable and urban citizens governable. At the
same time, urban authorities, as well as other ‘development’ stakeholders, propose identifications that
are both credible for citizens and ‘promising’ in terms of image, for example representations of a clean,
attractive and competitive city. These spatialized identities are proposed on a local scale to urban
citizens to persuade them to buy in to the proposed urban plan. On the other hand, many groups of
urban citizens point out the inefficiency of urban management by government authorities, demonstrating
their dissatisfaction and expressing their demands at the local scale. Occasionally, encouraged by
government rhetoric about participatory democracy and the practices of ‘development’ stakeholders
(NGOs, for example) whose actions are supposedly oriented towards community and the local scale,
diverse urban social movements mobilize city dwellers as well as spatial identifications. Demarcation
and identification are two forms of territorialization. Yet, paradoxically, even if these two forms seem
to respond to a concern for adaptation to local contexts and citizen participation to expand the ‘right
to the city’, at the same time they imply classification by place, an imposition of urban identity
categories, which can foster intra-urban fragmentation.
The construction of a ‘collective memory’ (or, conversely, resistance to erasing a memory) can be observed as an essential tool in both forms of territorialization, whether for the officials who wish to promote the consensual image of an urbanized community or for local city stakeholders who rely on a so-called common past to defend their identity-based territory (Candau 1998) and legitimize their demands for recognition and redistribution. There are various ways to distinguish contemporary forms of memory (Didier et al. 2007), as well as the complex relationship between individual memories and the production of so-called collective memories (Halbwachs 1997; Lavabre 2007). If we understand memory as a ‘present representation of something absent’ (Ricoeur 2000: 68), we can simultaneously draw on various theoretical classifications of memories.

Marcel Proust suggests as essential the differentiation of two types of memory: voluntary memory (reconstructed moments, remembered like pictures in an album of postcards one leafs through) and involuntary memory (a ‘reminiscence’, an ‘immediate, delicious and total explosion of the memory, which ‘allows one to escape from the present’ and ‘be reunited with the old days’, Le temps retrouvé, 1987: 228). Often provoked by the presence of an object from the past in the present space, this involuntary memory evokes what Michel de Certeau (1980) called ‘the ghosts of the city’: abandoned objects and places, calls of a lost past that the policies of heritage preservation attempt to tame. Another designation could be ‘tomason’ (or ‘thomasson’): urban objects whose function is no longer recognized, relics of a system from another time, forgotten by the ‘creative destruction’ of the neoliberal city (Genpei Akasagawa 1987; Gervais-Lambony 2012). This approach suggests we must differentiate two modalities of the past’s presence. The latter, involuntary, could be understood as Henri Lefebvre’s (1974) spaces of representation, i.e. actual experience; whereas the former − voluntary − could be said to be a representation of space, i.e. conceived because it is the voluntary production of a memory and a discourse.

The importance of this categorization is that it leaves open the possibility of reflection on a third term described by Lefebvre through his analysis of practices. Within this conception, the urban resident can tip an object or a space into one or another of the categories. Thus, one must differentiate the idealization of the past, often the action of either urban authorities or economic agents that produce spaces by making reference to an imagined past, from the nostalgia experienced by urban residents (Huysse 2003; Boym 2001; Dlamini 2009). Yet, nostalgia in looking toward the past invokes the present, and suggests a future. How many urban development plans are a projection into the future based on an idealized past? How many individual plans are a search to reproduce a lost past in the future? How much rallying for changing space is based on nostalgia? In these processes, the ‘powers of the imagination (as the dual ability to remember the past and desire the future)’ (Appadurai 1996: 34) are central.

Certainly, we know three things about the most generic and contemporary forms of urban citizen memories. First, inhabitants of cities are confronted by change. This is a feature of urbanity that we have been aware of since Charles Baudelaire wrote: ‘The old Paris is no more, [a city’s form] changes more quickly, alas, than a mortal’s heart’. This is a consequence of ‘creative destruction’ as described by David Harvey (1990), which produces nostalgia, what Boym calls ‘historical emotion’ (2001: xvi). ‘Nostalgia and progress are like Jekyll and Hyde: alter egos’ (Boym 2001: xvii). Ambiguous nostalgia seems to me to shape urban residents’ experiences in general (Lepetit 1995), as well as their relationship with urban space (past, present and future). Moreover, nostalgia is accentuated by the acceleration of social and spatial changes, such as those characterizing African cities today. Urban residents must simultaneously manage the rapid transformations of their city, integrate new temporalreferents, or alternatively, in some cases, observe a marked lack of change. Second, we also know that parts of a city change at varying paces (Ronçayolo 2002). Some neighbourhoods change while others seem to be standing still, often the result of selective effects of economic globalization or urban transformation policies that are concentrated in ‘promising’ spaces − a city’s ‘shop windows’ (city centres, business
centres in the suburbs or neighbourhoods undergoing gentrification), as opposed to its ‘back rooms’
(poorer neighbourhoods, for instance) (Bénit-Gbaffou and Gervais-Lambony 2003; Lee and Yeoh 2004). And, third, proliferations of references to the past are tied to rapidly increasing processes of territorialization (Di Méo 1995).

Territorial identity demands for ‘recognition’ multiply tremendously, particularly in the face of change, among the richest and the poorest alike. The demands are based on local territories that they produce and on discourses about the past which are mobilized for strategic reasons. Urban residents’ memories become political issues and officials, for their part, produce discourses and spaces devoted to these memories. In this contemporary urban context, it is critical to ask about the ‘right to memory’. The recurrence of ‘nostalgic’ discourses is striking, though diverse in nature and conjured up for a multitude of purposes, for instance: by the politician constructing a rallying identification; by territorialized social movements defending their right to the use of space; by neoliberal economic actors marketing the memory of an idealized past; by urban residents in general simply producing discourses that order their endlessly changing universe.

Conclusion

Framed by the three characteristics discussed above, I suggest it is critical to study the links between processes of territorial identification, local political life and urban citizen memories. This is especially important in the context of growing interest in questions of social justice, understood as distribution and recognition (see Soja 2010; Bret et al. 2010) and as matters of heritage (see Huys ten 2003; Kusno 2004; Gravari-Barbas 2005). The relationship between both phenomena is a significant question for contemporary cities, in general, and in Africa, no more nor less than elsewhere. In these processes, space plays a fundamental role. On the one hand, space is where evocative traces of the past survive, and ‘haunted places are the only ones people can live in’ (de Certeau 1980: 191). As Vladislavic (2006: 176) suggests, these contexts demonstrate the importance of tomasons that thrive in the man-made world, in spaces that are constantly being remade and redesigned for other purposes, where the function of a thing that was useful and necessary may be swept away in a tide of change or washed off like a label … the obvious, useful facts of the city recede and a hidden history of obsolescence comes to the surface.

Space is thus a medium for discourse that makes possible the production of ‘places of memory’ (Nora 1984), but is also often an issue of contention challenged in these debates.

At the heart of urban citizenship, the right to remember space from the past features in resistance to the political projects of erasing, re-writing or imposing a certain selected past in the present remaking of cities. Far from leading to a single consensus, or a generalized hypothetical collective memory, the contention of memory instead rallies around and crystallizes urban identity on a number of levels. It is precisely there that the link between memory, identity, space and justice is located: the demand for a memory, whether individual or collective, is also a demand for an identity, a demand for recognition and legitimation. Memory is mobilized to demand justice, understood in the sense of ‘recognition’ or to support material demands for redistribution. But it can also well become an argument for demanding autochthony and can therefore also be a factor that produces injustice because it excludes the Other. Understanding processes of urban citizen identification in African cities in particular, and southern contexts more generally, is therefore intimately connected to material and political issues; not a luxury, it is an urgent condition, central to advance toward greater urban democracy and justice.
References


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Note

1 The territorialization process can be said to be a process of conversion of spaces into places, see Tuan 1977.
THE PLACE OF MIGRANT WOMEN
AND THE ROLE OF GENDER
IN THE CITIES OF ASIA

Brenda S.A. Yeoh and Kamalini Ramdas

The growing presence of migrant women in Asian cities

In Asia, the massive but uneven impact of change wrought by globalization processes has meant that even as people resist or inflect creeping as well as sweeping change, lives and livelihoods are being transformed. Nowhere has the changing role of women been more evident than in the globalizing cities of Asia. These are cities that have become threaded into the intersecting spaces between globalizing time-space compression on the one hand, and the particularities of localisms on the other. In the post-colonial era when many nation-states in Asia gained independence, cities grew rapidly, largely as a result of the increased volume and quickened pace of transnational and rural–urban migration. At the same time, the place of women in the city has become even more visible in the last two decades, as migration within Asia grew in both volume and velocity, becoming more feminized, irregular and commercialized (Collins et al. 2013; UNDESA 2012). Even as they continue to shore up the home front with their unpaid domestic labour, women − citizens and increasingly migrants − play an expanding role in paid domestic work, the factory, the corporation and the city.

Given that female migration numbers have increased rapidly to virtually equal male migrants on the move, the phrase ‘feminization of migration’ has gained considerable currency in Asia. For sending countries such as the Philippines, Indonesia and Sri Lanka, for example, women constitute the majority of legally deployed migrant workers each year (IOM 2011: 24). Significantly, women also dominate irregular migration channels in Asia (Asis 2005).

The feminization of migration flows is in part a result of changing production and reproduction processes worldwide (Lim and Oishi 1996). Globalization processes, in which production activities are relocated from the post-industrialized economies of the west to those of the south to take advantage of cheaper input costs, have drawn on pre-existing gender relations and targeted cheap and flexible female workers − many from rural areas with declining employment opportunities − to enter factory employment in export processing zones and industrial parks in rapidly industrializing Asian cities. The feminization of labour migration is also strongly linked to what Sassen (2000: 506) calls the ‘feminization of survival’, whereby migrant women from the south are increasingly incorporated as ‘the global world’s newest proletariat [or ‘factory daughters’], into the global capitalist activities of the North, all under severely diminished citizenship regimes’ (Dobrowolsky and Tastsoglou 2006: 3; see also Ong 1987; Wolf 1992; Salaff 1995).
The other numerically important form of female labour migration is linked to reproductive activities, such as low-paid domestic service, care work and the sex industry. The increasing demand for women’s paid reproductive work in the globalizing cities of Asia is due to a combination of factors, including an increase in women’s labour force participation in the cities resulting in care deficits on the domestic front; growing eldercare needs resulting from plummeting fertility rates, increasing dependency ratios, rapid ageing and major gaps in state support for the care of the elderly and infirm; and the expansion of hospitality and sexual services as male executives and entrepreneurs become more mobile. Women migrating within labour contract systems are no longer tracing pathways just to advanced industrialized nations in the west or wealthy oil-producing countries; many are also seeking overseas employment in the rapidly industrializing economies in Asia such as Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, South Korea, Malaysia and Thailand. In urban East Asia, the increasing educational level, financial independence and career-mindedness among citizen-women has also led to rising trends in non-marriage and delayed marriage, creating what has been labelled a ‘bride deficit’ in the lower economic strata of society that in turn has stimulated the growing phenomenon of international marriage migration in Asia (Jones and Gubhaju 2009). Increasing numbers of female migrants from developing countries in the region cross borders as ‘foreign brides’ to become marriage partners of citizen men in the globalizing cities of first-tier rapidly industrializing economies in Asia (Piper and Roces 2003; Yeoh et al. 2013). The globalization of care work based on an ‘international division of reproductive labour’ (Parreñas 2000) has created regional ‘care chains’ (Hochschild 2000: 132) across an unevenly developed but interconnected Asia.

Life in the city provides migrant women the opportunity to refashion themselves as ‘modern’, ‘independent’, and to carve out and negotiate spaces that accommodate their desires and dreams for a
different future. However, while the ability to be ‘modern’ may seem not to lead to any significant dismantling of patriarchy in the Asian context, we show how an engagement with gender politics in the everyday lives of women can shed light on the complex relationship between patriarchy and modernity.

**Migrant women and gender politics in Asian cities**

As Stivens (2000: 24) has noted in the context of Asia, ‘we are not dealing with one global version of modernity, but multiple, divergent modernities within a globalizing whole. These modernities have generated their own specific, situated politics, including feminist or “womanist” politics and struggles for sexual [and other] rights’. Amidst the complexities of multiple modernities, feminized migration flows to the cities have further intensified the degrees of gendered and racialized diversity in the urban fabric as both local and migrant women strive to carve out a niche for themselves in largely patriarchal worlds. Given the intensity and quickened pace of social change in cities as well as their openness to different social and cultural norms embodied by ‘migrant others’ who gravitate to the city, urban settings have the capacity to induce ‘gender liquefaction – melting, blending and re-solidifying new gendered norms, themselves subject to re-melting and re-formation’ (Jarvis et al. 2009: 111). Such processes may be highly contradictory, and can be potentially both emancipatory and constraining in their effects on gender practices and norms (Huang and Yeoh 1996). As Young (2010: 233) notes, ‘the city has often offered a welcome anonymity and some measure of freedom’ and yet at the same time ‘the liberatory possibilities of capitalist cities have been fraught with ambiguity’.

Globalizing cities, in Asia and elsewhere, are structured by deeply embedded power geometries which are primarily masculinist and patriarchal in both intent and effect. Against this, feminized flows of migration into the city are productive of struggles, strivings and strategies as women find their own place in the city. Women ‘occupy multiple and shifting sites, employ a range of strategies, and experience a wide variety of spatial relations’; at the same time, prevailing gender relations are often negotiated ‘within prescribed boundaries of acceptable behaviour’ (Huang and Yeoh 1996: 107). For instance, Doshi (2012) and Datta (2007) draw our attention to activism in slums of Mumbai and Delhi respectively. Slum dwellers, who are usually migrants, deploy strategies that serve to elucidate the complex intersectionality between gender and class. While activism in slums is often linked to the rising number of women from the educated middle class (see for example Chowdhury 2010), Datta (2007: 216) suggests that ‘working-class women can create new and valid empowerment models’. Datta’s paper engages with such a model of empowerment in which a working-class NGO, Samudayik Shakti, based in the slum, draws from and builds upon its roots in Jagori, an NGO comprising members who are not slum dwellers. Jagori’s objective was to ‘spread feminist consciousness for the creation of a just society’, but this broader objective was later narrowed by Samudayik Shakti to the more immediate concerns of ‘socio-cultural and material transformation’ (Datta 2007: 219). The members of Samudayik Shakti comprised working-class women from different caste, religious and ethnic groups who came together over similar concerns of justice for women and men who experienced threats of violence from corrupt officials in the slum. Similarly, Doshi argues that in the eviction and resettlement of slum dwellers, gender is strategically deployed by NGO and social activist groups comprising slum dwellers, playing to the feminine/domestic and class aspirations of women living in the slums. And yet resettlement to city peripheries has also produced a strain for these women who must now commute to their places of work in the informal sector in the city they no longer live close to. By ‘mobili(zing) around feminized and ostensibly non-political social-reproductive needs and aspirations for housing and domesticity’, and ‘privileging domesticated gendered subjectivities’, the ‘other experiences of women and men’ (relating to their working lives outside the home) become ‘silenced’ (Doshi 2012: 11).
In considering the interacting dynamics of gender politics, feminized migration and the urbanization process, we also pay heed to the feminist critique that much of globalization work has ‘ironically, reinscribed the centrality of nation-states by conceptualizing globalization processes as they relate to nation-state spaces, thereby excluding other crucial scales of analysis [such as the household, community, and the body]’ (Nagar et al. 2002: 265). In this vein, we argue that as there are multiple oppressions and opportunities at work in women’s lives at different spatial scales, our understanding of gender politics in the city needs to take on board analyses of gendered subjectivities and power hierarchies operating across inter-related spatial scales. In the following three sections of the chapter, we analyse respectively how gender is implicated in the cities of the south at three scales which intersect within the ‘urban’: the body and gendered identities, the household in the city, and the city as a locale within the nation-state. Rather than viewing each scale as separate, or privileging one scale over another, we echo the argument already well made in the geographical literature for the need to appreciate scales as interdependent, mutually affected by one another (Devasahayam et al. 2004; Marston 2000; Silvey 2004a, 2004b). To this end the use of scale in this chapter provides the scaffolding to understand how gender is reproduced, contested and negotiated in the urban south.

Gendered subjectivities, embodiment and identity politics in urban Asia

Feminist scholars have long argued that ‘identity’ is relational and socially constructed and that the politics of identity constitutes an important mapping of the basic contours of politics and struggle within the social body. Keith and Pile (1993: 34) observe that ‘the assumptions that are made about how people are constituted have profound effects not only on the kind of radical politics people can be expected to make but also on the kind of effects that can ultimately be hoped for through political action’. As such, identity politics is not ‘some sort of surface froth that floats around on top of more important social processes, but something that strikes deep into our ability to transform the social world into concrete knowledges’ (ibid.: 31). The focus on ‘politics’ puts the emphasis on the contested ‘social processes whereby people articulate, assert, challenge, suppress, realign, and co-opt varying hierarchies of identity’, often through claims and counter-claims about ‘self’ and the ‘other’ (Dickey and Adams 2000: 10).

Identity politics are often played out at ‘the human scale of gendered power’ and through the ‘embodiment of everyday routines and practices’, even as ‘the interdependence of this embodiment with multiple scalar processes of gendered power relations’ needs to be borne in mind (Jarvis et al. 2009: 113). For example, young Lampungnese women who leave their villages to take up work in the textile factories of Greater Jakarta, often in the face of parental disapproval, draw on women’s embodied behaviour as an ethnomarker to differentiate ‘self’ from ‘other’. Elmhirst (2002: 93) interprets this as a refusal on the part of the younger generation to partake in the gendered cultural politics of identity maintenance; instead in migrating to urban areas, they draw on ‘an inter-regional version of “Southeast Asian factory girl” femininity’ (drawing on Ong and Peletz’s (1995) term) by remaking and representing themselves as ‘fashionable’, ‘articulate’, ‘relatively worldly’ and ‘relatively well-educated’ compared to their rural peers, not only to challenge parental authority steeped in local representations of gender, but also in counterpoint to state-endorsed ibuism where appropriate femininity is represented by women who are housewives or ‘mothers of development’ (Elmhirst 2002: 94). In addition to the classed nature of identity politics (see, for example, the essays in Sen and Stivens 1998), Elmhirst’s (2002) analysis clarifies the importance of also taking into account how generational differences inflect identity struggles and gender politics in a region marked by rapid change from one generation to the next.

Indeed, the theme of fashioning the self in the image of consumerist modernity is key in women’s urban-ward migration in the region, for ‘the city itself is a part of the broader field of modernity, of a style of life in which ... women participate and fashion their identities’ (Askew 1998: 146). In Gaetano’s
(2008: 630) and Esara’s (2004) separate discussions of the experiences of single female rural-to-urban migrants in Beijing and Bangkok respectively, women gain greater freedom from the parental gaze, become economically independent and are able to ‘makeover’ themselves from ‘so-called rustic peasants’ to ‘modern girls’, thereby expanding labour market options, developing confidence and enhancing social status. However, as discussed in Esara’s (2004) paper, this freedom is curtailed as filial piety and the patriarchal norms of Thai society require many of them to marry and become parents, and as a result shoulder responsibilities for both their natal and marital families. Despite the physical distance from familyhood and domesticity in rural villages, the experience of many women in urban Asia continues to fall within the ‘reach’ of familial expectations rooted in a discourse of moral duty and women’s responsibility (see also Fan 2003; Parreñas 2005; Mitchell 2008; Agergaard and Thao 2011).

Conversely, as Gaetano (2008: 630) notes, ‘the freedom from parents and in-laws that migrant women who make freely chosen love matches gain [in the context of the city] may also make them more dependent on their husbands’ (see also Suzuki 2002). These marriages, unlike those where potential spouses are sought through parental or kin networks, are not seen as ‘symbolically binding two families’ (Gaetano 2008: 638) and in instances where the marriage is between a rural woman and an urban man, the women ‘continue to experience discrimination on the basis of gender and rural origin’ (ibid.: 641).

Transplanted into an urban context, migrant women creatively develop more ‘mobile subjectivities’ (Williams 2005) to reposition themselves vis-à-vis their families and kin back home and in the process loosen the control that male kin have on their bodies and sexuality. In patriarchal societies, the urban informal sector often provides migrant women with opportunities for economic independence and advancement despite deficient working conditions and the lack of safety nets (Yasmeen 2001; Agergaard and Thao 2011). Ironically, for migrant women who seek work as domestics in foreign homes in the city, it is by ‘knowing one’s place’ and through careful presentation of the self at the place of sojourn that they succeed in crafting a space of widening subject positions in order to distance themselves from the expectations of feminine docility and obedience at ‘home’. Understanding the experiences of migrant domestic workers in the context of the ‘family’ takes on a double reading because they move in and out of at least two families/households − one anchored in the ‘homeland’ from which they are spatially removed, and the other belonging to their host-employer in which they are physically located (Yeoh and Huang 2010, 2012).

Indeed, for many migrant women, transnational migration creates an ideological terrain on which the ‘uneven and shifting mixtures of family loyalty and responsibility on the one hand, and autonomy and agency, on the other hand’ (Ryan 2004: 367) are continuously traced and retraced. In trying to reconcile their own economic and consumption aspirations with their commitments − both material and symbolic − to their natal families where women’s migration is often understood as a family survival strategy, migrant women’s identities are shaped by ‘an ongoing process of negotiation and contestation between and within available “subject positions” (such as “good daughter” or “modern woman”)’ (Mills 1997: 38; see also Yeoh, Chee, Vu and Cheng, 2013).

Moralizing discourses centred on traditional notions of femininity and ‘a woman’s place’ are further compounded by sexualized and racialized constructions of women’s bodies in the city, as women are often deemed ‘unaccounted for’ outside the protective wrap of family life and male authority figures. Hilsdon and Giridharan (2008) write about how Filipinas who work in the nightlife industries of cities in Sabah and Sarawak as musicians and singers, karaoke hostesses, beauticians and masseuses are stigmatized and excluded from the Malaysian nation on grounds of their race (as non Malay) and sexuality (the work they do is seen as deviant, immoral). Yet, in the interstices of urban space and various sites of encounter, migrant women find degrees of freedom in seeking opportunities for work, love, friendship and marriage on their own terms (see also Mackie 2002; Suzuki 2002). In a similar vein, McIlwaine’s (1996: 161) study of migrant women entering sex work in Cebu City in the Philippines − in part a response to national policies promoting tourism as well as the historical presence of military
bases – shows that by distancing themselves from their natal villages and creating female-dominated domestic spaces as a shield against social opprobrium, they are able to cope with ‘the double bind of “morality” and poverty’, although this is often at the expense of widening the gulf between themselves and women in general. Phouxay and Tollefsen (2011: 433) also make the point that migrant women’s subjectivity and status are variegated across different ‘moments’ and ‘spaces’ in the city: in their study of Vientiane, they found that women experience exploitation within the factory gates as they are not able to negotiate work conditions, but ‘gain certain benefits in terms of consumption practices, status, or self-esteem outside factory gates’.

In sum, while women’s identities continue to be subject to asymmetrical power geometries structured by global capitalism, exploitative labour control regimes, and the ‘discursive and institutional orders of state, market and family’ (Gaetano 2008: 627), upon migration to the cities, scholars have in general found that the move to the city engenders changes in migrant women’s identities and practices, including bodily appearance and comportment; consumption patterns; views of romance, sexuality and marriage; and importantly, their ability to imagine a wider range of options, life chances and pathways towards a more open-ended future (Huang et al. 2000; Pun 2005; Gaetano 2008). In the next section, we analyse how gender is implicated in care relationships that emerge at the scale of the household, and the resultant gender politics as women negotiate the options available to them in the city.

**Gender politics in the urban household**

Feminist scholars have argued that the family/household is fundamental to understanding the urban lived experience as it is a major provider of welfare and ‘the foremost realm of non-capitalist economic production’ (Gibson-Graham 1996). At the institutional level, societies such as China formally distinguish between permanent residents and migrants in large cities via the *hukou*, or system of household registration that distinguishes between permanent and temporary migrants in large cities. Migrants who move to the city often do not possess urban *hukou* papers, but instead have their households registered in the villages. Place-based distinctions between rural and urban *hukou* are institutionalized via a host of regulatory mechanisms which render the rural migrant’s presence in the city illegitimate. Often viewed as outsiders who are socially inferior and inassimilable, female migrants in particular are confined to the informal sector or stigmatized occupations such as domestic work, low-skilled service jobs, casual work and the sex industry (Fan 2003, 2008; Gaetano 2008). This system of registration means that those who marry and start families in cities where they do not possess *hukou* papers are often forced to negotiate the stressful process of registering their children. Without urban *hukou* status, these children are denied access to education and other social services in cities and may be forced to return to the villages to live with their grandparents (Jacka 2006).

Using the social interactions and dynamics of the urban household as a lens to view the city provides ‘a holistic (or pluralist) approach to urban flows and networks – recognizing formal and informal (cash in hand) work, remittance economies, domestic food production and self-provisioning, reciprocity and the “economy of regard”, state benefits and redistributive economies and, crucially, care work’ (Jarvis et al. 2009: 24). Symptomatic of the increasing global interconnectivities between places, the household has also taken on an increasingly transnational character. Douglass (2006) has coined the term ‘global householding’ to describe the broad cross-class phenomenon of creating and sustaining households *internationally*, as seen in the flexibilization of household life cycles, and greater openness to elements such as international marriages, raising and educating children abroad, and frequent-flier lifestyles (Lam et al. 2006). Predicated on the transnational migration of people and their transactions across borders, global householding as a strategy is apparent in porous households where daily household maintenance and reproductive care are ‘outsourced’ to migrant domestic workers, care workers, nannies (in the case of middle-class households) and even foreign wives (in the case of working-class
households; see Yeoh, Chee and Vu 2013). The transfer of care work and domestic duties through a series of personal links between people across the globe (which Hochschild (2000) calls ‘global care chains’) have also been a concern among scholars who are keen to study how the value of care work becomes increasingly diluted as it gets repeatedly ‘off-loaded’ to other women ‘lower’ down the global hierarchy, often ending in unpaid labour performed by a migrant woman’s kin, such as a daughter or a sister in the global south. Research focusing on the cascading effects of globalization on the reproductive sphere not only captures the household internationalization strategies in Asia (and elsewhere), but also calls attention to the inequitable (often gendered, classed and racialized/ethnicized) ways in which different people are being drawn into care networks, through a mix of kinship ties and recruitment drives responding to the demand for care in the cities of the global north (Yeates 2009).

Within Asian globalizing cities, global householding has become an increasingly common strategy drawn upon by middle-class households dependent on dual careers in order to ensure that the family remains on the treadmill of consumer expectations. With the withdrawal of the wife/mother’s reproductive labour as she takes on the pressures of building a career, the household turns to the market-based option of bringing in women from less developed countries, for instance poorer countries in the region, to serve as low-paid, surrogate care for children, the elderly and the infirm as well as to perform domestic work. While eldercare work may also be ‘outsourced’ to (mainly female) migrant healthcare workers labouring in the institutionalized space of the nursing home (Huang, Yeoh and Toyota 2012), the prevalence of gendered ideologies based on ‘Asian familialism’ (Ochiai 2009, 2010) in the East Asian economies of Singapore, Hong Kong and Taiwan means that families continue to prefer to relegate the duty of aged care to the privatized family sector in order to conserve some semblance of filial piety. In this context, the ‘live-in foreign maid’ emerges as an increasingly common substitute to provide the care labour needed to sustain the household in a context where domestic and carework still remain resolutely ‘women’s work’. By moving down the care chain as opposed to across the gender divide, a system of the gender substitution of care labour dependent on exploitative practices of extracting cheap labour from migrant women is emplaced. Aguilar (1996: 5), for example, observes that ‘the plentiful supply of migrant workers from the Philippines [and other labour-exporting countries] has made possible the retention of archaic, slave-like forms of domestic labor in [cities such as] Singapore, which has propped up customary patriarchal relations in family and society’.

Of relevance too is the observation that analogous to the practice of middle-class families recruiting migrant domestic workers for householding purposes, working-class families are increasingly procuring domestic labour through the recruitment of ‘foreign brides’ (Yeoh, Chee and Vu 2013). With globalization and expanding educational and career opportunities for women, men from the lower socio-economic strata, who feel positionally ‘left behind’ by local women’s participation in the workforce, are seeking to fill the care deficit in their households through international marriage with women from the less developed regions in Asia. This category of women is considered more ‘traditional’ and willing to take on procreation and caring roles in sustaining the urban household (Cheng 2012; Jongwilaiwan and Thompson 2013).

Global householding and the introduction of migrant workers into the privatized sphere of the home lead to an elision between treating waged domestic work as a market transaction and as a familial relationship between a superior and a social inferior. This sets in place a ‘spatialised politics of the home’ (Yeoh and Huang 2010) as women — both the citizen employer and the migrant domestic worker — negotiate their relationship as household members across a ‘fraught terrain’ that lies uncomfortably at ‘the crossroads of anxieties of sameness and difference’ (Pratt 1997: 173). In their work on interlocking understandings and practices of domestic work and motherhood, Yeoh and Huang (1999a, 2010) show that while Singaporean employers on the one hand and Filippino and Indonesian domestic workers on the other are ‘worlds apart’ in many ways, they participate in negotiations around similar gender issues: both sets of women often justify resorting to ‘substitute mothering’ to seek material betterment for their
families. Both have removed themselves physically from the reproductive burden of their own households, but do not entirely escape the multiple ties that bind women to the domestic world, and both struggle with ‘distance mothering’ (although this occurs on different scales).

Silvey (2006: 68) argues that the household ‘takes on place-specific meanings through social practices defining domesticity, tensions around boundaries separating public and private, meanings of kinship relations, norms of sexuality, and relationships between various work and caring spaces’. In this light, strategies of global householding increasingly common in globalizing cities not only depend on migrant women but are complicit in the gendered negotiations surrounding both paid and unpaid work of care-giving. In the next section, we engage specifically with how migrant care workers make use of urban and transnational activism to negotiate for a place for themselves in the city and the nation-state.

Urban and transnational activisms: contesting the place of migrant women in the Asian nation-state

In writing about the gendering of post-colonial urban spaces, Rieker and Ali (2008: 2) argue that there are limits to urban opportunities and that ‘women, the poor, children and minorities in most cities have not been granted full and free access to the streets – they are not complete citizens – [even though] industrial life had brought them into public life’. Instead, globalization processes at the supranational scale have ‘strengthened the claims of powerful actors [including both global corporations and nation-states], often at the expense of the vulnerable, including migrant women, who find themselves pushed into casualized and flexibilized work (Nagar et al. 2002: 7). In this context, gender politics feature as a critical element of urban social organization as women’s agency and activism emerge from the inner workings of urban life to challenge or inflect powerful nation-state discourses, practices and structures of gender, family, class, ethnicity and citizenship.

In the globalizing cities of East Asia, the women’s movement is often linked to the increasing number of women from the educated middle classes whose concerns revolve around ‘reproductive rights, domestic violence, sexual harassment, tax reform, childcare, pornography, and gender awareness education’ (Chiang and Liu 2011: 558–9; also Lazar 2001). The growing presence of migrant women in these cities has in recent years stimulated a developing activist discourse of a different sort: around the case of female transnational migrant workers in particular, a ‘rights-based approach’ which has the potential (as well as limits) to provide a ‘strategic frame’ to ‘open up spaces for emancipatory political practice [and transnational] activism’ has come to the fore (Elias 2010). Championed by intergovernmental organizations such as the International Labour Organization (ILO), the language of rights has been deployed by non-governmental organizations and activist groups to challenge exclusionary citizenship practices and ‘frame a multitude of claims’ (such as workplace rights). However, the gains (in countries like Malaysia, for instance) have been relatively limited, primarily because of the gender-blind association of rights with the public sphere, hence rendering in the private sphere the migrant domestic worker invisible and domestic work unrecognized as ‘real work’ (Elias 2010).

Also significant are the contradictions between ‘universal notions of human rights’ and the ‘particularistic notions of citizenship’ in authoritarian regimes, which tend to debilitate claims to rights among migrants as they are often viewed as transgressors of the nation-state who cannot claim equal rights as citizens and are seen primarily as labouring bodies available for purchase (Elias 2010; Yeoh and Huang 1999b). In Singapore, for example, labour activism in relation to migrant workers is circumscribed by legal constraints on civil society organizations as well as ‘co-optive mechanisms to defuse political challenges through state-led organs’ (Piper 2006: 365). Given the incipient nature of civil society developments and the pervasive structural divide between foreign workers and citizen workers at the level of state policy and social perception, the forwarding of an alternative, more inclusive vision of society based on non-discrimination and the accordance of some rights to migrant workers is at best
limited (Yeoh 2013). It has also been noted that as citizen-women depend on migrant domestic workers to free them to enter the formal economy, local women’s groups have to contend with potential conflict in taking up the cause for migrant women’s workplace rights such as higher wages and provision for rest days (Lyons 2004). In other words, the forging of any kind of progressive feminist alliance across different groups of women is partly crippled, not only by racialized and classed differentiations (between middle-class Singaporean women on the one hand and low-paid domestic workers on the other) but also their diametrically opposite positionality in terms of the labour market as employers and workers respectively.

![Campaign by NGO in Singapore for a day-off for domestic workers](image)

*Figure 32.2* Campaign by NGO in Singapore for a day-off for domestic workers
*Source: TWC2*
In the more open democracies in Asia, however, urban activism among growing populations of migrant domestic workers have not only provided channels for migrant women's voices to coalesce but also platforms for developing transnational linkages. In the context of Hong Kong, for example, Law (2002: 205) identified ‘emerging spaces of transnational cultural production in the realm of political activism’ by locating activist discourses and networks forged among NGOs for migrant women of different nationalities present in Hong Kong. In their campaigns to address the protection of migrant workers’ rights, a coalition of NGOs in Hong Kong built their case by drawing on connections between the specificities of labour migration issues with government policies in both the Philippines (the sending country where the majority of female domestic workers in Hong Kong originate) and Hong Kong, as well as global discussions about human rights aired at the Beijing Conference. In this sense, NGOs operate as 'transforming terrains which expand the discursive field of their activities' and this in turn connects up with and potentially influences global discourses on human rights (Yeoh et al. 2002: 14). In a globalizing world where the nation is ‘no longer the key arbiter of important social change’ (Appadurai 1996: 4), such a conception points to multiple sites of transnational activism within ‘a broader social space where new alliances between migrant, feminist and workers’ organizations may be envisaged’. At the same time, it has to be remembered that while these ‘terrains’ allow for coalition-building, for example, when domestic worker groups of five different nationalities (Filipino, Thai, Indonesian, Sri Lankan and Nepali) came together to protest against minimum wage cuts, these formations also centre other nationally bound issues (such as differential wages among domestic workers of different nationalities) and may be themselves fraught with inequalities (Law 2002).

Turning to the potential of collective activism among marriage migrants, Hsia’s (2009) work shows how emerging social movements among marriage immigrants in Taiwan has had a transformative effect on notions of citizenship. More specifically, she illustrates how ‘multicultural citizenship’ can be used as a ‘narrative strategy to render exclusionary models of citizenship more inclusive’, and to pave the way towards ‘the ideal of a more inclusive multiple citizenship [that allows for overlapping membership across several nation-states]’ (Hsia 2009: 17).

While the model of multi-cultural citizenship is a double-edged sword, as Werbner and Yuval-Davis (1999) point out, the rhetoric of multi-culturalism can be co-opted without changing the substantive rights or even formal rights of citizenship for immigrants – Hsia (2009) shows, for instance, that activist groups among immigrant wives have been successful in radicalizing politically correct conceptions of multi-culturalism. Despite the exclusionary and patriarchal model of incorporation underlying Taiwan’s ‘multicultural’ immigration policy (which only allows wives and children of Taiwan citizens to be naturalized), Southeast Asian marriage immigrants have capitalized on the multi-cultural ideal (that the nation-state contains a degree of plurality that opens up space for migrants to retain their cultural identity provided they adhere to the state’s political norms) to challenge the long tradition of citizenship based on the principle of *jus sanguinis* or descent. By drawing on their status as mothers of Taiwanese citizens, they also have a base from which to fight for various rights (such as the right to teach their children ‘mother-tongue’ languages), Hsia (2009: 41) concludes that ‘compared to migrant workers, marriage migrants are in a more advantaged position to challenge Taiwan’s exclusionary model of citizenship because the nature of transnational marriages involves citizens from different nation-states and their children are the direct result of cross-border migration’. Echoing this same sense of optimism about women’s collective agency, Suzuki (2000) shows that non-Japanese Asian wives of Japanese men are ‘becoming increasingly active in civic groups, negotiating and asserting their rights themselves’ and that this has triggered ‘civic engagement, if not activism, among concerned Japanese citizens’ and advanced ‘demands for citizenship and the improvement of immigration procedures, … albeit in a piecemeal way’ (Piper 2003: 465).

As Yeoh and Huang (1999b: 1158) have argued, being relegated to the margins of urban society and excluded from formal power structures does not foreclose using ‘little tactics of habitat’ as ‘everyday
strategies’ or drawing on transnational linkages and networks of activists to create new political spaces from which to act. To this end, migrant women enact their agency from the margins even as the processes of globalization continue to reinstate the power of the state. In their efforts to negotiate greater rights and freedoms in the city, migrant women have deployed, with varying degrees of success, gender in debates about citizenship and their place in the city via formal and informal channels in ways that both reproduce and contest state norms. The emerging spaces of migrant women’s urban activism are, however, unevenly developed across Asian cities – more vibrant in the more liberal democracies such as Hong Kong and Taipei, and more constrained in the more authoritarian regimes in cities such as Singapore and Kuala Lumpur. In many Asian contexts, the lack of political will on the part of most governments to deal with the rights and civil liberties of major groups of migrant women such as domestic workers implies that the role of non-state actors such as NGOs and faith-based groups is crucial in encouraging migrant women to participate in welfare-oriented or advocacy work, forge cross-national alliances and networks and pursue transnational activisms to negotiate for human rights and better working conditions (Yeoh and Huang 2012).

Conclusion

Robinson (2006:173) argues against ‘propagating certain limited views of cities and thereby undermining the potential to creatively imagine a range of alternative urban futures’. In keeping with the spirit of Robinson’s point, we have drawn from literature on and from the south (and specifically the Asian context), and reflected on the ways in which the south itself may be productive of new ways of thinking about gender and the urban. We conclude with three key observations.

First, changing gender identities and relations in the rapidly expanding cities of the south is inextricably interwoven with other geographies of difference along multiple axes. Migrant women seeking a foothold in the cities of Asia often have to contend with exclusions that work to compound each other, including their gendered association with devalued women’s work often linked to the reproductive sphere, their racialized status as outsiders or transgressors of the nation, their commodification as sexualized objects that pose immoral danger that will threaten respectable society, as well as classed differences rooted in education and economics that divide them from local women. As scholars working on cities have noted, ‘empowerment, oppression and exclusion work through regimes of difference’ (Jacobs and Fincher 1998: 2–3). Focusing on multiple social identities inhabiting the city and the negotiations and contestations among different groups with differential access to urban space provides us with a means to challenge unhelpful binaries in the urban literature, including the divide between ‘scholarship that focuses on how cities constrain, disadvantage and oppress women and scholarship that focuses on how cities liberate women’ (Bondi and Rose 2003: 229).

Second, given that there are multiple inequalities as well as possibilities at work in women’s lives at different scales, we argue that emancipatory politics cannot rely on any single, universal formula but draws on multiple identifications and diverse strategies, sometimes through locally grounded embodied practices, sometimes in tension with familial dynamics and expectations, sometimes collapsing the personal and the political in opposing an exclusionary nation or the discriminatory practices of the state, and at other times by drawing on transnational or global frameworks or discourses. To this end we have adopted a scalar framework for the chapter by engaging with gender in the urban south at the scale of the individual, the household and the nation-state. By focusing on the politics that emerge at each scale and across them, we also try to enable an understanding of gender that goes beyond mere differences in biological sex and dichotomous sex roles to include gender as a means of ‘structuring power in human relationships’ alongside other axes of power such as race and class (Donato et al. 2006: 6; Suzuki 2002) as they unfold in ‘real [urban] spaces, built forms and the material substance of [the] everyday’ (Yeoh 2003: 4).
Migrant women and gender in Asian cities

Finally, even as we consider how migrant women’s lives are shaped by the power geometries coalescing at the nexus of gender, class, ethnicity and national identities, we need to acknowledge the heterogeneity that characterize populations of migrant women in the cities of the south, as well as ‘the complexity of women’s strategies, the diversity of sites for action, and the flexibility of their alliances’ (Yeoh, Teo and Huang 2002: 15). Pratt and Yeoh (2003: 159) observe that ‘[g]ender relations are often transformed through transnational migration, although the “gains” in gender equity tend to be uneven, hard fought for, and sometimes impermanent’. Yet through the chapter we have shown how migrant women find multiple and resourceful ways to exercise agency and transform entrenched meanings and existing social relations. They do so not so much through overt resistance and subversion of traditional structures, but more subtly from the margins, or through negotiation or working within their spaces of confinement to redefine their daily lives and place in the city.

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Discourses of difference proliferate across the terrain of urban and social theory to encompass gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, age and physical ability. Such thinking has a now distinguished history developing from the 1970s where divisions of class which dominated the debates in urban theory, notably Marxist theory, were challenged by feminists, Black activists, gays and disabled groups in particular, who argued that class only told a part of the story of inequality and oppression. Over the following decades, there was a shift from the notion of division to the notion of difference, to signal the complex relations of power, inequality, identity and subjectivity. This shift usefully connects to Roy’s (2011) notion of ‘worlding’ the city of the south, where she seeks to find a register to engage the normality of the diversely lived experience of those cities on their own terms.

The wealth of material in this terrain was largely developed in the context of cities in the ‘north’, for a complexity of reasons. In relation to questions of gender and sexuality, relative economic stability on the one hand, an increase in participation in higher education by women, a growing liberalization of social attitudes towards ‘homosexual’ practices once outlawed, on the other, opened up a space for feminist and gay politics to flourish. By the early 1970s women and gays had found a voice to campaign against multiple forms of social and economic oppression, which was articulated through a plethora of political campaigns and groups fighting for liberation and equal rights. Influenced by the early feminist texts which emerged in the USA, UK and Europe, for example, Kate Millet (1970), Shulamith Firestone (1970), Betty Friedan (1963), and Simone de Beauvoir, whose famous book was first written in 1949, by the mid-1970s these ideas began to permeate academic thought, as women and gays sought to destabilize dominant paradigms. Similarly, race politics articulated most forcefully in the Civil Rights movement in the USA during the 1950s and 1960s, also found their way into academic debates during the same period. Issues of age and disability followed a similar if less visible trajectory.

Though questions of gender, sexual and embodied difference are no less significant in the global south, and indeed arguably at this point possibly more so, they have figured less in academic debates and in the urban theory that was developed, although there has been embryonic — if patchy — work on difference across southern urban regions. Various reasons for this could be suggested. First, in countries where the primary struggles have been directed against colonizing powers, where race represents the most obvious social division and register of social exclusion (Beall et al. 2002), other questions of difference have been more easily marginalized. Second, notwithstanding considerable differentiation, countries of the global south have been characterized by greater levels of social inequality and poverty than countries of the global north, and hence, other social divisions and differences have been more
easily characterized as peripheral to the main struggle for survival or economic and social advancement. Third, in many countries, particularly those dominated by fundamentalist religious thinking, both Anglican and Muslim, the liberation of women and gays is abhorred by powerful, usually male, groups and leaders, with the effect that it has been difficult for campaigns for sexual freedom to be openly articulated. Fourth, where processes of globalization have led to the differentiation of western populations as migrants move to find employment and refuge, countries in the global south have been less subject to massive racial/ethnic shifts in the majority population (notwithstanding dramatic patterns of internal rural–city migration), again with some notable exceptions such as migration into southern Africa from other parts of the continent (Landau 2010).

This chapter reflects on questions of difference as these have been developed in urban and social theory (e.g. Fincher and Jacobs 1998) and how these might be thought through in the context of the global south, where questions of difference have tended to be less explored, despite their at least equal significance. It argues that difference across many complex registers is constitutive of how cities are organized both spatially and socially and should not be ignored. But importantly differences are constituted in varied ways in different places, contingent on local socio-cultural, political and economic contexts. This claim points to the necessity for deep and extensive research on how and where differences matter in the contemporary city. Clearly differences can be thought through many registers (Bridge and Watson 2010, 2011). The focus in this chapter is on race/ethnicity, gender and sexuality – which are lived both collectively and at the level of the embodied individual, rather than in collective divisions of religion or caste. As mentioned earlier, class, wealth and to a lesser extent race have been fully interrogated as constitutive of socio-spatial divisions in the cities of the global south, while the constitutive social and material effects of gender and sexuality have received less attention. My claim here is that their significance as axes of power and inequality are no less significant in the global south, even if they take different forms and are embedded in different contexts and socio-cultural and material relations. Where difference is constituted in relations of prejudice also, a further case can be made for the universality of such a conceptual framing across northern and southern cities.

Before considering the frame of difference as it has been articulated within and across cities of the global north and south, it is important to draw attention to how the notion of difference has been mobilized to frame the very imaginary of the north/south, or west/east divide. Said (1979) famously introduced the paradigm of orientalism to refer to the staging of difference of the non-west to the west, a perspective which has been hugely influential in studies of how non-western knowledges and cultural practices are consistently ‘othered’. Mbembe and Nutall (2004: 348–9) take this move further to argue, for instance, that Africa is ‘not only perpetually caught and imagined within a web of difference and absolute otherness. More radically, the sign is fraught because Africa so often ends up epitomizing the intractable, the mute, the abject, or the other worldly.’ Like many other nations, and cities, of the global south, an encounter with Africa, they suggest, is already an encounter with indeterminacy, provisionality and the contingent; the rapid, multi-directional and unpredictable shifts that characterize daily experience make the fixing of social forms problematic. According to this account, it could be suggested then, that not only are there dangers inherent in trying to establish how difference might be differently framed across the north/south, but also in trying to fix a frame on such a rapidly shifting terrain. That said, in the recognition that everywhere is ‘produced’ in a space of flows, flux and translocation, there are tendencies, relations and experiences of difference in cities of the south, some shared with cities of the north, some not, which this chapter aims to explore.

From division to difference

Much urban analysis to date has suffered from the trope of binary thinking, where the dominant groups on one side of the binary – white, nationals, men, able bodied, straight – is taken as the given, and
everyone else is cast as ‘others’ — those who are different. To the first group is given the prerogative to allow or disallow deviance from the so-called norm, which is often so obscured as to be naturalized as the norm. Rather than difference itself being constitutive of, and central to the ways in which a specific city has been developed and made, it is always necessarily situated on the outside looking in as something to be dealt with in positive or negative ways. Typically, urban academics themselves from the dominant side of the binary, have at best paid lip service to the work of others, the ‘others’ who conduct the research, rather than disrupt their own normative stance from within (there are of course exceptions). As a result, those not produced within discourses of difference are forgotten and outside of research or analysis; far more urban research is conducted on the poor, on women, on gays, on ethnic minorities, than on their opposites. This is changing as the categories of gender and race/ethnicity, in particular, have become more normalized and prevalent. Ethnicity, for example, is now a term mobilized to describe white people also, rather than applied solely to minority cultures in cities, and whiteness studies have opened up the white subject for interrogation (Steyn and Conway 2010). This move was adopted politically at an early date in New Zealand where New Zealand people of European descent were designated as Pakeha, a Maori term.

The second problem is that division and difference are usually mobilized as static forces and attributes which appear in a particular form, and must be accommodated, rather than being seen as produced within a complex intersection of flows, networks, and technologies in specific places and at particular moments and conjunctures. The effects of this approach are twofold. First, the dominant side of the binary remains unchanged, homogenous and fixed — the norm from which deviation takes place. Second, it leaves difference embedded in formulations of the social world in unproductive ways. In relation to the city, difference and diversity arguably are constitutive of the very urban experience itself in all its complexity of relations and subjectivities; the city concentrates difference which in turn defines the urban as a (quasi) distinct realm.

Ethnicity and race

One of the earliest social divisions to be recognized in urban analysis was that of race. In the first systematic analysis of cities in the Chicago School ethnographers looked at the settlement experience of different ethnic groups in this rapidly expanding metropolis which had become a magnet for immigration (e.g. Park et al. 1925). By the 1980s there was a growing recognition that the high levels of segregation of the African American population in US cities had created ghettos where disadvantage, discrimination and poverty had produced an underclass (Wilson 1987) or in Massey and Denton’s terms (1993), a form of hyper segregation. Similar studies in the UK had pointed to racially divided cities (Rex and Moore 1967) though of a less extreme kind. At the time, a period of growing neoliberalism and conservatism in both countries, where right-wing governments held sway, conservative voices which framed the ghetto in accusatory and blaming discourses were the focus of contestation by many urban analysts seeking to introduce more structural accounts.

Over the following decades the debates have shifted from a focus on race to a focus on ethnicity. Following the path from division to difference, ethnicity could also be said to be integral to the very ‘citiness’ of the contemporary city. Thus, as cities across the western world were increasingly affected by processes of globalization, as migrants moved in search of employment or security, new questions were raised for urban analysis. By the turn of the century global cities, and many small metropolises in the global north, witnessed a dramatic shift in their urban populations, with some inner-city areas being home to almost as many first generation migrants as to native born residents. New discourses of multi-culturalism entered the political and urban theory arenas in many nations of the global north, a political move so far — to my knowledge — not yet mobilized in the cities of the global south, even where racism and xenophobia is rife.
Rather than a discourse of division, multi-culturalism became articulated most centrally through the notion of difference, where questions of power and inequality were easy to ignore. Thus, the notion of the multicultural city was embraced, where a celebration of different cultures and cultural practices had the potential to ignore the remaining cultural dominance within which such representations were framed. In various countries, notably Australia, Canada and Britain, governments initiated and rallied behind multicultural policies in welfare services, education and employment and attendant legislation, at the same time as launching citizenship practices which delineated national historical practices as the norm (Bissoondath 2002; Modood and Werbner 1997; Hesse 2000). Critical voices emerged to challenge this framework, arguing that multiculturalist discourses were predicated on the assumption that it was for the white population to tolerate − or not − the other (Hage 1998). A wealth of urban research followed which sought to investigate the different experiences of migrants in the city, from housing and planning to education and religion. In the latter area for example, geographers and sociologists undertook research on the resistance to mosque building in suburban areas, and the enactment of alternative religious practices.

More recently another shift in multicultural discourse has suggested the notion of ‘everyday multi-culturalism’ (Wise and Velayutham 2009: 3) to denote ‘the everyday practice and lived experience of diversity in specific situations and spaces of encounter’ or ‘multicultural drift’ (Watson and Saha 2012) was proposed to denote the much more subtle, quiet and ordinary ways in which multicultural diversity is simply a fact of life in London’s erstwhile predominantly white suburbs. There is also the problem as Theodosiou (2011: 147) has pointed out; that the politics of recognition and difference associated with multi-culturalism can lead to the overlooking and collapsing of sameness across difference. Clearly even in the global north living with difference in the city is highly differentiated, local and specific, from localities and cities where racial/ethnic diversity is simply a fact of life, rarely contested, and mostly harmonious to sites where racial disharmony and strife reach levels of violence and inter-racial conflict of extreme proportions − for example, in the Parisian outer suburbs or southern Sydney beach suburbs where riots broke out between the Lebanese community and the Anglo Australians. Not surprisingly there is a clear relationship between inter-ethnic/racial disharmony and poverty, disinvestment and unemployment, where long-term residents blame new arrivals to the area for their woes.

There has also been a challenge to binary thinking around race and ethnicity in migrant studies. Glick Schiller (2011) invokes the notion of transnationality to ‘place cities within the synergies and tensions of the mutual construction of the local, national and global’. This move, she suggests, situates migrants and their connectivities transnationally within wider forces that constitute the urban. Rather than situating migrants outside of the dominant constitution and production of the city and city spaces, it centrally acknowledges the integral place of migration to the formation of cities.

Clearly racial differences have also been central to urban studies in countries of the global south, and central to the socio-economic and political constitution of cities. Race/ethnicity is figured as the crucial division in the vast majority of cities in the world, sometimes lived fairly peaceably, in other cases leading to extreme violence and oppression. Jeremy Seekings has a long history of writing on class, race and inequality in the South African city (e.g. Seekings 2011; Seekings and Nattrass 2005) as do many other authors across different cities of the world (e.g. Simone 2005; Yiftachel 2006). Mbembe and Nutall (2004) give us a way of shifting the frame from race, as a relatively clear-cut social division, to ethnicity as a more fluid category of diversity and difference constitutive of different urban experiences and practices. They point to the need to refine conceptual categories to take account of the power of the unforeseen and of the unfolding (Mbembe and Nutall 2004: 349), and to ‘revisit the frontiers of commonality and the potential of sameness as worldliness’ (Mbembe and Nutall 2004: 351). This is not a proposition to return to simplistic assumptions about universality and particularity, but rather to recognize that diversity is inherent to the urban experience, or to recognize in Nancy’s (2000: 185) terms, that ‘the world is a multiplicity of worlds’. 
Spaces of difference, urban divisions

Clearly, as an issue for urban analysis investigation of race/ethnicity and transnationality must remain a key pillar of research. As Glick Schiller puts it,

inhabitants of specific cities must be understood not only to be constantly repositioning their city within fields of power that are transnational in their scope but also to be actors who are shaped by and shape the variations of transnationality produced within such repositioning.

(2011: 183)

As she points out, analysing cities through a comparative and global lens defines migrants as local actors rather than within binaries of native/foreign or citizen/outsider (Petersson and Tyler 2008) or legal/illegal. Such a dialectical approach is an equally helpful way of analysing cities of the global south as it is to those of the global north. Landau’s (2010) research in South Africa, for example, explores the violence in 2008 meted on both foreigners and others positioned as ‘outsiders’ − the ‘perceived enemy within’, who were understood as inherently threatening, and holding back the country from its post-apartheid renaissance.

The extent to which urban theories around race, and more problematically, multi-culturalism developed in the global north can travel to make sense of ethnic differences lived in cities of the global south, remains an open question. As Robinson and Parnell (2011: 521) point out, urban studies whose reference points are urban life ‘where living conditions militate against building positive livelihoods and may even undermine life itself’ represents a very different terrain for thinking about racial and ethnic differences than one in which most urban citizens have a roof over their head and something to eat. Having said that however, racial/ethnic differences are constitutive or urban life everywhere, inevitably political and implicated in relations of power, and as such require deep interrogation in cities the world over.

Bodies, gender, sex and sexuality

There are many different ways in which bodies/sex/gender and cities have been thought. In the early days of feminist analysis, feminists sought to show how cities produced and reproduced divisions of home/work, centre/periphery, city/suburb, women’s exclusion from the labour force and traditional forms of family life (Hayden 1982; McDowell 1999; Watson 1986, 1988) through particular practices of urban planning, design and architecture. Much of this work, though seeking to destabilize binary frameworks, ended up by reinstating them discursively, by situating women’s marginalization and exclusion within their primary location in the home or private sphere which was sometimes seen as separate from the public arena, rather than constitutive of it. From the 1990s a different form of theorizing examined the more complex interconnections between bodies and cities and their co-constitution and the differentiated meanings attached to places, spaces and modes of resistance (e.g. Grosz 1992). A more Deleuzian approach (Probyn 1996) began to open up the possibilities of thinking through the technologies and materialities of city/body through which networks and flows settle and unsettle, configure and disrupt bodies in city spaces in unpredictable and fluid ways. More recently feminist writers have emphasized the materiality of the city and the possibilities for resistance and transgression within it (Sewell 2011).

There has been a somewhat similar trajectory of analysis and research on questions of sexuality. Before the 1970s urban theory paid little attention to issues of sexuality, and as with gender, gays and lesbians were largely invisible in writings on the city, with the exception of literature. Here early nineteenth-century literature on the emerging modern cities of London and Paris revealed associations between same-sex desire and intrigue, fear of unknown others, politics, radicalism and crime (Greenway 2005; Robb 2003). By the twentieth century discourses had shifted to position homosexuals as the
‘worst outcome of modern life’ (Sewell 2011; Cook 2003). As the gay liberation movement gained a stronger voice through the 1970s, so also social theorists began to introduce gay and lesbian perspectives and thinking into various academic disciplines – notably into sociology and history (Weeks 1977).

It was not until the 1980s that the city was subjected critically to analysis of both ways in which gays and lesbians occupied city space on the one hand, and the forms of discrimination and marginality experienced on the other. As gay and lesbian sexualities became increasingly accepted in mainstream society, the end of the twentieth century witnessed another shift in urban theory with the celebratory turn – somewhat paralleling the celebration of ethnic diversity as figured in exotic restaurants, street markets and festivals. The notion of the pink pound – a particularly male construction of sexuality on account of men’s higher incomes – was seen to reinvigorate run down areas as gay men moved in to buy up houses and flats and start new businesses (e.g. Bruce 1995). Florida (2002) even went so far as to propose the notion of the gay index to describe the often observed phenomenon of a correlation between the concentration of gay men and a city’s creative and vibrant cultural economy.

Studies over the last two decades have looked also at questions of identity and social movements. For example, Valentine and Sadgrove (2012) in a recent Economic and Social Research Council (ESRC)-funded project, which included case study research with lesbians, gay men and deaf people, explored how individuals understand and live processes of social differentiation, specifically examining how social identifications unfold across biographical time. At the same time several writers have shifted the terrain to place gays more centrally in city narratives and histories (Chauncey 1994; Mort 2000), rather than cast to the margins in a frame of division/difference. In *Gay New York*, for example, Chauncey (1994) weaves a complex story of the interconnections between gay and African American lives of the early to mid-twentieth century in Harlem and Greenwich Village. Abraham (2011) insists that homosexuality of cities cannot be subsumed within a framework of city divisions and differences, but rather the focus should be on the broader web of this history of homosexuality of cities.

In reflecting on how experiences and negotiations of sexuality are differently theorized in the global north and south, Swarr and Nagar (2003) usefully suggest that the dominant framing in the north is identity, while in the south it is development. It is to the south that I now turn.

### The global south

Chandra Mohanty (2003) makes a persuasive argument that third world feminism is distinguished from liberal feminist theory, developed in the USA particularly, in its refusal to define gender as the primary axis of power, insisting instead on the salience of race, class, sexuality and nation in shaping women’s lives. This then is a clear argument around intersectionality. According to Mohanty, the commonality of interests between women in the global south is predicated not on their sex but on their shared history of and experience of racist and colonial domination. In her important body of work (e.g. 2003; Mohanty *et al.* 1991) she powerfully opposes what she sees as a tendency amongst western feminists to construct a monolithic image of ‘third world’ women as unrelenting victims of the patriarchal cultures in which they live. Clearly the global south and the cities within it are heterogeneous spaces, and this is an important argument to take on board.

That said, in many countries the position of women as a consequence of entrenched patriarchal values and attitudes, often fuelled by fundamental religious beliefs which ascribe an inferior role to women, means that the space to develop feminist urban theory has been constrained. At the same time, where poverty renders many women’s lives centrally involved with ensuring their own and their children’s survival, the room for political mobilization around women’s concerns may also be limited. Yet gender issues in the city remain no less important, with a plethora of women’s organizations and social movements active in cities across the world; and despite much excellent work in the field (e.g. Brydon and Chant 1989; Chant 1996; Sangtin Writers Collective and Nagar 2006) ongoing and
Spaces of difference, urban divisions

extended research on sex/gender inequalities remains a pressing need. A recent rape case in India offers a stark illustration of the way women are seen in that society and the lack of security they face in the city. On 15 December 2012 in Delhi, a physiotherapy student was gang raped on her way home from the cinema, provoking continuous vigils across the city and other parts of the country as protesters demanded swift justice. According to one journalist (Mahr 2013), a feeling of deep unease had settled over the Indian capital, as the upheaval ‘exposed other deep fractures, raising difficult questions not only about the status of women in India but also about increasing violence, widening class divides and the delivery of justice in the world’s largest democracy’. In another article Mahr (2012) discusses the subsequent rise in reporting of other distressing cases which are met by an equally steady flow of tone-deaf commentary from some of India’s most prominent politicians and religious and social leaders. Indian media reported that Asaram Bapu, a guru, said the victim was to blame for not reaching out to her attackers as ‘brothers’ and ‘begging them to stop’. In its recommendations to a government commission set up to better protect women in India, Jamaat-e-Islami Hind, an Islamist group, suggested ‘sober and dignified’ dress for girls and the abolishment of co-education. Similar stories can be told in many cities and point to the vital need for active politics to fight women’s oppression — though such intervention brings its own potential dangers — and research in the academy to provide evidence and argument to help challenge entrenched gender inequalities. Mahr (2012), for example, suggests that part of the problem is the poor infrastructure and haphazard city planning, such as a lack of street lights and overcrowding on train cars, but there is little research in the field.

Women not only face violence and lack of security in many of the cities of the global south. In a 2010 survey, nearly 80 per cent of women in New Delhi reported being worried about their safety (Mahr 2012); they also face economic and social hardship through lack of access to income and employment. Many studies (e.g. Hafkin and Taggart 2001: 31) emphasize the fact that within poor households, women are the poorest of the poor, with less access to money in the family than their husbands, and lower levels of literacy and education; as a result girls and women lag behind men in every developing country. In their primary responsibility for the domestic life of the household, as mothers, carers and cooks, they also have to cope with often limited access to water, cooking fuel, food, and other necessities, and have to walk miles every day simply to satisfy a minimum of their family’s basic needs. Many reports commissioned by the United Nations and other international bodies over several decades have highlighted the burdens faced by women in the poorer countries across the globe, particularly in their role of ensuring the basic survival of family members (for example, ensuring a daily water supply (UN-Habitat 2006)). In the field of development studies particularly, and within UN programmes, a considerable body of work now exists on questions of gender in cities of the global south (e.g. Chant 1996; Van Marle 2006), but there is still a long way to go, both in terms of achieving real change, and also in the need for more urban research to analyse the complexity of socio-cultural, material and spatial issues affecting women’s lives and experiences.

Gays

In many countries same-sex partnerships emerge as a public issue for men, while lesbians remain far less visible. In over 60 countries consensual gay sex is a crime, with half of these relying on ‘sodomy’ laws left over from British colonialism, and many countries are attempting to make their laws even more repressive. For example, in 2009, Burundi’s president signed a law criminalizing consensual gay sex, despite the Senate’s overwhelming rejection of the bill, while a draconian bill proposed in Uganda would give jail sentences for failing to report gay people to the police and could impose the death penalty for gay sex if one of the participants is HIV-positive (The Economist 2010). As the article suggests, in many former colonies, ‘denouncing homosexuality as an “unAfrican” Western import has become an easy way for politicians to boost both their popularity and their nationalist credentials’.
Evangelical Christianity imported from the USA has played a vital role in stoking the fires in African countries, but the problem is pervasive globally and even in countries where homosexuality is legal such as Iraq, gay men are persecuted and subject to extreme levels of violence. *The Economist* reported that in the aftermath of the 2003 invasion, there was a growing fear of the ‘feminization’ of Iraqi men, fuelled by the Mahdi Army, a Shia militia, which claimed to uphold religious values and morality, and offered violent ‘solutions’.

Over the last two decades there has been a growing body of literature on gay men, and to a much lesser extent lesbians, in the cities of the global south. An early text, *Defiant Desire* (Gevisser and Cameron 1995), explored the lives of lesbian and gay South Africans of all races as they lived in the face of censure, denial and oppression from a drag salon in Woodstock to a gay ‘shebeen’ in kwaThema and a church in a Pretoria nightclub. Visser (2002) has studied the ways in which a particular area of Cape Town − De Waterkant − has been physically and symbolically transformed by gay attention, with the development of dedicated gay facilities and their use by sectors of the local gay community. But overall, he suggests, there is little that is ‘obviously gay’ about the area, and it has no residential concentration of gay people there.

Rink (2013) makes a different point about Cape Town’s reputation as a gay utopia focusing on the ways it has been marketed by the city’s tourism authority in the material form of the *Pink Map* − a policy intervention equally popular in cities of the north such as Manchester and San Francisco where there are vibrant gay quarters. There are similar scholarly interventions from other parts of the global south, such as Parke’s (1999) book on gay communities in Brazil or Vanita’s (2001) edited collection *Queering India* which was the first book to provide an understanding of same-sex love and eroticism in Indian culture and society, focusing on pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial gay and lesbian life in India through film, literature, popular culture, historical and religious texts and the law.

In the health policy arena however, we see distinct differences between the global north and south. Many health professionals and others have argued that discrimination against gays, in Africa in particular, risks undermining public health and the fight against HIV/AIDS, and there have been reports of suspected gays being targeted at a Kenyan government health centre providing HIV/AIDS services. While not denying the disease’s devastating effects, a more optimistic reading of the effects of HIV/AIDS argues that the disease has given rise to the growth of self-help groups and movements, which has brought gay men and lesbians together for the first time in a particular city or country. The argument here is that the rise of HIV has also led to a stronger sense of sexual identity in some areas where groups have demonstrated their ability to provide care and prevention services to fight the epidemic, and have even gained funding.

Finally, if we accept the claim that differences of gender and sexuality are at least as significant in the cities of the global south as in the cities of the global north, the interesting question is the extent to which the conceptual framing of difference developed by ‘northern’ theorists is transferrable to the south. There are clear linkages between northern and southern literatures, as this brief overview has highlighted. Where there are parallels of urban experience between the global north and south, for example in parts of modern Indian, suburban China and southern Africa reflected in similar urban forms, shopping malls, residential enclaves, gendered framings of urban life may move easily across borders. However, where extreme poverty defines everyday urban life, or where entrenched traditional gendered divisions mark social and cultural practices, or fundamentalist religious values prevail, then gender/sex differences both take different material, cultural and symbolic forms on the one hand, as well as demanding different analytical and theoretical frameworks on the other. Swarr and Nagar’s (2003) article on lesbian struggles in India and South Africa is useful here in its argument that the contrasting approaches of development theorists who see homosexuality as an identity of the privileged, and of feminist theorists who prioritize desire over needs, resources and livelihoods, render ‘invisible not only the experiences of a vast majority of poor women in same-sex relationships living in the
Global South but also the structural process that mold sociosexual practices and struggles’ (Swarr and Nagar 2003: 492). Drawing on oral histories of four women in same-sex relationships in Soweto, South Africa and Uttar Pradesh, northern India, they extend the notion of intersectionality – the co-produced axes of difference (rules, resources, practices etc.) – to argue for the reconceptualization of differences as ‘constituted and (re)configured in relation to place-specific struggles over rights, resources, social practices and relationships’ (Swarr and Nagar 2003: 496). This argument, I suggest, holds more widely and beyond the global south. Gender and sexuality in the cities of the global north are also produced in a socio-political, cultural and historical context which demands a more specific interrogation of how these differences are played out across different sites and spaces everywhere.

**Conclusion**

Differences in the city, as I have argued, are central to the constitution of urban space and the complexities of urban lives. Bodies are inserted into a web of socio-material networks which combine to produce very different social worlds for people according to the different bodies they have. Strong able-bodied (often white) young men are likely to be able to negotiate city spaces, economies and publics more easily than those on the other side of these binaries. But as I have pointed out also, these binaries are not clear cut, are fluid and produced and reproduced in diverse and multiple ways. Difference in the city is no less important in cities of the global south than in cities of the global north. As such it represents a key area of analysis for anyone interested in understanding the dynamics of contemporary cities the world over.

As this chapter has made clear, analysis of difference within urban theory predominantly originated in the global north, with an often implicit assumption of universality which was blind to specificities of place of a myriad of kinds: wealth/poverty, resources, religion, culture, socio-political/historical context, traditions and so on. Importing theories developed around race/ethnicity or gender/sex in the global north to the global south, can thus be problematic in writing out the distinctive intersectionalities of race/class/sex/gender/income in specific contexts. That said, however, difference is produced in city spaces, and mediated, reinforced and constituted in power relations, and inequalities between men and women, between the rich and poor, between established residents and migrants, between people of different races and ethnicities; trends pervasive across all cities of the world. What is needed therefore, is theoretically and empirically sophisticated and nuanced research which explores how different differences are differently constituted, produced, practised and lived in different cities of the global south and north.

**References**


Introduction

The urban ‘south’ is built through practices that are necessarily multiple. Here, culture is conceptually foundational. Not simply context, it is a field that allows for productive participation in urban space; as such, it works as a device to activate citizenship in the city symbolically and pragmatically. In this chapter, I draw on the practice of hip hop in Dakar, Senegal, to explore these complex processes and debates. In doing so, I distance myself from previous work on hip hop based on race (Forman and Neal 2004; Neate 2004; Rose 1994) and/or age (Kitwana 2002; Watkins 2005). Such a racial explanation for hip hop is a geo-historical framing of hip hop as a Black American culture, which can be confronted in its forms elsewhere with the actual experiences of Latinos living in American ghettos, of Portuguese or Maghreb immigrant descendants stigmatized in French banlieues, of Algonkin Natives parked in Canadian reserves; or, in this case, even young Africans marginalized in gerontocratic societies such as Dakar. Drawing on Chang (2005), I also question the definition of hip hop as a contemporary youth culture. In fact, ‘generations are fictions’; they are ‘used in larger struggle over power’ and stand as ‘a way of imposing a narrative’ (ibid.: 1). In reality, hip hop pioneers in the USA, France or Senegal, who still actively participate in this movement, are a variety of ages: in their forties, and in some instances, over fifty!1

Nonetheless, explanations based on race (and age) persist despite exposure to the diverse ways in which hip hop has emerged throughout the world. Overly focused on ‘origins’, this geo–historical understanding attests to a single referentiality that leads scholars to consider other appearances of hip hop in the world as different ‘appropriations’ of an ‘original’ cultural movement. This tendency reflects problematic linear continuities in terms of racial and social geographies and histories (Bennett 1999; Mitchell 2002; Perry 2004; Basu and Lemelle 2006).

In this chapter, I deconstruct such linear and universalist approaches to hip hop as a movement, through Foucault’s understanding of ‘genealogy’ that distances itself from a strict historiography as well as from any study of the origins (Foucault 1977). Rather than maintaining a focus on the systematic and particularistic analysis of the origins of this movement, I am interested instead in the multiple and ongoing expressive, discursive, even body-related praxis developed through history’s accidents, unexpected deviations and unanticipated dispersions; in other words, the ‘genealogy’ of its ‘descents’ (ibid.). Such a focus suggests a genealogy that is an epistemological project, seeking to subvert the totalitarian nature of globalizing discourse regarding hip hop. Rather than a single referentiality then, I argue that hip hop is multi-polar and multi-referential.
I draw on this argument and its overarching cultural logic to highlight the situated politics and located practices that shape hip hop in Dakar, recognizing it as a complex phenomenon which itself is a product of the south (of borderline socialities) and the north (of enabling economies). Insisting on the situatedness of cultural and musical emergences, in this chapter I argue against a too restrictive blurring of what is conceived as ‘from the north’ and as ‘from the south’, focusing instead on the boundaries that people draw on and cross, culturally across the city. A focus on hip hop in Dakar thus grapples with a generalized social marginalization, i.e. a southern movement in cities of both south and north, while highlighting the relational and relative dimension of difference in the city, the multiple and simultaneous realities that cohabit everyday life in the Senegalese capital city.

The first part of this chapter draws on Foucault’s concept of ‘genealogy’ (Foucault 1977) to challenge binary explanations of hip hop. I highlight hip hop as a mondialised expression, a ‘third space’ (Bhabha 2004). I situate this movement as a ‘transculture’, simultaneously marked by singularity and communality, of ‘borderline’ socialities (ibid.). Understanding hip hop as a ‘transcultural mediation’, I focus in the second part of the chapter on the constitutive performances of hip hop music, one of the aesthetical expressions of this ‘transculture’, drawing on the process of mélanges in order to formulate hip hop discursive practices as forms of singular brioise (Lévi-Strauss 1962). This perspective allows me to address the constitutive performances in hip hop music as political actions that displace the borders of common singularities; on a southern urban beat, I thus explore Dakar’s hip hop politics.

I emphasize and illustrate this ‘liminal’ perspective beyond binaries (Nouss 2005), to approach borderline socialities and redefine what it means to live in relation to – and, to be at – the borders. In the final part of the chapter, I argue what makes hip hop’s emergence particular, tied into Dakar’s youth and its postcolonial sociality. Through this discussion, I thus explore what it means and implies to be a young Senegalese urban citizen, a ‘southern’, or ‘borderline’, positioning in a West African city. Finally, I highlight how, in Dakar, such hip hop transcultural politics inform, moreover, a distinctive type of ‘ethical’ economy (Arvidsson et al. 2008). This local grounding makes possible ‘techniques of value that address the uncertainties of economic and ontological life’ (Neilson and Rossiter 2005). By focusing on the productive and economic dynamics of the aesthetics of hip hop, I argue that hip hop has become the informed product of identity politics and economic deeds, which has the potential to inscribe radical social change in the city.

**Hip hop in translation: mondialised genealogy**

As a culture and as a music, hip hop is always embedded in the context from which it emerges. Although it initially appeared in the 1970s in the Bronx in New York, hip hop is now part of the reality of diverse urban communities throughout the world. Here Bakhtin’s polyphonic conception of the carnivalesque narration is useful, where ‘there is no centre that dictates meaning […]’. Singularities all express themselves freely and together through their dialogue create the common narrative structures’ (Bakhtin, 1970 quoted in Hardt and Negri 2004: 249). Put differently, wherever hip hop emerges, another ‘world’, another mondialité, is created, with local innovation its reference. Indeed, neither global phenomena, nor local, hip hop emergences are mondialised inscriptions; at the same time, diverse and multiple, as well as, situated and singular.2 The French language allows for such a distinction with the word monde that simultaneously stands for ‘world’ and ‘people’, and with mondialisation1 read as the simultaneous process of emergence. Drawing on this concept, I oppose the recurrent binaries inherent in dialogical discourse about globalization, a mondialised approach that goes beyond centres and borders, allowing for multiple diversities.

Wherever hip hop emerges, this ‘transculture’ is evident in three artistic expressions – dance, painting and music (Djing and MCing) – an original translation. A translation is a proclamation that necessarily involves a mediation: beyond the transfer of a volatile message, translating means that
something can be said in this language and in the other (Nouss 2005: 42–3). Translating reveals what all the languages have in common beyond their formal or historical relationships: each language is one, singular, and participates in what goes beyond it. Translation is a ‘transcultural operation’, a third language or space, open and real. As Nouss puts it, such a ‘third space’ recalls the possibility of the ‘and’, of multi-belonging, rather than binary cuttings of hyphenated identities. This type of ‘liminal thinking’ confronts any essentialization (Nouss 2005: 44). Defining a unitas multiplex, Morin addresses a similar challenge in the difficulty of thinking of Europe in the multiple, in the singular, and in the singular in the multiple (Morin 1990: 24; quoted in Nouss 2002: 111). Applying Nouss’s ‘liminal thinking’ to hip hop, I understand hip hop as a ‘transculture’: a culture existing in a permanent openness, a culture that exists by itself, but one that can only be expressed through other cultures (see also Ortiz on ‘transculturation’, 1995: 98).

Transcultural hip hop and its métisse music

Borrowing from the Surrealists (Breton and Soupault 1971), the hermit crab is a useful metaphor that exemplifies my purpose. Like this small marine crustacean, which does not own its habitat but creates it from empty seashells in order to survive and grow, hip hop requires another cultural ‘habitat’ to live and develop as a culture. Put differently, hip hop is a ‘transculture’ insofar as it stands, in each time and place, as a singular translation of a commonality. The latter is inscribed in the diverse and multiple receptacles of social marginalization, of ‘borderline conditions’ (Bhabha 2004), whether located in southern or northern cities. As such, hip hop emergences translate in a singular way, a communality inscribed in the multiple forms of social marginalization, both real and imaginary (Motley and Henderson 2008: 245). Indeed, hip hop disrupts a situation of borders and margins, whose relationships situate social and economic practices especially manifest in the city. From this perspective, hip hop constitutes a phenomenon localized on the borders, on the margins of an assumed sociality and urbanity; it tends to emerge from a ‘southern positioning,’ a place of marginality; it is a ‘path of passage for a borderline sociality’ in cities north and south. Despite its character as a collective phenomenon, each emergence of hip hop and its borderline position in society is distinctively situated. Likewise, the deployment of an alternative discourse on urban conditions is always produced in an individual and singular way. In fact, while hip hop is a transculture, hip hop music, as any singular action allowed by this transcultural space, is métisse.

Métissage develops from Lévi-Strauss’s notion of ‘bricolage’ (Lévi-Strauss 1962): while the erudite is preoccupied with and submitted to structures, the bricoleur trifles with structures in order to construct other realities (Nouss 2005: 33). Hip hop music can be understood as métissage in that it can be apprehended as a ‘form’, never settled; a métisse form that moves from one singularity to another. Rather than a concept or an object, hip hop music thus stands as a system of communication, a type of speech which is ‘dissociable’ from its content: a ‘form’ in the sense developed and applied by Barthes to a ‘myth’. As far as Barthes’s ‘myth’ or hip hop music are concerned, ‘the form does not suppress the meaning, it only impoverishes it, it puts it at a distance, [and] it holds it at one’s disposal’ (Barthes 1993: 109).

The hip hop musical genre is thus vast and encompasses a multiplicity of discursive practices,9 inscribed in various social, political, economic, geographical or linguistic contexts. In Dakar, for instance, hip hop musical forms are far from uniform. There is the ‘hardcore’ that describes the most radical groups; the ‘cool’ or ‘soft’ that refers to an emphasis on themes such as love; and a third that mixes the two (Niang 2006: 181). Beyond these three tendencies, there are multiple other forms of hip hop music located in the hip hop inscription of the Senegalese capital city itself. Speaking to and through the body, rather than a reference to the reality of the artist, hip hop music displays the body of the individual, spatialized and historicized, whether in the performance of the MC or the DJ.10 the two bricoleurs of this ‘organic’ form. On one hand, the DJ can be unique, through the ‘writing of his/her
voice’ (Rubin 2003), by historicizing and spatializing his beat, thanks to techniques of sampling and programmed rhythms; on the other hand, the oral performance of the MC11 reminds us of the integration of discourse in the body and the voice, and vice versa (see Figure 34.1).

Nevertheless, while hip hop music remains a ‘form’ open to any and every singularity, for the sake of the forthcoming political argument, two broad tendencies in hip hop discursive practices can be distinguished in Dakar. One is commercial hip hop music, based on the entertaining praxis of the Master of Ceremony; and, the other is hip hop music with a message, reflective of grounded realities in the city and nation. Contrary to the commercial version that plays on imaginary fantasies for the sake of popular entertainment and individual profit, hip hop music with a message deploys a historicized ‘narrative’ that refutes the past and positions towards the future. It depicts actual identities and realities with an expressive social commentary that offers descriptions of particular issues as well as instructive messages to reshape borderline sociality. As such, this kind of hip hop music becomes a ‘form-subject’, which permits the acting political and social subject to think (Meschonnic 1995: 21).

This critical mix is illustrated below in an extract from Senegalese Matador’s track ‘Hip Hop Attitude’, which highlights how such a ‘hip hop writing of the voice’ goes ‘beyond simply writing and reciting’, but is about ‘setting down’ oneself on the beat; it stands in one’s ‘veins’, as a ‘way of living’, ‘self-made in the streets’, in which a ‘resourceful spirit’ is about ‘working hard’ and ‘serving others before oneself’.

Figure 34.1 June 2013 – Pre-show of Yakaar Festival of Urban Music, with Keur Gui and NitDoff Killah (Location: French Institute in Dakar, at Dakar-Plateau)

Photo: Jenny F. Mbaye
Hip Hop is a way of living, attitudes that change bad habits
Hip Hop is about confirmed bravery, all settled up with your consciousness
Setting down myself on the instrumental; rap is in my veins
[…]
Hip Hop ain’t made for empty minds
It has many dimensions that go beyond simply writing or reciting
Hip Hop is the cause of politicians’ lack of sleep
[…]
For a long time self-made in the streets […]
You can’t divide it; it’s one same head, one same body
Same position, same hitting capacity, one sole movement
[…]
Hip Hop only on my mind
Yes, we’re coming from far, and sorry, you can’t know where we aspire to go
A pain to get our teeth into something, always in resourcefulness spirit
We’re not worried ‘though we’re not wealthy, we work hard for tomorrow
Blood drips from the nose of an upright warrior
[…]
We represent Hip Hop
[…]
Advices giver, who doesn’t get to receive any; serving others before oneself
Eradicating stress, uplifting the moral of population, in times we so need it

(Extract from Matador ‘Hip Hop Attitude’, 2012)

For hip hop artists in Dakar, hip hop music has become an artistic path of self-creation, to which new forms of sociability and cultural expression attach. In fact, the hip hop sound, multi-polar in
its expression, demonstrating no referential centrality, and uncovering diverse historicités, appears as an already ‘translated’ musical creation. It stands as a métisse form. Indeed, hip hop music has become a ‘mondialised’ myth that integrates the spatialized and historicized individual body in its discourse. In doing so, it reminds us that a ‘borderline situation’, a ‘southern position’, is not synonymous with subordination. On the contrary, as we shall now see, this position shapes possible ‘political actions’.

**On the ‘southern’ side of the city: hip hop politics**

Senegalese urban society is subjected to a generational segregation, where young people are victims of a logic of exclusion based on the tradition of respect to the eldest. This logic implies obedience, reserve and often silence, tendencies which have marginalized a younger generation from public and social spheres, as well as from private family spaces (Diouf 1999: 42). While young urban citizens face precarious living conditions (Biaya 2000: 13), the métisse musical form can become a ‘writing of the voice’ that is capable of interacting with and informing an alternative political configuration. Through hip hop music young urbanites deploy another form of sociality than the one ascribed by the dominant urban culture, as well as creating an alternative practice of democratic discourse.

Originally from Thiaroye, a peripheral banlieue in the region of Dakar, Matador is a founding member of the well-known group, *Wa BMG 44*. For him, discursive performances are motivated by a lived situation of marginalization, by his experience of ‘out-of-place’ sociality and the problems of identification with his locality, as well as by his profound desire for individuation and vivid realization. For about 20 years, his hip hop ‘writing of the voice’ has allowed him to articulate another sociality that is particular to his own pride in his social and political positionality in Dakar. He explains below:

> Whenever we were saying that we were coming from Thiaroye, people were fleeing from us because it was synonymous of drugs, thieves, deviance, etc. We really wanted to show them that one could live in Thiaroye and still be someone!

(Interview conducted with Matador on 29 February 2009)

This motivation of ‘being someone’ invokes the lived possibility offered by métissage of constant becoming, of belonging to multiple singularities (Nouss 2005: 28–9). This métisse possibility permits Matador to redefine a marginalized sociality into something else: one in which marginalization is no longer synonymous with subordination, but instead, marks reinvention, a sociality in which one can ‘come from Thiaroye’ and still ‘be someone’. In fact, what is politically at stake in this musical form reshapes what ‘one is’, to aim, instead, for what one could be, both singularly and collectively.

Founding member of the pioneer hip hop group *Positive Black Soul*, Didier Awadi reaffirms this politics, through invoking his cultural referents in his album *Présidents d’Afrique*. Faithful to the vision of the Burkinabè revolutionary Thomas Sankara, Awadi wants to ‘dare inventing his future’, while deploying another sociality, both ideal and real. On one hand, he provides different political ideals,13 while referring to African personalities such as the first president of Ghana Kwame Nkruma, the Mandingo hero who fiercely resisted French colonization, Samory Touré, and the father of the ‘African renaissance’, Cheikh Anta Diop; on the other hand, as a pioneer, he marks this identity through his entrepreneurial trajectory, like other hip hop entrepreneurs in Dakar, ‘new figures of success’ (Havard 2001). Indeed, besides an on-going successful career as artist, Awadi began in 1998 to contribute to the musical sector of Dakar with the creation of his first home studio, *Taf-Taf Production* and the rental of his PA system. In 2003, *Taf-Taf Production* became *Studio Sankara*, a more formal and professional company for music production that actively balances the production of musical acts and commercial advertising spots. He explains:
Before in Senegal, advertising was a field monopolised by Ivorian, French or Moroccan people. We wanted to show them that we could do this job without inhibition. [...] And we show that it was possible once you believe and invest in it.

(Interview conducted with Didier Awadi, 25 February 2009)

The recurrence of the ‘we’ in his argument highlights that behind most hip hop artists, there is a ‘family’, a posse, a crew. The crew not only accompanies hip hop artists to their performances, even joining them on stage to assist with the shouting of the chorus, and verses, for instance, but also takes on a variety of ‘official’ jobs, essential to help maintain, promote and support hip hop performers (Herson 2000: 33–5; Niang 2006: 178). As Awadi puts it, it was about ‘giving work to all the crew I grew up with; and giving work to the neighbours’ (Interview conducted with Didier Awadi on 25 February 2009). Here, the writing of the voice thus also stands as a commitment, a responsibility (Benga 2002: 301); a writing of the voice through which legitimacy is ensured through the constitution and the active existence of the group. Indeed, hip hop artists ‘identify permanently with their groups, even if they also represent broader communities [...] [and their] attachment to the posse is always inextricably related to the omnipresent principle of commitment’ (Niang 2006: 179).

The ‘omnipresent principle of commitment’ is directed and addressed to what I refer to as the ‘emotional site’ of the artists, i.e. to their posse, their crew, and more largely to their neighbourhood or their community, whether defined as ‘hip hop transculture’, urban youth, West African youth, or a general southern positioning located in borderline socialities. This ‘writing of the voice’ is thus always multiple, ‘representing’ something more than an individual and his or her politics: indeed, it also implies another way of doing politics and entering the public political debate, by inscribing a political discourse per se inside artistic practices. As Latour reminds us, ‘[...] he who talks does not talk about himself but about another, who is not one but Legion. [...] he who talks does not have speech; he talks on others’ behalf’ (2003: 160).14

When developing musical performances, hip hop participants create this specific link between their own lives and their ‘emotional site’ from and for which they speak. As such, they talk for those who cannot speak for themselves and give them, by the same token, the possibility of knowing and understanding (Benga 2002: 302). In the terrain of politics, they offer an alternative practice situated on the ‘borders’ of institutionally shaped democratic discourse,15 and thus fill in a considerable gap between public officials of the republic, and a great part of its population. As such, in their discursive performances, they address issues that are considered taboo in their respective countries such as governmental corruption,16 mentally ill people and the deplorable conditions of the prison system,17 legalized injustices afflicting African women (excision, rape, forced marriage18), or the disillusion and distress19 of sénégalérienne20 youth. Such practices, moreover, are not limited to simple denunciation, but also encourage people to stand up for themselves, talk for themselves and express their own opinions.

Through this constant interaction of private domain and the public space of politics, hip hop artists participate in the construction of a citizen consciousness (Diouf 2002: 285). This is something that Matador highlights through his project ‘Hip Hop Education’.

We know that kids love hip hop culture and we want to use this culture to make them aware of their surroundings. This is something that we would like to teach throughout the country and in different sectors: make the youth understand that they should not wait for the state and should act to maintain their own environment, which is theirs or will be the ones of their younger brothers or sisters. [...] These are more projects of citizenship.

(Interview conducted with Matador, 29 February 2009)

Hip hop music thus reveals itself as political action, redefining the spatial structure and the social order of the city. It is a ‘writing of the voice’ both singular and multiple, and, as the examples of Awadi and
Matador demonstrate, eminently political. However, it is also a writing that inscribes itself in the political realm as an always distinctively situated, ‘southern transculture’, a dimension explored in the following discussion on the politics of hip hop in Dakar.

As a young Senegalese urban citizen...

The paradox of contemporary urban change is expressed in ‘the simultaneous expansiveness and closure of the city’ (Krims 2007: xxxiii; 5–7). In the Senegalese capital, this paradox particularly affects the youngest generations economically, politically and culturally. Indeed, in the region of Dakar, where more than 50 per cent of the population is under 20 years old (Agence Nationale de Statistique et de la Démographie 2007: 31; 49–50), almost one person out of two is officially out of work. The proportion of the active population currently employed is 51.1 per cent. Moreover, higher levels of education do not guarantee getting a job: almost a quarter (23.5 per cent) of those affected by unemployment hold a university degree. Despite its repetitive promises, the public sector cannot absorb the unemployment crisis, and the formal private sector remains a marginal player in a society dominated by its informal economy, which contributes 60 per cent of the national GDP.\(^2\) An important gap exists between the expectations of young people for employment and the actual possibilities offered in the job market, exacerbating social demands that are already high because of increased poverty (Agence Nationale de Statistique et de la Démographie 2007: 55). The urban expression of this national conundrum is significant: only 0.3 per cent of national territory, Dakar is home to more than half the nation’s urban population (53 per cent) and its litany of ills.\(^2\) Matador describes the political consequences of these trends:

To be a young person in Senegal is really to be cut-off from a lot of things that are happening. [...]

[...] The state does everything it can to put people to sleep and most of all the young people. [...]

[...] We know that we will never get anything from the state and whatever we would ask the state will not give it to us. First, because the state does not understand what is an urban culture, worse what is the hip hop culture. They think that we are the worst enemies of the state because throughout our texts we have always criticised the state.

(Interview conducted with Matador, 29 February 2009)

He highlights the ‘borderline situation’ of youth and their conflicting relations with the official city, as well as the conflicting and mutually suspicious relations between the government and disillusioned youth, who lack confidence in any future perspective and are stuck ‘waiting’.

While the disjunctions between economic, political, cultural and symbolic territories have accelerated, Mbembe suggests that it is at such ‘interstices’ that historical action takes place (2000: 43); in this context, this history, and the institutional violence that it responds to, clearly distinguishes between cohorts of individuals born before or at the edge of independence, and the ‘children of the crisis’ (Biaya 2000: 29; 2002: 350). The latter is marked clearly in the events of 2011 that saw the emergence of the Senegalese movement ‘Y’en a marre! (YAM)’\(^{24}\), in which Dakar’s youth, led by hip hop artists, affirmed themselves as critical actors in their country through political protest and social contestation. Formed in January 2011, this youthful collective declared no ties to any political party, emerging instead as a watchdog movement, formed on the urban margins of the city, the working-class district of Parcelles Assainies. Its refusal to be co-opted by establishment politicians marked the movement as radical, free of conventional forms of urban political manipulation. More importantly, it insisted on a mediation position, with its members and discourse acting as intermediaries between public officials and the population, but also as a source of independent media, through musical and audio-visual productions.
As such, YAM! voices the frustrations of the people, a seemingly cyclically disillusioned population living in a city scarred by recurrent power and water cuts, pervasive poverty and institutionalized corruption. Apart from protests and rallies – repetitive large-scale demonstrations, one of which on 23 June 2011 forced then-President Wade to back away from constitutional changes that would have ensured him a third term in office – the movement also uses hip hop music as a means of spreading its message. Capitalizing on the fame of its founders, it released at the end of 2011 a compilation self-titled ‘Y’en A Marre’. This was yet another expression, an aesthetic one, from urban youth, those who ‘belonged to sacrificed generations, with no future, and in total contradiction with the announced objectives and discourses of the government’ (Biaya 2000: 22); a youth living and organizing against the state and an urban society that marginalizes them. Repeatedly experiencing institutional violence, the urban youth have also historically (Set Setal 23; Boul Faalé 24) mobilized in times of social turmoil, rejecting their ascribed marginal sociality by those in political power and the economic situation, as well as the submissive social prescriptions of tradition.

Through this quest for elementary civic rights (education, employment, implication in political processes that concern them), Dakar youth have created in hip hop a place as political actors, as well as cultural entrepreneurs, in the Senegalese metropolitan scene. Indeed, emerging from a ‘third space’ – hip hop’s ‘southern transculture’ – this cultural and musical expression has offered an alternative politics that interacts and impacts on the economic dimensions of the music scene. Moreover, as hip hop artists, a particular ethics – a ‘philosophy’ that sensitively informs practice – strongly influences the form of cultural entrepreneurship. How the political production of Senegalese hip hop métis interacts with and impacts on the economic production of their musical expression, is thus the focus of the final section in this chapter.

An ethical economy of hip hop music

As Matador asserts: ‘[…] people already recognise that rappers do not only say the truth but they are also workers and developers’ (Interview conducted by the author with Matador on 29 February 2009). In other words, the Dakar hip hop culture’s economy highlights a production characterized by an ‘ethical economy’ (Arvidsson et al. 2008), which is ‘mainly coordinated through non-monetary incentives’. As such, hip hop music economy incorporates a traditional rational capitalist economy of an individual, as well as an affectivity that is relational, linked to the collective, the community, and the ‘emotional site’. This affectivity is deployed around two principles of praxis: ‘representing’ and ‘proving’; or as Matador put it, in the previous extract of his track, ‘working hard’ and ‘serving others before oneself’. These two principles stand as mondialised hip hop ‘transcultural codes’ and reflect on the one hand, a notion of original ‘writing’ as well as individual challenge (‘proving’); and, on the other, an attachment to the ‘emotional site’ (‘representing’).

In fact, while there is not a fixed doctrine relative to hip hop, there are some recurrent cultural codes attached to this ‘southern transculture’, elements that translate in different practices around the world and bind together this community. It is first about ‘proving oneself’, learning to be the best from where you are, from what you have; in other words, it is about challenging oneself in a positive way. Second, it is about ‘representing’, returning and dedicating the benefits of this individual challenge to the hip hop community and its participants. In this respect, Thomas draws a list of such codes: ‘keeping it real’, ‘speak truth to power’, ‘change the game’, ‘represent the hood’, ‘self-expression’ (2007); while Mitchell defines more generally an ‘ethos’ that reflects an independent lifestyle involving both ‘raising the bar’ and an attachment to territory through political and social engagement (Mitchell 2007). Understanding the hip hop music economy as an ethical economy based on ‘proving’ oneself and ‘representing’ one’s community explains the logic of the entrepreneurial motive beyond a market economy justified by monetary incentives alone (Arvidsson et al. 2008: 10). It also illuminates the
authority of specific affective affinities to elaborate an informal social infrastructure. These specifically situated relations active in hip hop music and the ‘transcultural politics’ of its participants are reflected in this ethical economy, and reveal practices that take different forms in the varied contexts in which hip hop flourishes.

While I distance myself from any ethnic or racial presumption in hip hop community, I draw here on an ‘enclave logic’ (Basu and Werbner 2001) to understand the ways in which a community that shares identities and practices, organizes itself internally in order to respond to its production as well as consumption needs. Such an endogenous system implies the internal organization and coordination of the enclave as a key element in comprehending the dynamics of participants’ enterprises. This framework emerges from the US context, where it has been argued that a hip hop ‘aesthetics of entrepreneurship’ is evident in artists’ growing awareness of the importance of the entrepreneurial dynamic in the hip hop culture and industry (Muhammad 1999). Unlike previous generations of African Americans in the entertainment world, hip hop music entrepreneurs in the USA have been perceived as an ethnic enclave economic structure, whose participants capitalize on their access to this creative niche for economic rewards beyond it (Basu and Werbner 2001). Systematically planning and organizing businesses beyond their musical production, in this context hip hop entrepreneurs have developed complex economic portfolios, packaging musical production as commodity and networking through aesthetics and business collaborations to find employment, set up secondary businesses and professional services centred around hip hop culture and music. Nowadays, many people celebrate hip hop moguls who emerged in the American market, despite the fact that these entrepreneurs always have a link with major music corporations, either under pressing and distribution deals or joint ventures.

In Dakar this ‘enclave’ economy and its ‘aesthetics of entrepreneurship’ has been organized so that participants have a certain capacity to create autonomously inside their community, but also an awareness of themselves as a new generation of cultural entrepreneurs active in their city. As such, the hip hop ethical music economy articulates through two modes, in which the hip hop individual and collective are inextricably linked: ‘peer production’ and ‘communal governance’ (Bauwens 2009a, 2009b). In the Senegalese experience, the enclave perspective suggests a cooperative, community-based as well as community-oriented form of entrepreneurship, which contrasts with the US individualistic approach to enclave entrepreneurial initiatives, in which only a few moguls succeed. Indeed, while the entrepreneurial initiatives developed by American hip hop moguls aim to increase their respective market shares, in Dakar, the strategic rationale of hip hop entrepreneurs is to create this very market in a locale that is ignored by the global music corporations. In fact, Dakar’s participants are aware that, contrary to US or European music, their musical production rarely leaves the country, let alone the region. Consequently they strive to develop an alternative terrain for productive music making locally.

‘Peer production’ thus draws together economic practices by Dakar-based hip hop entrepreneurs which help them gain autonomy through the ownership of the material conditions of production. This independent production capacity helps create a dynamic business ecology to ensure the survival as well as the continuing development of their market. Creating and developing an alternative terrain for their own market in order to ‘prove’ themselves and ‘represent’ their community, these entrepreneurs have endeavoured to produce autonomously for the benefit of their community. To do this these participants must own the initial recording device and instruments necessary to produce music. They also have to develop ‘home studios’ and engage in auto-production as well as the diversification of music-related activities throughout the chain of production (see Figure 34.2).

To penetrate new areas of expertise, hip hop actors extend their entrepreneurial initiatives to festivals, media (radio, TV, webzines, written press) that are expressly dedicated to hip hop, as well as recording studios, fully equipped rehearsal rooms, independent labels, duplication plants, street wear fashion brands, cultural associations, audio-visual and graphic designer companies, as well as security agencies. In fact, since 2006, a dynamic business ecology has emerged to support the peer
production process in hip hop music. Hip hop artists have thus developed a vertical integration and interconnectedness between different parts of the music production process, through and for their community, with alternative avenues for the production, promotion and distribution of their musical products. One of the most visible contemporary hip hop artists on the Senegalese scene, Simon BisBi Clan created an enterprise of music production and promotion that puts together a duplication plant, a street wear fashion brand, a unit of graphic design and audio-visual production, as well as a musical label dedicated to hip hop:

It’s a label 100 per cent hip hop […] where one can enter into a studio, record, mix, do the mastering, duplicate the product, make a jacket, and then just go to the Copyrights Bureau to get stamps. It is a complete service […] It was really the present that I wanted to offer to the hip hop movement, and at affordable prices […] And people starts to come for the quality as well; they see the difference!

(Interview conducted with Simon, 21 February 2009)

As a means of quality control, selection and critique, ‘communal governance’ highlights, in contrast, the reflexive self-organization and self-regulation of autonomous participants in the hip hop community. A participative process, based on the principle of self-rule, this ethos is applied to the productive sphere, so that ‘market competition is balanced by co-operation, the invisible hand is combined with a visible handshake’.

As a métisse form open to any and every individuality, individual participation is
equipotential; there is no a priori selection to productively engage with the community (Bauwens 2005). In fact, hip hop actors voluntarily engage with indirect, rather than direct reward in the form of monetary compensation.

More precisely, this peer governance is based on the voluntary engagement of participants, and simultaneously on the self-regulation of the productive community by affective affinity (Arvidsson et al. 2008: 11). Indeed, such participatory production distinguishes itself from traditional capitalist methods of coercion such as dependence-based wage work where productivity is based on mutual self-interest. Rather, motivation is ‘intrinsically positive, i.e. deriving from passion rather than from “extrinsic positives” (self-interest or greed, motivated by the external monetary system)’ (Bauwens 2009b: 127). Moreover, the capacity to contribute is verified in the process of contribution itself (Bauwens 2005); what counts is demonstrated ability, not prior formal proof. The popular hip hop expression ‘it’s not where you’re from, but where you’re at’ acknowledges such a participatory process that is not based on a prerequisite, but credited in the participation itself. Indeed, hip hop governance is guaranteed by an internal self-regulation by participants through reputation systems that are used for communal validation (Bauwens 2005: 2): the fact that ‘people start to come for the quality’ and ‘see the difference’.

Equipotentiality is not synonymous with equality or fairness; the hip hop participation system, as any informal system, produces new inequalities. In fact, Simon reminds us: ‘before, a lot of people were just public, part of the audience. But now many of them have become rappers themselves. It worked for me though it does not work for everybody’. Indeed, the governance of the hip hop productive community remains intrinsically connected to physical products (whether recorded or live musical productions) that require systematic ‘cost-recovery mechanisms’ (Bauwens 2009b: 129). In an ethical economy, coordination is ensured through a process of ‘affective affinity’, whereby participants aim at accumulating respect and recognition from a chosen community (Arvidsson et al. 2008: 11), a form of ‘reputation economy’. For the most experienced hip hop artists, the accumulation of respect and recognition has sometimes been accompanied by a consequent credit and its privileged monetary compensation from the global music market. In this respect, the most eloquent example is Awadi, who explains how in such cases, artists participate in their productive community:

If one performs live, one needs musicians and it is very expensive to have them, to rehearse with them and not everybody has a training room or the required instruments. Also, one needs to do a real show, i.e. needs to rent a good PA system, need to advertise the event on the radio, TV, through flyers, poster. All this makes a good show but it’s not everybody who can do so! Those who have a bit of money because they travel, then come back and are able to organise better show because they have the means to do so.

(Interview conducted with Didier Awadi, 25 February 2009)

This emphasizes the collective approach that is often favoured as a cost-recovery mechanism; what becomes at the regional, national and metropolitan level, a ‘benevolent dictatorship’ (Bauwens 2009b: 124) directed by more ‘established’ hip hop participants. The influence of such a ‘core leadership’ is especially salient in the organization of festivals dedicated to hip hop that are active in the sub-Saharan Francophone region. Indeed, a networking dynamic across cities of Francophone West Africa – including agreement on artists’ participation and fees, notably – has emerged among festivals that share a common thematic to sustain live performance and the diffusion of hip hop music. In the Senegalese capital as well, this networking dynamic has developed with the organization of the ‘72h Hip Hop’, an event that includes over a dozen hip hop enterprises, and during which conferences, exhibitions, workshops, and concerts dedicated to the movement are held (see Figure 34.3). In 2010, for its second edition, the city of Dakar integrated the ‘72h’ into its end of the year festivities cultural programme,
the ‘Ribidion’. As Simon concluded, ‘public authorities as well have noted the impact that the movement has on the youth of our country. They did not suspect there existed such an organisation.’ As such, these entrepreneurs have ‘represented’ their emotional site (‘impact […] on the youth’) and ‘proved’ their singular ‘writing’ (‘such an organization’) on their urban territory.

**Conclusion**

In Dakar, hip hop participants collectively but autonomously co-create an ethical economy through creating peer production as well as governing mechanisms. From this perspective, the hip hop music economy is ethical, not in the sense that it translates some form of philosophical universality but because it is situated and particular to local practices. Indeed, rather than a ‘moral’ economy, the hip hop music economy constructs an implicit knowledge economy and elaborates the social infrastructure that is informal, but critical to its success. This ethical feature is a ‘transcultural dimension’ of hip hop that shapes its original Dakarois translation. In this respect, this mix of productive and governing processes demonstrates how musical entrepreneurs, through their ethical practices, enhance the convergence of individual and collective hip hop interests. The participatory production and the productive participation of hip hop participants in Dakar thus give rise to an alternative form of entrepreneurial practice that emerges from this constant and dynamic duality between community and individual.

The hip hop experience in Dakar highlights urban cultures from the south that are diverse and multiple, as well as complexly embedded in the city’s contemporary socio-economic and spatial realities. Built around notions of *mondialisation*, *métissage*, and transculture, the conceptual framework
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drawn on grounds, in time and space, a distinctive cultural and musical emergence, revealing the latter as the informed product of situated politics and located practices. In this sense, hip hop and its transcultural elements, its codes of praxis, develop out of a southern positioning, a borderline position that interlinks in complex ways practices of hip hop from the north as well as the south. It always does so, however, while offering an originally translated world or *mondialité*. Singular and multiple, this transculture and its *métisse* expressions thus remind us of the importance of ‘third spaces’ and ‘interstitial zones’ essential to thinking and conceiving urban cultural realities and dynamics across reductive binaries. The field of urban culture is thus more than just contextual background in the study of city dynamics. Instead, it suggests productive sites for marginalized urbanites to enact civic participation and empowerment, politically as well as economically and socially. In the context of crisis, moreover, culture has emerged as a privileged vehicle for social change for young urban (southern) citizens. The Dakar experience highlights how hip hop serves as an effective site for identity formation and negotiation, building a cultural economy that allows for endogenous local capacity building as a potential source of individual, as well as collective, growth and development.

References


Notes

1 For instance, Didier Awadi from the Positive Black Soul (Senegal) born in 1969 has just released a new album, Ma Révolution’ (2012); Imhotep from IAM (France), and most of the members of his group were born in 1960 and just released their album ‘Arts Martiens’ (2013); also, GrandMaster Flash, Furious Five (USA) was born in 1958 and performed in London on 10 February 2011. Just to give an indication regarding the generation fiction and the unstable indication given by age, Priss’K, a pioneer female hip hop artist from Ivory Coast, is nicknamed the ‘Vieille Mère du Hip Hop’ (‘Hip Hop Old Mama’) and she was born in 1985!

2 This approach thus allows a conception of Hip Hop as an ‘ensemble of specificities’, of singularities, in which each ‘emergence’ singularly appears, develops and stands out as another mondialised world of this ensemble.

3 Here, I draw on the contributions of A. Nouss, who introduces the concept of mondialisation, in contrast with ‘globalisation’: the former refers to the human dimension of an inhabited world, while the latter refers to the concreteness of a soulless economic and material reality (Nouss 2005: 76).

4 Various techniques of ‘breakdancing’ such as smurf, hype, double dutch, boogaloo.

5 ‘Graffiti’ and ‘tags’.

6 Includes scratch and sampling techniques.

7 Includes rap and human beatbox.
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8 I recognise here the contribution of H. Osumare, who develops the concept of ‘connective marginalities’ (Osumare 2007: 61).

9 Conscious Rap, Dirty South, Political Rap, East Coast, West Coast, Crunk, Midwest Rap, Hardcore Rap, Gangsta Rap, Jazz Rap, Street Rap, Mainstream Rap, Old School, Pimp Rap, Pop Rap… all of which are NOT mutually exclusive – for a glimpse into each genre, please refer to the following Wikipedia entry http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_hip_hop_genres.

10 For an in-depth discussion of the role of DJ (Disk-Jockey) and of the MC (Master of Ceremony / Master of Composition), see J.F. Mbaye (2009: 297–8).

11 Although the MC initially played a more entertaining role in this musical landscape where s/he was simply introducing the DJ to the crowd, I argue that the MC’s part became predominant in the musical creation, evolving from ‘Master of Ceremony’ to ‘Master of Composition’.

12 This is an extract from Matador’s track ‘Hip Hop Attitude’ from the album Vox Populi (2012). English translation by the author based on the initial transcription and translation from Wolof produced by the Africulturban’s team.

13 This album ‘Présidents d’Afrique’ is constructed around extracts of speeches given by Cheikh Anta Diop, Kwame Nkrumah, Thomas Sankara, Patrice Lumumba, and with various references to Frantz Fanon, Aimé Césaire or Samory Touré.

14 Italics in original text.

15 Political expression in vocal music is of course not new, expressing either pro-establishment (national anthems) or anti-establishment (protest songs) messages.

16 See, for instance, Awadi’s tracks ‘J’accuse’ and ‘Stoppez-les’.

17 These are themes that Fou Malade and his collective ‘Bat’haillons Blin-D’ have especially favoured.

18 These are themes especially favoured by the female hip hop artist Sista Fa, who actively participated in a documentary film ‘Sarahah’, which focused on female genital mutilation.

19 See, for instance, Wa BMG 44’s track ‘Danger’.

20 ‘Sénégaléenne’ is an expression created by Xuman from the group Pee Froiss in a track entitled ‘Gunman’; this term originally draws on the contraction of the adjective ‘sénégalais’ (Senegalese in French) and ‘galère’ (which simultaneously means ‘galley’ and ‘pain’).

21 ‘Hip Hop Education’ is a project developed by Matador’s association Africulturban, through which hip hop artists intervene in primary schools in order to provide artistic activities (concerts, workshops, etc.) as well as to encourage, in partnerships with pupils and teachers, the amelioration of the studying conditions (cleaning up schools, lobbying for funding for better infrastructure).


24 Y’en A Marre means ‘fed up’ or ‘enough is enough’ in French.

25 Set Setal means ‘clean and make clean’ in Wolof. It was a youth and local movement centred on the neighbourhood in opposition to national movements, the most spectacular expressions of which were wall frescoes, and with mbalax as its distinctive soundtrack. This movement was considered as a symbolic response to the tragic border dispute with neighbouring country, Mauritania in 1989.

26 Boul Faalé means ‘don’t worry’, ‘never mind’ in Wolof. It is the title of the first musical cassette released by the Senegalese hip hop pioneer group, Positive Black Soul in 1994, in which the group formulated a vehement discourse denouncing the corruption of the PS (Diouf’s political party) then in power.

27 ‘Musical enterprises in Senegal’, 2009, identified 13 fully equipped rehearsal rooms (both private and public), among which two belonged to hip hop artists, who had invested in this essential material for live performances.

28 In Senegal, a quarter of the duplication units belong to hip hop entrepreneurs. One should note however, that they are primarily artisanal burning units rather than proper industrial duplication plants.

29 I refer here to the brand ‘Bull Doff’ created by the hip hop artist and choreographer, Baay Sooley.

30 Positive Black Soul, for instance, would regularly call upon young people of their neighbourhood to be the security during their performances. While these young people used to hanging around in the streets became members of this group’s crew occupying the ‘function’ of bodyguards, after ten years of ‘informal’ practice, they officially created their bodyguard agency – Delta Force – that is now linked to the Studio Sankara.

31 For each release of an album, in Senegal, one needs to declare to the Copyrights Bureau (BSDA) the number of copies to be placed on the market, and to pay the rights for mechanical reproduction through the payment of stamps for each copy.

33 Gabao Hip Hop Festival (Gabon); Waga Hip Hop Festival (Burkina Faso); Hip Hop Kankpe Festival (Benin); Assallamalekoum Festival (Mauritania); Hip Hop Awards (Senegal); Festival Festa’2H. (Senegal); Togo Hip Hop Awards (Togo); Guinean Africa Rap Festival (Guinea-Conakry); Hip Hop Wassa Festival (Niger); Mali Hip Hop Awards (Mali); but also in non-Francophone countries: Big Up GB – Movimento Hip Hop Festival (Guinea-Bissao); Hi-Life Festival (Ghana).

GENDER IS STILL THE BATTLEGROUNDS
Youth, cultural production and the remaking of public space in São Paulo

Teresa P.R. Caldeira

Youth groups and their artistic interventions are changing the character of the public in São Paulo. In the 2010s, it is through cultural production, not through political movements, that public spaces are being transformed. A significant proportion of the new cultural producers come from the impoverished peripheries of the city. Through cultural production, they not only affirm their existence in the city and assert their right to use its spaces, but also start to master the production of signs – painting, calligraphy, writing, video, film, and several forms of electronic and digital production. Moreover, they use them aggressively to expose the discrimination they experience and to re-signify spaces of the city, especially the periphery. No longer represented by others who used to dominate the production of signs, young people from the peripheries now force their own representations onto the city. Thus, they destabilize the previous system of signs, social relations, and rules for the use of public space dominated by the upper classes.

These transformations are substantial, but not without deep contradictions. One of the most salient of them is the reproduction of gender inequalities. The protagonists of all forms of artistic and cultural interventions coming from the peripheries are mostly young men. Although women have always been present in these productions, there is no doubt that they are a small minority, operating in universes dominated by men and in which they face many obstacles and prejudices. Thus, although women participate in the public sphere in countless ways they tend not to be producers of cultural and artistic interventions coming from the peripheries.

In this chapter, I argue that a clear pattern of gender inequality is one of the main products of the new urban practices and artistic interventions that shape the public in contemporary São Paulo. As young men from the peripheries use the space of artistic productions to reinvent their subjectivities, they forge aggressive and risk-taking masculinities that recreate gender asymmetries instead of weakening or problematizing them. As they challenge other inequities, especially those based on class and race, young men reproduce and sometimes amplify gender inequalities. The presence of women in these productions is always problematic. In the spaces of these artistic productions, as in the public spaces of the city, gender tensions are palpable.

In what follows, I discuss some of the new artistic productions and modes of representation originated in São Paulo peripheries at two successive moments. First, I discuss the prevalence of rap and the emergence of marginal literature in the 1990s and their powerful re-signification of the periphery in a
moment of very high rates of violent crime. Second, I address the diversification of the cultural production starting in the 2000s, focusing especially on *saraus*, graffiti and tagging. At this moment, not only did the forms of artistic engagement proliferate, but also they went beyond the spaces of the peripheries to impose themselves upon the whole city. It was a decade of decreasing rates of violent crime. At both moments, I indicate the type of masculinity that these movements were articulating. Finally, I turn to the young women and their ambivalent relationships with these spaces of cultural production.

**Speaking from the peripheries in the 1990s**

São Paulo's peripheries are the product of the process through which workers have urbanized the city. As in many other metropolises in the global south, migrants who arrived by the hundreds of thousands a year to work in what was becoming an important industrial centre could not find housing. They have thus relied on autoconstruction. Starting in the 1940s, they bought cheap pieces of land in non-urbanized areas in distant peripheries and then started a long-term process of building and expanding their residences, transforming them year after year until it would become a nice house of their own. This process typically takes one to two decades to complete and simultaneously urbanizes the city. It is a process of social mobility in which houses express the upward status of their owners. The majority of the workers owned their houses.

As a consequence of this process, by the 1970s, São Paulo was clearly segregated according to a centre–periphery pattern. The better-off lived in well urbanized and equipped central areas, while the working poor inhabited the precarious peripheries that they had built on their own. By the 1970s, almost any social indicator was good in the centre and worsened as one moved to the peripheries. But as this pattern crystallized, it also started to change.

In the 1970s and 1980s, the main agents of transformation were urban social movements, which spread throughout the peripheries claiming rights to the city they had built and in which they paid taxes. These movements helped to democratize Brazilian society and to significantly transform the peripheries. As new elected officers came to power, they chose to invest in the peripheries. As a result, asphalt, water, and electricity became almost universal, and sewerage expanded considerably. The number of schools, health clinics, and later on (in the 2000s) cultural centres grew exponentially. What used to be unquestionably very precarious spaces are no longer that precarious. The 'city' arrived in the peripheries, fulfilling the dreams of their residents.

The young people who are the main artistic and cultural producers today were born in São Paulo and are the children or grandchildren of the migrants who first moved to the middle of nowhere to build their houses. The perspective from which they look at the city is quite different from that of their parents’ generation. When they were born, the social movements were already fading away and the spaces of their neighbourhoods had improved considerably. They grew up in a world of democracy, NGOs, relative access to education, and increasing availability of technologies of communication. They all carry cellphones and have some access to the internet, while their parents, a good proportion of them illiterate, faced long years of a military dictatorship and censored mass media, only dreamed of an almost impossible phone land line, and spent at least part of their lives without electricity or asphalt and with very limited possibilities of consumption. In spite of their poverty, the young artists from the peripheries are plugged into globalized circuits of youth culture, whose styles they reinterpret and adopt, and into an equally globalized and quite expanded consumption market.

But in the 1990s a series of negative factors also shaped lives in the peripheries. The years of economic boom that peaked in the 1970s were over and young people faced not only an economic crisis and unemployment but also the disintegration of a working-class culture anchored on the
dignity of labour. The economy was changing so much that many working-class skills were becoming irrelevant and young people could no longer rely on the references that had guided previous generations of urban workers. They had to reinvent themselves. Moreover, violence and crime were widespread in their neighbourhoods. Starting in the 1980s, homicide rates began to climb in the city, jumping from 14.62 per 100,000 inhabitants in 1981 to 47.29 in 1996 (Caldeira 2000) and to 57.3 in 2000 (Pro-Aim 2011). Murder hit the peripheries especially hard, where rates of homicide reached around 120 per 100,000 in some areas, compared to less than ten in central neighbourhoods. The majority of the victims were young men, especially African-Brazilians. They are also the main targets of a police force known to abuse the use of force and to kill. In the 1990s, homicide became the main cause of death of young men (the third for the total population) and made life expectancy for men decrease by four years (Jorge 2002).

Violence and death, more than anything else, shaped the emergence of the new youth cultures of the peripheries in the 1990s. Hip hop was its first expression. In São Paulo, it started in the mid-1980s in downtown with groups break dancing. By the 1990s, it had moved to the peripheries and rap became its dominant expression. São Paulo’s rappers identify themselves as from the peripheries, poor and black, and articulate a powerful social critique. In a few years, rappers became the interpreters and voices of a generation of young men coming of age in the peripheries at its most violent moment. In the 1990s, rappers started to elaborate the notion that the periphery was a world apart and that they spoke from there and to other people like them. The famous verse by Racionais MC’s, São Paulo’s most well-known rap group, ‘the world is different on this side of the bridge’ powerfully captured the city’s geography of segregation and demarcated their territory. In important ways, São Paulo’s rap is the elaboration of this dichotomy between there and here and the denunciation of the inequality that exists between them. On the other side of the bridge, there is wealth, white people, families going to the park, playboys wasting water to wash their cars, whores, and upscale clubs. That is a world inaccessible to them:

Look at that club, how cool!
Look at the little black boy seeing everything from the outside
He only dreams through the wall…

(Racionais MC’s Fim-de-Semana no Parque 1993)

On their side of the bridge, the periphery, there is a universe always described in quite dystopic and unsubtle ways as a space of despair: violent, ugly, poor, dirty and polluted; a space of single mothers and alcoholic fathers, of treacherous young women, of feuds and deaths of young men, most of them black. This is a space in which ‘to die is a factor… The true trick is to live’, as the Racionais put it:

In the extreme south of the southern zone all is wrong.
Here your life is worth very little,
our law is faulty, violent, and suicidal.
[…] Scary it is when one realizes
that all turned into nothing and that only poor people die.
We keep killing each other, brother, why?

(Racionais MC’s Fórmula Mágica da Paz 1997)

The more rappers and later other cultural producers elaborated on the characteristics of the two sides of the bridge, the more they transformed ‘the periphery’ into a homogenizing symbol of precariousness, violence and inequality that disregards the real improvements that have happened in the peripheries and erases the differences in relation to other more precarious spaces, such as favelas. It is in the terms
of this symbol that the periphery has been appropriated by thousands of residents of the peripheries for whom rappers offered a language to express their despair and frustration with the daily indignities they suffer in the city.

The imaginary articulated by the 1990s raps became the repertoire of other artistic genres created in the peripheries. One of them is ‘marginal literature’ (literatura marginal), a term coined by one of its most famous representatives, the writer Ferréz. This term designates the production of a series of writers from the peripheries and who write about them basically in the terms articulated by rap. As he elaborates on the precariousness of life in these territories, Ferréz prefers to call the periphery ghetto, or sometimes favela or senzala, the Brazilian term for slave quarters. He writes about the hopelessness of the ghetto, its violence, its neglect and isolation. This ghetto is sometimes a space of solidarity and certainly one’s own space of belonging, but it is mostly a space of suspicion and betrayal, something they frequently associate with women.

Rappers, writers of marginal literature, and other artists from the peripheries articulate a powerful and complex voice, a balancing act of trying to transform derogation into a source of dignity. They speak from the perspective of dangerous peripheries and of the prejudices expressed against them. Instead of contesting the terms that stigmatize them, they adopt them to identify themselves, reinforcing the terms of derogation. Moreover, they create a new aesthetic that in general exaggerates whatever is considered negative: precariousness, violence, bad words, ugliness, defacement, and spoken Portuguese that ignores correct grammar.

The elaboration of the symbol of the periphery and the cultivation of a voice rooted in stigmas are part of the project of these movements to affirm their autonomy, especially for the production of information about themselves. They want to use words as weapons, to produce a ‘literary terrorism’, to make people think, to circulate information, to expose inequities, ‘sabotaging the reasoning’ of the elites. This is for them the only path to freedom and to peace.

Rap and marginal literature are also male universes. Not only are the large majority of writers men, but also they write from the perspective of young men growing up in the peripheries of the 1990s in a context marked by death and violence. They address each other as ‘mano’ and elaborate the terms of their masculinity. They reflect on the (lack of) options available to them, on what led them to either crime or to rap, to feuds and death; they ask what would make the right type of black man, what is to have the right ‘attitude’. In these reflections, they contrast themselves, the ‘sangue bons’ (good blood) to those to be despised, especially white men, black men who betray them, and women. The representation of women is marked by a deep split. Basically, they articulate two main categories of women: on the one hand, mothers, especially their own; on the other, young women not to be trusted. Fathers are frequently absent in their lives, a common phenomenon in families in the peripheries, where one in every three mothers is a single mother. In this context, the women treated with respect in raps and marginal literature are mostly their own mothers who suffer, raise them by themselves, and give them character. Verses despising young women abound. One of the most concentrated expressions of prejudices is the rap Mulheres Vulgares (Vulgar Women) by Racionais MC’s. It describes women as vulgar beings, with repulsive ideas; idiots, obscene, worthless people who make money from sex. It concludes:

She’s beautiful, delicious, and sensual
Her lipstick and makeup make her banal…
To be the evil one, fatal, fine, bad … She doesn’t care!
She only wants money, finally.
She gets anyone involved with her ingenuous look.
In fact, behind rules the most pure mediocrity.
She dominates you with her promiscuous way of being.
Youth, cultural production, public space

As one changes clothes, she trades you for another one.
Many want her forever,
But I just want her for one night, do you get me?

(Racionais MC’s Holocausto Urbano 1990)

In the 1990s and early 2000s, when this rap and other similar ones were written and when marginal literature came into being, the peripheries of São Paulo were spaces of huge uncertainties. They were marked by blatant social inequality and lack of opportunities, unemployment, the overwhelming presence of death, and the unmaking of the strong belief in progress and social mobility that had structured the lives of the previous generation. Moreover, the culture of labour that anchored working-class culture and the sense of dignity of working-class people, especially male, had lost reference. In the periphery of São Paulo, as in the post-industrial American inner city, the black male body was then at the centre of struggles for life and death, power and powerlessness. In this context, it is possible to understand why sex comes to the forefront and why misogyny and preoccupation with the boundaries of life and death pervade rap (Gilroy 1994; Caldeira 2006).

In the 2000s, the dynamics of the city’s public space was changing in directions that transformed in significant ways the conditions that rap and marginal literature have been dramatizing. Although their imaginary persists and still articulates the thoughts and feelings of many youth from the peripheries, there are other processes going on that change urban experiences, gender asymmetries and their representation.

The 2000s: diversification and engagement beyond despair

The clearest evidence of change in the city’s dynamics in the 2000s is a steady drop in rates of homicide. In 2000, the rate reached its highest point: 57.3 per 100,000 in the city of São Paulo. However, in 2005 it had dropped to 25.62 and in 2010 to 11.48 (Pro-Aim 2011). By any account, it was a significant decrease, whose consequences have not yet been really appreciated. There is not a consensus among either citizens or social scientists regarding the reasons for the sharp decrease. The government credits it to its policies of incarceration, police reform and improvement of systems of information. NGOs and human rights activists associate it with the control of weapons and policies of empowerment of youth in the peripheries. Hip hop may associate it with its efforts of education and incorporation of youth to its practices. Some people associate the decrease with the role of organized crime in disciplining the use of weapons among its members and structuring everyday life in the peripheries under its authoritarian practices (Feltran 2010).

Whatever the reason, the fact is that in the late 2000s death was no longer the central fact of everyday life in most neighbourhoods of the periphery. Several people I interviewed in the peripheries in recent years confirm this, asserting that everyday life is not as dangerous as it used to be and that they feel more comfortable to move around (something only relative in the case of women, as I discuss below). Nobody says that the neighbourhoods feel totally safe: they just agree that they are less dangerous and tense, in spite of the continuing police harassment and frequently the presence of organized crime. In areas of the periphery such as Jardim Ângela, from where both the Racionais and Ferréz come, rates of homicide have dropped from 110.7 per 100,000 inhabitants in 2001 to 18.9 in 2007, and continued to drop after that (NEV-USP 2000−2007).

A less murderous city is a city in which circulation is more feasible and where the themes of cultural production may be broadened. Although it may be hard to prove, one can certainly speculate that the decrease in homicide rates is associated with other phenomena that have been changing considerably the everyday dynamics in the city. Since the mid-2000s, the city has been booming with cultural and artistic interventions, in the centre and in all directions of the peripheries, and death and violence are not necessarily their dominant themes.
The *saraus* are probably the main novelty in the cultural landscape of the peripheries. They are weekly meetings usually in bars that congregate hundreds of people to read and listen to poetry and other literary productions. Anyone can show up and read their poems, and the audience has been increasing, at the same time as the numbers of *saraus* multiply. One of the oldest and most famous *saraus*, Cooperifa, also in Southern Zone, was created in 2001 by Sérgio Vaz. He describes himself as a ‘poet of the periphery’ instead of a marginal writer. For him, the periphery is a ‘modern senzala’ and the *saraus* a form of ‘cultural quilombo’ (Vaz 2008: 12–13). In the cultural desert that was the periphery, he argues, the *saraus* was a necessity and a form of resistance and liberation.

Although Vaz is an admirer of hip hop and of the fellow rappers of his region, his interventions and those of many frequent participants in *saraus* carry another tone. They add a more hopeful perspective to the cultural landscape of the peripheries. Vaz prints his poems on postcards and distributes them around the city. One of them says: ‘While they capitalize reality, I socialize my dreams’. And another, entitled ‘The Vengeance’:

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Vengeance
has its good side
if used as it should be.
For example:
if someone tells he loves you,
avenge him,
love him back.
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Vengeance is a central concern in a universe of reciprocal violence and fratricide. However, the tone here is definitively very different from that articulated in raps of the Racionais or in the writings of Ferréz. The new poetry of the periphery aims at emotions, not only at reason. Still anchored in the realities of these spaces, their poverty and violence, roughness and resilience, it is a ‘poetry of the streets’ that has a certain target: ‘other people’s heart’ (Vaz 2008: 115).

Paulista rap of the 1990s pioneered the project of using words as weapons. Cooperifa and other *saraus* take this project further:

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The periphery has never been so violent. In the mornings, it is common to see in the buses men and women holding weapons of up to four hundred pages, young people trafficking short stories; adults, novels. The more desperate ones snorting chronicles without stop. The other day, a guy rolled a sonnet just in front of my daughter. …

The kids are high on children’s stories. Some are already so addicted that, in spite of everything and everybody, they want to go to university. Look, who ordered it hidden from us? Now we want everything at once!...

No, this is not Alice in Wonderland, but it is not Dante’s inferno either. It is only the miracle of poetry.
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(Vaz 2008: 116)

The sharp decrease of death in the everyday life of the peripheries contextualizes the new possibility: treating violence, crime and drug dealing metaphorically in a struggle in which literature is the basis of socio-cultural subversion. Times have changed and so has the cultural landscape of the peripheries. In the new context, the misogyny that marked hip hop and marginal literature has softened. *Saraus* have become cultural spaces in the peripheries in which women find some room to articulate their voices. Around one third of the people who read regularly in *saraus* are women.
Youth, cultural production, public space

In sum, in the 2000s, both the themes and forms of cultural production diversified. Instead of reflecting only on the space of despair, this production started to articulate the terms of a space of hope. This vision is conceived differently from that of the social movements of the 1970s and 1980s, which demanded recognition for workers and citizens’ dignity, and their inclusion in the centre, in the modern city. Their imaginary aimed to bring the centre and its good quality of life to the outskirts of the city. In contrast, the art of the peripheries in the 2000s started to formulate the notion that the future of cultural production in the city would come from the peripheries and then be diffused throughout the metropolis, affecting deeply entrenched patterns of social inequality. For Vaz, the formulation of this perspective was a revelation:

In the factory where Cooperifa was born and where I was also born again, I discovered another very important thing in my life: if we really wanted something, it was just a matter of taking it, because everything was ours.

The center was starting to change place, although discreetly.

(Vaz 2008: 81)

Beyond the bridge: reconfiguring centre–periphery relationships

The transformation of the relationships between centre and peripheries is certainly one of the main characteristics of the new cultural landscape of São Paulo especially after the mid-2000s. There are many indications of these changes that make the current socio-cultural geography of the city more complex than it has ever been. The whole city is the site of intervention and re-creation of public space. Both the state and citizens are involved in this process in new and unexpected ways.

Since the early 2000s, the city of São Paulo has adopted policies with significant impact on the dynamics of cultural and artistic production, especially in the peripheries. Two have been especially influential. First, the municipal government has invested heavily in the construction of large educational/cultural centres throughout the peripheries. Considering that until the early 2000s these areas basically had no spaces for artistic and cultural activities, not even movie theatres, the new centres combining spaces for schools, libraries, auditoriums, sports and workshops have had a significant impact. The city built 45 of these centres, known as CEUs – Centro Educacional Unificado – after 2003. The infrastructure and the public services for education and cultural production in the peripheries are now radically different from what they were up to the 2000s. Some people argue that they have helped to reverse the pattern of widespread violence in the peripheries.

Second, the city implemented the VAI (Programa para a Valorização de Iniciativas Culturais) programme. This project started in 2004 and determines that the city government should fund young citizens (14–29-year-olds), especially from the peripheries, to produce art. The assumption of the programme is that there is interesting artistic production in the peripheries and that it is the role of government to create conditions for it to flourish. It has no restriction regarding artistic genre. From 2004 to 2012, VAI funded 956 projects selected from over 7,000 applications. Each project results in an artistic product. In 2013, the highest grant was R$25,500 or USD12,800, a significant amount, and the total invested by the programme in its first eight years was USD9.5 million (São Paulo: Secretaria Municipal de Cultura 2012: 15). This programme has become the main source of financing for artistic initiatives in the peripheries, provoking a dynamism never seen before and at a scale that only public funding can generate. As one of its analysts says: ‘It is no longer possible to talk about culture in the periphery without citing VAI’ (Leite 2012: 116). This is corroborated by my observations, as the artists and cultural producers I interviewed were all in some way involved in a VAI project. Among its many positive results, VAI has helped the formation of networks of producers, connecting people from all
parts of the city. Intense circulation around the metropolis is one of the by-products of the new cultural production. The ‘bridge’ is crossed more frequently and easily. In the process, new possibilities and tensions arise in the city in general.

This dispersion of the presence of cultural producers from the peripheries in the public spaces of the city is probably most evident in the types of practices that take the whole city as a site of intervention: graffiti, tagging (pixação), skateboarding, parkour, and motorcycling. They all grew exponentially during the 2000s. Against the symbolic construction of the ghetto and seclusion to its limits, they claim all urban space. ‘A city only exists for those who can move around it!’ says a graffiti in downtown São Paulo. As they intervene everywhere, they affect the quality of public space.

I do not have space here to analyse all these urban practices. However, it is important to add a few comments about the most visible of them: graffiti and pixação. Most graffiti artists and pixadores (taggers) are young men who come from non-elite and non-central areas of the city. While several graffiti artists have a middle-class background and are college-educated, most pixadores come from the peripheries and grew up under conditions of significant poverty. Many of them are Afro-descendent. The two basic formal elements that set those two styles apart are the use of colour and figuration. Today, what most Paulistanos recognize as graffiti are large and colourful murals painted mainly on public surfaces using not only aerosols but also latex paint, and creating amazing characters and complex compositions. São Paulo graffiti is known internationally and has become one of the city’s touristic attractions.

Pixação has a much more transgressive relationship with the city and its public. It is the writing in public spaces usually in black and without figuration. Pixação is made either with spray cans or with black paint and small foam rollers. São Paulo’s pixação has its own renowned style: a calligraphy made of vertically elongated and pointy letters using straight lines. Pixadores tag any type of surface or building and their inscriptions are omnipresent in the city today, constituting a central mark of the public in any direction one wanders, from the centre to all the peripheries. The majority of the population detests pixação. They see it as vandalism and crime, as attacks on their property, and as proof of the deterioration and defacement of the public spaces within which they no longer prefer to circulate. Pixações are commonly associated with ugliness and defilement, not with art and beauty, as in the case of graffiti.

Pixação is conceived by its practitioners as an anarchic intervention and a kind of radical urban sport. The idea is to inscribe onto the most impossible of spaces, to experience an adrenaline rush by risking personal safety. Pixadores climb tall buildings without safety equipment and write upside down, frequently hanging from dangerous positions to tag the highest part of buildings. Pixação is about being recognized for one’s daring deeds and the marks left all over the city. Violence, competition, aggressiveness and adrenaline are ingredients in the type of masculinity it articulates. Pixação accepts the illicit as something both inevitable and desirable, as the only location from where young men from the peripheries can speak. As the pixador Djan summarizes in the film Pixo, ‘Pixação is illegal and this is its essence. Pixação is pure anarchy, [it] is hatred.’

Pixação and graffiti are transgressions. More than improper appropriations of public or private space, they imprint on the city, especially on its wealthier part, the presence of those who were supposed to be invisible. In the same way as other forms of artistic interventions produced from the peripheries, they destabilize existing systems of representations, social relations, and rules for the use of public space dominated by the upper classes. Thus, all these practices dislocate the centre, affecting its character and reconfiguring the public of the whole city. These interventions can only be tense and frequently aggressive, as they challenge long-term and entrenched patterns of dominance and discrimination. However, this production of self-representation and its transgressive character are without doubt some of the most innovative by-products of Brazilian democratization.
Young women: reproducing and challenging gender hierarchies

The novelty represented by the new artistic-cultural production of the peripheries is unquestionable. But there is also no doubt that these are mostly male universes in which women have little space. As young men reinvent their subjectivities by taking the city and circulating around it, reflecting on death and violence, being aggressive, and putting their bodies at risk, they also re-create gender hierarchies. This issue is usually overlooked in analyses of these productions. However, I turn to it now to argue that gender inequality is in fact one of the main products of the new interventions and practices, structuring them as much as the affirmation of blackness and the positive view of the peripheries. The despising of women is the counterpart of the type of masculinity put forward by some of the new cultural languages, especially rap, marginal literature written by men, and pixação.

Women are a minority in all types of artistic interventions I discussed here. There are only a few graffiti artists, pixadoras, and practitioners of parkour. Although women have expanded their presence in hip hop since the mid-2000s, they are still a clear minority among rappers and DJs and none has the public recognition of the majority of the men. Women participate in *saraus* and publish their poetry and novels, but represent only 34 per cent of the authors published by the main *saraus*. Only a minority of the applicants to the VAI programme are women.

In spite of being less present among cultural producers, women are certainly important players in the public sphere in São Paulo. They work: their rate of participation in the labor force was 56.1 per cent in 2012. They study and are a bit more educated than men of their age. They are the head of households and increasingly raise kids on their own. They have been for a long time a common presence in the public spaces of the city: they are on the streets, on public transportation, at the wheels

Figure 35.1 São Paulo, 2010: Competing inscriptions on the walls produced mostly by young men frame the everyday spaces of the city

Photo: Teresa Caldeira
of private cars, in restaurants and bars, in demonstrations and spectacles, in sports’ teams, and in the
audiences of most types of cultural and sports events. They vote massively, as voting is mandatory in
Brazil for any person older than 18. They have been active participants and organizers of social
movements and staff countless NGOs. The Brazilian president is now a woman and there have been a
significant number of mayors, deputies, and councilwomen. But one does not need to scratch too much
beyond the surface to realize that gender inequalities are reproduced in each of the spheres in which
women participate. Salaries are lower than men’s, rates of unemployment higher.20 They have been the
majority of the participants and organizers of social movements, but just a tiny percentage of the
leaders. They are only a minority of elected officers. And so on.
Perhaps more importantly, women invariably report different types of discomfort in the use of
public space. This goes from direct harassment – as when they are touched and have men pressing their
bodies against theirs in public transportation and any kind of crowd – to less physical forms of
harassment, such as the desiring gazes put upon them and the constant catcalls. All the women I
interviewed over more than a decade commented on behaviours that make their use of public space
unpleasant. Most declared that they are afraid of using public transportation and walking on the streets
at night because of the fear of being sexually assaulted. A few had been raped, a crime whose report has
increased recently.21 This does not preclude them from moving around to go to and from work and
especially from coming home late at night from the schools they persistently attend, but it does make
these experiences of mobility in public unpleasant and sometimes intimidating. The same feelings
appear in spaces of cultural productions where women continue to be a minority.
In sum, while men imprint their marks on the city and use its public space for enjoyment and fun,
women quietly circulate in these spaces in which they feel uncomfortable and frequently harassed.
While men elaborate their masculinity without addressing it directly and by constructing an aggressive,
risky, daring subjectivity through their engagement with public space, women involved in the new
cultural production tend to problematize the meaning of their womanhood. This is a complex
undertaking, in which feminism is usually rejected, practices of discrimination are downplayed when
not literally denied, and the specificity of the feminine is many times elaborated in reference to
stereotypes about women’s nature.
Because women are very present in so many dimensions of public space, their absence in cultural
production is puzzling. I asked young women who did not participate why they did not engage with this
cultural production. The most common response was simply a lack of time, as they face what the Brazilian
feminists now call the triple journey: work, study and motherhood/domestic labour. To try to juggle all
these commitments in a city where distances are big and people usually spend hours commuting does not
leave much time for cultural activities. All young women I interviewed did domestic work, either because
they had children and a house of their own or because they had several responsibilities to assist their
mothers. They all spend many hours a week in this labour, while husbands and brothers in general were
not expected to do anything at home and could just spend all their free time outside of the home, often
in cultural production. The fact that they worked, frequently supported their families entirely or in part,
and persistently pursued their studies did not affect this division of labour at home. Because of that, for
several women being a single mother was a better option than living with a husband.
Some young women I interviewed were not involved in forms of cultural production because they
did not know about them or were not interested. But others did not participate because they found that
the environment was hostile and aggressive. This was made clear to me by one of the rare women who
has been a part of the hip hop movement in São Paulo since its inception. She was a leader of a posse in
the 1990s and an organizer of several important activities in the Southern Zone. She was also an M.C.
and a participant and articulator of one of the few collectives of women in hip hop. However, her life
was made very difficult by the male members of the hip hop scene and she never managed to record a
CD. This is how she described her experience:
Youth, cultural production, public space

I had to be a bit macho to get to the real hip hop space, I had to duke it out with the guys. I covered myself with an armour that did not exist inside of me, but I had to learn to punch them out, had to learn how to swear, had to get a club and jump on them, because in the beginnning I encountered a couple of terrible guys in the hip hop scene.... These guys are all bastards, experienced dudes; we were all young and naïve, the guys would come harassing, flirting, the other DJs as well. You had to get involved. It is not different today, and I have never accepted this, and because of this I was never able to record a CD. I had to incorporate a man inside of me to conquer space for me. I have always been very much a woman, thank God, but inside of hip hop I had to be a man. Until I reached a point that I collapsed, had enough.

(MC Carla, interview, 2002)

The experiences of MC Carla are very similar to those of other hip hop artists I have interviewed and of those represented in books such as *Perifeminas*: constantly being put aside and boycotted in shows, the inevitable catcalls and the persistent insinuation that if you do not accede to (sexual) ‘involvement’ you will not have access to the spaces that will allow you to present and develop your work. To succeed in this universe, even relatively, is to put up with harassment and have a complicated relationship with one’s own femininity. This goes from the denial of femininity – incorporating a man – to playing the stereotypes and entering the game of seduction and ‘involvement’.

What makes many women stay in this hostile environment is certainly the love of their art. But it is also and very importantly the support they find in hip hop to fight racism and to denounce the inequalities that affect them in the peripheries. The large majority of women in hip hop are black and hip hop is a space for the articulation and affirmation of blackness.

Hip hop has an address – the periphery; it has a color – black. I believe that as it was transformative for me, it can be for many women who live the movement, even if for this they have to take it by force!

(Flávia Quirino, in *Perifeminas* 2013: 22)

Guerreira! Warrior! This is how women in hip-hop address each other (in contrast to mano, brother, the term men use). They do fight back and in the last years have formed collectives to articulate their voices. In these endeavours, as in their artistic production and interviews, there is a strong praise for their resilience and strength, their ability to overcome the most incredible adversities. But there is also a good amount of ambivalence on how to articulate the need to behave like a man with the fact of being a woman. One of the ways in which their strength is understood is in relation to evocations of woman’s nature: her connection to earth and the production of food, to emotion, sensitivity, care-giving, motherhood and sisterhood.

We are women, we have a sensibility in full bloom. We know how to deal with everything where we are going and will go through. Above all, we are WARRIORS. … We are made of emotions, we cry for no reason, but when it is necessary, we find strength from somewhere no one could even imagine… To resist is forever. WOMEN OF STEEL, WITH ATTITUDE, WE ARE TRULY MULTIPLIERS!

(Sara, in *Perifeminas* 2013: 43)

Resilience and strength come, thus, from what traditional repertoires associate with womanhood. Hip hop networks and collectives organized by women in general characterize themselves as ‘feminine’. Feminism is a notion either directly rejected or used timidly. The same is true for the women graffiti
artists, *pixadoras* and *traceurs* that I interviewed. As they struggle to reinvent themselves, they always try to balance their ambitions and some of the constraints of being women. A significant proportion of young women involved in cultural production in the peripheries are mothers, usually single mothers at an early age. Simultaneously, they work and try to educate themselves. More than their male counterparts, they now pursue university degrees and choose careers in education and journalism, to which they try to connect their art and their womanhood. They have learned with hip hop and the *saraus* to believe in the transformative potential of information and the power of words and become ‘multipliers’. They teach, they educate, and they disseminate information. And they use fiction, poetry, theatre and dance as means to elaborate their femininity. They have also embraced the internet as a very effective mechanism to build networks, debate in forums, circulate their activities and productions, and protest against the discrimination they suffer.

But, sometimes they break down. Significantly, it is the tension between womanness and the need to be a man that is at the centre of the crisis. This was powerfully expressed by MC Carla, cited above. ‘Until I reached a point that I collapsed, had enough’. What made her collapse was pregnancy. The pregnant body could no longer fight like a man’s. MC Carla could not solve the ambiguity. She faced a deep life crisis, quit hip hop, and converted to Pentecostalism, a cause for which she now uses her fine organizing skills, making religion her new space of activism. A very similar story was revealed to me in an interview with a *pixadora*. The pregnant body does not climb buildings to tag. Even many men quit tagging when they become parents, as they feel responsible and think that they should no longer put their lives at risk on a daily basis. But for a woman it was simply obvious that there was an unsolvable conflict between pregnancy, motherhood and tagging. This *pixadora* quit, left São Paulo, and is raising her daughter in another state with the help of her mother and grandmother − three generations of single mothers.

But it is not always the case that to be an artist or cultural producer in the peripheries a woman has to be like a man. Some spaces are less male-centred: theatre, literature, and *saraus*, for instance. Young women draw on these practices to elaborate their identities. And some get to feminism in this way, something that is growing in São Paulo recently among young women. As one of them said to me:

> I had a certain distance from feminism, never understood it very well. It is just that two very serious incidents happened in my life: I had an abortion and I was raped, right next to my house, there in the Southern Zone… Since then, I guess it had more to do with the abortion, I had to suffer that one, I was 20 and now I am 24, since then I started to realize things. As a friend of mine says, *I came out of the closet and realized that I am a woman*…

> Then you start to see many things happening in the cultural movement, even with your boyfriend [like when he says]: ‘don’t go to this meeting, no, it’s too dangerous’, like competing with you, to prevent you from going to the struggle. … Then an incident happened at a *sarau*, a guy really big in hip hop and the movement, really well-known, this guy started to hit on a friend of ours, there was a big fight. After that, the women from the Southern Zone started to get organized in the *sarau* against this type of thing, and we started moving, trying to get organized: let’s do something!

(Roberta, a photographer and organizer of film screenings in the peripheries, interview, 2013)

A pregnant body, a body that has an abortion, a raped body, an abused body are all bodies that make evident the limits of pretending that one can pass as a man or be assimilated unproblematically into the male-dominant universe of hip hop and its twin forms of cultural production such as *pixação*, and marginal literature. The contrast between the quotes from MC Carla and Roberta is revealing in many ways. They not only show opposite choices − pretending to be a man; acting as a (feminist) woman −
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but also probably express two different moments. Eleven years separate these two interviews. What they describe is the same problem: men dominating the scenes of cultural production, putting women aside, and sometimes feeling free to literally abuse them. However, in the meantime, the presence of women in cultural production in São Paulo expanded and they got organized, formed collectives, moved around, entered universities, appropriated the internet, and came out of the closet. And now many of them use both their time at the university and their artistic creations to investigate their condition, to reflect on their femininity, and to fight back in other terms. They do not engage the city as much as their male counterparts, but they do circulate more than other women who are not involved with artistic production and use their engagements to reflect on their condition. As they do this, they usually evoke traditional stereotypes associated with women and their nature, but also contest them.

In sum, the new artistic production coming from the peripheries of São Paulo powerfully represents their young residents, articulating their denunciations of inequalities and injustices, and affecting the character of public space. However, they tend to recreate both gender hierarchies and gender stereotypes, even when they seem to contest them. The new genres of cultural production are mostly male universes in which young men from the peripheries facing new socio-economic conditions in the city and entrenched forms of discrimination and inequality reinvent their masculinity as aggressive and risk taking. Women do participate in some of these universes in growing numbers, especially in the *saraus*. However, their presence is always a challenge both to the male-dominated environments they enter and certainly to themselves. In fact, their participation is usually quite ambiguous, as it may be conceived under the constraints of denying that gender inequalities are an issue, behaving like a man, or searching for a mythical woman’s nature as sources of strength and ways to forge femininity. Only sometimes – mostly in literature and also in theatre – women find space to articulate their femininity in new terms. When they do this, they finally come out of the closet and establish new parameters for their lives and for their art.

References

T.P.R. Caldeira


Notes

1 I would like to thank the John Simon Guggenheim Memorial Foundation and the UC President’s Society of Fellows in the Humanities for fellowships that allowed me time off to work on the research on which this chapter is based. Thanks also to Thiago Thadeu Rocha, Ilana Nevins, and Marcelo Nery. This chapter is part of a long-term research project on youth, gender, and public space that I have been developing in São Paulo since 2001. Fieldwork among residents of the peripheries and cultural producers was done from July 2001 to December 2002, in all summers from 2003 to 2012 and between November 2012 and March 2013. During these periods, I engaged with the artists, interviewed them, attended public events they organized in several parts of the peripheries as well as in the centre, and assembled an archive of their production in several media.

2 It would be impossible to address all forms of artistic and cultural interventions that proliferate in São Paulo today. I address here those with a strong engagement with the city and its patterns of social and spatial inequality.

3 On the history of autoconstruction and peripheral formation in São Paulo, see Caldeira 2000 and Holston 2008.

4 It is impossible to do justice here to the complexity of the repertoire articulated by rappers, something I do in Caldeira 2006. Here, I focus only on the aspects relevant to my arguments on gender and cultural production.

5 ‘Da Ponte pra cá’ 2002. The bridge they refer to crosses the Pinheiros river that separates São Paulo’s expanded centre from the southwest peripheries.


7 In Jardim Ângela, the neighbourhood that both the Racionais and Ferréz are from, only 39% of the mothers are married. In central neighbourhoods, the percentage is around 70% and only around 17% of the mothers are single mothers, http://www.estadao.com.br/noticias/impresso,chance-de-ser-mae-solteira-na-periferia-e-ate-35-vezes-maior-,1030951,0.htm.

8 See Vaz 2008 for a history of the sanaus. Other well-known sanaus include: Ademar, Binho, Brasa, Burro, Elo da Corrente, Guilhermina, Mesquiteiros, Paraisópolis, Perifatividade, and Suburbano.

9 Quilombo is a community of runaway slaves and a centre of resistance to slavery.

10 Céu in Portuguese means heaven.

11 The same type of investment in cultural centres in the peripheries exists in other cities in Latin America, most famously in Medellín, Colombia, where they are also associated with a reversal in patterns of widespread violence and death.

12 Program for the Valorization of Cultural Initiatives. Vai in Portuguese means go.

13 This programme belongs to a new type of public policy that both expands the social capacity of the state and trusts the autonomy of the poor to use these funds as they feel is appropriate. Cash transfer programmes such as the well-known Bolsa Família belong to this type.

14 I have addressed their characteristics in a previous article, Caldeira 2012.

15 As an indication of the presence of women, one can take the Google gallery of São Paulo graffiti. From a total of 36 artists represented, there are six women (16.6 per cent). The proportion of pixadoras is even smaller. Any visit to the point where pixadoras congregate in downtown São Paulo makes the gender imbalance abundantly evident. The same pattern is evident for practitioners of parkour.

16 An analysis of the anthologies published by five of the most important sanaus shows that from a total of 281 authors only 97 are women (Ação Educativa 2013).
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17 VAI recognizes in its reports that women are a minority among the applicants, but does not give precise numbers (São Paulo: Secretaria Municipal de Cultura 2008: 53).
18 The rate for men was 71.5 per cent. (Fundação Seade 2013: 2).
19 The proportion of women with a complete university degree in 2009 in São Paulo was 10.9 per cent versus 9.7 per cent for men (Fundação Seade-Dieese 2009: Table 1).
20 The average salary for women in São Paulo in 2009 was R$1,030 and for men, R$1,489 (Fundação Seade-Dieese 2009: Tables 39, 42). Unemployment rate for women in 2012 was 12.5 compared to 9.4 for men (Fundação Seade 2013: 3).
21 Statistics of rape are notoriously unreliable. In São Paulo, rates of rape have remained relatively stable around 11 per 100,000 population during the 1990s and 2000s. However, they have doubled to 22 per 100,000 in 2010 after a new law from 2009 broadened the definition of rape. The previous legislation defined rape as forced vaginal penetration only and excluded both anal sex and oral sex, now included in the new legislation, that also acknowledges that men can be victims of rape.
22 I have changed the names of the interviewees to protect their privacy.
23 In this book, 63 women retell their history of involvement with hip hop, revealing recurrent cases of discrimination. The project and the book were funded by a VAI grant.
24 Pardue (2008) is one of the very few authors who addresses the gender imbalance inside of hip hop. He argues that femininity in hip hop is a ‘remainder’ of masculinity, ‘usually a subaltern voice, a position of reaction, if active at all’ (2008: 129). Two books by authors from the peripheries address the presence of women in the new cultural production: Buzo (2010) on hip hop and Vaz (2008) on Cooperifa. Although they try to emphasize the role of women in these movements, their narratives reveal their secondary and (in the case of Buzo) highly ambiguous presence.
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PART VI

Conceptualizing the built environment: accounting for southern urban complexities
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CONCEPTUALIZING THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT

Accounting for southern urban complexities

Susan Parnell

Given projected rates of demographic and economic growth in the urban global south, the everyday needs of people for housing, sewerage, waste or transport are likely to dominate city agendas for decades to come. But while expanding infrastructure generates production, consumption and distribution issues, infrastructure is also about everyday politics and large-scale political contestation. Major decisions about global finance, resource use and political organization are implicated in the steady expansion of dams, power stations, pipes, landfill sites and cables on which cities depend. The changing class profile of cities, moreover, establishes uneven demand for the physical reworking of the urban form. Understanding the locus of power, where the important decisions about urban infrastructure are taken, is always tricky. Characterized by informality, contested governance and huge inequality, the imperatives driving physical transformation in cities of the global south are even more difficult to understand and manage. In this context, it is critical to come to terms with the challenges and opportunities presented by urban infrastructure in underserviced and yet-to-be-built cities of the south.

Prompted by anxiety about ecological integrity and resource depletion, new ideas about urban infrastructure — including the need to rebuild and retrofit — to ensure sustainability have gained ground across Europe, Australasia and North America. In the wake of Graham and Marvin’s (2001) influential book *Splintering Urbanism*, the interface between material, technological and organizational structuring of the city came under the spotlight, revising assumptions about appropriate city infrastructure design and organization. Dissatisfaction with the constraints of the current infrastructure regime of cities, but also a utopian desire to grasp opportunities to do urban infrastructure differently, drove revisionist approaches to the governance of services that are physically embedded in the infrastructure of cities (like energy, water, or waste) as well as the more visible top structures of houses, offices and factories. This may not be enough, however: the arguments made in this section suggest that even these radical notions need further adjustment to adequately address southern realities. With an overt focus on the global south, the chapters in this section build on, but crucially also extend and challenge, northern generated rethinking on urban infrastructure.

Understanding how the revisionist argument about urban sustainability and resilience can be further advanced by a more southern focus, such as that presented here, is best explained by rehearsing the somewhat divided contributions of traditional scholarship on urban infrastructure in the south and north. As one would expect, given the huge human and financial effort put into constructing and maintaining cities, there is a long tradition of technical research on making the built environment...
efficient, affordable, aesthetic (at times) and structurally sound. The major professional disciplines of engineering, architecture and planning have, self evidently, an enduring presence in this field, but public administration, law and finance also support specialist research on the built environment and its governance. Geographers, with interest in space and spatiality and urban historians are lesser academic players in the field.

Until recently, much of the professional work by built environment researchers explored cities in the north, although there has always been a parallel stream of enquiry focused on the infrastructure of southern cities, with a greater emphasis on low cost, low tech and affordable construction. What may be less well known is that the study of the built environment has, since the 1970s, also been one of the mainstays of academic and policy investigation in development studies (although ironically few universities in the global south embrace the ‘discipline’ or frame questions on the built environment in this way – see Davila, Chapter 40). Within the corpus of work on providing and improving infrastructure as a means to ensure urban development and reduce poverty, there has also long been a voluminous body of work on infrastructure and its associated urban services, much of it found in the grey material of development banks, consultants, donors and large NGOs.

A distinctive feature of the chapters in this section is that several authors speak not only to the conventional fragmented urbanism or urban political ecology literatures, but also to the more southern-oriented policy and profession-based constituency that are interested in the developmental role of urban infrastructure. Unifying this hitherto dual audience around a revisionist agenda on urban infrastructure development is foundational both to the global development project that embraces universal urban citizenship, and to the academic imperative of rethinking the ecological integrity of the city. This shift hinges on the termination or resolution of every form of infrastructural fragmentation – technical, political or institutional. Allen, for instance, confronts barriers to finding this nexus when she sets out the very opaque relationship between the governance of the post-colonial city, its hinterland and its resource base. Her use of the term ‘governance’ connotes not only the multi-party stakeholders that influence regimes of power, but also the full range of actors associated with resource extraction to produce, distribute and reproduce urban infrastructure. Jaglin’s systematic interrogation of urban service provision seeks more robust pathways to foster sustainable services in southern cities by making legible the competing, overlapping and complex power relations and infrastructure networks that developers must engage at every step of service provision. Pieterse and Hyman point to the imperative of understanding affordability and infrastructure finance necessary to re-master networked infrastructure, something that cannot be assumed in many southern cities. Using waste as a lens to explore ‘informality’, Myer’s discussion lays bare the undocumented networks that bind formal and informal waste, and exposes the myth of a discrete experience of informalism by presenting the complex and interconnected relationships that shape the overall story of urban service provision.

If there is an issue that defines the innovative intersections between global urban studies and the fresh work emerging on cities and towns in the global south, it is the built environment. But some caution is necessary. Networked infrastructure and a more nuanced understanding of complex urban service governance are only some of the windows into a more productive understanding of the shifting urban form. The chapter by Lees, that draws from the well-established theoretical debate on gentrification and economic restructuring, opens fresh insights into the rebuilding of southern cities by tracking the contradictory pressures on urban transformation provoked by the luxury housing demands of the new middle classes of the south. Like Lees, Avni and Yiftachel suggest that the physical and social re-figuring of city space, in both the north and the south, is the outcome of citizen action. In their chapter they track marginalization, not renewal, in highlighting the pressures for the formalization of ‘gray’ spaces. Similarly, Behrens rehearses the apparently well-worn, though enduringly important, themes of density, design, efficiency and accessibility of the urban form. Using established
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...methods and unconventional reference points, he invigorates evidence from southern cities to remind us again of the centrality of transport dynamics in shaping cities everywhere.

Together, the seven chapters of this section exemplify how new technologies, deepening urban poverty, expanding wealth and raised awareness of the ecological impacts of urban consumption are shifting the way we think about urban infrastructure in every city, drawing critical attention to how the built form intersects with the diverse citizenry that occupies the city now, and will do so in future.

References

REGULATING SERVICE DELIVERY IN SOUTHERN CITIES

Rethinking urban heterogeneity

Sylvy Jaglin

In cities everywhere, the concentration of people and activities is accompanied by the organization of essential services (water supply, sewage management, energy supply and waste collection, for instance). However, the ways in which these services are produced and regulated differ, as does the role of networked infrastructures and the public utilities that operate them. For historical reasons, the network, a set of interconnected structures, centrally planned and managed by a single monopoly-based public utility offering a uniform service in a given area according to an egalitarian access standard, has been perceived as the most efficient way to provide urban services to concentrations of population and activities in northern cities (Coutard 2010). Most of the solutions proposed for the provision of essential services in southern cities have therefore been formulated with a view to reproducing this conventional model (Maria 2006). Accordingly, critical assessments of these services have emphasized their deficiencies in terms of rationed supply, unreliable provision, unequal access, difficulties in delivering a universal service and sustaining viable operators, despite successive reforms (such as nationalization, decentralization and privatization). More generally, they insist on the distortions and failures of the conventional model when implemented in southern cities.

In order to go beyond this observation, I propose a radical change in perspective, taking as a starting point not the failure of urban services and the institutions responsible for their delivery, but the vitality and multiplicity of actual delivery systems which, despite policy announcements and reforms, and notwithstanding imported models, survive and contribute to the functioning of cities. The fact is that in southern cities, services are not delivered within the framework of a uniform and integrated system, but in different ways and through a range of provisions. Alongside the conventional utilities, many alternative suppliers are small-scale operators, involving local ‘private’ actors (small firms, NGOs and CBOs and individuals), relying on makeshift low-cost technologies and informal local institutions; others espouse more ‘modern’ technical and commercial forms, depending on their target clientele. More than the overlap between legality and illegality, it is their socio-technical diversity that is an essential feature of these urban delivery channels.

In describing the set of arrangements which contributes to the provision of an essential service (drinking water, energy…) within a city, I follow Olivier de Sardan by using the notion of delivery configuration:

the delivery configuration of a good is the totality of actors and institutions, and of equipment and resources, which contribute to the delivery of its various components, under some form
Service delivery and urban heterogeneity

or other of co-production: collaboration (direct or indirect, episodic or permanent), substitution, competition, complementarity, etc.

( Olivier de Sardan 2010: 5-6)

This notion reflects the real forms of governance of essential services in southern cities, which arise from numerous collective initiatives, involving a diversity of actors (or institutions), and operating to particular standards and under specific arrangements. It also stresses how the ‘dynamic of de-statization with respect to this delivery’ (Olivier de Sardan 2009: 3), by shifting the boundaries between public and private, legal and illegal, commercial and non-commercial, is transforming the functions of production and regulation in technical urban services. Whether analysed as a form of ‘indirect private government’ (Mbembe 1999) or as an avatar for a ‘dumping’ process (Hibou 1999), the different ways in which government allocates or abandons a certain number of service tasks to private agents (international or local firms, NGOs, user groups, individual contractors) result in multiple delivery configurations that make governance and regulation of services more complex.

New ideas in recent work on networked services in southern cities follow the prolific wave of research on the application of neoliberal policies (1980-1990) and the subsequent critique of those policies (2000). In the last 30 years, much of this research has focused on analysing the institutional deficiencies of conventional services, attributing their failures to underinvestment and poor public management. The policies implemented in response since the 1980s have emphasized the need for institutional reform and pro-poor governance. Inspired by a neoliberal perspective that assumes the superiority of private sector models of organization and management, they have been backed by an international ‘consensus’ embodied in the notion of public-private partnerships. The inconsistent outcomes of these reforms in the developing world have been interpreted as problems of governance and regulation (Estache and Fay 2009; Gassner et al. 2009; Gómez-Ibáñez 2008; Kessides 2004).

In these approaches, the conventional network and the historical trends towards network-based universal urban services do not come into question. The lack of infrastructure or access is perceived as a developmental delay which time will remedy, whereas alternative services are temporary solutions, destined to disappear. Economic theory has stressed the essential role of network effects and economies of scale in the expansion phase of infrastructure systems and the impact of resistance effects in the network’s subsequent, slower growth phase (Dupuy 2011). Historical approaches emphasize the driving role of public action in overcoming this local resistance (Scherrer 2006; Coutard and Pfieger 2002). These are the perspectives from which the dominant literature has analysed public policies on urban networks in the south. Nonetheless, there has been other research that explores the question of the transferability and reform of the conventional network model (Darbon 2008) or underlines the potential for innovation in ‘scientific, technical and practical resistance to the conventional system, which is expressed through alternative sociotechnical approaches’ (Maria 2006: 251).

The continuous reproduction of delivery configurations points to relativizing the role of the network and reconceptualizing the relationship between urban heterogeneity and socio-technical diversity, which can no longer be treated simply as a characteristic associated with poverty and confined to poor areas, but is an integral part of the material fabric of southern cities. Here, I follow Roy’s aspiration to ‘understand the inevitable heterogeneity of southern urbanism, that which cannot be contained within the familiar metonymic categories of megacity or slum’ (Roy 2011: 231) by arguing that this socio-technical diversity is organically linked with the heterogeneity of southern urban societies, that is both the intrinsic diversity of urban socio-spaces under today’s conditions of economic globalization, and the qualitative variations in the processes of urbanization resulting from local agency and contingency. This approach presents two main challenges. The first is theoretical: how to analyse the processes whereby these systems take root and change over the long time span of cities? The second is practical: how to regulate this diversity in a way that is both effective for urban performance and
equitable for the majority of city dwellers? This chapter thus aims to articulate policy-relevant theoretical propositions by working on the actual diversity of the delivery configurations. The first section analyses their patterns and outcome, while the following section lays out an explanatory framework about how this plurality of services is related to the main characteristics of urbanization in the south. The third section focuses on the challenges raised by the necessary regulation of these delivery configurations.

Plurality of services and heterogeneous urban environments as mutually constitutive

**Service provision: a socio-technical dispositif**

Drinking water can be supplied via a network with private taps or standpipes, by pumps or by water carriers; energy can be accessed through connection to an electricity grid, by rechargeable batteries through a subscription service, by generator or by gas bottle; wastewater can be treated via a sewer network, a septic tank, or a cesspool... Each method of delivering an essential service is considered here as a socio-technical dispositif involving actors, tools, knowledge and values; in other words a combination of heterogeneous factors required for the production of collective goods.

With its starting point in Foucault’s definition, this approach to the dispositif is inspired by the work of the founders of actor-network theory (Akrich et al. 2006), which seeks to identify the role of material and technical factors in the organization of human activities and the role of social factors in the production of technical artifacts (Akrich 1987). It also enhances the analysis of interactions between humans and non-humans within hybrid associations (Callon and Law 1997). In this approach, delivery configurations are understood as complementary dispositifs of co-evolution/co-construction of techniques and societies. However, by contrast with a ‘radical’ actor-network theory approach, I consider dispositifs as resources for action, and my purpose is to study under what conditions and with what success the temporary stabilization between a dispositif, an actor (or an organization) and a particular objective, occurs.

Because of this priority, it must be stressed that socio-technical combinations under scrutiny are situated. First, they are situated in space: water distributed to homes via a networked public infrastructure in a dense urban area does not employ the same socio-technical dispositif as water sold by competing private water carriers in a peri-urban context; energy purchased from a secure electricity grid via a prepaid meter in a poor neighbourhood does not entail the same sociotechnical dispositif as a subscription to a high-tech battery rental/recharge service in a small town. Moreover, they are situated in institutional and organizational environments that have a certain inertia, either because of resistance to change or resilience, which constrains what is possible. These situated socio-technical dispositifs are therefore neither pure material extensions of a stable state of social relations, nor pure social constructions, and they incorporate dimensions other than their specific operating components. Nor are they constantly emergent and undetermined assemblages, as they tend to be perceived in certain recent currents of urban thought (McFarlane 2011; McGuirk 2012). Rather, they should be considered as symbiotic with the heterogeneous and rapidly changing urban environments (Simone 2010) of southern cities and as open processes of service production, embedded in their urban context, moulded on the one hand by competing forces, and on the other hand by inertia effects and path dependency. These diverse dispositifs are not therefore predetermined and static assemblages; the conditions of their emergence, their coexistence and their relative stability or instability within delivery configurations express the dynamic and contingent capacity of each society to address its fundamental needs such as the provision of water and energy.

This approach to delivery configurations shifts the emphasis to the political nature of their regulation and the conflictual dimension of any public control that might seek to manage the forms of domination/
exploitation which, in each configuration, are the source of the inequalities (in access and consumption) observed, but also of the very unequal sharing of the efforts and externalities (positive and negative) associated with the operation and expansion of services. An approach based on socio-technical dispositifs thus in no way precludes critical thinking on how socio-technical dispositifs deployed in cities create and reproduce inequalities as well as on the regularities of these mechanisms across time and places (Brenner et al. 2011). Indeed, in many delivery configurations, alternative services are prevented from developing fully by official regulations and the exclusive rights of conventional operators. Although in ‘crisis’ for several decades in many southern cities, conventional services continue to dominate local representations of what should be a ‘modern’ service, to orientate technical know-how and culture, and to monopolize public resources. This is because delivery configurations are anchored in urban contexts and shaped by local power struggles as well as a specific combination of resources and knowledge. Understanding how services are delivered in southern cities thus requires capturing the plurality of socio-technical dispositifs available locally and the way they are mobilized by the different actors with some sort of influence in framing the supply of services.

**Sociotechnical dispositifs that reflect urban diversity**

In responding to the heterogeneity of the demand for services, the plurality of available options emphasizes the irreducible distinctiveness of southern urbanization. The process of ‘planetary urbanization’ cited in certain works (Brenner et al. 2011) seems wrongly to suggest, as in the urban convergence hypothesis (Cohen 1996), that statistically measured human concentration follows a single pattern. Instead, this global phenomenon encompasses extremely different forms, experiences and practices, which are ill adapted to a one-size-fits-all conception of the ‘contemporary global urban condition’ (Brenner et al. 226), a pure abstraction given the diversity of the processes and outcomes of urbanization. Rather, this diversity requires thinking about urban conditions in the plural, by detailing their socio-material, historical and geographical depth, and identifying what, analytically, unites and divides this broad ensemble in order to draw concrete conclusions regarding the implications of this diversity of conditions for the co-evolution of technology and social practice when looking at delivery configurations.

As Cheneau-Loquay writes of information and communication technologies, ‘there is no universal way to modernize, to adopt and to adapt new technologies’ (Cheneau-Loquay 2012: 85). All the socio-technical dispositifs – conventional and nonconventional – involved in delivery configurations, are embedded in the particular socio-eco-cultural environments of their use. This means that between the situation of the older industrialized cities, for which conventional network services were designed, and those of southern cities, ‘there is a difference in nature in the forms of modernization, which arises from the processes of “territorial fabric”’ (Cheneau-Loquay 2012: 85), that is from the creative ways in which people actually succeed, under specific and localized conditions, in devising technical and institutional solutions.

That urban modernity is multiple and incorporates different standards and modes of problem solving derived from the various local cultural and technical traditions is also a point made by Harrison in his thinking about planning theory in a ‘non-Occidental’ world (Harrison 2006). If this approach seeks to recover ‘subalternised knowledge’ and practices (ibid.: 324), it should not entail a perspective of subaltern urbanism, whereby the multiple forms of alternative services are interpreted as manifestations of an inventive economy self-organized by and for the poor, in the interstices of the developed city. Such an analysis is both limited and mistaken. Limited, because it romanticizes the informal service economy and a certain vision of collective action by the have–nots, whether conceptualized in the form of ‘subversive politics of the poor’ (Benjamin 2008) or in terms of Chatterjee’s ‘political society’ (2004). Alternative delivery dispositifs are not a distinctive form of political agency of the poor; their informality
is neither a property of poverty nor exclusive to the spaces of poverty: ‘community’ services are no less commercial than conventional services and often much more speculative (Jaglin and Bousquet 2012); the compensatory solutions employed by the rich (pumping and storage of water, generators and solar panels, etc.) are often no less informal and illegal than the practices of the poor (Maria 2006). Mistaken, because it underestimates the multiplicity of connections with the legal/capitalist world through which alternative services operate. These connections are first technical: water-carriers buy their water from standpipes; battery chargers are connected to the power grid; waste recyclers supply international recycling networks… They are also economic: alternative service operators are often contractors or civil servants who have accumulated capital elsewhere; alternative dispositifs depend on the technologies available on local markets. Last but not least, they are politico-legal: what is considered alternative and informal is decided by the state, based on laws or contracts that exclude certain forms of supply and authorize others. The informal telecoms economy (the market for second-hand handsets, prepaid phone cards, small-scale repairs, etc.) is a convincing example of these connections as it prospers on the margins of the large corporate market (Orange in West Africa, Safaricom in East Africa, or MTN in Southern Africa) and by means of its own specific technical and commercial innovations (Cheneau-Loquay 2012).

Conventional and alternative services are not separate worlds: they belong to a socio-technical continuum that reflects the heterogeneity of southern cities. This echoes broader analyses of developing economies (Lautier 2004) and urban informality: ‘[a]s a concept, urban informality therefore cannot be understood in ontological or topological terms. Instead, it is a heuristic device that uncovers the ever-shifting urban relationship between the legal and illegal, legitimate and illegitimate, authorized and unauthorized’ (Roy 2011: 233).

A de facto adaptation: delivery configurations

Service provision in southern cities is a combination made up of a networked infrastructure, deficient in varying degrees and offering a rationed service, and of private sector commercial initiatives, whether individual or collective, formal or informal, which are usually illegal in respect of the exclusive contracts of operators officially responsible for the service. These services fill the gaps in the conventional service and, depending on the type of urban area, target either the well-off clientele or poor clientele excluded from the main networks because of lack of resources, geographical remoteness or illegal status. These delivery configurations have one thing in common: the conventional network does not always reach the end user. It requires socio-technical interventions, in the form of appropriate extensions to the network or an off-network dispositif to expand certain functions of the service. There have been numerous analyses and precise descriptions covering the water and waste management sectors. For energy, the delivery configuration, as shown in Figure 37.1, may be a combination of a network with individual connections and meters, takeoff points downstream from the meters (an informal system for semi-wholesale subscribers), takeoff points on the grid (electricity poaching), off-grid systems (mini-networks fed by solar panels or wind farms; individual solar thermal and photovoltaic installations) and functions accessible to off-grid households: battery rental services, phone charging points, communal TV centres… In the telecoms sector, African cities have entered the ‘age of access’ thanks to the vitality of an informal telecommunication economy: they have found in the ‘pooling of communication tools (tele-centers, cybercafés and phone points) an appropriate response to the need for cheap communication for most of the population’ (Cheneau-Loquay 2012).

The number and variety of dispositifs are not infinite; not all exist everywhere and with the same intensity, but in all cities a combination of several of these dispositifs contributes to the provision of services, depending on the condition and performance of the network, the nature of the urbanization process, the spending power of households and the dynamism and inventive capacity of the dominant
operator. Embedded in specific configurations, under certain conditions these socio-technical mediations allow services to extend beyond the club of subscribers to the conventional network. This section has gathered observations about delivery configuration patterns and outcomes which suggest that, in heterogeneous cities, the diversity of service needs has been a vector for innovation. How this relates to characteristics of southern urbanization and to what extent it questions the universality of the conventional model based on networked infrastructure is studied in the following section.

A framework for interpreting the diversity of urban services in the south

Southern cities manifest, to variable degrees, distinctive delivery configurations in which the conventional network historically and enduringly coexists with alternative services (Jaglin 2010; 2012). Are these delivery configurations suited to southern cities? More generally, when can socio-technical dispositifs be considered ‘adapted’? Is it when they ‘emerged in urban societies, were created and developed in harmony with their stakeholders, in the culture and history which they sprang from?’ (Bolay and Kern 2011: 39). This is obviously difficult to answer, but it should be noted that the debate has gradually moved away from the notion of ‘appropriate technology’, popularized in the 1970s by Schumacher (1973), towards that of ‘diversified technological approach’, emphasizing the principle that technologies should be embedded and differentiated to match territories and their idiosyncrasies and the people using and affected by them (Bolay and Kern 2011). Building an explanatory framework about delivery configurations, the plurality of their socio-technical dispositifs, and southern urbanization thus needs to take account of these changes in approaches to socio-technical diversity.

The conventional network: A contingent solution?

As a means for the industrial organization of urban services, networks exist in many cities but they do not constitute a universal method of providing services to all. In fact, the extent of their contribution
to the total range of services is a powerful criterion in differentiating between cities, as illustrated in Figure 37.2, which shows that the network model is characterized by numerous exceptions in the contemporary urban world, especially in southern countries. In this broad outline, four configurations or states of the model can be identified: consolidated, degraded, incomplete and inappropriate.

Given the diversity of urban worlds, there is no reason why the network should be the appropriate socio-technical dispositif for all places and all times: it becoming hegemonic and universal is not what is suggested by the analysis of real delivery configurations in southern cities, where it remains but only one sociotechnical dispositif.

To understand the mismatch between the conventional network and numerous urban configurations, I propose a framework for the interpretation of the relations between economics, urbanization and networks, inspired by the work of the French regulation school (Aglietta 1997; Boyer and Saillard 1995) and by Lorrain’s work on European urban capitals (Lorrain 2002). From the former, I draw the idea that networked services have been one of the compromises at the heart of Fordist methods of regulation and one of the means of pursuing economic and social progress in Fordist societies. From the latter, I adopt the perspective that the methods of managing services reflect the different models of urban capitalism that were developed in mid-nineteenth-century Europe ‘to tackle the challenge of industrialization’ (ibid.: 203) and then, on the basis of the original choices and a few bifurcations, followed ‘authentic “dependency paths”’ (ibid.: 234). Lorrain’s argument emphasizes two interesting elements here: first, that the performance in the provision of urban services is associated with institutions which were created to solve specific problems in specific contexts; and second, that many of the arrangements inherited from the past, which drew on local or national cultural components, shape action or limit the available range of strategies long after they were first devised.

The historical conditions in which networked urban services emerged and developed in industrial cities, particularly in Europe, produced models that I propose to call Fordist, which share three

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**Figure 37.2** Different outcomes in the urban service network model  
*Source: Jaglin, after Scherrer 2006*
characteristics. First, a service production system designed to meet growing industrial and domestic demand by means of individual services provided through a centralized network infrastructure. Second, an institutional and technical framework – the monopoly network – which, through standardization and interconnection, generates economies of scale that permit the widespread provision of universal services. And finally, a ‘virtuous circle’ of network development in an environment where productivity gains and rising incomes foster ‘convergence’ in living standards and mass consumption of standardized goods, but also one in which collective belief in the capacity of the new technologies to promote social change is favourable to the universal development of networks in space (Scherrer 2006).

Different variants of these models have been transplanted to the south. But in urban conditions where the compromises do not relate only to Fordist methods of regulation, and where salaried employment sometimes plays a marginal role and the urban challenges are partly unrelated to the challenges of industrialization, they have failed to develop a universal service. It should be added that certain factors that previously provided impetus for public action have ceased to be effective. Cholera, for example, which was a powerful driving force for the introduction of public sewerage systems in nineteenth-century European cities (de Swaan 1995), occurs regularly and is even endemic in numerous southern cities, but has lost its power to mobilize, since the middle classes can protect themselves individually and collectively without sharing the burden of building infrastructures in poor neighbourhoods (Chaplin 2011). Moreover, service improvements are often driven by the market and by the capacity of well-off city dwellers to implement individual solutions (private boreholes and water tanks, photovoltaic and thermal solar power, septic tanks, private waste collection), more than by their capacity to encourage municipal authorities to pool the costs and externalities of services (Maria 2006). So the urban realities of the south are not greatly conducive to universal network solutions.

Because of their close symbiosis, networks and exogenous factors need to be analysed in parallel with their context, in particular the territorial system that they serve (Offner 1993). The need for this is also demonstrated by increasing opposition to conventional services in northern cities, as a result of changes to the Fordist urban model and of societal trends such as increasing poverty, the secession of the rich (gated communities, premium networks), the emergence of decentralized production techniques, pressures on natural resources and the increasing costs of mobilizing these raw resources in northern contexts (Coutard 2010).

**Alternative services consistent with southern urban dynamics**

The emergence of alternative services – whether individual or collective – in southern cities, follows a twofold path: first, adaptation of the networked infrastructure and its management to make the service more affordable; then, creation of functions that allow some of the benefits of the network to be extended beyond the limited scope of the infrastructure. Each of these components depends on a specific set of resources and a specific method of governance, and is associated with a territorial configuration; neither has the capacity to satisfy total urban demand and to extend to all urbanized areas. Whereas conventional services reflect a supply-side calculation based on standardized norms and principles, alternative services answer to commercial imperatives of adaptation to demand, based on finely segmented customer groupings. Some of the demand comes from well-off customer groups, whether domestic or professional, which are dissatisfied with the mediocre quality of public service and have access, usually through local markets, to technical solutions that can ensure reliable provision at an acceptable cost. The other demand comes from urban populations comprising both very poor urban groups and households with access to ‘low-level prosperity’, often illegally housed.

In certain cases, the alternative services for poor client groups are the result of highly controlled, network-based innovations: electrification of the slums in Casablanca (Zaki 2010), scale of services in
Cape Town (Jaglin 2008), participatory community projects in Buenos Aires (Botton 2007). These experiments adapt conventional solutions for customers of modest means and irregular incomes by lowering the standards and costs of connecting to the network and by applying innovative sales technologies (community bulk metering, prepaid meters, etc.). The vast majority of cases, however, are individual or collective urban initiatives. Financially autonomous, they receive no subsidies and have features typical of the informal economy: unlisted, untaxed, asset light, legally vulnerable (Lautier 2004). Flexible and responsive, they adapt to urban growth, to poverty, to changes in land use and to the geographical mobility of small businesses more easily than large networks. Being asset light, they can easily ‘relocate’. Although the barriers to entry, both financial and non-financial, are far from negligible (e.g. when the activity is controlled by cartels), they do not prevent new services from developing when paying demand exists. Low and flexible wage levels, the strength of personal and social bonds in working relations, also explain the capacity of informal services to survive fluctuations in urban markets and the high vulnerability of households with irregular and uncertain incomes. These services are governed by a combination of commercial and community arrangements particularly suited to the methods of exchange prevalent in poor areas of southern cities. In other words, informality and illegality do not preclude forms of social integration through the generation of a standard of access compatible with the absence of networks.

These alternative dispositifs also match the characteristics of urbanization: fast demographic growth accompanied by ‘floating’ populations; non-existent or ineffective spatial planning and competing land ownership regimes, producing an urban fabric composed of large areas with no formal administration; uneven institutional capacities and conflictual methods of governance in highly heterogeneous societies. In the urban societies of sub-Saharan Africa, for instance, they typically arise from difficult compromises with the weight of colonial heritages and from institutional and cognitive transfer processes typical of ‘projected societies’, in which the formal state-sponsored normative system is widely supported by the projection of imported models from the western world and very little is enshrined in local social practices and processes (Darbon 2008). Ultimately, ‘the increasing volatility of urban life, both productive and deleterious, itself generates wide-ranging political, social and cultural impacts which are difficult to predict and assess’ (Simone 2010: 2).

Urban heterogeneity also moulds the demand for services: as elites enthusiastically embrace a cosmopolitan consumerism, poor urban folk live in makeshift dwellings, with few means of political expression. All this means that the private services developed in response to the unmet demand of well-off city dwellers form part of the total supply just as much as the informal services aimed at the poor. The first maintain the competitiveness that urban territories need to attract investment and improve productivity; the second reflect the growing urbanization of poverty. In their contribution to the turnover of cheap labour, informal services are one of the expressions of the steadily increasing flexibility of production and one of the particular features of the involvement of southern cities in the globalization process. By satisfying the essential needs of the poorest city dwellers and by redistributing income, however weakly, to unskilled workers, they make the city ‘habitable’ while contributing to the economic mechanisms that generate urban poverty and chronic vulnerability.

It is the combination of all these alternative services which, together with the conventional service, represents an adaptation to urbanization in the south. However, institutions have failed to keep up with the emergence of these delivery configurations and their socio-technical mix, reflected in: little or no regulation, little or no solidarity, little or no coordination between service producers and between services. Largely focused on networks, public policies remain straitjacketed by powerful vested interests, which have formed strong relations with governments and urban socio-economic elites and captured both resources and political capacity.
Regulating delivery configurations: can diversity be ‘governed’?

To recognize the enduring plurality of urban services is not enough. For the public interest to prevail and for issues such as social equity and environmental preservation to be addressed, some form of coordination and regulation must be applied to the different socio-technical dispositifs associated with the delivery configurations. New regulatory frameworks, encompassing conventional services and heterogeneous alternative solutions, need to be sketched out and implemented to organize and monitor their complementarity. This, however, encounters at least two difficulties. On the one hand, regulating existing dispositifs and practices thwarts the corporate interests underpinning conventional utilities as well as the private strategies of the alternative operators, which have proved in the past to be highly resilient, with new informal schemes tending to re-emerge as previous ones are integrated into formal arrangements. On the other hand, regulation experiments are impeded by the absence of urban coalitions capable of promoting alternative services, the urban elites of the south having systematically channelled resources, knowledge and power towards conventional networks alone (Chaplin 2011; Jaglin forthcoming). In consequence, there is usually no political force capable of devising the conditions for cooperation between the different socio-technical dispositifs within functional delivery configurations. And municipal authorities, constrained and shaped by the tools that they have acquired to regulate conventional service alone, are incapable of establishing regulatory instruments appropriate to the heterogeneity of delivery configurations. Therefore, moving from a description of delivery configurations to the design of regulatory frameworks that both support and oversee their activities is far from simple.

Whatever the difficulties, there is a necessity to explore the conditions of coexistence between all service delivery channels and to regulate their interactions, the possible scenarios being juxtaposition, integration or coordination. Juxtaposition describes many situations that currently exist; integration remains the least probable outcome in the short term, because it requires a merger of socio-technical cultures and difficult compromises. The coordination of heterogeneous dispositifs within delivery configurations is a plausible scenario, which is currently gaining adherents (Blanc et al. 2009). However, its resulting arrangements can be more or less effective, depending on the quality of regulation and the consistency of incentive structures: some of the issues that need to be addressed to improve the performance and the relevance of these delivery configurations through coordination will now be examined.6

Issues and externalities needing regulation

Although they make a significant contribution in giving city dwellers access to many urban amenities, existing delivery configurations also raise multiple problems: they are costly for consumers, usually unregulated as to quality and quantity and potentially risky for urban integration and social equity. In middle-class neighbourhoods, they arouse fears of urban fragmentation (Graham and Marvin 2001), technical and financial detachment, and the overexploitation of communal resources to the detriment of global ecological balances. As for services aimed at the ‘bottom of the pyramid’, they raise crucial questions about household affordability levels as well as about the brutal forms of socio-economic exploitation in informal labour markets.

Funding mechanisms thus need to be reinvented and adjusted to reflect providers’ conflicting requirements. As for now, very little exists to extend formal investment mechanisms − public grants, cross-subsidies,7 revenues from land and property taxes, micro credit − to alternative services or to services which rely on off-network service functions. Development projects that rely on international donor funding tend to use ‘output-based aid’, which targets grants to specific beneficiaries contingent on their meeting performance criteria. Designed to reinforce a sense of public responsibility and
disbursed on the basis of real outcomes, they are experimented with informal small private operators but there are few existing examples of large-scale applications. Moreover, these schemes tend to concentrate on physical achievements, assuming that all operational costs are passed through to the users. Yet, subsidizing the consumption of the poorest remains necessary, even when standards and costs are lowered to meet local demands. Whereas socio-economic arrangements based on proximity and trust (such as small instalments, credit purchases and deferred payments) are provided to consumers of non-conventional services, such transactions do not include redistribution or solidarity mechanisms. As for lifeline tariffs and free basic services, they are designed for conventional services and do not include users of alternative dispositifs. Incentives and tools for funding social and spatial equity in heterogeneous delivery configurations have yet to be devised.

Legal and financial incentives are also crucial to tackle externalities. These can be environmental: for instance, pumping groundwater in large cities increases the risk of depletion or else contamination of the water table through the uncontrolled discharge of grey water. While conventional services have the means to collect and treat such water before distribution, alternative services may be poorly equipped to deal with ever-deeper or more remote water sources. How can the burden of environmental efforts be shared by all the different actors involved in delivery configurations? There are also health risks: informal waste collection systems provide very useful disposal and recycling services, but these very often come at a health cost for waste collectors and an environmental cost for waste storage and discharge areas (Flux 2012). On the contrary, by contributing to the socio-spatial integration of informal settlements, delivery configurations have positive urban externalities, which could be strengthened by a more innovative use of norms and standards in planning by-laws and practices. A careful and progressive engagement with all providers is thus needed to regulate the externalities of their activities, while preserving some flexibility over standards and margins for local adaptations.

Finally, the technical and institutional creation of a consistent body of norms and standards is also strategically central for delivery configurations. How can these be planned, managed and regulated in a way that preserves their dynamism and diversity? The difficulty is to design norms and rules specific to various dispositifs that together contribute to higher values and priorities (like social equity, environmental preservation). How can alternative services, using low-cost techniques and inexpensive manufactured products, coexist with conventional service operators, to which more stringent standards are applicable? How can ‘scales’ of differentiated levels of service and progressive upgrading schemes be crafted? A distinction certainly needs to be made between ‘universal’ requirements − such as health standards and minimum service levels − and ‘relative’ requirements that may vary from place to place, type of uses, groups of consumers. Such clarifications may generate conflicts, requiring subtle judgements that can only work if backed by large groups of consumers and services providers.

In short, regulation needs to address the intrinsic heterogeneity of delivery configurations: its objective should not be, as in the network model, to homogenize the conditions of production and to ensure equal access standards, but to organize the technical consistency and the political legitimacy of a delivery system which is fundamentally composite in technical terms and hybrid in its conception and design.

Key institutional challenges

To resolve these questions, delivery configurations need to be subject to appropriate institutions of governance and regulation, which transcend the obsolete distinction between the public and the private sectors, formal and informal operators in the provision of public goods and services, and which provide an adequate coordination of a large number of actors, all with different interests and stakes. Two mutually reinforcing categories of action can be undertaken by policy makers: reforming the existing structures for delivering services (water, energy, waste collection, etc.) so as to make them more
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supportive for all operators, conventional and alternative; engaging directly with all the existing actors of delivery configurations so as to negotiate adequate deals that strike a balance between benefits and constraints, support and regulation.

Once the ‘one-size-fits-all’ principle of unitary systems is abandoned in favour of a pragmatic principle of differentiation, it must be stressed that the mode of governance of these delivery configurations is neither neutral nor unequivocal. One approach is to encourage maximum autonomy for different socio-technical dispositifs, each creating its own service standards and rules, as well as its methods of monitoring customers. This solution limits entry costs for operators and is inexpensive to coordinate. It encourages multiple supply dispositifs endowed with their own modes of governance, and relies on competition to regulate their coexistence. However, autonomous dispositifs pose higher risks to urban integration goals since they can maintain and even exacerbate intra-urban inequalities. Conversely, a second approach favours a polycentric solution aimed at drawing all delivery channels into a single architecture, maintaining the diversity of participants and dispositifs but framing their action in all-encompassing regulations for quality, social minima and price limits. This, however, raises the question of tools to regulate these new arrangements, which bring increasing numbers of participants into play.

At least three different modes of coordination are possible. Direct competition between all the providers is one of them: it requires the partial withdrawal of the monopoly held by the conventional operator and the opening up of certain segments of the market to alternative providers. Licensing and sub-contracting are alternative approaches and often the preferred options when identifying the parties involved and clarifying their roles are necessary to stabilize heterogeneous organizations. Licensing means awarding licences to operate as registered companies and as public service providers: in the water sector, it ‘offers a means to develop codes of conduct and potentially a tool for pushing standards to improve’ (Valfre-Visser et al. 2006: 25). Subcontracting is experimented to institutionalize out-sourcing of services between formal and informal operators. Contracts are also a ‘must-have’ tool for guided apprenticeships, for instance in small piped water schemes in Africa. Despite its rapid spread, however, this instrument is not a miracle cure for the governance of delivery configurations in which ‘the actors and institutions … are subject to non-commensurable particular accountabilities’ (Olivier de Sardan 2010: 8). Finally, a third option would be to incentivize creative collaborative arrangements through which all providers could contribute to the co-production of a service. These arrangements can take the form of exchanges of information, experience and technical support; they can rely on concerted initiatives to invest, set common objectives, negotiate mutual commitments, and lobby policy makers. Apart from a strong political will, monitoring these collaborative processes would require the use of tracking tools and indicators for all the sociotechnical dispositifs involved in the provision of services – tools that do not yet exist.

Finally, these interactions bring competing ‘visions’ of service provision into play. Simply acknowledging delivery configurations will not result in peaceful coexistence between their diverse dispositifs: setting standards, allocating public and private resources and power, negotiating lifestyles, balancing financial contributions between new and old city dwellers … all these issues are controversial. Delivery configurations internalize many conflicts that tend to remain outside the scope of conventional service activities and creating cooperative processes that bypass such conflicts is critical to the continuity of service delivery in southern cities. The model for integrated utility services has ignored the heterogeneous character of real delivery configurations, while maintaining the fiction of services based on national and egalitarian standards. Yet conventional utilities address these technical, pricing and socio-political solidarity issues in specific ways unsuited to alternative systems and, although existing delivery configurations do provide services for urban populations, they cannot become an efficient and equitable solution for the majority of citizens without appropriate policies, the full challenge of which rests on the ability to ‘govern’ diversity, that is not only to regulate the competition between the different dispositifs but to create synergies and rules they can share.
References


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Notes

1 These configurations vary widely from one country to another and one type of urban area to another. For an analysis of water services in sub–Saharan African cities, see Jaglin 2010.
2 ‘A thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble, consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid’ (Foucault 1994 [1977]: 299). Author’s translation.
3 According to Roy, ‘subaltern urbanism… seeks to confer recognition on spaces of poverty and forms of popular agency that often remain invisible and neglected in the archives and annals of urban theory’ (Roy 2011: 224).
4 For example, the issue entitled ‘Eau des villes: repenser des services en mutation’ in Revue Tiers Monde (Jaglin and Zérah 2010).
5 See the issue entitled ‘Mutations des services urbains: le cas des déchets au Sud’ (Flux 2012).
6 For an overview of these challenges in the water sector, see: Valfrey-Visser et al. 2006.
7 Cross-subsidies can organize transfers between customers (some pay higher rates than others, so that service providers can still achieve adequate revenues based on payments from all customers) and services (from those with operating surpluses to those with deficits).
THE POLITICS AND TECHNOLOGIES OF URBAN WASTE

Garth Myers

Introduction

It is a given that cities produce large quantities of waste. The management of this waste, whether it is residential, industrial or specialist (for instance medical) waste, often requires sophisticated and expensive treatment. In cities of the global south where the capacity to tax or charge for services is limited, waste is often an unmanaged and unregulated environmental blight, and its management is often a physical manifestation of political and social challenges of urban governance and urban service delivery. This chapter uses examples from African cities and a case study from Dar es Salaam to interrogate the institutional and environmental challenges of urban solid waste management (SWM), reflecting on the dirty politics of inclusion and exclusion associated with waste. In succession, I deal with the perceptions of waste as a problem in African cities in comparison to the realities of waste (mis)management for the continent’s urban areas, and then the empirical analysis of planning efforts to address the problem in African settings, ending with the Dar es Salaam case study.

Perceptions and realities of waste

Early in his classic novel, The Beautiful Ones Are Not Yet Born, Ayi Kwei Armah (1968: 7) has a long discourse on ‘what seemed to be a small pile of earth with a sort of signboard standing nonsensically on top of it’ on the streets of a city in Ghana. As a character in the book approaches this pile, he realizes that the signboard is a waste box emblazoned with an exhortation from the government to ‘Keep your country clean by keeping your city clean’ – and yet the pile is the waste that has overflowed from it, a situation that was replicated across the city at these receptacles (ibid.). ‘People did not have to go up to the boxes any more,’ Armah (1968: 8) wrote: ‘From a distance they aimed their rubbish at the growing heap, and a good amount of juicy offal hit the face and sides of the box.’

More than 40 years later, I wrote of a similar, but non-fictional scene, in Lusaka, where a 2004 city council sign read, ‘Please Keep Lusaka Clean: Otherwise the Pirates Will Get You’, and a pile of garbage crowded the base posts of the sign (Myers 2011: 21−2). Comparable scenes of the visceral and defiant presence of waste and filth can be gleaned from the fiction and the non-fiction of urban Africa. In his coming−of−age tragicomedy, Graceland, novelist Chris Abani (2004: 4) wrote of Lagos as a place where ‘the smell of garbage from refuse dumps, unflushed toilets and stale bodies was still overwhelming’. Many other urbanists and novelists enliven their writings by filling our nostrils with the stenches of
garbage-strewn African cities (Davis 2006). Rampant and pervasive waste has clearly become a trope in representations of cities in Africa.

We can place a standardized cause alongside this perception of the waste problem: government mismanagement. The Armah (1968: 7–8) novel drips with contempt for the ‘latest campaign to rid the town of its filth’ with which the waste boxes were associated. It was an ‘impressive’ political charade, where the newspapers and the radio lined up a succession of ‘big shots’ to warn of the ‘evil effects of uncleanness’, but the ‘magnificent campaign’ was a spectacular failure. Similar failures haunt the common perceptions in urban writings and media sources.

To what extent do these perceptions match the realities of SWM in Africa? It is difficult, and perhaps dangerous to overgeneralize across a continent as vast and diverse as Africa – even if we limit our analysis to sub-Saharan Africa. Some cities or countries appear to have dynamics at work which distinguish their waste issues from those of neighbouring cities or countries (Oteng-Ababio 2010; Doe and Tetteh 1999). In South Africa’s cities, for instance, as wealthier urbanisms with a generally higher degree of industrialization and greater presence of high technology, some more positive dynamics might be more common than one would find elsewhere on the continent, such as programmes for the recycling of electronic waste (Karani and Jewasikiewitz 2007; Nahman and Godfrey 2010; Lawhon 2012). Specific industrial geographies for some cities or urban regions elsewhere on the continent – e.g. the cities of Zambia’s Copperbelt or the oil-rich Niger Delta in Nigeria – produce some particularized solid waste management issues (to say nothing of issues with liquid wastes or air pollution). Policy implementation particularities are likewise a feature of SWM issues on the continent, for instance in a comparison of the eight years of successful stringent enforcement of a ban on plastic bags in Rwanda (New Times 2012) to a similar ban in Zanzibar that has had a limited impact (Vuai 2010), and a situation in Nairobi where plastic bags seem to have become another fruit in the trees (Njeru 2006).

Despite these and other examples of variability, there are several common themes that pertain for waste issues in most of the region’s cities when one examines the small but growing body of literature on SWM in urban Africa (much of it produced in Africa by African scholars, as my chapter’s reference list makes starkly evident). Let me briefly mention eight of these, where each cascades from the next.

The first is that municipal waste collection services have failed to keep pace with the growth of demand (and the growth in wastes produced, including a wider range of wastes from processed goods and higher-end consumer goods) amidst Africa’s comparatively rapid rates of urbanization, for decades on end, so that it is often the case that a majority of residential waste in particular goes uncollected, especially in informal settlements (Kironde 1999; Parrot et al. 2009). Second, though, even in collecting only a portion of wastes produced we find that the landfills meant to serve these collection services are overflowing and unsanitary, and cities have been slow at best – and often entirely unsuccessful – in identifying and developing alternative landfill or disposal sites (Odumosu 2000; Lusaka Waste Management Unit 2006). Third, the provision of waste services has been highly uneven from the outset, with wealthier and central city commercial areas receiving more effective services than poorer areas where the urban majorities reside (Nchito and Myers 2004; Adama 2012).

A fourth theme is that the incapacity to collect and deposit waste from most areas of the city creates new – or multiplies existing – environmental health hazards, for instance in the increasing prevalence of water-borne diseases emanating from a greater presence of standing water as a result of uncollected trash clogging storm water drains in many neighbourhoods. Fifth, and relatedly, although the composition of urban waste in most cities retains a high proportion of organic materials (largely food waste), there is an increasing toxicity to waste composition which exacerbates those health issues. Sixth, SWM technologies have not kept pace with the needs for more sophisticated equipment or processes, whether in landfills or waste collection, leaving landfills more susceptible to contamination or spontaneous combustion and SWM workers more vulnerable to toxic wastes.
Two final themes that appear to be common across the cities of the continent relate more specifically to management systems at a broader level. The seventh theme, overall, is that contemporary efforts to replace government-led urban SWM delivery services with private-sector and public-private-popular partnerships have had mixed results at best across the continent, despite the claims of partisans (Bartone 2001; Halla and Majani 1999; Mitullah 2008; Hampwaye 2005; Tukahirwa et al. 2010; Oteng-Ababio 2010). Eighth, and finally, while draconian or authoritarian waste management strategies may occasion short-term increases in the percentage of waste making it to a landfill or improvements in the visual perceptivity of the problem, more effective policy examples over the longer term entail more participatory, grassroots, popular and activist engagement with waste issues, from consciousness-raising to deposition and recycling (Cisse 1996; Doe and Tetteh 1999; Mutenga and Muyakwa 1999; Fredericks 2009). Even with this relatively progressive sort of engagement, though, SWM remains a significant challenge in most cities of sub-Saharan Africa.

**Empirical assessment of the politics of garbage**

There have been relatively few scholarly studies of SWM for Africa’s cities, considering the massive number of cities and the significant weight of import that those eight generally common issues which I’ve sketched above have for everyday life for the continent’s urban residents. Many of the most useful
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studies have come in the form of unpublished undergraduate or Masters thesis work (especially from students in urban African universities), along with a handful of recent doctoral dissertations. Technical reports and policy documents also occasionally cover SWM issues, but often with a lack of broader theoretical reflection. Even in journals dedicated to the study of SWM, research articles on urban African cases such as those I cite in this chapter are still rather rare, and the readership for such journals is quite narrow. It is telling that many Africa-related pieces in the highly technical journal, *Waste Management*, over the last decade have come in one-to-three page entries in a special section called, literally, ‘a glance at the world’. We have clearly reached a time when rigorous research is a burning need to further evidence or contest my eight generalized claims above, and to place the findings on a wider terrain for a broader set of scholars and policy makers alike.

The anthropologists Giorgio Blundo and Pierre-Yves Le Meur (2009: 2), in an innovative introduction to their recent edited volume on *The Governance of Daily Life in Africa*, aim to analyse the actors involved in actually existing governance, ‘the way in which the rules for such services are produced, debated, transformed and controlled’ and how urban services are performed in African cities. This concurs with geographer Anna Davies’s (2008: 25) observation that debates on governance in urban studies, political science, and urban geography often remain focused on conceptualization and abstraction, giving rise to a growing advocacy for more grounded, empirical assessments of governance outcomes. This pertains directly to questions of urban SWM across Africa.

Helpfully, several scholars have offered examples of just this sort of grounded yet broadly aimed assessment for SWM on the continent. While a few such studies have analysed related phenomena, such as electronic waste recycling (Lawhon 2012) or campaigns targeting the elimination of plastic bags (Njeru 2006), I focus here on two recent works that address SWM more comprehensively for two important urban cases, Abuja and Dakar (Adama 2007; Fredericks 2009).

Abuja is one of the most rapidly growing cities in Africa, and in the world. UN-Habitat (2010: 53–4) estimated its population as nearly 2 million people in 2010, with an annual rate of growth over 9 per cent for 1990–2005; the rate tapered slightly to 8.3 per cent from 2005–10, but that still led to an absolute increase in the urban population of some 680,000 people in that five-year period. Onyanta Adama examined the city’s SWM systems in exactly that context of stunning growth in her 2007 dissertation and book. Despite the city’s origins as a new, planned centralized capital for the Federal Government of Nigeria (Adebanwi 2012), Abuja’s highly planned character is more of a façade when it comes to SWM. Local government and community-based involvement in governance, of the waste sector and of many urban service delivery functions, is minimalized and marginalized (Imam *et al.* 2008). In Adama’s case study of the community-based SWM project for the hybrid (part formal development, part informal settlement, part indigenous village) area of Nyanya, real community buy-in proved illusory, with women community members particularly distanced from the power structure of the programme. ‘The community’s hope for a clean environment has been raised and dashed many times’, Adama (2007: 162) wrote. Part of the cause for dashed hopes resides, she suggests, in the lack of ‘common interest’ within a community riven by cultural, political and economic differences. Bridging the gap between Abuja’s symbolic role in Nigeria and its actual existence as an ordinary city has proved largely futile, with failed SWM as a consequence.

Dakar presents a potentially more hopeful scenario. Dakar is far and away the largest city in Senegal, with an estimated population of 2.8 million as of 2010, but growing less rapidly than Abuja (UN-Habitat 2010). Dakar also represents a rare case of a city in Africa which has been managed within an ostensibly democratic political framework from independence onward; while to some extent, similarly to Abuja, Dakar’s local government has been overshadowed by the capital city functions, Dakar has had a much more engaged and involved popular local politics (Diop 2012). Moreover, urban management has been central to the furtherance and deepening of democracy, with a specific high point in SWM. Recent work by Fredericks (2009) on SWM in Dakar brings us a fresh perspective that refutes the crisis narrative which
can and often does flow freely from an excavation of garbage management problems in urban Africa. She contrasts the city’s 2007 popular revolts which erupted around the breakdown of SWM and trash collection with the 1989 Set/Setal movement, wherein Dakar’s youth organized to clean up the city.

Fredericks is essentially writing to counter the narrative of African urban decline that is embedded in most stories of SWM, seeing her two cataclysmic trash crises and contrasting movements not as part of ‘chaotic periods of disintegration, but productive moments in which key political, economic, and social factors crystallize and new configurations of social relations are negotiated’. She effectively shows how ‘certain people get positioned, and position themselves, to do the dirty work [of trash management], with different rewards and dangers, across the uneven spaces of the city’ (Fredericks 2009: 4). She shows how the youth of the earlier Set/ Setal movement became so ‘indispensable in filling the gaps left by the failing trash collection company’ that Dakar’s mayor, Mamadou Diop, ‘masterminded their incorporation into a city-wide participatory trash system’ that lasted a decade (Fredericks 2009: 81; Cisse 1996). After Senegal’s newly elected government’s privatization effort stalled for these community activist groups in the solid waste sector in the early 2000s, a muddled, in-between ‘transitional phase’ was marked by a second major garbage crisis (Fredericks 2009: 100). Fredericks (ibid.: 99) left the city after fieldwork that documented this crisis, which she described as ‘characterized by nebulous institutional arrangements, poor working conditions, and garbage build-up in the public space’. Yet youth engagements with the ‘dirty work’ showed the possibilities for, if not a solution to the crisis, a transformation of it into a moment for understanding more of the complexities of political engagement. Populist, decentralized and participatory SWM systems are not a panacea, but they are clearly an alternative to both statist and corporatist failed ‘solutions’.

In Fredericks’s work, even with its largely political economy focus, we see Dakar as it manifests the themes I’ve noted above: most of its waste goes uncollected, its landfill in Keur Massar, known as Mbeubeuss, is one of Africa’s largest overflowing dump sites, solid waste services are severely uneven across the city, water-borne diseases recur as an indirect result of failures in waste management, trash workers’ conditions have deteriorated, and privatization has proved a very mixed process. Despite this, we also see active, participatory youth engagement with the system which produces more positive social, political, and environmental outcomes. In the period since her research, these more positive, participatory and activist youth engagements have endured and even strengthened in Dakar, as witnessed in the Y’en a marre [‘We are sick of it’] movement, which included trash workers in its successful 2012 campaign to elect Macky Sall as Senegal’s president. Despite the shortcomings of the SWM system, there are ways that, as the President of Mbeubeuss’s informal scavengers’ union said in a January 2013 focus group (deploying a clever pun in French),1 in Dakar, ‘waste is solid gold’, politically, socially and economically at least.

Thus, both Adama’s and Fredericks’s studies document many of the broader trends that I have suggested above, albeit in distinct ways befitting the divergent contexts. In both cities, trash collection and waste management technologies failed to keep pace with growth, landfills overflow and thus increase environmental health hazards with increasing toxicity levels, service delivery is highly uneven across the city, and experiments with privatization have had middling results while the long-term prospects for more participatory and community-oriented SWM are more promising. Both thus add further evidence to the claims that emerged from my own research in 2002–2004 on the United Nations Sustainable Cities Programme’s SWM projects in various cities on the continent. That study began, as that UN programme had, in Dar es Salaam, upon which I focus in the section below.

Dar es Salaam: mixed outcomes from reform

Dar es Salaam is Tanzania’s main city, with a population which the UN estimated as about 3.4 million in 2010. Its rapid growth from a small city of 356,000 in 1967 to a city nearly ten times that size
occurred in the absence of real expansion in formal sector employment, and during a prolonged period of public sector dis-investment in Tanzania’s cities. Needless to say the impacts of such rapid growth for solid waste management were staggering.

Partly because of recognition for such pressing needs, Dar became the world pilot city for UN-Habitat’s Sustainable Cities Programme (SCP) in 1990, and innovative new ideas for SWM emerged out of that programme. Before it even began, the Tanzanian government orchestrated a large public clean-up campaign to try to clear the city of the huge backlog of solid waste (Yhdego 1995; Armstrong 1992). As of 1990, some estimates suggested that less than 3 per cent of the solid waste produced in the city was regularly collected. Up to 75 per cent of housing units existed in unplanned settlement areas with no solid waste service whatsoever.

The waxing and waning of democratic tendencies in urban management are important within an understanding of the SWM which emerged for Dar out of the SCP. Dar was managed under highly centralized single-party local government (administratively positioned directly under the Prime Minister’s control) at the time when the SCP began in 1990. Tanzania’s 1992 decision to build a multi-party political system had its first impacts in 1995 local elections for the Dar es Salaam city council. But in mid-1996, Tanzania’s Prime Minister dissolved the new democratically elected multi-party city council and replaced it with a city commission whose membership was entirely appointed by his office. The new commission’s Director, Charles Keenja, quickly privatized solid waste collection and disposal in the city. As a result of the programme’s combination of private and popular sector companies in solid waste collection and the Keenja commission’s privatized street-cleaning operations, Dar es Salaam became visibly cleaner between 1996 and 1999. The rate of collection and disposal of garbage increased from that estimated 3 per cent in 1990 to more than 40 per cent a decade later. It has not really improved on that mark since (Mbuya 2008; Myers 2005; Salim 2010; Kassim and Ali 2006).

The story of this dramatic attempt to transform SWM remains a representative case for experimental public-private-popular sector partnerships for SWM, worthy of examination in detail for its potential comparability across the continent and the global south. The solid waste programme began with a pilot project for the ten city centre wards in 1994, in which a new company, Multinet, was given a contract to collect and dispose of the CBD’s garbage. Multinet was completely inexperienced with its new line of work. Nonetheless, the Keenja commission expanded from Multinet’s work in the CBD to all 44 of the urban wards among the 73 wards in Dar es Salaam Region in 1996. Five companies and the city council controlled all collection. By 2003, in these 44 wards, there were 21 private companies and 23 NGOs or CBOs operating to collect waste. But the two larger firms (Mazingira Ltd. and Multinet) collected most of it. Collection continued to be ‘sporadic and in most cases incidental’, since most contractors were ‘ill-equipped in terms of operating gear’; by 2003, only these two larger companies had more than four trucks (Majani 2000: 45).

Where CBOs and NGOs collaborated with private companies, the community groups collected in the narrow alleys of informal settlement areas and then the private firms would take the waste out from the collection points. The solid waste management unit of the city council estimated that the higher end companies obtained 85−90 per cent of their collection fees, and the less successful ones about 70 per cent (Chinamo 2003). Others claim that ‘very few people or institutions were paying their refuse collection charges’ (Kironde 1999: 85). In either case, by July 2003, an estimated 43 per cent of the waste was reaching the city dumpsite − approximately 980 tons per day; by 2008, the percentage overall had dropped to 39 per cent and the proportion of fee-payers in the city had fallen even further (Mbuya 2008).

Solid waste management under this privatization effort has been praised by some, but it has been highly criticized by others, not least by the main companies involved in it. The Keenja-era appointed commission received the most critical attention. In 1999, the managing director of the private firm, Mazingira, told Bituro Majani (2000: 135) that ‘unfortunately most of the local people hate the
Commission, sometimes for no apparent reason, and we find ourselves disadvantaged to reveal that we work for the Commission’. Community-based organizations also developed grievances with the system, as ordinary residents developed misgivings with them. Some groups, such as those in the Msasani peninsula’s poorer communities that lie dotted between the richest area of the city, had their contracts stripped from them by the Keenja commission.

The most well-known among the community-based collecting contractors that survived the Keenja era was the Kinondoni Moscow Women’s Development Association (Kimwoda) of Hanna Nassif ward in Kinondoni municipality. Hanna Nassif is often highlighted as the greatest success story of the Sustainable Dar es Salaam Programme (Majani 2000; Mhamba and Titus 2001). Yet to some extent this is faint praise from a distance. The Keenja commission actually eliminated four other community contracts in Hanna Nassif with other CBOs and gave the whole ward to Kimwoda − precisely when it established itself as a chartered private company rather than a private voluntary organization. One of Hanna Nassif’s key leaders told Majani (2000: 157) that the Commission concealed ‘the whole procedure from us’, and that as a consequence Kimwoda met ‘a lot of resistance from the residents’ from that day forward.

The utilization of private companies in combination with community-based organizations for solid waste management was seen as a central tenet of plans for addressing the cornucopia of problems. Removing the waste build-ups from neighbourhoods, by whatever means, would reduce environmental health risks associated with garbage in the unserviced communities. On the surface, the SDP can record some successes here. Beyond the increase in the overall rates of collection and deposition, several accomplishments are worth noting. First, the organization of a scavengers’ union at city dumpsites, together with an intensive effort by the city council solid waste and UN-Habitat’s Environmental and Planning Management units to forge partnerships between this union and private firms, resulted in an impressive record of recycling (75 per cent) for glass, paper, and plastic (Chinamo 2003; Mkumba 2003). Second, several community-based groups were able to keep afloat amidst competition from larger private companies, and this did represent employment for low-income residents. Agencies such as Kimwoda were required by their contract with the city to hire workers from within the communities they served (Mhamba and Titus 2001: 224).

Beneath the surface, literally and figuratively, the outcomes were less clearly positive. Waste collection rates varied substantially by neighbourhood. Well-to-do sections of Kinondoni Municipality, such as those of the Msasani Peninsula serviced by Mazingira, had collection rates above 50 per cent. Poor communities right next to these areas in Msasani, or places like Hanna Nassif, had collection rates below 20 per cent. Private companies, logically enough, only collected from customers who paid. The community-based solid waste groups that succeeded and endured were those that functioned effectively as private companies (Kassim and Ali 2006). Fewer and fewer of the poor had anything to do with the new regime of waste management as time went on; less than half of Kimwoda’s customer base was willing or able to pay the solid waste collection fee. The visibility of areas from major roads − and proximity to them − played a key role in the Keenja cleanup, and this emphasis on visibility continues. Neighbourhoods off main roads, out of sight of donors and elites (in other words, neighbourhoods where most Dar residents live), and neighbourhoods near dumpsites prove to be a different story entirely.

The political relationship between dumpsite communities and the government has long been abysmal. The Tanzanian government had an agreement and a loan for USD6 million with Danida to build a sanitary landfill in Kunduchi, north of the city, but Kunduchi residents took them to court and prevented it (Armstrong 1992). City facilities on proposed sites at Tabata and Mbagala were closed by the same court. The city was able to dump at Vingunguti for some ten years, but was eventually stopped there too (Chinamo 2003). By 2001, the city moved to using a dump at Mtoni Kwa Kabuma, about 10 kilometres from the city centre (Mkumba 2003) − right on the side of a mangrove stand and tidal creek. From 2−3 metres deep with informally disposed waste when the city started to use the dump at Mtoni in October 2001, the trash had piled up to 15 metres thick in a half-mile square area by
July 2003. The fees that the dump managers were obtaining from 2001–2003 were insufficient for paying its workers' salaries or buying the diesel it needed to operate lifts, trucks and bulldozers. These machines frequently broke down, and therefore the dump workers could not actually cover and mix as they were legally expected to do to reduce environmental impacts.

The staff fumigated at most twice a month with hand-held pump sprayers. No employees had any protective equipment. Portions of the waste pile would smoulder for months. The dump was supposed to be closed in July 2003 but was not closed until 2008, and the city continues to cope with serious water and air pollutants from it (Mbuya 2008). Rubhera Mato (2002: 133) showed that about half of the city has ‘high groundwater vulnerability’ to pollution from ‘indiscriminate waste disposal practices’. And ‘uncontrolled, indiscriminant dumping’ remains the predominant means of disposal in the city two decades after Ngiloi (1992: 75) had reached that cited conclusion. The resultant water pollution not only threatens human health directly, but also indirectly: the outflow areas from Tabata and Vingunguti dumps and almost all of the major lowland areas in the city are productive centres for urban agriculture, and crops from these fields had exceedingly high contamination from heavy metals (Sawio 1998).

It is not just in neighbourhoods adjacent to the revolving set of dumps that the city tries to keep open that environmental impacts from the solid waste crisis affect human health and the quality of life. Michael Mpuya’s (2000) research in Hanna Nassif clearly evidenced a continuation of severe environmental crises beyond the toxicity of urban agriculture crops there. Mpuya focused on the lowland squatter areas of Hanna Nassif (known as Bondeni [in the lowland]) because the ‘laissez-faire attitude of government’ had allowed for massive squatter development in hazard-prone areas (Mpuya 2000: 6). Most people in the city obtained and developed their plots extra-judicially, and this has not changed even in the face of a massive campaign for land registration and titling (Myers 2011).

The creation of the three elected municipal councils in 2000 for Kinondoni, Ilala and Temeke proved to be another false step towards decentralization or democratization (Dill 2013). Kironde (2001: 14) noted that while the division of the city into three municipalities was meant to bring government closer to the people, ‘accountability leaves a lot to be desired. Many urban authorities are not democratic enough in the sense that they do not operate in a transparent manner’. The fiscal autonomy of these three bodies is minimal. Between 67 and 72 per cent of all revenues consist of central government funding (Kironde 2001: 39).

Allen Armstrong (1992: 282) wrote 20 years ago that the ‘periodic “Clean Dar” campaigns attempt to mobilize public resources and popular involvement to clean up the city. After an initial spurt of enthusiasm, official and popular enthusiasm soon wanes and any short-lived and limited impacts soon evaporate’. Ultimately, most ‘city residents are still engulfed in filth’ (ibid.: 282). It is a damning critique of the Sustainable Dar es Salaam Programme that, after more than a decade and millions of dollars of aid from a half-dozen major donors in Dar es Salaam, ‘very little was achieved in terms of poverty alleviation, improved access to municipal services, and better living conditions’ (Lerise and Ngware 2000: 124). The progressive rhetoric deployed in the SDP hid an authoritarian governance framework at its core. The programme’s short-term successes – as measured in improved rates of the collection and disposal of solid waste – came at the expense of longer-term possibilities for reconstructing the relationships between Dar residents and the local and national state (Myers 2005). Exclusionary democracy in planning also simply extended the possibilities for a divisive politics of cultural difference in a city that had been relatively free of the violence of those possibilities until the last two decades and has exploded with them, with a vengeance, in the last few years.

**Conclusion**

Dar es Salaam, then, like the majority of Africa’s large cities, has an SWM system that has kept up neither with the rate of growth in the urban population nor with the technological advances of waste
management. As a result of significant inequalities in waste service delivery across the city, many waste-related environmental health hazards are endemic in poorer, informal communities, especially those nearest to overflowing landfills. While more authoritarian policies have occasioned short-term improvements in collection rates or appearances, and privatization schemes enrich a few companies and improve services for Dar’s well-to-do, a more likely scenario for broader success in SWM policy implementation would clearly need to be more participatory, decentralized, and democratic, while employing Dar’s youth.

What lessons or insights might Dar es Salaam offer to other African cases, or the global south’s (or global north’s) urbanisms? Is there anything distinctly ‘African’ about Dar’s situation? Probably not, and indeed, arguing that there is anything ‘African’ about cities on a continent with 50 urban areas with a population of over a million people in 55 countries is nearly laughable. Other areas of the global south suggest greater possibilities for innovative waste management or recycling, including of e-waste, in comparison to most African cases. Moreover, there are core cities with arguably dirtier politics of inclusion and exclusion in urban garbage governance (e.g. Naples – see Taylor 2012) or more treacherous possibilities for environmental health calamities that stem from waste toxicity. It is challenging to lay claim to uniquely central findings from the study of urban solid waste management in Dar es Salaam that have broader, or even universal applicability.

Yet cities of the global south, and cities of sub-Saharan Africa, do face a similar set of interlocking challenges to those in Dar. Their SWM shortcomings are often similar in manifesting governance and urban service delivery issues. The perceptions of novelists, journalists and urbanists alike across Africa and much of the global south about garbage may seem stereotypical – and they are certainly often exaggerated representations – but they can bring us close to the severity of everyday realities in Africa and across southern cities. As more (and often younger) African and Africa-based scholars turn to urban waste management research, too, we discover nuances and complexities that go beyond the perceptions. Many urban Africans in informal settlements work from an urban consciousness that sees waste differently, or doesn’t see waste at all. Some are beginning to sing the song that ‘garbage is wealth’ (as one of the community-based SWM workers in Zanzibar with whom I worked in 2003 literally sang – see Myers 2005: 1), where trash becomes a powerful commodity. The President of the Dakar scavengers union had deployed his French pun of ‘waste is solid gold’ (as noted earlier) after all, as a part of explaining the growing interests of foreign investors in ‘mining’ the waste for methane, scrap metal and other goods. Yet privatization has seldom provided wealth for very many in the waste sector, and it has also seldom led to a longer-term trend towards more comprehensive and equitable service delivery. Privatization tends to be deployed in urban service delivery in Africa within hybrid public-private-popular forms of governance, largely as a product of the distrust that the continent’s generally weak states earn among donors, in tandem with the thinness of indigenous African private sector capacity. Yet consciousness of waste issues is nonetheless on the rise in Africa, and, instead of privatization, many activists, planners and even mid-level city officials in the SWM sector on the continent recognize that the more participatory, democratized, decentralized and cheap the SWM governance solutions a city has, the more effective the solutions are in the longer term. There are, indeed, vestiges of these solutions in the everyday practices of service delivery beyond any formal urban system, as Jaglin discusses in this volume. This is a sort of consciousness with potentially global importance.

References

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**Note**

1 Ordure is the French word for waste; the union president played with this word as a combination of ‘or’, the French word for gold, and ‘dure’, meaning strong or solid – Author’s focus group discussion with leaders of the scavengers union, Tom Hanlon, Alasse Elhadj Diop, staff of Partners Senegal, and four US undergraduates, 4 January 2013.
Introduction
Current rates of urbanization in the cities of the global south place considerable pressures on the public facilities and infrastructures that service their growing populations. More particularly with respect to the focus of this chapter, they give rise to problems associated with access and mobility, as transport system capacities have seldom, if ever, increased at the same rate as travel demand. The majority of city populations in the global south do not have the resources to own private motor cars, and consequently the roles of public transport services, walking, bicycles and motorcycles assume great importance in sustaining their livelihoods.

The purpose of this chapter is to explore problems associated with providing access and mobility to the citizens of cities in the global south, and to focus particularly on the public transport solutions that have emerged in response to these problems. The chapter is divided into five sections. The following section highlights key passenger transport policy challenges facing these cities, and briefly describes ways in which they differ from the problems faced by their northern counterparts. The third section then narrows the focus of the chapter onto one of the key policy challenges identified — namely poor qualities of service in public transport service provision — and reviews the public transport planning innovations that have emerged in response to this challenge. The fourth section discusses the diffusion of these innovations, and reflects upon the degree to which cities of the global south have offered transferable practices to cities of the global north. The fifth section concludes with a tentative discussion on the obstacles facing public transport improvement in the global south, especially in the sub-Saharan African context where resource and capacity constraints are particularly severe.

Passenger transport policy challenges
Under conditions of rapid population growth all cities, irrespective of fiscal resources, experience access and mobility problems: typically in the form of supply and demand mismatches that lead to congestion during periods of peak travel demand and to insufficient service coverage, as well as a variety of associated environmental externalities and social inequities. This section explores how some of these problems are exacerbated in the global south by relatively weaker institutional and planning frameworks and less fiscal and household financial resources, and how transport system policy challenges differ from their northern counterparts as a result.
Motorization

One obvious key difference from the global north is lower dependence on the private automobile. Figure 39.1 indicates that the proportion of city inhabitants without access to private motor cars is far greater in the global south than in the global north. The mean number of motor cars per 100,000 population for cities with an annual gross domestic product (GDP) per capita of less than USD19,000 is 148, compared to 482 for cities with a GDP per capita greater than USD19,000. For the purposes of the comparative analysis presented here and elsewhere in the chapter, GDP per capita values of between USD18,000 and USD20,000 are indicated as the approximate dividing point between cities conventionally regarded as falling into the global north and global south. Despite relatively lower aggregate rates of car ownership, improved household incomes amongst a relatively small middle class have nevertheless led to accelerated motorization, with annual increases in vehicle ownership sometimes exceeding 10 per cent (Gwilliam 2002). As a result, congestion on city arterials has worsened and, in the absence of effective road space prioritization for buses, the quality of public transport service has declined. A combination of limited road capacity and weak traffic management and law enforcement resources often results in congestion levels that are considerably worse than northern cities with significantly larger private vehicle fleets. Mean weekday traffic speeds of between 10 and 15 kilometres per hour are not uncommon in the centres of many cities (Gwilliam 2003).

Figure 39.1  City motor cars per 1,000 population, by gross domestic product per capita (n=112)

Source:
1. Motor car registration data are derived from various sources: CAF (2010); Kenworthy (2011); Kumar and Barrett (2008); Mitric (2008); UATP (2010); and www.city-data.com (accessed 15 November 2012).
2. Gross domestic product data are derived from: PWC (2009) and Kenworthy (2011). 1995 USD values are adjusted to 2012 values using an annual inflation rate of 2.5 per cent.
3. City population data are derived from: www.citypopulation.de (accessed 15 November 2012).
4. Year of data collection ranges between 2002 and 2012.
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Modal split

As a consequence of lower automobile ownership, cities of the global south have populations that are more heavily dependent upon public transport and non-motorized transport (NMT) modes. This is reflected, somewhat obscurely, in the modal split data presented in Figure 39.2. These data indicate that public transport and NMT mode shares decline steadily as incomes rise. The mean share of public transport and NMT modes for cities with an annual GDP per capita of less than USD19,000 is 31 per cent and 36 per cent respectively, compared to 22 per cent for both travel mode categories amongst cities with a GDP per capita greater than USD 19,000.

The statistical relationship between GDP per capita and mode share is weak, however, as reflected in low R-squared values (measuring the goodness of fit of regression lines in Figure 39.2) and large variance. Standard deviations from mean public transport mode shares are 16 and 14 percentage points for cities with a GDP per capita of less and more than USD19,000 per annum respectively (the equivalent standard deviations for mean NMT mode shares are 17 and 12 percentage points). The analysis of automobile dependence undertaken by Kenworthy (2011) reveals that the relationship between public transport mode share and urban population density is considerably stronger than the relationship between public transport mode share and GDP per capita (see Figure 39.3). This demonstrates clearly that there are numerous complex factors that influence public transport ridership, beyond simply passenger affordability.

Figure 39.2 City public and non-motorized transport main mode share, by gross domestic product per capita (n=99)

Source:
1. Motor car registration data are derived from various sources: CAF (2010); Kenworthy (2011); Kumar and Barrett (2008); Mitric (2008); UATP (2010); and www.city-data.com (accessed 15 November 2012).
2. Gross domestic product data are derived from: PWC (2009) and Kenworthy (2011). 1995 USD values are adjusted to 2012 values using an annual inflation rate of 2.5 per cent.
3. City population data are derived from: www.citypopulation.de (accessed 15 November 2012).
4. Year of data collection ranges between 2002 and 2012.
The lower car ownership and greater public transport and NMT mode shares of the global south are of course not problems in themselves. In fact in the context of mounting pressures to reduce carbon emissions, many policy makers in cities of the global north would be envious of these transport system characteristics. The access and mobility problems experienced in the global south relate more to an inability to provide adequate services and to manage externalities.

**Road safety**

One such externality is road crashes. In the absence of adequate NMT infrastructure and strong law enforcement capability with respect to driver behaviour and vehicle roadworthiness, more heterogeneous traffic typically leads to greater vehicle conflicts and crash risks, particularly for pedestrians. The speed differential between different road users, inherent in heterogeneous traffic conditions, is central to understanding crash risk. The probability of fatality resulting from a crash involving a vehicle and a pedestrian increases exponentially with speed at collision. The relationship with collision speed follows a sinusoidal curve in which fatality probability begins to increase rapidly after 40 km per hour, and levels off at around 90 km per hour where the probability of fatality becomes fairly certain (Rosén et al. 2011: 28).

Reliable comparative data on city crash rates are difficult to obtain. Figure 39.4 consequently presents country crash rates as a proxy for city data. These data suggest that the greater exposure to risk associated with more heterogeneous traffic in poorer countries has a considerable impact on fatal crash rates. The mean crash fatality per 100,000 population for countries with an annual GDP per capita of less than USD19,000 is 22, compared to 12 for cities with a GDP per capita greater than USD19,000. As in the case of mode shares the R-squared value is low, however, indicating that there are numerous other factors that influence crash rates beyond wealth. Important among these are likely to be prevailing road geometries and urban form characteristics (Mohan 2008).

It should be noted that data assembled by some other authors suggest a trend line shaped differently to that fitted to the World Health Organization (2009) data presented in Figure 39.4. Kopits and Cropper (2005: 173) and Mohan (2008: 95) present trend lines with a parabolic curve. They suggest...
that crash fatality rates peak amongst lower middle-income countries and cities where greater road infrastructure investments enable higher vehicle speeds, and where walking accounts for a considerable share of modal split. By contrast, low-income countries have comparatively poorer road infrastructures, which prevent vehicles from attaining high speeds at times when there are large volumes of pedestrians in the road space, and consequently speed differentials are not as high and fatal crashes are less probable.

**Public transport service provision**

Another obvious key difference from the global north is greater informality in public and for-hire transport service provision. In many cities of the global south formal public transport operating companies have ceased to be viable altogether, or have been unable to serve large sections of the passenger market. Thus there often exists a hybrid public transport system comprising both officially contracted and organized (and in some cases subsidized) public transport services, and partially regulated or illegal paratransit services. The term ‘paratransit’ conventionally describes a flexible mode of passenger public transportation that does not follow fixed routes or schedules, typically in the form of small- to medium-sized buses. In the global north paratransit services are often associated with demand-responsive ‘dial-a-ride’ systems provided for persons with movement disabilities. In the global south paratransit services are usually provided on a far larger scale for the general population, often by operators within the informal sector. For this reason paratransit in the global south is sometimes also referred to in the literature as ‘informal transport’ (Cervero 2000; Cervero and Golub 2007). The term paratransit is preferred to informal transport in this chapter as these services are not necessarily
unregulated, nor indeed provided only by informal businesses. However it should be noted that in
instances where paratransit services are fully regulated and provided by businesses within the formal
sector, they usually first emerged as unregulated and informal.

With regard to regular formalized public transport services, both rail- and road-based modes can be
found in the cities of the global south. A relatively small number of cities have rail systems, typically
managed by large public agencies. By far the most common formal mode is conventional bus systems,
which can incorporate a variety of vehicle sizes. Formal service networks are typically built around
historical radial corridors converging upon city centres, while newer routes run more circumferential
services which connect decentralized retail and industrial nodes (Wilkinson et al. 2011).

The paratransit that has emerged in the global south is heterogeneous (see, for instance, Cervero
2000 and Cervero and Golub 2007), with a diversity of operators ranging from fully licensed minibus
(i.e. 9–16 seats) or midibus (i.e. 17–35 seats) services run on prescribed routes by formalized businesses,
to illegal sedan (i.e. 4–8 seats) services run by informal businesses. Vehicle roadworthiness generally
varies according to the enforcement capability of public authorities. Regulatory frameworks also vary
widely, from public sector regulation of market entry and service quality, to self-regulation by
fragmented route associations. Regulatory control by public agencies is generally weak, and in some
cities corruption within regulatory authorities in fact rewards operator non-compliance (i.e. it is
cheaper to pay a bribe than to comply). Despite this heterogeneity in regulation, there are some
common operational characteristics, most notably: a ‘fill and go’ arrangement for departing vehicles at
origin termini after which passengers board and alight on an improvised basis; and a revenue strategy
in which vehicle owners claim a fixed daily revenue target from drivers, who in turn keep the balance
of the daily fare box, less vehicle operating expenses, as income.

The regulatory and business environment in which paratransit services are provided often results in
poor quality of service. Most problems commonly associated with paratransit operations can be linked
either to an inability of public authorities to formulate and enforce coherent regulatory regimes, or to
the ‘target’ revenue strategy. In the case of the former, un- or under-restricted market entry can lead to
overtrading on more lucrative routes, attempts to violently remove competitors, and unfair labour
relations. In the case of the latter, strong incentives exist for drivers to compete aggressively for
passengers in the road space, drive dangerously, and overload vehicles. When vehicles are not maintained
and their replacement is not planned for, the result can be ruinous competition. Poor business viability
in turn results in the withdrawal of services from less lucrative routes or during less lucrative times of
the day. A key policy challenge confronting city governments in the global south is therefore the
improvement of the quality of public transport services. This needs to occur in the context of weak
institutional frameworks and scarce fiscal and human resources: a set of challenges elaborated upon in
the following discussion.

Emergent public transport planning responses

Some authors have suggested the prevalence of a ‘regulatory cycle’ in the cities of the global south to
explain fluctuation between, on the one hand, formalized large public transport operators under
regulatory control, and on the other, the entrance of small fragmented operators in a highly competitive
and loosely regulated regime (Gwilliam 2008b). In essence, this ‘regulatory cycle’ involves the following
four main stages:

1 political pressure to keep fares uneconomically low, and a lack of competition, leads to inefficiencies
and decline in monopolistic or oligarchical public transport undertakings;
2 multiple smaller self-regulated paratransit operators emerge to fill the service gaps that result from
decaying formal public transport services;
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3 the weak regulatory regimes associated with paratransit, and aggressive competition in the road space for passengers, leads to low qualities of service; and
4 public authorities seek to re-introduce large formal public transport undertakings in an attempt to improve service quality levels.

The cycle is repeated, although not necessarily returning to precisely the same situation in which it started, once the efficiencies of larger public transport undertakings begin to decline due to a lack of competition or ‘regulatory capture’.

While it is debatable whether a ‘regulatory cycle’ can be observed in all contexts (see for instance Wilkinson 2010), many cities in the global south would appear to be in, or contemplating, a public transport policy environment broadly consistent with the fourth stage described above. This section discusses how public authorities have intervened to improve public transport service levels, and to re-regulate public transport operators.

Of contemporary public sector interventions into public transport systems, the most prominent initiative in the field has been ‘bus rapid transport’ (BRT). The defining features of BRT systems include: physically segregated trunk service busways to prevent buses from experiencing congestion delays caused by general traffic; pre-boarding fare control and level-boarding to minimize dwell times at trunk stations; and integrated feeder and trunk service ticketing to facilitate seamless bus service transfers.

The installation of BRT services in the global south thus necessitates major changes to the configuration of public transport networks. Principal amongst these is the replacement of direct services (typically operated as paratransit) with feeder-trunk-distributor services (see Figure 39.5). As indicated above, a feeder-trunk-distributor service arrangement is a defining feature of BRT systems (Wright and Hook 2007). The common view in public transport economics is that it is optimal for larger buses

Figure 39.5  Route structures: direct (top) and feeder-trunk-distributor (bottom) services
to serve high volume routes, and for smaller buses to serve low volume routes. Minibuses are therefore usually viewed as an adjunct to the operations of large buses, serving routes on which large buses would operate at too low a frequency. Minibuses are commonly perceived to outperform large buses only on routes where their higher seat–kilometre costs (assuming comparable labour costs and vehicle maintenance regimes) offset the reduction in headways (i.e. the time between vehicles on the route) and passenger waiting time costs. Feeder-trunk-distributor services can, however, disadvantage some passengers through creating a need to undertake more transfers. BRT system designs are therefore required which minimize both the cost (i.e. additional fares) and time penalties (i.e. the time it takes to alight from a vehicle, walk to and wait for next vehicle and board) of transfers. The cost penalty is usually minimized or eliminated by enabling transfers in closed stations which removes the need for additional fares, while the time penalty is minimized by using smaller vehicles on the feeder and distribution routes, with consequently higher frequencies for any given level of demand (Gwilliam 2008a). It is argued that operating fewer but higher capacity vehicles on the trunk routes results in savings in vehicle operating resources (i.e. driver hours, vehicle km), which can be reallocated to increasing service frequencies along the feeder and distribution routes.

While pre-dated by some Northern American and European urban busways (Chicago in 1939, and Runcorn in 1971) (Deng and Nelson 2011), the complete package of BRT innovations is widely attributed to the Brazilian city of Curitiba (which started operating proto-BRT services in 1974). For many years Curitiba’s Rede Integrada de Transporte was regarded as the international BRT exemplar (Rabinovitch 1996; Smith and Raemaekers 1998). In the past decade, however, attention has shifted to Bogotá’s TransMilenio system implemented in 2000, largely on the basis of the extraordinary peak passenger loads achieved (Wright 2001). The implementation of Curitiba’s BRT system started in 1972, and its first corridor began operating in 1974 (Pardo 2009; Ardila-Gomez 2004). Key to Curitiba’s early success was the establishment of an autonomous agency responsible for urban planning, including transport (Instituto de Pesquisa e Planejamento Urbano de Curitiba), in 1965, and the subsequent adoption of a master plan to direct the city’s land use and transport system development in 1966. Jaime Lerner, the mayor of Curitiba during this period, favoured a bus system over a metro rail system proposed at the time, because of its comparatively lower cost and faster implementation. The innovations in bus system planning in the city were consequently developed largely to counter pressures to implement rail services. These innovations included: a trunk and feeder service network; a single ticketing system and a ‘trinary road system’ comprising central exclusive BRT lanes and parallel higher speed mixed travel lanes for express services. In 1980, a circular route was created and a single fare for the entire public transport network was introduced. Further innovations in the 1980s took the form of a change from passenger-based to km-based operator contracts (i.e. paying operators on the basis of service kilometres, which removed the incentive to compete aggressively for passengers within the road space), and pre-boarding fare control (i.e. fare collection before passenger boarding, which reduced bus stop dwell times considerably). This enabled the city authority (Urbanização de Curitiba) to establish a central clearinghouse to collect and distribute fare box revenue according to the service km provided by each contracted bus operating company.

The construction of the first phase of Bogotá’s BRT system started in 1999, and service operations began in 2000 (Ardila-Gomez 2004; Cain et al. 2006; Gilbert 2008). To manage the system, a publicly managed company, TransMilenio, was established to administer contracts. The system consists of a network of trunk busways, with passing lanes enabling express and stopping services to share the same road space and to increase passenger capacities considerably. The trunk service routes are integrated with feeder services provided by buses operating in connecting mixed-traffic lanes. In contrast to Curitiba, the TransMilenio system did not introduce many technological innovations. Rather, its elevated status in the public transport literature is due to the scale and speed at which it was implemented,
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the passenger capacities it produced, and the incorporation of large numbers of small incumbent paratransit operators into its operating companies. The busiest corridor in the system, Avenida Caracas, carries a peak load of 36,500 passengers per hour per direction (some authors report 43,000 passengers, Hidalgo et al. 2010), compared to 13,000 passengers on Curitiba’s Eixo Sul corridor. As will be discussed later, this ridership is comparable to many rail systems. Initially there was resistance by incumbent bus operators to own and operate buses under service km-based gross-cost contracts (i.e. contracts under which operator revenue was no longer determined by passenger volumes). Enrique Peñalosa, the mayor of Bogotá during this period, along with a team of professionals and negotiators, invested considerable effort in a programme of public information and stakeholder engagement. To entice local firms to tender, several concessions were made. In particular, bus operators bidding for service contracts were favoured if they had local bus operating experience, and owned or purchased existing buses (for later scrapping as part of an initiative to reduce the overall quantity of buses in operation).

Following the successes in public transport improvement in Latin American cities generally, and in Curitiba and Bogotá more specifically, BRT systems have been viewed by many city governments throughout the world as a viable alternative to rail systems (Hensher and Golob 2008). The basis for this view is a supposition that the capital and operating costs of BRT systems are substantially lower than rail systems, and that the passenger capacities they can achieve are broadly similar. Figure 39.6 tests this through meta-analysis of cost, ridership and operating speed data collated from a variety of data compilations. Notwithstanding the difficulties in assembling data that are comparable and reliable, these data broadly confirm the capital cost advantages of BRT systems, and, to a lesser extent, their capacity similarity. Insufficient operating cost data were found for inclusion in this comparative analysis.

Part (a) of the figure plots passenger ridership against capital cost, and, assuming the limited data on light rail and metro systems are broadly representative, confirms that BRT systems are cheaper to construct. The ridership values for different public transport modes suggest that some BRT corridors (notably Bogotá, São Paulo and Porto Alegre) produce ridership comparable to rail corridors. These BRT corridors are, however, outliers, and the data indicate that there is no real alternative to rail services in transporting large passenger volumes (i.e. >45,000 passengers per hour). Most BRT corridors included in the figure have a peak load of between 3,000 and 13,000 passengers per hour.

Measures of peak passenger ridership do not reflect the quality of service, however, as it is possible for very slow moving congested services with small headways and high vehicle occupancies to attain high throughput values. For this reason part (b) of Figure 39.6 introduces mean operating speeds into a measure of ‘productivity’, illustrating the greater quality of service achieved by modes with more expensive dedicated right-of-way infrastructure. These data clearly demonstrate the productivity advantages of rail systems with wholly segregated rights-of-way. For decision-makers in many cities of the global south, however, the lower capital costs of BRT have outweighed the greater productivity of rail in making public transport investment choices. Modes with lower capital and operating costs are obviously an attractive option for the agencies responsible for public transport investment in situations where funding is chronically limited and subject to competing demands from other policy sectors.

Diffusion of public transport innovations

Having established its centrality in the field, this section discusses the diffusion of BRT technology, and the degree to which cities of the global south have offered transferable practices to the cities of the global north. Figure 39.7 presents a timeline of BRT corridor service launches by city GDP per capita. While it cannot be claimed that they are comprehensive, these data demonstrate that over the past decade BRT technology has diffused rapidly across cities of both the global south and the global north. Of the 168 BRT corridors for which launch year data are available, 116 (68 per cent) were launched in the last ten years. The data also highlight the contribution of Latin American cities.
Figure 39.6 Peak public transport corridor passenger ridership, by capital cost and productivity

Notes:
1. ‘Full specification BRT’ is defined as a corridor with the following features: physically segregated median-aligned ‘closed’ trunk service busways; feeder and trunk service fare integration; pre-boarding fare control; and level-boarding trunk stations that facilitate feeder-trunk service transfers.
2. ‘Standard specification BRT’ is defined as a corridor with physically segregated trunk service busways, but not all (at least two, Wright and Hook 2007) of the other features that a ‘full specification’ system has.
3. ‘Busway’ is defined as a bus system operating on a physically segregated lane that is permanently and exclusively for the use of public transport vehicles.
4. ‘Enhanced bus’ is defined as a system which may employ a combination of BRT, and other bus prioritization and service quality enhancement features, but does not have a physically segregated busway over most of the service route length.

Source: Passenger ridership, capital cost and mean operating speed data are derived from a variety of sources compiled by Bruun and Allen (2012, personal communication), Finn et al. (2011), Hidalgo et al. (2010) and MacDonald (2012). In the case of daily passenger ridership data, it is assumed that 15 per cent of trips occur in the peak hour.
Urban mobilities in public transport

Figure 39.7 Diffusion of bus rapid transit corridor systems by city gross domestic product per capita (n=99)

Source:
3. City population data are derived from: www.citypopulation.de (accessed 15 November 2012).

(particularly Lima [1972], Curitiba [1974], Belo Horizonte [1975], Goiania [1976], Porto Alegre [1980], Recife [1982] and São Paulo [1980]) in pioneering BRT systems. Of the BRT corridors launched in the last decade, 37 per cent were in cities with a current GDP per capita of greater than USD19,000 per annum, compared to only 19 per cent in the period up to 2002. Bus transportation arguably represents one of the few policy sectors in which innovation and technological development has flowed from the south to the north.

The rapid diffusion of the past decade has been fuelled in part by the efforts of international development agencies: particularly the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy (ITDP) and the Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ, formerly GTZ). To aid the spread of BRT systems these agencies have disseminated considerable technical guidance, most notably the ITDP’s Bus Rapid Transit Planning Guide (Wright and Hook 2007) and the GTZ’s Sourcebook Module 3b: Bus Rapid Transit (Wright 2003). To promote high-quality BRT systems, ITDP and GIZ have more recently published The BRT Standard which defines what constitutes ‘best practice’ in BRT system design, and proposes a scoring method that celebrates high-quality systems (ITDP and GIZ 2012). City BRT systems are awarded ‘gold’, ‘silver’ or ‘bronze’ on the basis of the scores they achieve. BRT technology diffusion has also been fuelled by international study tours to Latin American cities. Curitiba and Bogotá in particular have hosted numerous delegations seeking information on the implementation of their Rede Integrada de Transporte and TransMilenio systems respectively, effectively serving as demonstration projects for many cities across the world (Mejía-Dugand et al. 2013).

As a result, many cities in both the global south and the global north have been persuaded to consider adopting BRT systems as the core component of their proposed public transport improvement projects. More particularly with respect to sub-Saharan Africa – the site of much forecast world urbanization – a
number of city governments have over the past decade embarked upon the initial phases, or at least proposed the installation, of BRT as a means of reforming public transport systems (Gauthier and Weinstock 2010; Wright 2011). Many of these proposals have been explicitly modelled upon ‘best practice’ Latin American cases described in the previous section, and the widely acclaimed TransMilenio system in Bogotá more specifically. BRT services have been launched in Johannesburg in 2009 (McCaul and Ntuli 2011) and in Cape Town in 2011 (Schalekamp and Behrens 2012), and numerous other cities are either planning or constructing BRT systems (e.g. Addis Ababa, Dar es Salaam, Durban, Rustenburg and Tshwane). So-called ‘BRT-lite’ services (i.e. a segregated busway service without the features that define BRT) were launched in Lagos in 2008 (Dairo and Brader 2009).

As discussed earlier, the model of ‘best practice’ BRT advocated is essentially one in which existing direct paratransit services are replaced by a feeder-trunk-distributor service network, and operators converted into contracted formal bus companies. Thus, with notable exceptions in West Africa (e.g. Accra, Dakar), many of the sub-Saharan African BRT proposals envisage, explicitly or implicitly, in toto replacement of paratransit services as an outcome of the transformation process, albeit gradually or in phases.

Conclusion: transferability prospects

This chapter set out to explore key transport policy challenges that are unique to cities of the global south generally, and to review and discuss responses to policy challenges relating to public transport issues more specifically. It has been argued that, while all growing cities experience challenges in maintaining efficient, sustainable and equitable levels of access and mobility for their inhabitants, the global south faces some particularities relative to the global north. These include: lower (but increasing) levels of motorization; worsening congestion externalities as a result of a larger gap between system capacity and demand; higher dependence on public and non-motorized modes; higher road crash fatality rates; and greater informality in public transport service provision and regulation. In many cities, qualities of public transport service are poor, and in need of improvement. In this regard, it has been argued that road-based public transportation, in the form of BRT, represents a policy sector in which innovation and technological development has flowed more strongly from the south to the north, than from the north to the south. The following concluding remarks reflect critically upon the transferability prospects of these innovations, focusing particular attention on sub-Saharan African cities where urbanization forecasts predict the pressures on supporting urban infrastructures and public fiscal resources will be most severe.

It is argued that, while the South American BRT experience generally, and the Bogotá and Curitiba experiences more specifically, undoubtedly provide inspiration and some important lessons for cities in the global south, it must be questioned whether they offer a model that can be transferred directly and uncritically into all contexts. It does not necessarily follow that the processes and technologies that have enabled successful outcomes in one context, will achieve this level of success when transferred to another. Ironically, it is probable that the prospects for the successful transfer of BRT systems may be stronger in the global north than in many of the least resourced parts of the global south. BRT innovations were, in essence, formulated as a cheaper alternative to light and metro rail transit systems. Their original conceptualization was not as an alternative to paratransit systems: services upon which the majority of public transport users in most cities of the global south depend. The successful implementation of ‘gold standard’ BRT networks requires supporting urban densities and land development policies, considerable and sustained capital investment, and established institutional structures and capacities underpinned by appropriate enabling legislative frameworks. Many of these pre-conditions do not exist in the poorer cities of the global south, and are more prevalent, in contrast, in the cities of the global north.

In sub-Saharan African cities in particular, there are path dependencies and constraints that limit the extent of possible public transport system reforms. Indeed, paratransit operations have some inherent advantages with respect to demand responsiveness and service innovation in the context of rapid
unplanned urbanization that should not be discarded. They are flexible, penetrative (i.e. provide services to parts of the city that scheduled large buses cannot), and free of direct operator subsidization. They can also offer an important source of income and poverty alleviation to a segment of the population that often finds itself superfluous to the formal economy. Attempts to eradicate paratransit, therefore, may be neither pragmatic nor strategic.

It is further argued that (beyond a ‘do-nothing’ scenario) two public transport reform outcomes are likely in sub-Saharan African cities: hybrid scheduled paratransit service systems in cities that have the capacity to instal formal high capacity services; and upgraded paratransit service systems in cities that do not (Salazar Ferro et al. 2013). A review of international experience yields a variety of policy alternatives in engaging these two scenarios, which require careful consideration (Behrens et al. 2012; Salazar Ferro et al. 2013).

To conclude then, it is argued that the established interests of paratransit operators and the financial and regulatory capacities of responsible government agencies present deeply embedded constraints to policy choices and path dependencies that should not be ignored. With regard, more specifically, to reform strategies based upon the in toto replacement of paratransit with BRT feeder-trunk-distributor services, resistance by existing operators with well-established vested interests and reluctance to surrender control of their businesses and livelihoods en masse to what are likely to be uncertain prospects associated with transformed systems, as observed in South African cities in these processes to date (Cape Town, Johannesburg and Port Elizabeth), potentially present a significant obstacle to change. Further, the appropriation of ‘best practice’ BRT models that have not been fitted adequately to specific local institutional frameworks and urban environments, and as a result have not accurately anticipated and secured the substantial capital and operating funding required by these systems, may well prove unaffordable without a major diversion of scarce public resources. These models may also offer poorer benefit-to-cost ratios than originally expected.

The prospect of achieving the sometimes explicitly stated, or implicitly implied, ambitious objective of total paratransit replacement in sub-Saharan African cities in the short to medium term seems remote. Cities will depend, for decades, on a hybrid public transport system that combines both scheduled and paratransit operators – possibly in what Gwilliam (2008b) refers to as an optimum state of ‘delicately balanced chaos’. City governments formulating much-needed strategies to reform their public transport systems should recognize the enduring presence of paratransit services and their centrality to public transport provision, not ignore them.

References


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Note

1 In recent decades rates of urbanization in the global south have accelerated relative to the global north. The mean annual rates of change for the urban populations of Africa, Asia and Latin America between 1970 and 2011 were 3.8 per cent, 3.2 per cent and 2.6 per cent respectively, compared to 0.7 per cent and 1.3 per cent for Europe and Northern America (UNDESA 2011). The United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs’ forecast for the period 2012 to 2030 suggests that urbanization in Africa will outstrip the rest of the world (at a rate of 3.1 per cent per annum, compared to 1.9 per cent, 0.3 per cent, 1.1 per cent, 0.9 per cent for Asia, Europe, Latin America and Northern America respectively).
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URBAN FRAGMENTATION, ‘GOOD GOVERNANCE’ AND THE EMERGENCE OF THE COMPETITIVE CITY

Julio D. Dávila

Introduction

As national governments relinquish some of their functions, governments of cities around the globe are increasingly expected to act in a corporate manner to compete with other cities (Harvey 1989; Sager 2011). The orthodoxy that posits that economic openness and liberalization are desirable steps towards development has turned the focus of international and national policy to those cities where economic output and population are concentrated. The resulting policy prescriptions seek to prepare cities to attract foreign investment by making them more amenable to an international elite, easing local regulations, providing infrastructure and incentives and generally creating a modern image by resorting to an accepted international language of architectural aspiration and urban prosperity (Cuadrado-Roura and Fernández Güell 2008; Rossi and Vanolo 2012).

Central to these policy prescriptions are the notions of globalization and ‘good urban governance’. The World Bank advanced the idea of ‘good urban governance’ in the early 2000s as a central tenet in its pledge to help ensure ‘a decent quality of life and equitable opportunities for all residents, including the poorest’ and, in its own words, make cities livable (2000: 8). Compared to the 1990s and 2000s, the World Bank’s current influence over national government policies, as measured by the volume of loans it is able to disburse, has diminished – especially in relation to foreign direct investment and overseas remittances. Until the early 2000s, however, the World Bank’s influence on the nature and direction of policies of national governments that needed to borrow from it was virtually undisputed. In the 1980s and 1990s this institution lay behind many of the major reforms of the state embodied in Structural Adjustment Policies (SAPs), mainly in low and middle-income nations to which it made conditional loans (Mohan et al. 1999; Craig and Porter 2006). As the legacy of SAPs persists, it is pertinent to examine the nature and reach of what became an influential set of policies once they were taken up at the city scale. The story is not one of simple policy transfer.

This chapter examines the World Bank’s position on ‘good urban governance’ and its promotion of urban competitiveness within a framework of globalization, and sets this against a set of recent urban interventions in the city of Medellin, Colombia’s second largest city. The case of Medellin is a valuable one to examine, not simply because it has been largely under-documented internationally, but also because it has been marked in recent decades by acute problems of violence, poverty, a large informal
economy and growing social and spatial fragmentation that in many ways are typical of other cities in Latin America.

Medellin in the 2000s offered a range of institutionally and politically bold social and economic policies that stand in stark contrast to the free-market policies espoused by Colombia’s national government of the 1990s (Bateman et al. 2011). The chapter shows that in a context of unusually high levels of violence and social malaise, successive local governments in Medellin had no option but to fill major gaps in access to infrastructure and improve the well-being of poor and highly marginalized urban communities. Whilst espousing a competitiveness and liberalization discourse to attract foreign investment that might appear to point to a set of free-market policies, like those advocated by the World Bank, in practice these governments actively intervened by investing heavily in urban infrastructure to benefit marginalized communities while strengthening local democratic practices. Medellin is unusual in that it not only devoted considerable investment towards upgrading informal settlements and connecting their residents to the formal city, but it was also able to draw on a set of robust municipal institutions and national and local revenues as well as other local resources that few municipal governments of its size in the global south are able to secure.

The next section examines first, the arguments supporting reforms of the national state that dominated much of the mainstream political discourse in Latin America in the 1980s and 1990s and second, the notion of ‘good urban governance’ as outlined by the World Bank. The third section presents the case study of Medellin, mainly focusing on the major investments in transport and physical upgrading of marginalized urban communities of the past decade, as well as on the city governments’ search for greater competitiveness. A final section concludes.

‘Good urban governance’

The 1980s saw major shifts both in the nature of the state and how influential decision-makers in the international arena perceived it. The state had been seen as a crucial factor and central component of the process of economic and social development since the 1930s, when the world economy suffered major setbacks resulting from the Great Depression. This central function of the state began to be questioned some decades later. The arguments of major thinkers advocating a reduced role of the state in the national economy, like Hayek in the 1940s, and later Buchanan, Friedman, Balassa, Lal and Little in the 1960s, 1970s and 1980s, are well known (Hunt 1989).

The process of reduction in the size of the state and deregulation of the market that unfolded at a global scale has been variously described and analysed from a range of ideological and epistemological angles. Of interest here is what this involved in terms of contestation, malleability and reconstitution of the state in its different scales (Brenner 2004, 2009; Swyngedouw 2005), and in particular what this entailed for the city level, the scale at which it is more able to directly influence people’s quality of life and their sense of order and security (Maragall 1997).

Bresser Pereira (1999) refers to the state that started to appear since the 1930s in the industrialized countries as ‘social-bureaucratic’, whose main function was to guarantee social rights and full employment by directly employing a mass of bureaucrats. For this scholar and politician (who was minister for state reform under President Cardoso of Brazil in the 1990s), while the crisis of the 1930s was a crisis of the market, what emerged in the 1980s was a crisis of the state. After two decades of unprecedented economic growth and unparalleled improvements in living standards, industrialized countries underwent two decades of slower economic growth, increased unemployment, inflation, a growing fiscal gap and increasing fiscal difficulties.

In the decades prior to 1980, the state in Latin America had also played a central role in guiding development, through interventionist policies and protection to infant manufacturing industries, giving rise to rapid economic growth. However, the region was not able to escape the fiscal crisis of the
1980s. The exhaustion of import substitution industrialization policies launched in previous decades was accompanied by high inflation levels, increasing levels of private and public debt resulting from the high price of petrol and abundance of cheap petro-dollars in the 1970s (Kalmanovitz 2001). This was made worse by pressure on national economies arising from globalization, facilitated by technological advances (especially in telecommunications), low prices of energy for transporting trade merchandise (which even today fail to take into account the high price embodied in climate change as a result of fossil fuel emissions), and the rapid rise in international trade especially by multinational companies, key winners in the struggle to lift measures that protect national industries (Biel 2000).

According to Bresser Pereira (1999: 12), the crisis of the state resulted from ‘the fact that, once it grew beyond a certain size, and due to its loss of autonomy resulting from globalization, the State had often been captured by private interests’. So, ‘by growing too much and losing functionality’, the social-bureaucratic state ‘instead of being a factor impelling development began to dampen it’ (1999: 9). This led to a consensus among governments to the right of the political spectrum, such as Pinochet’s government in Chile and later Thatcher’s and Reagan’s in the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (USA) respectively, to open national economies and actively seek to reform the state in what came to be known as ‘the Washington Consensus’ (Williamson 2004). International aid agencies have been central actors in this process, by acting as transmission mechanisms of ideas about state reform in the most distant locations on the planet.

The World Bank (along with its sister institution, the International Monetary Fund) made reform of the state a pre-condition for disbursing loans. Although the impact of state reform in Latin America was not as socially devastating as in sub-Saharan Africa where levels of unemployment and informality increased exponentially, the Bank’s influence in the ways the state was to be redefined was nonetheless decisive, not merely at the national scale, but also at the sub-national and particularly the urban scale. In Zetter’s view (2004), because the urban scale concentrates a large and growing proportion of output and consumption, it becomes a fulcrum for the articulation of the national and global economies. This is the reason why state reforms seek to integrate more effectively cities to the global economy. Reform was also central to the policies of other international aid agencies including bilaterals (such as the UK Government’s Department for International Development) and multi-lateral ones (such as the European Union, the Inter-American Development Bank and UN-Habitat).

It is within this context that the notion of urban ‘good governance’ was coined. According to the World Bank’s strategy for the urban sector and local governments, good governance ‘implies inclusion and representation of all groups in the urban society – and accountability, integrity, and transparency of local government actions – in defining and pursuing shared goals’ (2000: 10). Cities must be livable, ‘ensuring that the poor achieve a healthful and dignified living standard that permits them to share the resources of society’ (World Bank 2000: 8). To achieve this, cities must be competitive, well governed and managed, and be financially sustainable.

In a competitive city, according to the World Bank, city output, investment, employment and trade respond dynamically to market opportunities (2000: 48; see also World Bank 1991). Under such conditions benefits from urban agglomeration are maximized and diseconomies (from congestion and pollution, for example) minimized. An excess of regulations and fragmented infrastructure systems create additional transaction costs that are particularly harmful to small firms, ‘a significant source of employment and entrepreneurial energy’ (2000: 48). Those cities able to support firms so as to maximize their economic potential and weathering adverse developments ‘also provide a good platform for workers – by offering flexible labor markets, efficient services, and good education and training’ (ibid.: 49).

In addition to good governance, it was also argued that a livable and competitive city also requires capable urban management. This refers to ‘the capacity to fulfill public responsibilities, with knowledge, skills, resources, and procedures that draw appropriately on partnerships’ (World Bank 2000: 49). A constant and formal interaction between local government and residents (including
Fragmentation and 'good' urban governance

NGOs and community organizations should be an important component of the Bank’s Urban Agenda programmes.

The third dimension seen to contribute to a livable city was financial sustainability or bankability. City governments become creditworthy in the eyes of international financial institutions only when they are able to demonstrate a solid resource base and regular revenue flows. Up to that point, only national governments are eligible for sovereign loans. This shift reflects not only the new responsibilities that municipalities have been given by central governments, but also their growing role as mechanisms of transmission between national and global capital as described earlier. And yet, many cities lack the economic vigour and financial capacity to access capital markets, as this requires expenditure management, revenue mobilization and cost recovery, predictable inter-governmental transfers, good financial administration, and prudent conditions for taking on loans. For the World Bank, one channel for enlarging the fiscal base of municipalities in the global south in particular is ‘to integrate informal and marginal communities as full urban citizens, taxpayers, and service customers’ (2000: 51).

In a separate exercise, the World Bank has explored how cities perform under different conditions of openness to the global economy and governance arrangements. Using large data sets from 400 cities both in wealthier (OECD) and less developed countries, it set out to measure the extent to which these are linked (Léautier 2006: x) and found that ‘good governance and globalization tend to improve city-level performance in both the access to services as well as the quality of delivery of services which allows cities to translate global opportunity into local value for their citizens’.

In this study, ‘governance’ was measured through three variables, one national and two at the city level: ‘control of corruption’ by national government, ‘bribery in utility’ (the extent to which firms pay a bribe to gain access to utility services at the city scale), and ‘state capture’ (the extent to which some firms make illegal payments to the local government thus reducing competition). ‘City performance’ is measured using standard variables of access to basic infrastructure services (water, sewerage, electricity and telephones). ‘Globalization’, the second factor in the study, hypothesizes that impinges on city-level performance, is measured at the country level using a composite of international political engagement (participation in United Nations, number of embassies, etc.), internet penetration, degree of personal interaction internationally, and economic integration into the global economy (Léautier 2006: 5).

Notwithstanding the methodological concerns one might have about such variables, such an exercise merits attention insofar as it seeks to capture, in broad terms, a range of associations between categories that are used by a hegemonic ideological framework which continuously pushes city governments in the direction of opening up their economies to compete with each other in attracting international capital. As Medellin is not exempt from such pressures it is relevant to examine the extent to which such analytical framework fits with the city’s reality.

The next section examines the extent to which these notions are of value in interpreting the case of Medellin. In particular, it seeks to examine the degree of association between globalization, governance and city performance as posited in the World Bank documents. The section also seeks to highlight the increased importance of Medellin’s local government as a central actor in local development, particularly in its contribution to reducing fragmentation of local infrastructure.

Medellin: the search for competitiveness

If any city can be said to be media-conscious it is Medellin, for several decades of the twentieth century Colombia’s main manufacturing centre. Testament to this is one of its most recent international accolades as ‘innovative city of the year’, beating 199 contenders on the way, including New York and Tel Aviv, the other two finalists. The official website of the prize (Wall Street Journal 2013) summarizes the city’s achievements thus:
Few cities have transformed the way that Medellín, Colombia’s second largest city, has in the past 20 years. Medellín’s homicide rate has plunged, nearly 80% from 1991 to 2010. The city built public libraries, parks, and schools in poor hillside neighborhoods and constructed a series of transportation links from there to its commercial and industrial centers. The links include a metro cable car system and escalators up steep hills, reducing commutation times, spurring private investment, and promoting social equity as well as environmental sustainability. In 2012, the Institute for Transportation and Development Policy recognized Medellín’s efforts with the Sustainable Transportation Award.

But a change in the institutional fabric of the city may be as important as the tangible infrastructure projects. The local government, along with businesses, community organizations, and universities worked together to fight violence and to modernize Medellín. Transportation projects are financed through public-private partnerships; engineering firms have designed public buildings for free; and in 2006, nine of the city’s largest firms funded a science museum. In addition, Medellín is one of the largest cities to successfully implement participatory budgeting, which allows citizens to define priorities and allocate a portion of the municipal budget. Community organizations, health centers, and youth groups have formed, empowering citizens to declare ownership of their neighborhoods.

Medellín’s challenges are still many, particularly in housing. However, through innovation and leadership, Medellín has sowed the seeds of transformation, leading to its recognition as a city with potential for long-lasting success.

Although some hype might be expected from what is largely a marketing exercise by international commercial companies, independent academic research on these changes, particularly in some of the city’s informal settlements (Dávila 2013; Brand and Dávila 2011), confirms the veracity of much of this. How did Medellín ‘remake’ itself? By the early 1990s the city had gained international notoriety from the violence between rival gangs seeking to control a booming export market of illegal drugs (mainly cocaine) to the US and Europe (Hylton 2007). A linked high homicide rate resulted partly from the high levels of unemployment brought about by economic liberalization that hit the city’s textile and garment producers and the readiness of unemployed youth in poor neighborhoods to take up paid jobs with the drug gangs (Brand 2005). With no significant supply of social housing to meet the demand of a rapidly growing population of rural migrants, from the 1940s onwards the steep hills east of the traditional city centre and eventually both sides of the Medellin River, provided a precarious but affordable location for improvised shacks in land squatted upon or bought from illegal land developers. Poverty has been an enduring and harsh reality in these and other rapidly growing informal settlements that extend above the long valley where much of the ‘formal’ city lies. Occupying less than a quarter of the city’s area, informal settlements nonetheless housed over half of its population, many of whom rent the property they live in. Demolitions and evictions from these precarious locations by the police became the norm, with the municipality unable or unwilling to provide affordable alternatives (Bahl 2012).

The city’s manufacturing industry (which never quite graduated from light consumer to capital goods), protected for decades by policies of import substitution industrialization and largely geared to a domestic consumer market, was unable to weather the winds of liberalization. This plunged the mass of workers into long-term unemployment and poverty. With the appearance of the international drug trade as an alternative source of income, some of the poorest areas in this city of 3.5 million inhabitants fell under the control of local gangs and became inaccessible even to the local police. The city became increasingly fragmented, with the upper and middle classes withdrawing to enclosed, guarded spaces, while the city’s squares and the inner city became the territory of street vendors, the homeless and armed gangs. Right-wing paramilitaries fought for control of informal settlements with left-wing militias.
Gradually the city’s political class, intellectuals, community groups and activists reached a consensus on the need to find solutions to its intractable social problems. The control and reclamation of public spaces were seen as effective deterrents to violence and crime (Stienen 2009; Medellin-IDB 2009). In this, the city government was able to build on Colombia’s new then national political Constitution of 1991 that gave the state the role of protecting public space for collective use over private interests. It also built on the precedent of a strong defence of public space made by mayor Enrique Peñalosa in Bogotá, Colombia’s capital city, in the late 1990s (Dávila 2004). That this often meant an official perception of informal street vendors and the homeless as undesirables who had to be removed is an issue that divided public opinion in Medellin (Stienen 2009). But it also chimed with the World Bank’s aforementioned notion that a city’s bankability necessitates integrating informal and marginal communities as full urban citizens, taxpayers and service customers.

During its construction in the early 1990s, the Metro was responsible for upgrading public spaces along its main line. This was achieved by imposing a common template and an architectural language of frugality and order, based on the notion that uniformity helped people identify such spaces with the ‘Metro Culture’, its system of tight rules of behaviour (Stienen 2009: 125). Implicit in this was an idealized vision of the city’s industrial past of the 1920s to 1970s, when social order was imposed by a conservative patriarchal system of family firms and the Catholic Church (Hylton 2007).

One important component of the public policies enacted under the municipal administration of elected mayor Sergio Fajardo (2004–2007) was a major programme of capital investment in a number of informal settlements to create or improve public spaces, public libraries, new schools, social housing, support to micro-enterprises, cultural events and recreation. These all point towards consolidating the presence of an until then absent local state, mainly through highly visible and attractive buildings that mark a stark contrast with the precariousness of self-built housing (Figure 40.1), and were the result of

Figure 40.1  Medellin Metrocable Line K with Park-Library España in the background
Photo: Julio D. Dávila
national and international architectural competitions. They also point towards making the city more readily attractive to international visitors and investors, in the hope that they might find some familiarity in the tropical exotism of such a troubled city.

A highly visible element of these interventions are two cable-car lines connecting low-income hilly communities with the city’s Metro system, the first of which was built by Fajardo’s predecessor as elected mayor. Despite their low passenger-carrying capacity (at 30,000 trips per day), they have improved mobility conditions within the catchment area of the stations and their use involves no additional cost for Metro users (Brand and Dávila 2011). They have also helped to physically integrate these settlements with the city centre while making residents feel part of the rest of the city. Their success can be measured in the long queues that form at peak times, and in the fact that similar systems have been implemented in other Latin American cities such as Caracas and Rio de Janeiro (Figure 40.2). Aerial cable-cars could well become to hilly areas what Bus Rapid Transit Systems (BRTs) have been to main arterial roads in large and medium-sized cities around the world since Bogotá launched its first line in 2000 (Gilbert 2008).

At the same time, to outsiders, including tourists, these lines have opened access to areas previously seen as dangerous. As youth gangs are still active in some of these areas and localized violence has not entirely disappeared, for some there is probably a certain thrill in experiencing these environments from the safe distance of a hovering cabin. Among local residents there is a palpable sense of relief and improvement, reflected in greater local investment in buildings and local businesses, as well as pride in receiving visitors.

Another important element of the municipality’s policies was the implementation of a participatory budgeting process, whereby local communities make collective decisions on 5 per cent of the municipality’s investment capital. Although this may not seem like a large proportion, between 2004 and 2011 communities across the city made investment decisions on a total of USD350 million (Coupé et al. 2013; Carvajal 2009). Participatory budgeting, a system developed originally in Porto Alegre, Brazil (Avritzer 2006; Peruzzotti and Selee 2009), was turned into a central strategy aimed at improving and strengthening the relationship between the local state and poor communities.

We can now return to the notions of ‘good governance’ and ‘city performance’ as advocated by the World Bank to assess to what extent the case of Medellin offers support to the argument that good governance and globalization tend to improve city performance, allowing cities to translate global opportunity into local value for their citizens (Léautier 2006).

Increased openness to the global economy was certainly at the core of mayor Fajardo’s policies in the mid-2000s: in his 286-page end of administration report, the word ‘competitive’ (as referring mostly to its citizens and its productive base) is cited 32 times. He further concludes:

we promoted the city as a destination for foreign investment on the basis of competitive human talent, the quality and coverage of its public utilities, a strong entrepreneurial tradition, competitive costs, and strategic clusters (garments, construction, energy, and business tourism).

(Fajardo 2007: 17)

His successor as mayor, Alfonso Salazar (2008–2011), went further and used the word in the title of his administration’s programme: ‘Medellin: Solidarity and Competitiveness’. Excluding references to this title, the word competitive appears 26 times in his 209-page end of administration report (Salazar 2011). Competitiveness is also central to the current administration of mayor Aníbal Gaviria (2012–2015), as shown in the urban development plan (Gaviria 2012), with 114 counts of the word in a 510-page document.

There is no denying that Medellin’s local government has tried very hard, over the last decade, to follow the World Bank’s advice to open its economy to the world. The intention was to diversify the
Figure 40.2  Rio de Janeiro’s aerial-cable car in Complexo de Alemão informal settlement

Photo: Frédéric Monié
local economy away from manufacturing industry and towards the service sector. The attraction of foreign private investment seems to have become a relevant issue, not merely for the municipal government, but also for the underground economy. A prominent Mafia boss linked to illegal drug trafficking and death squads argued in the mid-2000s that the city needed to attract foreign investment, lest the city ‘be left behind by the engine of globalization’ (Hylton 2007: 86).

To what extent has this seemingly frantic search for competitiveness and economic openness led to improvements as measured in terms of access and quality of services for its population? One way to find out is by comparing Medellin’s performance with that of other cities.

Comparisons with the World Bank’s study of a sample of 274 cities in developing countries quoted earlier (Léautier 2006) are revealing. They show that both in 1985 and in 2011 coverage of basic services in the municipality of Medellin (excluding the other nine municipalities in the metropolitan area, of which Medellin is the richest, with 70 per cent of the total population) was higher than for the sample of non-OECD cities from around the world. In particular, in 2011 it was well above those considered in the World Bank sample to be ‘highly globalized’, with upwards of 98 per cent of its population having access to water and sewerage services, and 94 per cent to telephone services. Even making allowances for the decade that separates Medellin’s 2011 data from that for the sample of cities (dating to the late 1990s or early 2000s), the differences are considerable.

Despite widespread poverty and a high incidence of urban informality in Medellin, coverage of basic infrastructure services was already among the highest in the sample in the mid–1980s. For decades, the city economy has relied almost entirely on local and regional resources, initially from mining and agriculture, and later from manufacturing, property and the financial sector. Municipal revenues have been bolstered by a well-managed property tax as well as a long-established betterment tax on infrastructure projects. The national government played a role in funding construction of key infrastructure projects, most notably the city’s Metro system, but by and large basic infrastructure has been built with local government revenues.

As was seen earlier, by the mid-2000s local authorities were intent on opening up the city economy (largely to the financial and property sectors) and improving its competitiveness. Can improvements be attributed to these efforts? Official figures show that the high levels of basic service coverage seen in 2011 had already been attained by the mid-2000s, so perhaps this was not a key factor. Furthermore, although measurements are elusive, it would seem that Medellin’s notorious international image weighed down these efforts considerably, though there are indications that investments in infrastructure, international events and marketing were paying off: the city’s position in Latin America as measured by an ‘index of attraction of investment’ (a composite of national and local factors including, among others, city’s reputation, quality of higher education, security and local purchasing power) rose from thirtieth in 2010, to twenty-fifth in 2012 and to thirteenth in 2013 (CEPEC-IdN 2013).

The question arises whether ‘good governance’ might then be responsible for the significant improvements in basic service coverage from the mid-1980s to the present. Are the high coverage rates in basic infrastructure services incompatible with the enormous social dislocation so poignantly shown in the high homicide rates and levels violence of the 1990s? The answer is no, and lies partly in the strength and endurance of the municipality’s powerful institutions. Central to the implementation of the range of socially progressive policies outlined earlier were three municipal institutions: the Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano (EDU – Urban Development Agency), the Metro Company and the Empresa de Servicios Públicos de Medellín (EPM – Public Utilities Company).

With the EDU the municipality showed an extraordinary capacity for managing urban development projects. Created in 2002, this public enterprise unit brought together established technicians, young professionals and academics new to public administration, a combination which allowed the fast implementation of novel ideas in short spans of time. Despite the large sums of local funds involved in these projects, a succession of municipal administrations not linked to traditional parties (both Fajardo and
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Salazar were elected independently of established political parties, a common rejection of party politics by urban voters in the 1990s and 2000s in Colombia) was instrumental in avoiding old clientelistic practices.

Funding for these projects was also crucial. Since the 1990s, EPM has been increasingly central to the plans of any local government administration. With a current asset value of over USD10 billion, EPM is a municipality-owned public company providing water, sewerage, energy and communications services as well as 20 per cent of Colombia’s electricity, with energy investments in other countries. It is the second largest company in Colombia after the national petroleum company (Ecopetrol), with an AAA national financial quality rating. In the three years between 2010 and 2012, EPM transferred close to USD1.4 billion to the municipality, equivalent to USD500 for every inhabitant. The enterprise is committed by law to transfer no less than 30 per cent of its surplus to the municipality, thus providing it with a substantial investment resource, including for the range of social programmes described earlier. It is able to do so by operating with a ruthless commercial logic, with illegal access to utility services being kept to a minimum. EPM spends over USD17 million per year in disconnecting and re-connecting users of infrastructure services who fail to pay their fares regularly (interview with F. Restrepo, EPM CEO, 25 March 2011).

The Metro Company was created in 1982 as a public company owned equally by the municipality of Medellin and the government of Antioquia Province into whose municipalities one of its two main lines extends. The system opened its doors in 1996 after 11 years of construction, demolition of large sections of the city centre, and considerable financial overruns. The first urban mass-transit system in Colombia, it set itself the role of transforming the city’s transport system, until then an inefficient mass of old and polluting buses competing for the same routes (Stienen 2009; Brand and Dávila 2011). Its main line connects the poor suburbs in the north to the city centre and the southern suburbs, the historical location of factories. Following a protracted construction process it sought to counteract negative perceptions among the citizenry through a concerted marketing effort at promoting a ‘Metro Culture’ of strict behavioural rules that in many ways reflected the ‘Jesuit disciplinary system for which the city became famous during the 1930s and 1940s’ (Stienen 2009: 126).

These efforts have paid off and successive mayors have found in the Metro Company a partner focused on functional autonomy and financial stability. These qualities can occasionally cause friction with the Medellin mayor’s office, for example in the selection of routes for a bus rapid transit system that it sees as generating competition (Brand and Dávila 2013). Nonetheless, there is no doubting its technical soundness, as seen in the fact that it has become a reference point in Latin America for the design of urban aerial cable-car lines, and it is held in high esteem by the city’s population despite having substantially increased ridership (to well over half a million users a day in 2012 involving heavy congestion at peak hours) and not subsidizing its fares (except to a few sections of the population such as low-income students and the elderly).

Of significance here is the fact that the political class has not been tempted to privatize EPM, a highly profitable company, nor the Metro, with the promise of large injections of cash, a temptation that many a local politician has fallen into in other contexts, both in Colombia and elsewhere (though at the time of writing sale of the telecommunications branch of EPM is being debated at the City Council). One explanation is that for several years both of these companies have had a very high standing in the opinion of Medellin’s citizens, while they serve well the interests of the dominant class. In this, the sense of pride that the average citizen feels for these institutions is shared by its elite, and draws on a strong sense of regional identity within Antioquia Province, of which Medellin is the capital (Brand and Dávila 2013; Hylton 2007).

Conclusions: is Medellin a case of ‘good urban governance’?

The hegemonic discourse embodied in the ‘good urban governance’ debate has been highly influential in Latin America. This was much in evidence in the 1990s and early 2000s with the
proliferation of strategic city plans fostered by national and international consultants (mainly associated with the Barcelona and Bilbao models; see Cuadrado-Roura and Fernández Güell 2008), but also through the deployment of a fairly standard kit of strategies and other tools designed to attract domestic or international capital and tourists, and generally project an image of modernity to the outside world. This has involved a range of interventions including major urban renewal of brownfield sites mainly located close to city centres, ports, rivers or high-income residential areas. In echoes of Harvey’s ‘accumulation by dispossession’ model, this has meant relocation of entire low-income or socially marginal communities and small businesses to less valuable sites, generally in the outskirts of cities, as well as large-scale investments in brand new corporate headquarters, convention centres, high-culture performance venues, hotels and office buildings, all exhibiting a readily identifiable and often bland international architectural language of glass, steel and faux gardens.

Nonetheless, according to the principles of ‘good governance’ outlined by the World Bank (2000), the range of interventions in informal settlements described here would appear to point towards making Medellín a more livable city. They would also appear to be contributing to making the city more competitive, given that they have helped integrate marginal areas to the rest of the city and to the city’s labour and service markets. The remarkable drops in the degrees of stigmatization previously experienced by the residents of the informal settlements served by the aerial cable-cars (Coupé 2013) should enable them to integrate more easily into the city’s wider labour markets, while gaining access to a broad range of cultural and social activities. Insofar as transport projects such as the cable-car lines widen access to specialized training, it is conceivable that it also helps strengthen their human capital. These issues should not, of course, be seen in isolation from other municipal programmes, such as for example access to a range of university scholarships that the municipality earmarked specifically for young residents of these settlements.

Finally, the range of interventions outlined here would point to strengthening the municipality’s bankability, insofar as they have sought to help workers access labour markets more easily and may lead them to eventually become tax payers. To what extent this will result in higher degrees of formalization of both workers and residents, and therefore higher levels of income tax, remains to be seen.

There is little doubt that the remarkable volume of highly visible investments in public space, social, cultural and transport infrastructure that Medellín has made in the past decade has helped forge an image of ‘good governance’ and ‘good management’, one that will probably attract national and international visitors and capital. How far this will help reduce factors that are not explicitly measured in the notion of ‘good governance’, such as pronounced levels of inequality and spatial fragmentation, will depend on a concerted effort to sustain high levels of investment in the city’s poorer areas, reduce the conspicuous levels of violence that still make everyday life miserable for thousands of residents, and continuing to foster a fragile culture of tolerance.

References
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The New Divided City?
Planning and ‘gray space’ between global north-west and south-east

Nufar Avni and Oren Yiftachel

Introduction

This chapter traces and theorizes the making of new urban divisions, namely those caused by the emergence of widespread urban informality. It claims that the study and conceptualization of ‘the divided city’ must pay serious attention to this structural and long-term type of division, which constitutes the new urban divide. Urban informalities denote developments, populations and transactions which do not comply with planning or legal regulations, and are denied planning approval or full membership in the urban community. Yet, by and large, these developments and populations continue to exist and grow, and become a major component of the new urban order. Hence, the process of ‘gray spacing’ has blurred the neat dichotomies between legal and illegal, citizen and alien, permanent and temporary. This phenomenon includes a combination of slums, squatters, invaders, illegal and temporary immigrants and their economies, and is conceptualized here as ‘gray space’.

The ‘gray spacing’ of most cities has also blurred the neat dichotomy between the global north-west and south-east in two major ways. First, the phenomenon of spreading informalities, which originates in the south-east, has long ‘infiltrated’ to cities of the north-west, mainly in the form of undocumented migration, temporary populations and growth in unplanned development. Second, the post-colonial flow of urban and planning knowledge, traditionally from the north-west to south-east direction, has now been partially reversed. Knowledge and concepts gained from the rich experience of the global peripheries is now used to understand and manage cities of the global core.

In the pages below, we offer a conceptual discussion, followed by analysis of the process of ‘gray spacing’ and subsequent urban divisions in the cities of Colombo, Sri Lanka and Tel-Aviv-Jaffa (TAJ), Israel. We demonstrate how informality has become a permanent urban component that divides space and population in the two cities. The chapter is part of a wider comparative research currently taking place in five cities, which touches the fields of urban citizenship, urban planning and ethno-class identities, through the ‘lenses’ of informal urban development.

Notably, the role of city and state authorities in the production of ‘gray spaces’ and the impact of planning policy have generally been absent from theoretical and professional discourses. Given the key role of these authorities, we focus in this chapter on the details of their involvement in producing, maintaining, and at times combating, urban informality. We demonstrate below that the combination of policies and intentional inaction have had a major impact on shaping informal spaces in both cities.
These have typically included the initial turning of a blind eye, followed by long-term neglect, and later partial ‘whitening’ of urban development through privatization and gentrification.

Conceptual framework

The ‘divided city’ has for long been a key concept in human geography and urban planning scholarship. A wide range of studies, originating with the pioneering works of Fredrick Engels in the nineteenth century, has documented the fragmentation of cities into group-based areas, and the nature of economic, political, ethnic and racial boundaries that typify such cities. To date, studies of this nature continue to dominate the field.

Let us provide a few notable examples. Studies of the Fordist and post-Fordist (mainly western) city emphasized the dividing impact of wealth disparities, amplified by the increasing concentration of the population into urban agglomeration (Marcuse 1993; Harvey 2008). Other studies have drawn empirical and conceptual attention to the splitting of cities on the basis of identity (race, ethnicity, religion), with notable examples being a series of studies on Belfast (Boal 1978), the American black ghetto (Massey and Denton 1993; Bollens 2011), and the Arab-Jewish city (Yacobi 2009; Missewitz and Rieniet 2007). Other scholars have drawn further attention to the mechanisms of essentialization and spatialization of difference, which often overlap with socio-economic divisions in the making of the colonial and post-colonial city (Mabin 2005; Watson 2012). The new angles have brought renewed interest to the conceptualization of urban divisions as ‘spaces of risk’ (Jabareen 2006), with the effect of not only dividing space and communities, but producing whole populations classified as ‘urban outcasts’ (Wacquant 1997; Marcuse 2010).

Yet, it is striking that these rich discussions on urban divisions have consistently lacked serious analysis of urban informality as a major and growing source of urban divisions, deeply intertwined in the production of the contemporary city. While urban informality is often closely associated with class and identity, it cannot be reduced to either of these criteria. Recent work on informality has indeed shown that new boundaries and limitations derive from the construction of the informal space itself, which adds new dimensions to ‘old’ urban divisions. Urban informality appears to form a foundation for a new ‘mode of urbanism’ (AlSayyad 2004) marked by deep geo-social divisions engraved in the urban landscape and society (Roy 2005, 2008; Davis 2006). These divisions become structural and enduring through a process we refer to as ‘gray spacing’.

Gray spacing

The long-term nature and impact of urban informality and its rapid expansion in most global regions, warrants, we argue, its conceptualization as ‘gray space’ (Yiftachel 2009, 2011). ‘Space’ is used here in a Lefebvrian sense, denoting the combination of geographical and socio-political processes that merge to ‘produce’ the urban assemblages of places, rights and capabilities. These in turn shape urban regimes and group relations. ‘Gray spacing’ denotes the processes through which the urban structure is transformed. It is the spatial and political foundation of the ‘surface expression’ of informal urban development.

A key point about ‘gray space’ is its unstable and putatively temporary nature. This instability defines the assemblages, developments, places, populations and transactions that are positioned between the ‘lightness’ of legality/approval/safety, and the ‘darkness’ of eviction/destruction/death. ‘Gray spaces’ are neither fully integrated nor totally eliminated, forming pseudo-permanent margins of today’s urban regions, which exist partially outside ‘the gaze’ of state authorities and city plans (see Roy 2009). Hence, the new urban division is often elusive, malleable and unstable. Nevertheless, it has concrete consequences for the unrecognized parts of the city, which are continuously denied full access to their urban citizenship rights.
The rapid expansion of ‘gray spaces’ has transformed urban space, regimes and society in unforeseen ways. It has prompted calls for new critical urban theories to account for the new, previously unforeseen, urban structure, in which the city is remade by unplanned and illegal neighbourhoods, immigrants and economies (Brenner et al. 2012; Yiftachel 2010).

The conceptualization of informalities as ‘gray spaces’ highlights the need to move beyond rather problematic dichotomies of legal/illegal, planned/unplanned, foreign/citizen, and immigrant/local. Instead of projecting these rigid classifications on increasingly diverse urban societies, it draws attention to the process of ‘gray spacing’ during which whole urban areas and populations may be located in neither of these categories. The status of these spaces may be subject to long-term struggles and mobilizations, which typically result in long-term deprivation, but also in the possible upgrading of the status of unplanned communities and areas, in what Bayat (2007) aptly termed ‘the slow encroachment of the ordinary’. Hence, ‘gray spaces’ mark the new character of urban divisions − no longer strictly bound to walls, lines or legal status, but rather more dynamic, mobile and unstable.

Contemporary urbanism has become dominated by such informal assemblages, mainly, but far from solely, in the global ‘south-east’. The first wave of scholarship on urban informality emerged from Latin America, with strong emphasis on economic processes, often referring to ‘the informal sector’ (see Annis and Franks 1989; Perlman 1976; AlSayyad 1993; Rakowski 1983; De Soto 1989). Recent work has moved further to re-conceptualize informalities as a spatial-societal process, forming a vital component in the new mode of urbanism developing in contemporary cities, which is structurally based on the permanent existence of informal housing, economy and development processes. In many parts of the world, therefore, the formal–informal gap has at the same time become increasingly blurred and pervasive. ‘Gray spacing’ is therefore observed by some to constitute the most significant division to characterize the contemporary city (Davis 2006; Roy 2009).

Recent work on urban informality has broadened the scope to analyse the surfacing of this phenomenon in urban Africa, the Middle East and Asia (see Roy and AlSayyad 2004; Dierwechter 2004; Bayat 2007; Davis 2006; Fernandes and Varley 1998; Miraftab 2009). As these authors show, the ‘gray spacing’ of contemporary cities marks a profound shift in their regimes, that is, in the ways in which power is spatialized and institutionalized through space, and in the new social relations that are produced and maintained by this emerging socio-spatial order.

While the concepts of urban informalities and ‘gray spacing’ also cover the creation of informal and illegal spaces ‘from above’, that is, by powerful groups linked to the centres of power (see Yiftachel 2009), in this chapter we shall focus on the most common peripheral, weakened and marginalized ‘gray spaces’.

Yet, communities subjected to ‘gray spacing’ are far from powerless recipients of urban policies, as they generate new mobilizations and insurgent identities, employ innovative tactics of survival, and use ‘gray spaces’ as bases for self-organization and empowerment. To be sure, power relations are heavily skewed in favour of the state or majority/wealthy groups, yet the ‘invisible’ population of informal settlement is indeed an important actor in shaping cities and regions.

Housing, on which we focus, is the most common and central component of ‘gray space’ worldwide. This derives from housing being an immediate human need, commonly self-provided without plans or approvals. Housing also constitutes a major financial burden to most people commonly amplified by regulations, institutions and taxes (for an overview, see Friedman 2010; Napier 2011). Hence, the financing of housing by the urban poor and immigrant groups is often conducted under the ‘gray economy’ (which forms a vital element in enabling the ‘gray spacing’ of the city) in a series of informal arrangements.

Indeed, the ‘gray spacing’ of vast metropolitan areas in most world regions is marked by self-construction of marginal neighbourhoods, which commonly create large swathes of new urban developments, hanging between approval and inclusion, and the danger of criminalization and eviction.
The close proximity of these informal developments to established higher-income neighbourhoods has spawned a new urban order, causing Davis (2006: 27) to conclude his global survey of slums by observing that:

The global growth of vast informality … is a wholly original structural development unforeseen by either classical Marxism or modernization pundits. Slums indeed challenge social theory to grasp the novelty of a true global residuum … concentrated in a shanty-town world encircling the fortified enclaves of the urban rich.

Urban policy

Urban policy is typically ambivalent about ‘gray spaces’ and their communities: they are usually reluctantly tolerated, while subjected to derogatory discourses about their putative ‘contamination’, ‘criminality’ and ‘danger’ to the desired ‘order of things’. We identify in this chapter several typical stages of urban policy responses to the emergence of informality, which accompany the process of ‘gray spacing’:

(a) Ignore – prolonged turning a blind eye;
(b) Neglect – intentional denial and under-development;
(c) Limit – institutional and at times violent control and containment;
(d) ‘Whiten’ (selectively) – gradual recognition of (selected) sections, accompanied by aesthetization, privatization and gentrification.

The above can be described as the ‘toolkit’ of managing the ‘unwanted/irremovable’ in today’s dynamic urban regions and economies. These groups are typically made of minorities, immigrants and the poor. The disjuncture between actual tolerated reality and its ‘intolerable’ legal, planning and discursive framing, constantly shifts the boundaries between ‘accepted’ and ‘rejected’. This process ‘entraps’ whole populations in a range of unplanned urban zones, lacking certainty, stability and hence development. The consequences are clear in many cities – whole neighbourhoods and quarters lack basic services, thereby creating concrete disparities and divisions between the city’s various sections.

As part of the management of ‘gray space’, well documented by Holston (2008) and Datta (2012), the power of the ‘stubborn realities’ makes the authorities recognize and ‘whiten’ (in other words, approve) certain, usually small, informal areas. This gradual and partial process enables residents of such areas to gain access to modern services and be better integrated into the urban fabric, thereby ‘lightening’ the ‘grayness’ of their developments and communities. However, this ‘whitening’ process is most commonly partial, gradual and incomplete, often becoming the backbone of a long-term struggle in itself. This process is often so slow that it does not keep pace with the creation of new informal developments, so the overall scope of urban informality continues to increase.

Another option is the advancement of ‘whitening’ by either public ‘urban renewal’ projects, which have a clear impact of controlling and even dispersing local communities, or by forces of gentrification with their associated ‘take over’ of the area by the gentrifiers, such as professionals, investors and members of the ‘creative class’. In both these scenarios, the state and private capital upgrade the building stock and often radically increase housing prices. This tends to drive the original inhabitants away, and typically paves the way for the creation of new ‘gray spaces’ in close proximity (for recent examples see Datta 2012 on New Delhi, and Holston 2008 on São Paulo).

Clearly, gray spacing is a power-laden process. Therefore, the concrete emergence of ‘stubborn’ informalities is typically handled by a combination of corrective or equalizing policy, as well as a range of delegitimizing and criminalizing regulations and discourses. This creates a multitude of shifting
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boundaries that divide urban groups according to their ‘planning status’ which is often determined by a range of political motives. This politicization puts in train a process of ‘divisive incorporation’ and with it ‘creeping urban apartheid’ whereby the meaning of urban citizenship depends on features such as ethnicity, place of birth or class. The double-edged nature of ‘divisive incorporation’ preserves ‘gray spaces’ in a state of ‘indefinite temporariness’; concurrently tolerated and condemned, perpetually waiting ‘to be corrected’ (see AlSayyad 2004; Davis 2006; Neuwrith 2006; Roy 2005, 2009). We may therefore think of the ‘gray spacing’ process as hinging on the temporal management of space. Hence, the pace of the recognition process is a key axis around which the nature of urban citizenship is constructed.

Below we analyse the reaction of planning and housing authorities to the emergence and persistence of ‘gray spaces’ in two major cities – Colombo, Sri Lanka, and Tel-Aviv-Jaffa, Israel. The analysis will show that urban and housing policies have indeed been central to the creation and management of ‘gray spaces’, and to their impact on the urban and social structure. The ‘gray spacing’ of the two cities has been a regime response to the uneven incorporation of the ‘unwanted/irremovable’, in a variety of methods detailed below.

Colombo and Tel-Aviv-Jaffa (TAJ) were selected as comparative cases, because they are both major globalizing cities of similar sizes, located within ethnocratic states (see Yiftachel and Ghanem 2005). The two states, Sri Lanka and Israel, are committed to policies of expanding territorial and political control by majority populations (Sinhalese and Jews, respectively), while controlling and containing minority groups. At the same time, however, the two cities have established strong economic centres, in which liberal attitudes and the logic of the market are more prominent than in the rest of the state. The ethnocratic-capitalist tension has resulted in the emergence of vast ‘gray spaces’ in both cities, thereby providing suitable comparative settings of structural similarities and local differences.

Informality in Colombo and Jaffa

Colombo, the financial and cultural hub of Sri Lanka, is in many ways a ‘gray’ city. Informal economy and housing is the most distinguished feature of this expanding, globalizing metropolis. About half the city’s population lives in areas described by the government as Under Served Settlements (USS). This broad definition covers 1,600 housing sites, built on private or municipal land, in which the tenants lack title deeds (Gunetilleke et al. 2004). Colombo’s USS suffer from a multitude of deprivations such as low income, high density, absence of basic services and insecurity of housing and employment. Developed independently throughout the years, most of the houses and infrastructure do not follow urban planning regulations, and consequently, their development is largely unsupervised (Gunetilleke et al. 2004; Chularathna 2000).

Informally in Colombo and Jaffa

Traditionally, USSs in Colombo are divided into two broad categories: slums and shanties, categories that are often used interchangeably. The legal status of ‘gray’ housing in Colombo is complex. A significant percentage of the 77,000 families living in Colombo’s USS (in both slums and shanties) do not enjoy full tenure over their land and property. Instead, most of them hold, at best, a variety of documents and validation cards handed to them by government officials over the years, which entitle them to different levels of security (Figure 41.1). For many residents in informal housing, these documents provide a legal basis for their presence in their Colombo locations, yet they are neither title deeds, nor guarantees of long-term secure tenure.

All tenure categories described in Figure 41.2 exist in Colombo. For instance, large groups of residents exist within the USS with no documentation; in contrast, some have full title. As long as informal tenants lack official tenure, their status is precarious and real insecurities continue to exist. Hence, informality in Colombo is not a fixed status but a complex mode that ranges from no recognition to certain recognition by the authorities (Wakely 2007).
Figure 41.1  Example of enumeration cards given to families in a shanty settlement in Colombo
Photo: Nufar Avni
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Tenure categories found in many cities
1. Pavement dweller
2. Squatter tenant
3. Squatter ‘owner'-unregularized
4. Tenant in unauthorized subdivision
5. Squatter ‘owner'-regularized
6. Owner-unauthorized division
7. Legal owner-unauthorized construction
8. Tenant with contract
9. Lease-holder
10. Free-holder

Figure 41.2 Typology of urban housing categories according to their legal status
Source: Based on Payne 2001

The growth of Colombo’s informal spaces was in accordance with substantial economic changes experienced by Sri Lanka in the 1940s. The growing export industry required labour power and Colombo’s prime location near the port soon made it a popular target for internal migration (Van Horen 2002). Before long the old urban core became overcrowded, and urban sprawl began: old houses were gradually occupied by lower-income residents and large buildings were split into several units and rented out to incoming work migrants. Over time these buildings deteriorated into slums. Shanties emerged in similar circumstances, built poorly and located in unfavourable areas in terms of land use and zoning (Sevanatha 2002; Steinberg 1982). Since the initial rise of informality in Colombo, slums and shanties have increased in size and number and continue to mushroom to this day (Velez-Guerra 2006; see Figure 41.3).

In contrast, Jaffa − the southern section of the city of Tel-Aviv-Jaffa − does not follow the classic pattern of ’southern’ informality characterized by harsh slums, poverty and an open informal economy (see Figure 41.4). In Jaffa informality is more concealed, as is often the case with sections of homeland minorities ‘caught’ in ethnocratic cities. Here we refer to minorities who had resided on their land for generations prior to the expansion of control by a dominant majority. This typically ghettoizes the minority in specific parts of the city. Yet informality is an important feature of the city.

‘Gray space’ in Tel-Aviv-Jaffa is composed of a combination of squatting, illegal construction, unplanned zones and some informal economy. Squatting and illegal construction in Jaffa can be traced back to the unique legal circumstances created by the Law of Absentees’ Property, applied in Jaffa following the 1948 war. This Law was used in Jaffa and elsewhere in Israel to expropriate land previously owned by Palestinians to the Trustee of Absentees’ Property, managed by the Israel Land Authority (ILA) (Kedar and Yiftachel 2006). According to the estimates, two thirds of Jaffa’s population lost
Figure 41.3  Area designated USS in Colombo
Photo: Nufar Avni
ownership over housing assets following the law, mainly because they were not present in their homes on a particular date determined by the law (Wallerstein et al. 2009). The extensive expropriation of property transformed the housing status in Jaffa irrevocably, changing the status of tenants from property owners to leaseholders almost overnight.

The law produced a unique status of lease where the property owner is the State of Israel. While this status provided some benefits and protection, it also placed heavy limitations on the renters’ ability to make changes to the asset or transfer it to others, including family members. The smallest change would require approval from ILA and the local municipality. Without such approval, the renter could be considered an illegal squatter in an ‘unauthorized’ development. These limitations became highly relevant in subsequent years. Lack of planning in Jaffa between the 1960s and 1980s (which will be analysed later) determined that thousands of residents became squatters due to the absence of legal alternatives for developing their impoverished properties. They were unable to obtain permits for construction or renovations for over two decades, and hence resorted to unauthorized solutions. In addition, as mentioned, the state imposed inheritance restrictions; the right to bequeath the house was only permitted once. Consequently, thousands of third-generation tenants are today considered squatters in their own houses.

Hence, informality in Jaffa is similar to the situation of homeland and indigenous urban minorities in places such as Belfast, Nicosia, Sarajevo or Jerusalem, to mention but a few, and is different to Colombo, and to most cities in the global south-east, since it was not a consequence of immigration to the city. In Jaffa, as opposed to Colombo, there are no slums and shanties that evolved on vacant urban land, or neighbourhoods that developed independently. The informal residents of Jaffa live in established houses.
and neighbourhoods. The main urban dynamic which made them informal was the implementation of legal frameworks and planning policies, typical to ethnocratic societies. These commonly aim at shrinking and controlling minority spatial rights, while empowering the ethno-national majority (Yiftachel and Yacobi 2003; Yiftachel 2012). Although informality is produced and expresses itself differently, many aspects of its governance and containment mechanisms across Colombo and Jaffa are similar.

A policy of neglect and ignore

Once informality becomes part of the picture, new challenges in the management of cities arise. Often, the preferred response to informality is lack of policy. A policy of ‘ignore and neglect’, as we name it, is common in many slum areas around the world where tenants are considered illegal, in spite of their prolonged presence in the city and their considerable size (UN-Habitat 2003). To a large extent, choosing this policy implies concurrently ‘planning for’ and ‘against’ ‘gray space’: by turning a blind eye to informality the authorities allowed it to expand and materialize; although by neglecting it, they condemn it to deprivation and marginalization. In both cities the period of neglect is most significant in the establishment and growth of the ‘gray spaces’.

In Colombo, USS became an integral part of the urban landscape in the late 1940s. Until the late 1970s, however, no major government programmes were implemented to improve their conditions. They were considered either private property, which does not require intervention, or illegal and therefore not worthy of attention and support (Wakely 2007; Russell and Vidler 2000).

In Jaffa from the 1960s to 1980s the prevalent urban planning policy was neglect, eviction and destruction of residential and public buildings. This ‘urban renewal’ policy included eviction and demolition of slums in order to encourage economic development and private investments. Fabian (1999) argues that the widespread destruction policy was not a result of a political agenda but a professional planning approach dominant at that time. Yet in reality the Palestinian population of Jaffa was the most affected, since the greatest damage was carried out in traditional Arab neighbourhoods. Moreover, the Palestinians were reluctant to accept housing solutions elsewhere in Jaffa due to their religious and cultural ties to the old parts of the city and its community (Abu-Shehadeh and Shbaytah 2010). This brutal approach lasted until the mid-1970s (Goldhaber 2004).

This systematic neglect had extreme consequences on informality in Jaffa. The housing stock was reduced dramatically and there was very little new building to compensate for the loss. For decades the ‘suspension of planning’ (Monterescu and Fabian 2003) prevented tenants from receiving renovation permits and as a result entire neighbourhoods were denied urban planning. According to the regulations applied on the absentee’s property, the smallest renovation could transform the tenants into squatters. With no legal solution at hand, many of them modified, renovated, or squatted in empty apartments. These discriminatory planning policies and brutal measures forced residents in Jaffa to ‘step outside the law’ (Fernandes 2001) causing severe implications to their future entitlement to housing, as demonstrated below. During the period of ‘ignore and neglect’, however, there was only little institutional or punitive response to the pervasive violation of law.

‘Ignore and neglect’ policy, therefore, does not resolve informality; on the contrary, it contributes to the state of ‘permanent temporariness’ typical to ‘gray spaces’, and deepens the gaps between the planned and the unplanned. By allowing informality to thrive, urban authorities only postpone the problem. Sooner or later, they will have to confront it.

Planning for the ‘gray space’ – aestheticization of poverty

In Colombo and Jaffa alike, planning against ‘gray space’ later turned into planning for ‘gray space’, although the process and scope of such planning has changed structurally.
In Colombo, 1978 marked a shift in the approach of the urban municipalities to ‘gray space’. Constitutional changes in 1973, which transferred most of the USS to the jurisdiction of the National Housing Development Authority (NHDA), resulted in revolutionary plans for informal spaces. From the late 1970s to the mid-1990s, the range of programmes implemented in Colombo’s USS focused predominantly on the following:

(a) Upgrading the physical and social conditions in the USS, mostly through improvements to infrastructure and service delivery (i.e. installation of water taps and toilet facilities, road pavements, sewerage construction), and attempts to involve the public through the establishment of Community Based Organizations (CBO).

(b) Partial attempts to regularize gray housing and land ownership.

Between 1984–1994, 60–70 per cent of Colombo’s USS were included in one of the upgrading projects (Sevanatha and WEDC 2001). This impressive figure indicates the scope and significance of the programmes implemented. Through these projects, thousands of people received access to facilities and services they were previously denied.

Yet in spite of these efforts, the programmes suffered some key deficiencies, mainly because they were temporary, specific, and did not follow a coherent policy. Not only were the USS not reduced in number during these years, they actually increased. In this context, Roy (2005) critically referred to the limitations of the ‘aestheticization of poverty’ by arguing that improving the built environment is insufficient to accomplish a genuine improvement in the lives of the poor. Vélez-Guerra (2006) argued similarly that in Colombo informality persisted due to the authorities’ failure to interfere with the informal processes through which it evolves. Whereas the established slums gained some attention, new slums continued to mushroom since the problems which created informality in the first place have not been addressed.

These development efforts benefited gray housing in Colombo as more households received documents such as enumeration cards and entitlement certificates which strengthened their rights to the property. Yet, they won full ownership in very few cases. The letters and cards proved their presence in Colombo and gave the residents some degree of confidence, however, they were never legally equivalent to title deeds. Therefore the dependency on the government by informal tenants continued, and their status could be conceptualized as a ‘lighter’ shade of gray.

In comparison, in Jaffa in the mid-1980s the widespread ‘creative destruction’ (Harvey 2008) ceased. The municipality decided on a new approach after realizing that neglect caused severe damage to the physical and social urban fabric. This new neoliberal agenda aimed at encouraging the private sector to invest in Jaffa. According to this logic, the money invested in Jaffa would benefit the deteriorated environment and improve the existing housing stock (Monterescu and Fabian 2003). The planning stagnation was replaced with vigorous attempts to revive the city and attract new populations. While the engineering department launched comprehensive planning projects for the area, the municipality successfully included Jaffa in a National Urban Renewal Project. A new municipal body was established responsible for the rehabilitation and development projects in Jaffa that received municipal and government funds for large-scale projects and infrastructure (Tel-Aviv city profile 2002). Development has included typical luxurious housing projects built in old Jaffa by private entrepreneurs since the 1990s.

‘Planning for the gray space’ adopted different approaches in both cities. Findings from Colombo indicate an exceptional dedication of funds and resources allocated for the benefit of the informal residents, whereas in Jaffa, the goals were directed at development and beautification of the city in general. The neoliberal logic that was already evident in Jaffa in the mid-1980s was absent in Colombo’s ambitious rehabilitation projects. In addition, tenure security has improved in Colombo, although this
programme is not yet finalized. By contrast, in Jaffa the legal status of Arab absentee property has remained untouched. In both cities, however, ‘planning for’ has not resolved the root causes of informality nor has it offered long-lasting solutions. Instead, the policy has recently focused on privatization, to which we now turn.

A turn to privatization

In an era of neoliberalism where space is a commodity, informality too is influenced by the logic of capital. In fact, examples from both cities show that informality often reveals the constant tensions between capital, space and power and their manifestation in the on-going construction of ‘gray spaces’—so often linked to the withdrawal of the state from housing and urban development, under the leading neoliberal euphemism of ‘relying on market forces’.

In Colombo in 1998 the NHDA launched a new housing programme, which signalled transformation in the perception of gray housing. The Real Estate Exchange Ltd (REEL) initiative was established in order to free the USS land for profitable enterprises by evicting the informal tenants and transferring them to high-rise buildings in alternative sites. Profits from the land were used to sponsor the expensive relocation costs, and the evicted tenants were promised ownership of their new apartments (Wakely 2007). The REEL programme was eventually unsuccessful and very little relocation took place. Yet it signified a changing perception of informality. Whereas in previous decades urban authorities played key roles in overcoming informality by devising policies that aimed to improve living standards, now people were no longer the first priority. The REEL signalled the rise of a new era where development, money and progress received higher priority than the needs of the local people.

As it turned out, REEL was just the beginning. The concept of informality as a hindrance to development strengthened in 2003 with the rise of the current government to power. The comprehensive in-situ upgrade projects common in the 1970s were gradually replaced by relocation. Regularization processes have not ceased completely, but they have slowed considerably. A policy investigator at Sevanatha, a Colombo-based NGO, argued in an interview:

Everyone thought that the land issue was resolved in Sri Lanka. But after 1994 all the policies changed, the government wants to relocate people and take lands for other purposes, like urban development purposes. Now the land tenure is a huge issue.... We cannot see any large progress in the last 6–7 years. A few communities got lands but it is a very slow process.

(Interview conducted by N. Avni, October 2010)

Privatization in Jaffa came hand in hand with the rehabilitation projects such as Andromeda and Jaffa Boulevard—both boasting luxurious residential, tourism and commercial seaside developments. The massive investments yielded rapid results and real estate values rose significantly (Monterescu 2005). Jaffa became ‘one of the places where very poor community lives on very expensive land’ (Peled 2009). In the mid-1990s residential luxury complexes and up-market apartment houses became an ordinary sight in the once neglected city.

As part of the reliance on gentrification, in 1996 the ILA sold land and housing assets expropriated in 1950, which had since been leased to informal tenants. Allegedly, this act would allow the informal tenants to formalize their housing status by purchasing the property from the ILA. In reality, very few tenants benefited from the decision. The rising housing prices in Jaffa were out of reach for the majority of tenants who were offered the property at almost free-market rates.

Paradoxically, the development of Jaffa that was supposed to benefit the informal tenants in fact worsened their condition. Although considerable funds were invested in Jaffa, few were utilized to
Divided cities, planning and ‘gray space’

solve the acute housing shortage. The once neglected ‘gray space’ became a desired and costly location at the heart of the centre of the city. In the neoliberal reality of Jaffa, there was no need for government schemes to combat informality since the market forces served that purpose.

The Privatization of the Absentees’ Property (confiscated from 1948 refugees) by the ILA could be considered the ‘blackening’ of the ‘gray space’ in Jaffa. Although privatization theoretically enables regularization, countless limitations prevent the transfer of assets to the tenants. As expressed succinctly by a Bioko activist (an NGO advocating planning rights):

In the sense of the absentees’ property (belonging to 1948 refugees who reside abroad) there is no gray, on the contrary. It actually goes from the hands of the state to completely private hands. The intention is clearly to privatize precisely absentee property, to undermine the whole concept of an absentee property... once it passes into private hands, it no longer exists. (Interview conducted by N. Avni, March 2011)

In both cities, ‘gray spaces’ become a problem once the logic of capital seems more appealing than the logic of inclusion. Whereas in Colombo the intentions are stated clearly, in Jaffa the neoliberal discourse is concealed and no official body admits to it. Nevertheless, the outcomes are similar: in times of increasing privatization, informal spaces in Colombo and Jaffa are more likely to be considered obstacles to the development of the city. ‘Planning against’ is therefore expected.

Current trends

The forces noted above, which have shaped and reshaped ‘gray spaces’ in Colombo and Jaffa, are still present in current trends in both cities, to which the following discussion is devoted. In Colombo in 2009 the government entrusted slum clearance under the authority of a new body established specifically for this purpose: the Urban Settlements Development Authority (USDA). The USDA was responsible for all the procedures related to slums and shanties in Colombo, such as data collection and surveys, policy making and relocation. As of October 2010, the authority was still in the preliminary stages of gathering data and setting targets. However, in an interview with the CEO of the USDA, he declared that the ultimate goal for the next decade was to evict some 65,000 housing units defined as slums and shanties in order to liberate the land for commercial use. The evicted tenants will be offered alternative housing at no cost until they receive their new homes in high-rise buildings to be constructed at the city’s margins. The USDA policy encourages eviction of residents through negotiation and mutual agreements. Accordingly, forced evictions are perceived as a last resort. Nonetheless, the CEO emphasized: ‘We do not encourage forced evictions. But one day, we know, we cannot win 100% of the people. Some people will have to be evacuated forcefully.... But we try to do everything we can to minimize the forced evictions’ (Interview conducted by N. Avni, October 2010). Nonetheless, the CEO emphasized that the USDA is working closely with the community through persuasive dialogue in order to convince people to relocate.

Government intervention in urban processes in Colombo did not end with the establishment of the USDA however. In May 2010 it was decided to transfer the Urban Development Authority (UDA), the body responsible for planning in the urban sector, to the authority of the Ministry of Defence, which is in charge of the police and armed forces. NGOs believe that the purpose of this significant and unusual step is an aggressive implementation of the slums eviction plan through violent repression of the opposition to evictions. In their opinion, opening up areas of slum to redevelopment will benefit entrepreneurs and foreign investors at the expense of the local population. In response, a local organization initiated a coalition of organizations to fight the eviction programme, calling for the recognition and regularization of existing neighbourhoods instead of eviction.
The processes taking place in Colombo today are intriguing and inconsistent. Upgrade projects and regularization of informal neighbourhoods continue but at a much smaller scope and slower pace. Informality is still a major issue, hotly debated in the political and civil spheres. Planning authorities state that concern for the right to housing of the poor is their first priority, while at the same time promoting grandiose eviction plans. The president has declared his intention to support the public sector and limit the private sector, while advancing slum clearance programmes for the benefit of high-profit private enterprises. Colombo’s ‘gray space’ is ‘blackened’ and ‘whitened’ simultaneously when certain neighbourhoods are recognized and others demolished. The ambivalence is also evident in statements made by public figures such as those that embrace ‘gray space’ as an integral part of Colombo, and others that hint that the tenants are responsible for the physical and social deterioration of their neighbourhoods.

In parallel, in Jaffa in 2007 hundreds of eviction orders were delivered to informal tenants affecting thousands of individuals. The warrants were issued by Amidar, the public housing agency in charge of the absentees’ property in Jaffa. Most of the warrants referred to legal violations reported in Jaffa between the 1960s and 1980s during the period of ‘ignore and neglect’. For many years the authorities overlooked the unauthorized construction, renovations and squatting. The belated enforcement, according to a member of Rabita—the coalition for Jaffa’s Arab citizens—is not random:

There are eviction notices that were issued a long time ago … and they were put in the drawer of Amidar or the ILA, owners of these assets … few years ago they came back to life. And why is that? Because the ILA knows that in Jaffa there is expensive land with people who don’t pay for it … all the ILA cares about is money … So they launched a massive campaign of warning letters, eviction lawsuits and activation of orders that were already in the drawer.

(Interview with lawyer and activist Amir Badran, conducted by N. Avni, 2011)

The ILA and Amidar, the National Public Housing Agency, firmly reject these accusations: Amidar’s CEO argued in an interview in 2007:

Managing housing assets in Jaffa requires daily confrontation with crime, squatting and illegal building … Amidar acts continuously and systematically to remove safety hazards and to evacuate squatters. This policy is not new and hasn’t changed lately … Israel, a country governed by civil laws, must protect its assets and its planning laws. In case of law infringements, Amidar acts to defend state rights, regardless of the assessed value or the religion or nationality of the residents.

(Cohen 2007)

Despite the vigorous denial, the extensive eviction notices do raise questions on the role of the authorities in maintaining exacerbating conditions that lead to urban informality. The 500 eviction warrants intensified the already fragile housing situation in Jaffa. Many more warrants are expected to be issued in the coming years due to expiration of inheritance rights, and rising real estate values in the area. As noted above, the right to inherit property is only valid for one generation, and at present most tenants are third generation and can therefore be declared as squatters in the houses in which they and their parents were born and raised.

A place for hope?

Despite the powerful forces that work ceaselessly to deny ordinary people residential and economic safety, and beyond the steady expansion of ‘gray space’ in most cities of the global south-east, the
situation is not all bleak. The worsening urban conditions, in Colombo and Jaffa, as well as hundreds of other cities, have also given rise to new forms of resistance, creative self-planning and democratization ‘from below’.

During the last decade, for instance, an active civil society developed in Jaffa with housing one of its top priorities. The civic protest triggered by the crisis finally gained the attention of the City of Tel-Aviv-Jaffa in 2009. The municipality initiated a round table forum that included representatives from the Jaffa branch of the Tel-Aviv municipality, Amidar, the Israel Land Authority, the Ministry of Housing and political leaders. Its role was ‘to facilitate a discussion between professional bodies and civilians in order to improve the awareness and understanding of the participants regarding the problem, and in order to examine possible solutions’. A significant portion of the meetings revolved around the Absentee Property and the barriers to gaining ownership of the type of housing, occupied primarily by Jaffa’s Palestinian population. The forum provoked mixed reactions. On the one hand, it was a positive process that raised a significant problem in the public and policy arenas. On the other hand, those who hoped for quick solutions were disappointed: no direct outcomes followed the initiative. An architect active in Bimkom, an NGO advocating planning rights, claimed:

They speak now about affirmative action, but I can’t see that something is really happening … there was a process of round table; they gathered data, interviewed, researched. I doubt the conclusions they reached so far. They didn’t touch many aspects. They talked about affordable housing, and it’s not clear what they meant. What about public housing? There used to be housing solutions... I can’t see it now.

(Personal communication, April 2011)

Similar notions were expressed by other interviewees (see Avni 2012).

Activists involved in the housing struggles report, however tentatively, a possible change in the attitude of the municipality of TAJ, the ILA and Amidar towards the tenants. They mention more sincere efforts to cooperate, an achievement attributed to the public attention gained by the civil struggle. However these activists also worry that the change is mainly semantic and will not produce significant action.

In both cities, therefore, ‘gray space’ is trapped between declared policies and ineffectual action. It is hard to predict what the future will bring. There are reasons to doubt that the ambitious plans advanced in Colombo will be implemented smoothly. Similarly, informal residents of Jaffa will not give up their right to the city easily. After decades of government and municipal plans, projects and ventures, the tensions leading to the gray spacing of these cities have not been resolved. On the contrary, the number of people occupying ‘gray space’, and therefore the process of ‘gray spacing’ has increased in both cities. Consequently, no immediate planning or legal solution seems likely at hand. This highlights the futility of treating complex urban situations through the typical professional dichotomies of legal/criminal and planned/spontaneous. A system built on such binaries will forever be trapped in a way that will deny many residents their fair allocation of rights and resources.

Notably, the gray spacing of Colombo and TAJ has proceeded differently. In Colombo, it was created mainly by rural–urban migration and the influx of refugees from war zones, as well as by the deteriorating economic conditions of the lower middle classes, who were forced to relocate into shanty towns. It appears as if in Colombo members of all main ethnic groups occupy the city’s ‘gray spaces’, giving the phenomenon a distinct class characteristic.

In TAJ on the other hand, gray spacing has had a clear ethnic slant. The majority of residents with no permanent status, and with the impending danger of eviction, are Palestinian Arabs. During the last decade hundreds of thousands of foreign labourers began to also create ‘gray space’ and communities in other parts of the TAJ metropolis, making the phenomenon ever more conspicuous. In recent years the
decline of the Israeli welfare state and downgrading of Jewish lower middle class has squeezed more Jews into the uncertainty of informality. Yet, the city’s ‘gray spaces’ are dominated by Arabs and non-Jewish immigrants, emphasizing the ethnic nature of this phenomenon.

In both cases, ‘gray spacing’ has created profound and widening urban divisions between residents of the same city. While the process of ‘gray spacing’ has blurred the neat separation between legal and illegal, planned and unauthorized, foreign and local, it has also widened the gaps in the city between included, approved and safe areas, and the combination of areas that do not enjoy full urban citizenship. Access to the most basic conditions and services, first and foremost housing, has been systematically denied to large sections of the population. Even the welcome attempts to ‘whiten’ (recognize) certain informal developments have largely involved privatization and gentrification, and hence could not change the structural processes of marginalization and denial. It is this enduring and troubling presence of indefinitely marginalized ‘gray spaces’ that led us to conceptualize it as the new urban divide.

**Overview and conclusion: ‘gray planning’ and new urban divisions**

As we have shown above, the ‘gray spacing’ of the two cities has been a prolonged, convoluted and structural process, transforming over time socio-spatial relations under an emerging new urban regime. Gray spacing has involved policies of ‘turning a blind eye’, followed by decades of neglect and recently, privatization, aestheticization and gentrification. These are reshaped by local mobilization, resistance and partial co-optation. In both cities the ‘whitening’ – the legalization and regularization – of certain informal sections has been a notable recent policy success, although this move has not kept abreast with the creation of new ‘gray spaces’ and communities. Hence, the phenomenon appears to be structural and enduring, thereby altering the formation of the city, its regime and social relations. This requires, as argued above, rethinking and expanding the concept of ‘divided city’ to include the many manifestations of gray spacing, and the associated urban divisions they create.

Clearly, such urban divisions possess enormous diversity, differing from city to city in causes, types and policy responses. They are socially, economically or ethnically unstable or inconsistent. Yet, there appears to be a common thread of rapidly growing urban spaces/communities that are neither fully approved and included, nor fully criminalized or evicted. The understanding of ‘gray spacing’ as long-term and structural, in most regions of the world, is thus one of the most urgent tasks facing urban analysts and theorists.

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Notes

1 The project compares and contrasts international cities in terms of identity, economy and governance. It includes cities such as Colombo, Talinn, Cape Town, Sarajevo, Nicosia, Jerusalem and Beersheba. It has been supported by several bodies, such as the Israeli Science Foundation, US Institute of Peace, Israel Foundations Trustees and the Universities of Cape Town and Venezia.

2 Slums – old and/or overcrowded tenement gardens of decaying permanent construction with minimal common water supply and sanitation, or subdivided old large houses. Shanties – shelters, generally of impermanent materials, with inadequate access to communal services and usually with no legal right to land (squatters) (Wakely 2007).

3 Absentees’ Property is a legal term for the land and housing of Palestinians who left, or were driven away from their homes during the 1948 war and were never allowed to return. In practice, the property of these Palestinians was expropriated by the state and put under the custody of the ILA. The ILA is in charge of the ‘abandoned’ lands and houses, in which the Palestinians in Jaffa reside temporarily through lease agreements.

4 Meeting Summary No. 1, 14/09/09, Tel-Aviv-Yafo.
GENTRIFICATION IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH?

Loretta Lees

Introduction
Over the past two decades a significant transformation has taken place in the global economy caused by the rapid economic growth of developing countries like China, India, Brazil and South Africa. The economic centre of gravity in the world seems to be moving towards the ‘developing’ south. Coincident with this transformation have been reports about gentrification emerging in the global south from academics and the media alike. There were academic references to gentrification in the global south in the 1990s (e.g. Garside 1993; Jones and Varley 1999), but the literature on gentrification in the global south, in countries such as China, Singapore, South Korea, India, Brazil, Chile, Argentina, Mexico and South Africa, really began to take off in the 2000s (for examples see Visser 2002; He 2007; Harris 2008; Shin 2009; López-Morales 2010). While some highlight the similarities of their findings with gentrification in the global north, others point to exacerbated social and economic cleavages in gentrifying areas of the global south when compared to the north (see Grant and Nijman 2002). Harris (2008: 2423) argues that rather than exporting Eurocentric understandings of gentrification to the global south we need to learn from the ‘new sharp-edged forms’ of gentrification emerging in the previously peripheral cities of the global south.

In this chapter, following Roy (2005), I discuss gentrification in the global south as a ‘mode’ or type of urbanization and in so doing I reveal some of its trends. Like Roy (2005; also Parnell 1997) I want to keep in mind that Euro-American ideas on gentrification may be inappropriate but they may also be appropriate as planners and policy makers borrow and replicate across borders. In the chapter I use a simple definition of the defining characteristics of contemporary gentrification as, ‘in the widest sense’: (1) reinvestment of capital; (2) social upgrading of locale by incoming high-income groups; (3) landscape change; and (4) direct or indirect displacement of low-income groups (Davidson and Lees 2005: 1170). This definitional simplicity encompasses the vast diversity of processes and types of gentrifications we might find around the globe. Of course suburbanization is also a significant process in the new (re)urbanization processes playing out in the global south. The global south is experiencing what Neil Smith (2002) has called ‘gentrification generalized’ and what might also be called ‘generalized suburbanization’ at the same time. ‘Planetary urbanization’ by this interpretation = ‘global gentrification’ + ‘global suburbanization’ (compare this to Mike Davis’s 2006 take on the global south city, where planetary urbanization is equated to slum). Their relationship, however, is not the same at it was in the global north. In Lees et al. (2008) we were clear about this when we argued that gentrification had
Gentrification in the global south?

become a state-led, global urban strategy in the global north involving ‘an innovative race to create attractive, novel, and interesting – but also safe and sanitized – playgrounds for the wealthy residents and visitors who work for (or receive interest and dividends from) the institutions of global capital’ (p.166). But, in the global south gentrification is playing out in more diverse ways:

Although urban thinking in much of Europe and North America is obsessed with the contours of postindustrial society, urbanization in the Global South is driven by the simultaneous expansion of ‘old’ and ‘new’ spatial economic shifts; cities are being reshaped by the expansion of manufacturing and heavy industrial activities, as well as the growth of high-tech off-shoring and outsourcing activities and smaller pockets of service sector innovation. (Lees et al. 2008: 166)

This is new and different to in the global north where post-war gentrification was a reaction to suburbanization and the rent gaps caused by it. But in the face of those who are now, ironically, rehearsing the old rhetoric that suburbanization is dominant and gentrification marginal in the global south, I would argue that first, you cannot discuss one without the other, they go hand in hand (if in a different way in the global south), indeed I (Lees 2003) and others (Butler 2007) have argued that more recent processes of inner-city gentrification in the global north are in fact quite suburban in nature; and second, because gentrification is occurring on high-value land in and around the central city in the global south, the processes have been more visceral than those associated with suburbanization – in some inner cities of the global south there have been mega-gentrifications and mega-displacements of poor urban citizens to city peripheries. Gentrification, not suburbanization, is the leading residential edge of a much larger endeavour: the class remake of the central urban landscape world-wide (see Lees et al. forthcoming, a and b). This is an upward class transformation of urban space. But is there a distinctive form of gentrification in the global north and south?

The gentrification literature has long been at the forefront of opening up and moving beyond the traditional dichotomies of urban studies (Lees 2012), from its rejection of the ecological urban models of the Chicago School of Sociology to discussions of rural and suburban gentrification, which have demonstrated the extension of ‘the urban world’ beyond the city and the inner city at that. As such, gentrification researchers are well positioned not just to dispense with the old binaries of city and suburb, urban and rural, but also between north and south, developed and developing worlds. In this chapter then, following on from Phillips’s (2004) earlier agenda about incorporating ‘gentrification’s others’ into gentrification studies, I seek to do the same with processes of gentrification in the global south. Gentrification in inner cities and in rural areas is part of the overall process of planetary urbanization (the urbanization of societies worldwide).

When referring to the global south, loosely I refer to places outside of the ‘usual suspects’ in the gentrification literature – that is cities in North America and Western Europe. In so doing I recognize that the global south is present in the global north and vice versa – after all there are slums being gentrified in west European cities like Lisbon in Portugal (see Ascensao forthcoming) as there are in Latin American cities. But Lisbon, like other southern European cities such as Athens and Rome, despite having slums and poverty types like those of the global south, see themselves as located in a political union that is very much of the global north. Nevertheless, theory and practice from the south may well be useful for investigating urban conditions in northern cities, for poverty and informality are not the preserve of the south. But my focus in this chapter, for the most part, is on gentrification in cities of the geographical south – in East Asia, South Asia, Latin America and South Africa. The overall aim of this chapter is to promote a better understanding of those gentrifications (note the plural) happening outside of the west/global north/English-speaking world, for these are processes that blur urban and developmental categories.
The process (singular) of gentrification?

The process of gentrification was first coined in London, England (Glass 1964) and since then the gentrification literature has been dominated by studies from, and on, the global north. The bulk of the Anglo-American literature on gentrification has investigated post-war (World War Two) processes of gentrification; the theorizations and conceptualizations therein are temporally and contextually bound to North American and West European post-war cities and urban processes (see Lees et al. 2008). Gentrification, however, began before the term itself was coined. As Clark (2005: 260) points out: ‘Ruth Glass did indeed coin the term in 1964, but it is careless to turn this into an assumption that we have here the origin of the phenomenon’ (see also Clark 1994). Smith (1996: 34–40) argued that the Hausmannization of Paris was a precursor to gentrification, as were the gentrifications happening in parts of New York City, New Orleans, Charleston and Washington DC, in the late 1930s (Gale 1984). A discussion of gentrification in the global south enables us to return to these debates over what gentrification is and it may be we can learn as much from comparative precursors such as the Hausmannization of Paris as we can from classic gentrification in Anglo-American post-war cities. Gentrification is ‘no longer about a narrow and quixotic oddity in the housing market’ (Smith 1996: 39); it was happening before and has departed well beyond Ruth Glass’s (1964) definition. Drawing on Clark (2005), in this chapter, as in Lees (2012), I want to see some dispute over the ‘conventional truth’, the time-space delineations of gentrification. As Clark argues:

confident proclamations ring out: Gentrification is now global! The problem with this is not if gentrification can be observed in places around the world, but it is again an issue of time: it is now global ... The extent of occurrence of the phenomenon from a global historical perspective remains however largely uncharted.

(Clarke 2005: 260)

Drawing on both post-colonial theory and new ideas on comparative urbanism, I am now involved in such a project (see Lees et al. forthcoming b).

It is important to note that the geographies of a global gentrification that were presented at the turn of the twenty-first century (see Urban Studies 2003; Atkinson and Bridge 2005) barely touched on the global south. Of the 14 empirical chapters on global gentrification in Atkinson and Bridge’s (2005) edited collection, only three were from outside of the ‘usual suspects’ of North America, Australia and Europe. A good part of their introduction talked about gentrification as a form of neo-colonialism – the white Anglo appropriation of the central city – but there was no discussion about the appropriateness of this theory for analysing processes of gentrification in the predominantly non-white cities of the global south (like Japan and Brazil – which featured in the book). In addition, given that a colonial experience is barely present in some countries in the global south, like China, or regarded as belonging to the distant past as in some Latin American countries, what is the value of discussing global gentrification as a form of neo-colonialism? In the subsequent edited collection by Porter and Shaw (2008) we find a much broader collection of ‘global’ case studies, including ones from the global south – from Asia, South Africa, and the Middle East. The collection is a great start in getting gentrification researchers to develop a comparative analysis of regeneration/gentrification strategies, their effects, and efforts to resist them, but the comparisons are not explicit enough and they do not pay sufficient attention to the issues of developmentalism, universalism and categorization that contemporary advocates of comparative urbanism (such as Robinson 2006) field. Other recent journal special issues on gentrification can also be criticized for their lack of global coverage and their global north viewpoint (see, for instance, Environment and Planning A 2007; Urban Studies 2008; Population, Space and Place 2010).

As I have recently argued:
What is now required of the gentrification literature is a comparative imagination that can respond to the post-colonial challenge of ‘decentering the reference points for international scholarship’ (Robinson 2006: 169), and this will have implications for how gentrification is conceived (questioning the usefulness and applicability of the term ‘gentrification’ in the Global South) and how research is to be conducted (this will push us to learn new kinds of urbanism and involve multiple translations throughout the world). Importantly, it entails unlearning (drawing on Spivak 1993) existing dominant literatures that continue to structure how we think about gentrification, its practices and ideologies.

(Lees 2012: 156)

The key to understanding gentrification in the global south is to recognize the importance of the different timings and geographical and historical specificities of urbanization. The fact is, irrespective of whether we can trace earlier examples of gentrification in the global south, most of the big gentrifications we see today began at the turn of the twenty-first century and are associated with the developmental trajectories of those countries in terms of modernization, economic growth and global competition. Unlike gentrification in the global north, which is associated with post-industrial cities and society and a turn away from industrial society and modernity (and especially the modern suburbs as a reflection of that), gentrification in the global south is associated with industrialization, modernization and modernity; indeed it is happening in tandem with, not in opposition to, suburbanization. It is also happening in parallel with the increase in slums in the global south, another factor that differentiates gentrification in the global south from the north. The bulk of the gentrifications emerging in the global south are of the ‘new urban renewal’ type, often high-rise new-build developments with limited concern for architectural preservation (see Figure 42.1). Increasingly these...
are the dominant types in the global north too, with the processes that are emerging sharing many similarities with third and fourth wave gentrifications in the global north in terms of scale, the involvement of the state, and the fact that capitalism has rendered parts of the population disposable – accumulation by dispossession (see Lees et al. 2008). But there are important differences too.

A key reference point: the post-industrial city

One of the key reference points for international scholarship in both Anglo-American urban studies and gentrification studies is the post-industrial city. Post-industrial cities are cities whose growth took off due to the industrial revolution in the late eighteenth century and into the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, cities that then deindustrialized in the post Second World War years and transitioned to post-industrial economies in the 1980s and 1990s. The post-industrial city is rooted in an era following industrialization and the economy of the post-industrial city is based on the provision of services rather than on the manufacture of goods. Gentrification in the global south, for the most part, is not happening in deindustrialized, post-industrial cities. Rather it is happening in rapidly developing cities where, as Amin and Thrift (2002) state, pre-industrialization, industrialization and post-industrialization are all in progress simultaneously, making the context much more hybrid and complicated. Post-industrial societies and cultures developed in post-industrial cities and economies and these were linked by key gentrification authors like David Ley (1996) to the emergence of gentrification as a socio-cultural reaction to, and critique of, industrial modernity – of its mass productions and standardizations, and sterile homogeneous suburban landscapes. But gentrification in the global south does not usually have these same landscapes to react to. Industrialization and post-industrialization are happening simultaneously, and as such northern theory’s conceptual relationship between post-industrial society, culture and gentrification would seem to have limited use.

In China, for example, the ‘new’ middle classes are looking back to traditional architecture – expressing a yearning for traditional Chinese culture as a means through which to express their ‘cultural taste’. Gentrification processes in China began by imitating western modern architecture in the form of downtown skyscrapers and high rises (as seen in Figure 42.1), but have moved on somewhat and now show an interest in social responsibility through environmentally sustainable design and technologies, and in traditional architecture (see http://urbachina.hypotheses.org/1719). It has seemingly progressed the opposite way round from gentrification in the global north – large-scale and new to small-scale and old. Take the gentrification of hutongs, of lilongs in inner-city Beijing and Shanghai. A hutong is a narrow street that has small single-storey houses coming off it; the houses are normally made up of four buildings facing into a central courtyard. A lilong is a traditional urban alley community; the community is tightly interlinked – not just physically but also socially – because the residents also run the local shops and restaurants in the street. In the first wave of gentrification many hutongs were knocked down to make way for new, dense, western-style housing developments; now they are more likely to be gentrified by rehabilitation rather than demolition and reused as new trendy cafés and shops, their market well-off young Chinese who want to feel cool (see Figure 42.2a and 42.2b). The distinct temporal waves of northern gentrification are all happening at once in China, and in a back to front way, underlain by the growth of a new middle class and a new consumerism.

A key related imaginary for international scholars of gentrification has been a post-industrial, white middle-class pioneer gentrifier moving into, for instance, a predominantly African–American neighbourhood (a northern inner-city neighbourhood that was very much part of the industrial city and subsequently related to post-war public housing policies) in inner-city America. But how useful is such a description and analysis outside of inner cities in the United States? It certainly has limited purchase in London where the inner city was not very black and the racial politics were quite different. In the context of the global south, in African, Asian or Latin American cities, does this ‘colonial
imaginary’ (which is what it is) have any purchase? In a number of these countries pre-colonial, colonial, and post-colonial contexts are all co-present and relate directly to any analysis of gentrification and race. Indeed, I am interested in the ‘race-work’ of post-colonial studies in the global north and global south in relation to processes of gentrification, in ‘African nationalism’ as expressed through urban redevelopment projects, in the fact that ‘whiteness’ in Kenya is not the same as ‘whiteness’ in the USA, and so on.

Take South African cities. They experienced late post-colonialism in the context of the ‘late world order’ of the Cold War. They suffered insidious forms of neo-colonialism and economic dependencies were breaking down. As such the theoretical links between post-colonial, post-apartheid, and post-communist cultural formations were important in the goal of a functional democracy. The corollary is that the racial dimensions of gentrification (the white Anglo appropriation of the central city – see Atkinson and Bridge 2005) in South African cities, which have barely been touched on, are surely more complicated than those of the post-war US city. Indeed, the recreation of Johannesburg as a ‘World Class African City’ demonstrates how gentrification in the global south is playing out a little differently. The break from South Africa as a colonial outpost of the UK has moved on significantly as the country’s reintegration with Africa as a whole is prioritized (Mbembe and Nuttall 2008). The city is seeking to recreate Johannesburg as a ‘World Class African City’ (which of course is problematic, see Bremner 2000; Lipietz 2008; Robinson 2008). So on the one hand the re-creation of Johannesburg is a form of neo-colonialism – the white Anglo appropriation of the central city – for it is led by private investors who are mostly white, an example of northern imagineering with its high-tech, smart city ideas that seeks to attract international investors, international tourists and the wealthy into the new downtown.
But on the other hand it is spatially more complex than this. The inner city has been racially desegregated from a white segregated space under apartheid too, through disinvestment and low-income reinvestment, a racially black, even Pan-African space. This does not fit the gentrification story of the white Anglo appropriation of the inner city! The spaces that Murray (2008) describes have been built alongside these Pan-African spaces, they have not displaced them! Indeed Johannesburg demonstrates both the embracing of the African city – its disorderliness, riskiness, its low income groups, etc. (Robinson 2006) – and the embracing of western city ideas of development. They are intertwined but the whole is more than the sum of western and non-western, formal and informal. And unlike in most other southern world cities, state-funded developers are also providing low-income housing for low-income groups. As such the redevelopment (a form of gentrification) includes both the formal, sanitized western, white city and the informal, dysfunctional African city and thus embraces Johannesburg as a key place for the emergence of specifically African forms of modernity and urbanism (see Mbembe and Nuttall 2008).

The questions we need to tackle are: How important are varied colonial legacies in gentrification processes in the global south? But also in the global north, for example, the gentrification of slums in Lisbon, Portugal, is displacing those inhabitants originally from Cape Verde and Guinea Bissau – Portugal’s colonial past is itself being gentrified and sanitized. Thinking about the relationship between gentrification and colonialism in the global south and north throws up the question of a specific ‘Latino gentrification’ (see Inzulza-Contardo 2012) that could link Mexico, Brazil, Chile and Argentina, due to the colonial legacy of Spain and Portugal. Are their gentrifications more similar to those in Madrid or Lisbon? Other questions emerge too: Is resistance to gentrification stronger in post-colonial nations, like South Africa? Do resistance movements even feel the same need to use the term ‘gentrification’ for political purposes as they do in the global north? Abahlali baseMjondolo, the Durban shack dwellers' movement fighting ‘gentrification’, thought hard about this and concluded that the idea of ‘gentrification’ is not one that can really be said to be part of the living politics of Abahlali baseMjondolo (see http://www.abahlali.org/). Indeed they have suggested that it might be more important to clarify some of the ways in which their struggle is not about ‘gentrification’, rather than trying to fit their story to match theories and ideas developed elsewhere:

We have concluded that the idea of ‘gentrification’ is not one that can really be said to be part of the living politics of Abahlali baseMjondolo. It is not a word that you will hear shackdwellers in South Africa using a lot (or at all really!) to describe their lives or to analyze their situation. This is not surprising since the term was developed in the 1960s by Northern analysts trying to explain certain patterns in the historical development of mostly Northern cities. We know that the word continues to be used, and that it is used quite widely by now. We know that the patterns and issues it deals with are definitely important for all of us who are thinking about cities and who are committed to people’s struggles for justice in cities all over the world. We are very clear that we fully support the struggle of the poor against the rich everywhere in the world – in Zimbabwe, in Haiti and also in England. But, from the perspective of the living politics of the shackdwellers of South Africa, we want to suggest that it might be more important to clarify some of the ways in which our struggle is not about gentrification – rather than trying to fit our story to match the theories and ideas developed elsewhere by others who do not know our story.

(http://abahlali.org/node/5657)

Here we see quite clearly the question and challenge of shacks/slums and their interplay in a global south politics about the remaking of the city and its (post)colonial legacies. Those fighting gentrification in, for example, Santiago in Chile, have by way of contrast strategically used the term ‘gentrification’
Gentrification in the global south?

and are trying hard to educate the public about the urban social injustices that come with this process (see Janoschka and Casgrain 2011; López-Morales 2012).

Finally, in the global north the post-industrial city had a post-war welfare state to mediate the worst injustices of capitalist processes (even if the welfare state is now being destroyed, see Lees 2013 on the relationship between this and gentrification). Most cities of the global south were/are not so lucky (cf. Shaw 2011). However, there were/are what we might term ‘peripheral’ welfare states in Brazil, South Africa, and in a number of Asian contexts, many of which developed modern welfare state policies and structures at the same time as most European countries or more recently. To date no gentrification research has really investigated in any great depth the relationship between processes of gentrification and the welfare state, its political and social power relations as embedded in formal and informal political institutions and state structures. There are also what we might term ‘semi-peripheral’ welfare projects (after the semi-peripheral countries in world systems theory) emerging, demonstrating the considerable expansion of redistributive policies which can be both patronizing and empowering at the same time to excluded urban groups. Little research has explored non-state providers of social welfare, particularly in the global south. This is an area ripe for investigation by gentrification researchers especially given the major displacements and rehousings in some cities there, be it Karachi or Mumbai. It may even be that new types of welfare states or welfare activities emerge in the global south in response to pressures for a better (e)quality of life for those populations in countries pushing forward developmentally.

Although worldwide gentrifications are diverse, they are associated with local economies and cultural ensembles connected in many complicated ways to wider national, regional and global political economies. And pivotal in any conceptualization of global gentrification are the inter-related processes of urbanization, globalization and neoliberalization. As Neil Smith’s (2002) thesis on ‘gentrification generalized’ argued: the rapidly urbanizing metropolitan economies of Asia, Latin America, and (to a lesser extent) Africa, are becoming significant in the global order; neoliberalism has become a consummate agent of rather than a regulator of the market, and globalization bespeaks a recasting of the scale of the urban.

Different reference points: urbanization, globalization and neoliberalization

Gentrification in the global south is associated with rapid urbanization. Yet, the theories and models used to respond to the impacts of this rapid urbanization remain bound to the European and North American experience. And the gentrification theory from the north cannot accommodate cities which are currently urbanizing and moreover urbanizing differently. By 2015, half of China’s population will live in urban areas, creating an urban population in size second only to India. But unlike urban growth in other countries, like, say, India, the expansion of cities is being aggressively pursued by the Chinese government on a national scale, resulting in the explosion of growth that has taken China to its present level of urbanization in a very short period of time. Unlike in the United States where first-wave gentrification was seen as the opposite to urban renewal, in Chinese cities gentrification and (re)urbanization take the form of urban renewal! By way of contrast Latin America has a smaller population and is already more urbanized than Asia or Africa. Their rates of urbanization are predicted to be less rapid and more like those of Europe and North America. As such gentrification in Latin America is not connected to rapid development and urbanization as it is, say, in China. Rather, as I show later, it is connected to processes of neoliberalization.

In 2003 UN-Habitat argued that there had been little gentrification in developing countries and that slum housing remained the preserve of the poor:

This process of the physical deterioration of central city housing stock can be reversed through processes of gentrification, as has been frequently seen in ex-slum neighbourhoods in northern
cities, where (usually young) professionals, themselves marginalized by the rising cost of ‘acceptable’ housing are willing to move into a traditional slum, attracted by the architecture and cheap housing prices, and, perhaps encouraged by official renovation programmes. Gentrification can lead to a rapid shift in population, with poor tenants being pushed out to make way for wealthier occupants and new commercial and service developments — for example, in Morocco’s development of medina areas in response to tourism and a conservation agenda. However, gentrification in the cities of developing countries has been limited and traditional slum housing remains very much the domain of the poor.

(UN-Habitat 2003: 80–1)

But since this report was written, gentrification has taken off in the cities of developing countries and slum gentrification in particular (see Table 42.1 which compares slum policy in the first and third world). In some cases slum gentrification simply means slum removal; in other cases it means the gentrification of slums in-situ by wealthier in-movers. Slum gentrification is a significant part of the urbanization processes going on in the global south (and indeed the global north — see Lees 2013 on the gentrification of council estates imagineered as slums in inner London).

Five years ago, Rio de Janeiro’s favela hillside slums were virtual no-go zones, controlled by drug lords. Then in 2011 police began to seize control of dozens of favelas from drug gangs. Rio’s slum ‘pacification’ programme was/is part of a strategy to make the city safe in the run-up to the 2014 football World Cup and 2016 Olympics. Murder rates are down, and SecoviRio, an organization representing Rio’s real estate professionals, estimated that in the 72 hours after police ‘took’ the first three favelas, property prices there jumped by 50 per cent — and are still climbing. A luxury boutique hotel with a rooftop pool is going up in Vidigal, and Italian tyre-maker Pirelli shot part of its 2013 pin-up calendar in Dona Marta, which in 2008 was the first favela to be pacified. The similarities between this and Operation Pressure Point (a gentrification induced crackdown on street drugs) in the Lower East Side in New York City in the mid-1980s are glaring (see Smith 1996: 206). In the Vidigal slum, middle-class Brazilians and foreigners who cannot afford chic Rio neighbourhoods are snapping up properties wedged between beachfront areas like Copacabana and Ipanema. There is a growing group of wealthy buyers keen on acquiring ocean-view properties in Vidigal that are seen as bargains in a city whose real estate prices are among the highest in the Americas. In another Brazilian city, São Paulo, there has also been speculation that the large number of fires devastating slums in or near the most desirable areas are linked to gentrification projects (see blog by Raquel Rolnik, a Professor of Architecture and Urbanism at the University of São Paulo: http://rioonwatch.org/?source=blog-da-raqel-rolnik).

In 2011 The New York Times ran a feature on the slum neighbourhoods of Mumbai where slum shacks with faulty electric lines, no water or sewage were selling for USD38,000–50,000. The selling points were/are: (1) The slums are well-connected and are easily accessible to India’s finance and entertainment hubs (on gentrification and ‘spatial capital’ see Rerat and Lees 2011); (2) These neighbourhoods are among the few spaces where builders and real estate investors can expand. As I stated in Lees (2012), there is an important discussion to be had on the relationship between ‘slum gentrification’, ‘slum consolidation’, ‘informal settlement integration’ and ‘slum upgrading’. The wave of gentrification and slum clearance in Mumbai by developers is pushing many traditional, poorer slum-dwellers out of the city centre and into sprawling new illegal settlements — one of which, Deonar, has now outstripped Dharavi, the neighbourhood made famous by the film Slumdog Millionaire, as the largest slum in Asia. Suburbanization in the global south is occurring adjacent to the fallout from gentrification in the global south on city peripheries, presenting quite different circumstances to those around gentrification in the global north. Also, both inner–city slums and slums on the periphery of cities in the global south are facing gentrification due to municipalities’ increased interest in using land as assets. This could create new kinds of effects and different results.
**Gentrification in the global south?**

**Table 42.1 A comparison of slum policy in the first and third worlds**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key terms</th>
<th>Third World informality policy</th>
<th>American poverty policy</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Congruences:</strong></td>
<td>Focus on spatial concentration of poverty using human ecology or enclave models. The ghetto or slum becomes the culprit rather than the structural forces of racism and poverty that lead to segregation (for more see Wacquant, 1997).</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Argument about culture of poverty, whether in the negative sense of an American ‘tangle of pathologies’ or in the upbeat sense of Third World ‘heroic entrepreneurship’.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Emphasis on ‘integrating’ the poor by improving their environment, such as HOPE VI-style projects in the US or slum upgrading in the Third World.</td>
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<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key policies</th>
<th>Urban renewal/development</th>
<th>Urban renewal/redevelopment</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Congruences:</strong></td>
<td>These policies were popular in the 1950s. They became popular once again in the 1980s, in the context of entrepreneurial city policies.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Modernization of city fabric through large-scale ‘Hausmannization’ projects.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Gentrification of ‘blighted’ neighbourhoods causing displacement. There are, however, different policy approaches to dealing with this displacement. In America, the public housing/urban renewal nexus proved quite disastrous for overall housing supply and quality for the urban poor. However, in settings such as Singapore and Hong Kong, urban renewal was immediately followed by public housing with almost a complete transfer of the displaced to subsidized housing (for the state of exception in the Hong Kong case, see Smart, 2003).</td>
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<th>Community-based programmes</th>
<th>Community development and neighbourhood revitalization</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Congruences:</strong></td>
<td>These policies were popular in the late 1960s and early 1970s. They became popular once again in the 1990s, in the context of poverty alleviation policies that seek to put a ‘kinder and gentler’ face on the dismantling of the welfare state.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Place-based policies that focus on entire ‘communities’ and their capacity; equity often understood at this scale of the community or neighbourhood.</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Important role of civil society organizations in brokering fragile coalitions of interests (see Castells, 1983). But also now in Third World cities where there is an emphasis on transnational and multiscaled coalitions (see Appadurai, 2001; Evans, 2002).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Seen as grassroots activities but in fact top-down policy efforts led by experts and professionals to enact grassroots change.</td>
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**Source:** Roy 2005: 151

As Smith (2002: 431) noted, ‘with globalization the scale of the urban is recast, the old conceptual containers − our 1970s assumptions about what the urban is or was − no-longer hold water’. It is interesting then that he retains the concept of ‘gentrification’ which was properly formulated in the 1970s (when the urban was conceptually and also in reality quite separate from the suburban) in discussions of contemporary planetary urbanization as global gentrification. Was Smith right to retain the concept of gentrification in relation to contemporary urban processes? There are those who outline ‘a single monoculture of globalization’ that has caused urban placelessness around the world, what Sorkin (1992) terms ‘the ageographia’. Castells (2000) likewise argues that globalization has caused the
end of the barriers that made places remain different, meaning also the end of place. There does seem to be an ageographic form of global gentrification – ‘the creation of a global inner city aesthetic that will make cities around the world all look and feel the same’ (Lees 2012: 375). But does this ‘homogenous imaginary’ mask other processes?

Beijing is one of many cities in the global south with a blueprint that seeks to remake it as a ‘world city’ by 2050. Beijing has undergone rapid redevelopment, numerous historic buildings have been bulldozed to make way for new high-rise towers and until more recently Chinese preservationists were struggling to protect the character of neighbourhoods and indeed whole ways of life. Global architectural styles of building are seen by China’s new middle classes as representing modernity and change. Low-rise traditional houses built pre-communism and declining workers’ villages, factories and warehouses built in the socialist period are considered to be inappropriate by the state for a global city image. Since their re-entry into the World Trade Organization (Wu 2000, 2002) China wants to look and feel like other world cities. Shanghai, the largest city in China, a city that was once called ‘The Paris of the East, The New York of the West’, is seeking to reinvent this global identity through state-sponsored gentrification motivated by the pursuit of economic and urban growth at the cost of large-scale residential displacement (He 2007). Over a million low-income households have been relocated to Shanghai’s periphery over the last 15 years and millions of square metres of housing have been demolished. The displaced have been moved away from their employment/livelihoods, their social networks; their everyday lives have been destroyed (He 2010). Such processes have heightened the urgent call for ‘the right to the city’ in the global south (see Samara et al. 2012).

The socio-spatial changes taking place in many cities in the global south can be linked to neoliberal economic policies. Neoliberalization is a set of processes and practices, it is not a thing (Hackworth 2006); it is a belief that the market is the guiding mechanism for the organization of social, political and economic life and that less government is desirable (Marcuse and Kempen 2000). The resultant retreats by governments from earlier policies have been referred to as ‘roll back neoliberalization’, and these were followed by ‘roll-out neoliberalization’, that is the aggressive intervention by governments in crime, policing, urban policies and surveillance, with the purpose of disciplining, containing and relocating those marginalized or disposed by the neoliberalization of the 1980s (Peck and Tickell 2002). In the global south the effects of neoliberal policies have been more visceral, in the form of mega-gentrifications and mega-displacements, than in the global north. There are contingent realities to the way neoliberalization occurs in different countries and cities.

In Latin America neoliberalization has been at the forefront of instigating processes of gentrification. Mexico provides a useful example in that it was there where the neoliberal paradigm was first introduced in 1982. Mexico City has experienced both roll-back and roll-out neoliberalization, causing conflicts over urban space. Walker (2008) shows how, at the turn of the twenty-first century, Mexico City enacted a neoliberal municipal gentrification programme called the Programa de Rescate, whose aim was to take back (gentrify) the Centro Histórico of Mexico City from ambulantes (entrepreneurial street vendors who emerged in tandem with neoliberalism in Mexico City). The Programa de Rescate was a global urban strategy that sought to gain Mexico City global city status; the idea was that this state-led policy would attract investment into the historic city centre (the Centro Histórico) and in so doing attract upper/middle-class residents to live there and tourists to visit. This is a large scale project – the Programa de Rescate aims to renovate an area three times the size of the historic area of Barcelona. The process of gentrification in this example was/is a three-stage process: first, replacing the water and sewerage infrastructure and building a commercial corridor; second, building hotels, a visitor centre and skyscraper; third, and most viscerally, removing and relocating the 30,000 or so ambulantes who live and work in the Centro, adding public amenities and increasing security (including panic buttons at different sites linked to the police). In Mexico City we see a form of state-led gentrification or roll-out neoliberalization in which the state has implemented urban policies to gentrify ‘problem’ areas created
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It is important to consider how the rise of neoliberalism in Chile, Mexico and Brazil has affected processes of gentrification in cities there. Their greater integration with global investment capital flows and the growing importance of real estate interests in cities in Brazil, Chile, Mexico, and so on, suggests that there exists a stronger degree of (often conflictual) interaction between ‘traditional’ urban space (often characterized by slums and decaying inner-city places) and emerging ‘gentrified’ urban space that caters for the needs of the new rich and international visitors. In Brazil there has been a major shift towards neoliberal governance; the state has pulled back significantly in mitigating the excesses and injustices of capital and is supporting private accumulation. The implementation of neoliberal tactics and practices in Brazil is particularly problematic because of the long-standing weakness of democratic institutions and the historic lack of social welfare programmes (the more recent expansion of welfare in Brazil may yet mitigate some of the injustices, but this is not certain; see Nuijten et al. 2012). Unlike in the global north, the global economic crisis of 2008 largely bypassed Brazil, enabling it to consolidate its position as an emerging player in the global economy. The rich have got richer, the middle class is growing, the very poor have experienced some limited social uplift, and American-style consumerism is growing. Gentrification in Rio de Janeiro must be understood within this context. The Porta Maravilha (Marvelous Port) project, which covers 5 million square metres of downtown...

**Figure 42.3** Gentrification in the South Recoleta district of Santiago  
*Photo: Ernesto López-Morales*
Rio, is to be redeveloped in the vein of London Docklands (but is twice its size) (see Gaffney 2013). It will host mixed-use buildings as well as high-density mixed-income housing centred on several anchor projects, including two museums and some Olympic sites. This is state-led gentrification that has real echoes of the Hausmannization of Paris.

In Chile both state and private activities have fed the flames of gentrification in downtowns in cities such as Santiago. An ‘urban renewal subsidy’ from the state has been used since 1992 to attract middle-income groups into the centre of Santiago, to live in North American-style loft apartments, setting these residents apart in their consumption of a new urban lifestyle. This state-led housing subsidy and the modification of floor area ratios by municipal governments have both acted to increase the demand for new housing by the middle class and they have also increased the potential ground rent, which in the end is captured exclusively by large-scale, local real estate developers. These developers have accumulated land and widened the rent gap, creating a privately led urban renewal market that is causing the social dispossession of low-income residents, through processes of blockbusting and the monopsonic (where one buyer is faced with several sellers) buying of land plots by developers, thus reducing the cash value of the land owned by small landowners, and limiting their post-occupancy options (see López-Morales 2010, 2011 and Figure 42.3).

It seems then that in countries which urbanized and neoliberalized early, like Brazil and Chile (where the ‘Chicago Boys’, as they became known, studied economics in Chicago and brought ‘neoliberal’ ideas back to Chile to be implemented in Pinochet’s economic reforms in the 1970s; see Peck 2010), the similarities with gentrification in the global north are much stronger than in other places in the global south.

Conclusion

In this chapter I am clear that there are ‘gentrifications’ happening in the global south right now and that these are deeply problematic in terms of global urban social justice. Not all of these are new or emerging processes: indeed He (2012) has identified a first wave of gentrification in Guangzhou, in China, in the late 1980s and Kim (2011) discusses a first wave of gentrification in Seoul, South Korea in the 1960s and 1970s — the gentrification of squatter settlements in which 30 per cent of Seoul were living at the time, the precursors to the gentrification Shin (2008, 2009) discusses. What these all share are similar root causes, drawing on Clark (2005): ‘commodification of space, polarized power relations, and a dominance of vision over sight’. These gentrifications have not necessarily ‘gone global’ (Smith 2002) implying some kind of projection from north to south, west to east. Indeed, researchers need to avoid the assumption that gentrification is simply ‘expanding’ towards the global periphery, even if at times it is an imported new phenomenon that builds upon emerging real estate markets (Peck 2010). Much more research is needed on the geography of gentrification globally, on the detail and specifics (temporalities and spatialities) of processes of gentrification in cities of the global south before we can claim this for all cases.

Contemporary gentrifications in the global north and the global south are a revanchist expression of planetary urbanization. However, the experience of gentrification in the global north over the past 50 years will not necessarily predict the future path of gentrification in the global south. Future research on gentrification needs to try hard not to apply a prescribed set of parameters developed out of the experiences of the global north to interpret what has taken place, and is taking place, in the cities of the global south and east (see Jazeel and McFarlane 2010, on this politics of learning), for as we have seen, gentrification in the global south has little to do with western conceptualizations of the post-industrial city. But we must also recognize that there are and will be examples of gentrification in the global south that share a lot in common with gentrification in the global north. A new geography of global gentrification must be open to both differences and similarities. In this regard, the experiences of what
‘smells like gentrification’ in the global south, global east, and other atypical places, deserve careful attention. The term ‘gentrification’ itself, I would argue, is appropriate (cf. Ley and Teo 2013) and politically advantageous. Northern theorizations and conceptualizations of the process may not always be appropriate.

References


Gentrification in the global south?


**Note**

PERI-Urbanization and the Political Ecology of Differential Sustainability

Adriana Allen

Worlding the 'peri-urban', enacting 'differential sustainability'

We are increasingly exposed to a mainstream interpretation of environmental change that calls the attention of planners, governments and markets to focus on the role that cities should play in the search for sustainable development. This is often summarized under the claim that ‘the sustainability battle will be lost or won in cities’, which has triggered in the last two decades a plethora of planning methods and approaches to tame ‘unsustainable cities’. But as argued by Swyngedouw and Heynen (2003: 901), ‘there is no such a thing as an unsustainable city in general. Rather, there are a series of urban and environmental processes that negatively affect some social groups while benefiting others.’ To which it could be added that there is not such a thing as a ‘sustainable city’ either, but rather a collection of socio-environmental projects and interventions that pursue and sometimes achieve a better environmental performance in certain areas and for the benefit of certain social groups at the expense of other portions of nature and society.

But what characterizes the contemporary urban transition of the global south? Several scholars point to the emergence of a spatially irregular landscape manifesting in the form of a lumpy rural–urban continuum that challenges conventional distinctions between the urban and the rural (Friedmann 1996; Iaquinta and Drescher 2000; Allen 2003, 2005; Lynch 2005; McGregor et al. 2006). Although findings from demographic research remain inadequate to show the scope of this transformation, it is estimated that approximately 45 per cent of the 1.4 billion people who will join the world’s urban population by 2020 will live in peri-urbanizing areas (Montgomery et al. 2004; Webster 2004). Such areas are typically undergoing a dynamic process of diffused urbanization and are physically and socio-economically distinctive for their rural–urban ambiguity. Furthermore, the process of peri-urbanization is closely associated with the coexistence of extreme poverty and wealth (Allen 2010).

Following the above discussion, my first contention is that the sustainability battle is increasingly taking place not in the city but upon the ‘city to be’, where the urban and rural become blurred categories. Such contexts can be defined as the peri-urban interface, where cities’ appropriation and transformation of nature’s nutrient cycle manifests most intensely. From an ecological perspective, such interface is subjected to constant tensions between the productive economic growth generated by cities and the impact of the latter on decreasing natural productivity, hence playing a crucial role in regulating the environmental inputs and outputs that sustain urban regions.
In an earlier publication (Allen 2003), I argued that the peri-urban interface is characterized by two further distinctive features. The first concerns its heterogeneous and fast changing socio-economic make up. The continuous but uneven process of urbanization taking place in this interface is generally accompanied (and often produced) by land speculation, shifting economic activities of higher productivity and informal farming, clandestine abattoirs and mining activities linked to the construction industry. As a result, subsistence farmers, informal settlers, industrial entrepreneurs and urban middle-class commuters often coexist in the same territory, but with different and competing interests and practices. Furthermore, as peri-urban areas typically fall outside the coverage of network infrastructural systems, they vividly illustrate the ‘splintering urbanism’ thesis (Graham and Marvin 2001), which describes how the privatization and unbundling of infrastructure networks is tearing apart and reconstituting the contemporary geography of urban regions in the global south. While Kooy and Bakker (2008) argue that service provision in the developing world has historically been splintered, peri-urban landscapes embody the production of splintering and splintered clusters of high-service enclaves and vast unserved areas (Allen et al. 2006).

The second distinctive feature of the peri-urban interface concerns its institutional configuration, typically regulated by sectoral and overlapping institutions who simultaneously treat this interface as the ‘backyard of the city’ where unwanted activities such as landfills are to be located; as a ‘buffer zone’ to accommodate future expansion; or as a ‘depository’ of environmental capital and attributes, such as fertile soils, forested areas and hydrological resources that regulate cities’ food, energy and water security, as well as their capacity to mitigate pollution and carbon dioxide emissions. Moreover, because of competing claims and institutional gaps, the water, sanitation, food and energy needs and demands of the peri-urban poor are often ignored, thus making them particularly prone to environmental injustices (Marshall et al. 2009; Allen and Apsan Frediani 2013). Thus, peri-urban interfaces are subjected to intense struggles over space, but also often treated as a blank canvas on which to experiment with the notion of sustainable urban transitions.

In the past, the struggle for space in the ‘city to be’ was either regulated by the state, through infrastructural and housing investments to relocate the poor or decentralize industrial production away from core inner areas, or left to the market to allocate functions to space on the basis of the highest bidder. By contrast, nowadays, debates over what and how peri-urban areas should be are not merely formulated in relation to their social and economic functions but increasingly also in the light of their environmental values. Should urban sprawl be contained in order to preserve the supply of clean water and regionally grown food? Should the peri-urban be treated as a reservoir of environmental resources and ecosystem services to be protected for the public good? Furthermore, how should peri-urban interfaces be regulated in the face of an increasingly urban future? As questions like these mount and challenge planners, we witness growing efforts to regulate such interfaces on the basis of environmental claims that attribute overriding priority to avert any form of unplanned urbanization threatening to squander peri-urban natural capital and ecosystem services.

When environmental claims acquire internal coherence and normative power, they become discourses. Spivak (1987) notes that discourses are not innocent explanations of the world but rather, means of ‘worlding’, or actively appropriating the world through knowledge. As argued by Roy and Ong (2011: 11), worlding can be further interpreted as a means ‘to identify the projects that instantiate some vision [or visions] of the world in formation’. Through this process, institutionally discursive practices are interwoven with technical forms of material practices into what can be defined as a dispositif of socio-environmental regulation. Such a dispositif operates within a battlefield of competing interpretations of ‘reality’ disciplining space and creating new subjectivities.

Thus, my second contention is that throughout the peri-urbanizing global south, ‘desirable’ urban transitions are being increasingly pursued through a dispositif of socio-environmental regulation that normalizes the production and re-production of ‘differential sustainability’; that is by adjusting
thresholds to meet the needs and wants of certain privileged social groups and territories at the expense of others. From this perspective, the peri-urban interface can be apprehended as a laboratory where interventions to regulate the urban metabolization of nature might selectively safeguard certain environmental resources or services while consolidating unjust patterns in the distribution of positive and negative environmental externalities.

The notion of ‘regulation’ (‘régulation’ in French − better translated as ‘normalization’) also requires clarification. Regulation theorists refer to ‘modes of social regulation’ to define the written and unwritten laws of society that control and determine how accumulation regimes face and overcome historical crises (Boyer 1990; Peck and Tickell 1994). In contrast, my concern here is not to identify singular laws of historical development at the macro level, but to capture the many ways in which urban transitions are dialectically produced in social and spatial terms at the level of micro-societies and under a myriad of circumstances and possibilities. I therefore refer to a ‘dispositif’ rather than a ‘mode’ of socio-environmental regulation, as a means to capture a less stable and more contingent regulation process embodied in the multiple projects, practices and struggles that make the peri-urban interface (Allen 2011). In other words, dispositif analysis opens the door to critically interrogate the way in which urban transitions are being constituted, without prematurely defining emerging reconfigurations as a new stable mode of socio-environmental regulation and development.

While a dispositif often emerges through the establishment of a moment of urgency or crisis (e.g. the diminishing capacity of peri-urban hydrological services threatening the regularity and quantity of urban water supply), it is in the interplay between discursive and non-discursive practices − the praxis of planning sustainability in this case − that devices become legitimized and routinized; for instance, through the endorsement and activation of policy and planning mechanisms and procedures to establish monetary transactions between the users and providers of environmental positive externalities, a practice examined later in the chapter through the adoption of payment for ecosystem services schemes. Through dispositif analysis it is also possible to apprehend the discursive and non-discursive production of space (Bauriedl 2007); what makes certain practices valuable and others undesirable, laying in turn the normative principles that regulate the trajectories of spatial change to be promoted and/or resisted through planning praxis. By ‘planning praxis’, I draw attention to the act of reflecting on both the purposive and communicative action of planning sustainable urban transitions by shaping the functions and physiognomy of the peri-urban interface. Upton (2002) contends that planning constitutes a particularly complex practice of applied ‘spatial ethics’, that is not a ‘value free’ activity but rather one inviting ethical questions on the impacts it generates. In the context of our discussion, this implies a commitment to interrogate the intended and unintended consequences of sustainable urban planning not just in relation to its effectiveness in preserving certain ecological functions and assets, but, more widely, in its capacity to create just socio-spatial relations in and through the appropriation and transformation of peri-urban nature and space.

Political ecologists have argued for the need to problematize global environmental discourses and their tendency to gloss over local difference and localized environmental practices and values (Castree and Braun 1998; Escobar 2008). To a large extent this has led to a portrayal of global northern and southern environmentalisms in which the former appears to emphasize the conservation of nature as an interpretive and normative frame, while the latter calls for the prioritization of everyday experiences and practices shared by the majority of the world’s people or, in other words, the ‘environmentalism of the poor’ (Martínez-Alier 2002). However, the above polarization does not explain why differential sustainability might be actively endorsed and propagated as a commendable path to regulate the appropriation and transformation of nature at play in the peri-urban interfaces of the global south. A more nuanced understanding and theorization of such process requires, in my view, an interrogation of the subtle contradictions, tensions and convergences of the ‘networked environmentalisms’ (Lawhon 2013) converging in attempts to regulate urban transitions.
Adopting a political ecology perspective, the chapter traces three distinctive and dominant devices widely adopted and/or increasingly regarded as apt to regulate the social metabolism of nature in the peri-urban context. The first concerns the revival of planning strategies to curb urban sprawl and informality, increasingly legitimized as an imperative to build urban resilience in the face of growing risk and climate variability. The second device examines the rapid career of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) in peri-urbanizing contexts, exploring why, how and with what consequences economic arguments about environmental services are overwriting non-economic paths for conservation. The third device concerns the greening of gated communities, a fast spreading strategy through which the peri-urban interface is becoming a desirable habitat, where exclusionary urban outlooks and lifestyles converge with ideals of living in harmony with nature.

These devices have been selected as means to interrogate the wide and varied spectrum of dispositifs through which planning for sustainability is normalizing differential sustainability as a desirable and overriding path. The discussion draws from my work in peri-urbanizing areas in metropolitan Mexico, Lima and Accra, as well as from the wider literature.

Curbing informal growth

For several decades, urban containment policies − often labelled under the rubric of ‘Smart Growth’ policies − have been applied in the global north as a land rationing strategy, forbidding development on large swathes of land that would otherwise be developable (Ingram et al. 2009). Since the mid-1980s, this approach has evolved into new policy objectives and geographies, with measures to contain ‘informal growth’ over valuable environmental areas becoming part of the planning repertoire applied in fast peri-urbanizing areas of the global south. Emphasis on greening cities invariably conjures concerns over the impact of ‘sprawled’ cities on the loss of surrounding natural land and on the environmental effects of automobile emissions, to name just a few evils. In response, compact city advocates look to limit peripheral urban development, assuming that peri-urban borders can be controlled through regulatory land use planning instruments, though often ignoring the political economy that drives peri-urbanization in the first place and the inability of urban policies to resolve the urban poor’s lack of access to land or affordable housing. The popularization of measures to curb informal growth marks the end of varied degrees of governmental tolerance with regard to peri-urban informality, legitimizing the eviction of the poor to enable the preservation of selective ecological functions for the city as a whole.

In Lima, to name but one example, peri-urban informal expansion has historically not just been tolerated, but actively enabled by local governments through the provision of facilities for occupying urban land outside formal land tenure provisions (Smolka and Larangeira 2008). This process of ‘informal urbanism’ has produced orderly neighbourhoods in the periphery of the city − which follow the traditional urban grid used in other parts of the consolidated city − and over time has become the main means for the poor in Lima to access land and housing.

However, nowadays, a recurrent theme in southern urban planning practice is that of curbing informal peri-urbanization, both through restrictive land-use policies and/or through provisions limiting access to essential services by the poor. While evoking environmental protection, risk reduction and consequently the safeguarding of human life, this shift from tolerance to eradication is also underpinned by land market speculation and land developers’ politics.

In the case of Lima − the second driest large city in the world after Cairo − the poor are increasingly forced to occupy an endemic but fragile ecosystem of lomas costeras on the outskirts of the city, nowadays recognized for its essential ecological functions in recharging underground aquifers and regulating the effects of climate variability. While the first wave of informal settlements occupied the bottom of the lomas as the outcome of planned invasions in the 1980s, today the logic propelling the occupation of
the steep slopes coinciding with the lomas is different and compounded with issues of risk, water injustice, land trafficking and the constant renegotiation of the border of the city.

Figure 43.1 shows the landscape generated through the endless building of ‘stairways up to the sky’ through two fundamentally different but converging processes. While land trafficking is a rampant business driving the commodification of the slopes, informal settlers unwillingly mimic this process in the hope of generating a revenue from the leasing of new ‘plots’. In the absence of public investment to ameliorate existing settlements, this is perceived as the only means to face the costs of risk mitigation and access to water, which are now three to four times higher than 20 years ago. Furthermore, rushing to develop the slopes before land traffickers do so is perceived by local communities as a strategy to gain some form of control over the conditions upon which newcomers will co-inhabit the area. Meanwhile, the pursuit of compact development features as a high priority in planning circles through Lima’s municipal plans to regulate the borders of the city through the creation of an eco-corridor of lomas parks. These, however, will cover areas which are not subjected to land titling conflicts, thus failing to address the actual dynamics at play in the current peri-urbanization of Lima.

As mentioned before, the containment of informal growth is increasingly being pursued not just through land-use planning mechanisms like the planned eco-corridor described above, but also through the regulation of non-service provision. Research conducted in the peri-urban interface of metropolitan Chennai, Cairo, Dar es Salaam, Mexico D.F. and Caracas found that, when it comes to access to water and sanitation the peri-urban poor are outside networked infrastructures (Allen et al. 2006). But contrary to what is often expected, this is not a matter of waiting until infrastructural investments reach those at the edge of the city. In all studied cases we found that for the poor (not the

Figure 43.1 Building stairways up to the sky in peri-urban Lima
Photo: Adriana Allen
well-off) ‘living far from the pipes’ is not a transitory but a permanent condition, reflecting a broader planning process oriented towards the combined preservation and commodification of valued environmental attributes beyond built-up areas.

The most frequent answer from interviewed members of local governments and service utilities to why this is the case was that once infrastructure is provided, the full urbanization of peri-urban areas would be unstoppable, threatening the maintenance of vital ecosystem services for the sustainability of the city as a whole. To avoid such a scenario, ‘border pacts’—a term applied to describe coercive measures to contain sprawl over peri-urban areas—are often sought to discourage further informal settlers from adding pressure to the carrying capacity of such areas. For instance, Milpa Alta was the last and least urbanized district to be incorporated into the Federal District, its ‘rurality’ seen as a key opportunity to protect Mexico City’s dwindling aquifer recharge areas. Since the 1980s, the economic crisis in the area has led long-term campesinos to divide communally owned land formerly used for cultivation, selling it through informal transactions to those unable to access land in more consolidated urban areas. This led to a gradual process of dispersed occupation of forested areas, which in turn put pressure on the local authorities to survey the district’s territory in order to respond to national forest protection policies.

With the aim of protecting both forested land and the aquiferal reserve in this area from the perceived threat posed by further informal settlers, a census was carried out in 1997 throughout the district dividing the population into two groups: those recorded in the census and those who settled after it. A ‘Zero Growth Pact’ (ZGP) was developed upon this distinction, establishing that only those settled before 1997 can have access to water provided by public tankers (but not piped infrastructure) (see Figure 43.2). In return, those included in the ZGP are expected to police the area and denounce any

Figure 43.2 Access to water by those within the ZGP, Milpa Alta
Photo: Adriana Allen
new settlers, who are to be denied any form of public water supply. Nevertheless, informal land use change still continues, while dwellers access water through different mechanisms, often forced to resort to illegal practices and at higher unit costs. Meanwhile, local politicians, seeking clientelistic relations, intervene at their discretion to ensure the supply of free water to those who are outside the ZGP.

In the name of environmental protection, the ZGP has created a new landscape of contradictions unwillingly fostering differential sustainability. While unable to stop the land conversion of forested areas, such a pact enforces a mix of various forms of illegality to the detriment of both long established and more recent settlers. While the former appear to enjoy comparatively better water provision yet are threatened by their failure to police the area and keep new settlers away, the right to water of both groups is still only partially guaranteed by an arbitrary date which sets the difference between precarious recognition and non-recognition. Here the dispositif of differential sustainability encompasses a complex web of institutional and everyday practices, ranging from a coercive device to curb informal expansion, to clientelistic networks, sub-standard water provision and the various interstitial mechanisms available to the peri-urban poor to cope with the reproduction of multi-dimensional injustices.

Similar agreements to the ZGP were implemented within Mexico D.F. as a means to avoid further expansion over areas of high ecological value (Schteingart and Salazar 2005). The genesis of these measures was the notion of ‘conservation land’ established in the early 1980s, when the Federal District’s Urban Development Plan divided the territory into urban and non-urban zones. This included a ‘buffer zone’ or transitional area between the urban and the rural and a ‘preservation zone’, representing 59 per cent of Mexico D.F., where urban development was strictly forbidden.

Currently conservation land is regulated by two different systems. From an environmental standpoint, it is governed by the 2000 Federal District Environmental Law, concerned with biodiversity preservation, aquifer recharge and the regulation of extractive activities. In contrast, land use planning is governed by the 1996 Urban Development Law of the Federal District, which is more responsive to socio-economic pressures and expectations. In the absence of adequate land and housing policies, conservation land continues to act as a land reserve for the poor, with peri-urban communal and ejidal land – that is land historically protected under a system of collective ownership, a cornerstone of indigenous and peasant rights in the Mexican agricultural system – absorbing the development of 19.5 km² of new informal settlements between 2000 and 2005 (Connolly 2009).

Aguilar and Santos (2011) argue that a key shortcoming of containment policies over peri-urban land in Mexico D.F. is not only the fact that conservation land is ‘over-regulated’ – which often results in no enforcement at all – but more significantly that urban space and environmentally valued space are treated as two separate realities. As such, environmental regulation ignores the reality of insufficient housing and land for the poor as much as urban development policies ignore the importance of preserving vital ecosystem functions that support urban life.

Since Mexico entered the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in 1994, the communal and ejidal systems have been widely undermined and regarded as low productivity systems. Within Mexico D.F. many peri-urban informal settlements are nowadays privatized plots of previously socially owned land. Hence, land titling and the provision of basic services are increasingly regarded as negative strategies that, according to Aguilar and Santos (2011: 655) send ‘a message of impunity to the owners of ejidal and communal lands, where property rights are considered to be more important than the public interest, and also accepting the loss of large expanses of land of high ecological value’.

Meanwhile, both institutional mechanisms to protect environmentally sensitive areas and de facto interventions to regularize informality in such areas continue to reproduce differential sustainability at the discursive level, and producing difference rather than sustainability at the material level. However, the need to abandon previous measures tolerating informal expansion enjoys increasing legitimacy in Mexican policy circles, though the ability of contention policies such as the ZGP to serve such a purpose is increasingly under attack. This in turn is prompting a shift to market-based mechanisms that
are regarded as a more efficient method of safeguarding ecologically valuable land in the PUI, through the adoption of Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) policies, a process explored below.

**Paying for ecosystem services**

The notion that ‘you cannot manage what you cannot measure’ has become a deeply embedded belief in contemporary planning for urban sustainability. The rapid proliferation of economic approaches such as EcoSystems Services (ESS) and Payment for Ecosystem Services (PES) policies is evidence of that. Capturing the value of nature in cities not only systematically takes us to the peri-urban interface – where ‘chunks of valuable nature’ are deemed to be located and in ‘urgent need of being protected’ – but also points to the possibility of economizing nature by relying on objective knowledge and the creation of incentives to promote environmental stewardship. PES policies can be defined as a derivative of ESS, aimed at replacing punitive measures to control negative environmental effects and behaviour with ‘voluntary transactions’ expected to promote environmental stewardship. The rationale in short, is that PES can potentially curb the emerging scarcity of previously free habitats and environmental services ‘at risk’ through ‘contractual and conditional payments to local landholders and users in return for adopting practices that secure ecosystem conservation and restoration’ (Wunder 2005: 1).

The conquering and taming of nature through a thorough understanding of its economic benefits is indeed not new, but only in the new millennium did its operationalization start to gain popularity as a plausible planning strategy to shape urban change in the global south. Traditionally applied to ‘rural’ areas, the application of PES is gradually expanding to the peri-urbanizing context and expected to confront urban sprawl and deliver a win–win situation with regard to conservation and sustainable development. Examples range from applications to reduce vulnerability to climate change in peri-urban Durban (Waters 2009) to the preservation of the CO₂ absorption capacity of peri-urban forests in Abeokuta, Nigeria (Adekunle and Agbaje 2012). The Payment for Environmental and Hydrological Services (PSAH) programme initiated in 2003 and administered by Mexico’s National Forestry Commission (CONAFOR) also illustrates this trend.

Following the neoliberal restructuring of environmental policy in Mexico over the last two decades, the PSAH programme works on the assumption that water users should pay ‘forest owners’ for the positive environmental externalities supplied by peri-urban forests in preserving aquifer recharge areas, mitigating runoff, and ensuring clean drinking water for cities. As almost 80 per cent of Mexico’s forests exist on communally owned lands with usufruct rights – designated as ejidos and comunidades – the programme includes mostly communally owned forests.

A decade of internationally driven experiments and internalized debates within the Federal Government set the scene for the adoption of the current PSAH, which began in the first years of Vicente Fox’s presidency. By 2008, Mexico had one of the world’s largest national PES programmes (McAfee and Shapiro 2010). In its original design, the Mexican hydrological PES programme targeted payments towards non-commercial forest areas of high and very high socio-economic vulnerability to preserve ecosystem services relevant to national interests instead of those attractive to the international market, such as forests’ capacity for carbon sequestration and biodiversity conservation. Thus, PSAH was initially conceived as both an anti-poverty and environmental preservation strategy, aimed at developing local markets in which payments were to be linked to existing water bills collected by municipalities and to expand municipal funds to support impoverished communal forest managers in ‘priority watersheds’. In order to address the ‘growing scarcity of water’, PES were to focus on both overexploited watersheds and cloud forests, the latter playing a key role in preserving hydrological services (García Coll 2002). In practice, however, the targeted areas had less relevance to preserve threatened aquifers than originally claimed, as the establishment of a payment system between individual service consumers and forest managers was deemed to be more viable in small tracts of forested land near cities (Alix-García et al. 2005).
Prior to its implementation, the approval of PSAH was subjected to heated negotiations that shaped the programme into its current form. First, the initial idea of collecting a 2.5 per cent levy from water fees to be directly channelled back to municipal funds was eventually aborted. Instead, a fixed annual amount (USD20 million) from all collected water fees received by the Federal Government was to be allocated to the ‘Mexican Forest Fund’, and then centrally managed instead of being proportionally reallocated to each watershed. Second, with the intention of enhancing the scheme’s profitability, the anti-poverty credentials of the original proposal were initially abandoned – though later partially reinstated – thus diverting targeted projects away from the most marginalized communities. Furthermore, the approval of the programme was shaped by controversial negotiations between the Fox administration and agricultural producers prompted by the commitment to liberalize most agricultural products under NAFTA in 2003. These, in turn, enabled rural organizations to gain a degree of control over the management of the programme through a newly created ‘Operations Committee’ in the National Forest Council, with equal representation of governmental and producers’ representatives (Alix Garcia et al. 2005).

PSAH was finally framed to target properties with forests of greater than 80 per cent density that were located in overexploited aquifers and with nearby population centers of more than 5,000 inhabitants. The latter was introduced to facilitate the creation of markets of service consumers large enough to enable the operation of the scheme. This in turn favoured the targeting of peri-urban forests near large cities. With 4,000 hectares of communal land incorporated into PSAH, Milpa Alta was the largest of 21 peri-urban areas within Mexico D.F. covered by the programme. An evaluation of PSAH conducted by DuBroff (2009) characterizes the programme as a promising mechanism to tackle the ‘perennial threat of illegal urbanization’ to Mexico City’s ecological conservation lands, ‘thereby creating incentives to protect peri-urban aquifer recharge areas and […] precluding new irregular settlements in these same areas’ (DuBroff 2009: 3).

Ecological conservation lands within Mexico D.F. comprise about 75,000 hectares and it is estimated that the last remaining forests in the area cover about 39,000 hectares. PSAH incorporated about 46 per cent of the latter between 2003 and 2009, from which only 12 per cent were areas at high and very high deforestation risk (DuBroff 2009). The payment scheme was established by the Federal Government through an econometric model based on national average estimates of what an appropriate price might be, taking into consideration social and ecological risk factors (Muñoz-Piña et al. 2007). In the case of Milpa Alta, participating communities received USD23 per hectare through the programme – an incentive too small to deter community members from deforesting their land for agricultural purposes or from subdividing the common forest for informal development (DuBroff 2009). Reflecting on other PES experiences, Wunder (2005: 9) argues that it is almost impossible to beat market-based pressures for land, instead ‘[p]ayments for environmental services are most effective in marginal lands where a modest payment can “tip the balance” in favor of conservation’. But if that is the case, what is the actual role of PES in addressing fair distribution while preserving areas of high ecological value vis-à-vis other land market pressures?

PES schemes operate under the assumption that environmental degradation and social vulnerability can be reversed through the creation of markets that internalize the costs and benefits of preservation into production and consumption decisions. Such markets are assumed to be particularly viable near cities, where the opportunity cost of linking ecosystem services’ buyers and producers appears to be higher. When scrutinized from an environmental justice perspective, this logic appears to have two fundamental flaws. First, PES automatically exclude as ‘service providers’ marginalized groups, such as those occupying or working the land without titles or regularized tenure. In a similar way, service consumers, such as individuals paying water tariffs or buying charcoal or regionally produced food, are likely to be negatively impacted when peri-urban land is set aside for conservation under PES schemes. Second, and as shown in the case of PSAH, through the commodification of ecosystem services PES
schemes inevitably create tradeoffs between conservation and fairness and unsolvable dilemmas in regulating the distribution of the opportunity costs created along the chain of ecological service suppliers and users.

The primacy of economics in regulating differential sustainability is not only to be found through current market-based devices seeking to preserve peri-urban nature but also through the perceived opportunity to green the city through the environmentally friendly dwelling choices of the well off. The next section examines such paths through the rapid spread of green enclaves.

**Producing green enclaves**

A third way in which the peri-urbanization of differential sustainability is being rapidly propagated is through the greening of elite residential enclaves – or ‘eco-enclaves’ as described by Hodson and Marvin (2010). This is manifested in a new generation of sustainable master planning products, that become premium developments due to their capacity (or aspiration) to enhance the ecological security of privileged groups.

Whether adhering strictly to ‘hard’ sustainability design parameters (such as ‘zero carbon’ or ‘100% recycling’), or adopting a more cosmetic approach, elite residential enclaves are becoming increasingly marketed in terms of their green credentials. As such, they offer a refuge away from the undesirable experiences of cities (slums, crime and so on), while enabling their residents to ‘positively contribute’ to the environment. Here, green citizenship aspirations meet the real estate development greed in a marriage that concretizes the possibility of realizing differential sustainability in islands of reform, where eco-living dreams might be available to a minority of urbanites. Put simply, green enclaves promise that what is good for nature can also be good for people (or at least for those who can afford it), boasting features such as spaciousness, marvellous views, a combination of natural greenery and fine landscaping that brings nature close to people.

Since the 1990s, green enclaves have proliferated across most metropolitan regions in the global south, driving the conversion of large chunks of primary agricultural land, previously the food source of adjacent urban areas and the livelihood of small subsistence farmers. For instance, in the Metropolitan Region of Buenos Aires (RMBA), the new residential aspirations of the privileged and the expansion of the suburban motorway network led to the emergence of a highly profitable real estate business, transforming large peri-urban areas of marginal land in the flood valleys of the RMBA into gated communities. By 1999, almost 450 new ‘closed urbanizations’ were built along the lowest areas of the region’s valleys, comprising about 400 km² of environmentally valuable land (Szajenberg 2000). These gated communities not only inaugurated an exclusionary model of urbanization but also had a significant environmental impact, leading to the loss of biodiversity and productive peri-urban activities and to the alteration of the natural drainage system. The likelihood of flooding consequently increased in the communities’ poorly serviced vicinities, despite the advertising of these developments’ green dwelling credentials. In the RMBA, as in many other urban regions of the global south, stricter Environmental Impact Assessment (EIA) requirements have resulted paradoxically in the proliferation of green enclaves, with green credentials becoming both a means to ease the planning application process and an opportunity to market differentiated products.

In this context the peri-urbanization of differential sustainability becomes ruled not just by the prominence of the private sector in modelling urban growth but also by the alignment of public urban planning and management with market forces, with both resulting in increased socio-spatial differentiation. Friedman (2000) describes this trend as a parallel process of ‘slummification/yuppification’, in which advanced marginality often cohabits with advanced material wealth, inevitably crystallized into socio-spatial segregation.

Similarly, green enclaves are rapidly transforming the face of the Accra Metropolitan Area (AMA) through the commodification of customary peri-urban land. Grant (2009) estimates that about 23
gated communities were at varying stages of development in 2004, representing an investment of almost USD435 million, but only about 3 per cent of AMA’s total housing stock. He describes the mushrooming of gated communities as the ‘globalizing of Accra from above’, a process fuelled by the restructuring of foreign direct investment, the expansion of international lending and mortgage programmes and the diffusion of global residential aspirations (Grant 2009: 18).

The above process is particularly at play towards the northeast of AMA, in the area of La—a traditional site of subsistence farming that up until the late 1980s supplied most perishables consumed in Accra. Here, large areas of customary land are rapidly entering the real estate market in the form of gated communities, church and college complexes, and individual non-approved structures. Signs threatening the latter with demolition pepper the area, but the capacity of the La sub-metro to enforce local planning regulations is weak (See Figure 43.3). This, alongside other factors, has given weight to calls to grant the La district municipal status, though it remains to be seen whether greater decentralization of powers will be used to protect local agricultural practices or instead accelerate the commodification of the area through more luxury housing (Allen et al. forthcoming).

In the above scenario, the processes described by Grant as ‘globalizing from above’ and ‘globalizing in between’ are actively at play. The former, driven by foreign investors who are rapidly penetrating the local real estate development market through the development of upmarket gated communities; the latter, through the mushrooming of structures built up by individual families, often through slow processes of capitalization fuelled by the remittances sent from Ghanaians living abroad. These two processes are rapidly reducing agricultural land and squeezing peri-urban farmers out of their trade, particularly women who cannot afford the longer distances and the capital required to relocate to other farming areas (Allen et al. forthcoming).

*Figure 43.3 Unapproved structures mushrooming across peri-urban agricultural land in Accra
Photo: Adriana Allen*
Peri-urbanization and sustainability

Within the area under study, an international company – Finali Ltd – secured land in 2008 to develop over 400 acres into a large-scale ‘luxury housing’ compound, Airport Hills. Exclusive developments such as this have proliferated towards the northeast of Accra, forming a new boundary around one of the sites where La farmers moved their farming practices, due to the encroachment of individual-built housing in the past five years in areas where they previously worked the land. While the ‘rush to build’ unapproved structures over customary land by individual families and traditional authority members is officially regarded as a negative but unstoppable trend fuelled by multiple attempts to capture the increasing value of the land before others do so, upmarket gated communities like Airport Hills are seen in a more benevolent light.

In an interview published in the local media, the Ghanaian Chief Executive Officer and Executive Director of Finali Ltd. explain why Airport Hills is an exemplary master-planned community concept to be closely watched by the government and real estate sector, which ‘when replicated, will go a long way in bringing sanity in community planning and in removing the frustrations associated with land and home acquisition in the country’ (Business and Financial Times 2008). They argue that ‘Airport Hills is not about creating a class society but making sure that its lessees have a serene environment to enable them to live peacefully … The environment within which a home is located dictates its value [this is why the enclave is] unique [and why] consideration is given to architectural merit and environmental issues’ (Business and Financial Times 2008). Finali Ltd currently owns approximately 3,500 acres of land throughout Greater Accra and other regions in Ghana that will be utilized ‘in future for the creation of gated master planned communities and commercial villages’.

The vision encapsulated in Airport Hills resonates with the ambitions of Accra’s authorities to become a world-class city.

Despite Accra’s green credentials as a Millennium City, current plans for the implementation of the city’s development strategy stipulate that urban agriculture will be pushed to surrounding municipalities, where competition for land is lower. Furthermore, peripheral land within AMA is to be acquired not for subsistence agriculture but rather for large scale, export-oriented schemes. Under this model the prospect for protecting the role of peri-urban agriculture in supporting local livelihoods and contributing to Accra’s food security appears to be reduced. Plans to create green areas for organic food production within gated communities are emerging in a small number of large-scale real estate developments (Allen et al. forthcoming). These initiatives, however, appear to be paying lip service to the purported benefits of urban agriculture, in that they are unlikely to stop the disappearance of local food production systems. Meanwhile, the concept embedded under green enclaves such as Airport Hills is celebrated by the local authorities as a potential path to create a ‘new and orderly Accra’, where the city expands in harmony with nature while making the most of the economic potential of its land.

The production of green enclaves today constitutes a large and fast growing industry characterized by an explicit pursuit of sustainability. Green enclaves are produced in a highly internationalized environment, in which sustainability design principles are increasingly being exported by a handful of large, multi-national architecture and engineering consultancies working for a diverse set of consumers, ranging from state clients, to public-private partnerships and even private developers.

Building upon the work of Healey (2010), Rapoport (2011: 2) argues that ‘the international diffusion of planning ideas can produce at best creative learning experiences, at worst the crude imposition or emulation of some purported “universal” solution’. She goes on to contend that:

[c]urrently it remains unclear towards which one of these extremes exported sustainable master plans lean. Is there an emerging paradigm of a standardized ecological urban modernity that is being exported around the world by private sector firms? Or are these plans leading to the development of new, hybrid models of sustainable urbanism?

(Rapoport 2011: 2)
The peri-urbanization of differential sustainability through the propagation of green enclaves articulates in my view both trends, linking the standardized products of a world-class industry to a burgeoning scene of urban entrepreneurs and the rise of middle-class consumer culture in the global south. Reinforcing each other in yet another trajectory of networked environmentalism, all these cogs together are part of a dispositif that puts in motion the very possibility of pursuing the greening of peri-urban areas through the creation of islands of reform.

Green enclaves create an exclusive and exclusionary dream within the city to be, while dislocating previous socio-economically integrated functions performed at the peri-urban interface. However, such enclaves should not be understood merely as a process of gentrification of peri-urban territories, but above all as devices that discursively resignify space and the political agency of their inhabitants. As argued by Sanzana Calvet (2012: 4) ‘the ideal of an ecological citizenship attributed to green enclave “citizens” can be read not necessarily as a progressive expansion of environmental consciousness, but as a new production of an elite citizenship, that use the ecological to enhance new socio-spatial exclusions, a new but regressive form of urban based citizenship’. In short, green enclaves discipline the peri-urban landscape, enabling differential sustainability through the socio-spatial segregation of green citizens away from the ‘other’.

**Differential sustainability at work**

The mechanisms discussed throughout this chapter are widely regarded as acceptable means to articulate selective interests in the framing and management of peri-urban nature, in effect normalizing the production and reproduction of differential sustainability as a desirable outcome. Although the short analysis of each approach only begins to touch on the myriad variables at play, together they illuminate how the peri-urbanization of differential sustainability works and why the vision of a sustainable urban future embedded in the discourses and practices of neoliberal entrepreneurial planning can only be implemented at the expense of environmental justice considerations.

As such, the dispositif of differential sustainability encompasses a crisis of regulation heralded by increased conflict in peri-urban territories, which partly stems from the relatively more limited powers that states have over such areas in comparison to the inner urban core where land is typically privately owned and subjected to institutional regulations. By contrast, land-use management at the peri-urban interface is not only highly contested but subjected to communal and traditional land systems, nowadays increasingly transformed by formal and informal markets. In this context, and unable to apply the repertoire of institutional mechanisms usually deployed in core urban areas, it is not surprising to find different public agencies experimenting with innovative yet one-dimensional solutions that aim to regulate conflict paradoxically by invisibilizing the multiple driving forces that propel such conflict in the first place.

The analysis reveals that the sprawl of informal settlements over ecologically valuable peri-urban land cannot be regulated without a simultaneous consideration of the environmental, social, economic and political factors that drive the peri-urbanization of poverty and the erosion of the poor’s right to city and to nature across the global south. Similarly, payment for ecosystem service schemes are likely to reinforce existing socio-environmental inequalities instead of bringing to play an ecological rationale in the appropriation of peri-urban land. Green enclaves for their part can at best be expected to deliver pockets of environmentally friendly settlements but not the transformation required to ensure that such an option is opened to many. In all the three cases analysed, a fundamental tension lies in the proposition that sustainable urban futures might be achievable but at the expense of the less privileged. The reproduction of difference is thus an inherent condition in all these three mechanisms, but even when examined strictly from a sustainability perspective, it is hard to imagine how any of these paths would ever succeed in preserving the ecological capital and functions of the peri-urban interface without
addressing the actual political economy that makes such interface simultaneously a space for the marginalized and excluded, the vote-seeker and the rent-seeker.

The production and reproduction of differential sustainability in its interface with urbanization processes is led not only by market forces, but also by the universalization of decontextualized and depoliticized urban planning and management methods and techniques. The three devices analysed illustrate how the environmental problematic is ostensibly moulded by the contributions of an ‘epistemic community’ of experts bonded by ‘their shared belief or faith in the verity and the applicability of particular forms of knowledge or specific truths’ (Haas 1992: 3). Treating the articulation of environmental values as an objective, scientific and value-free exercise perpetuates the reproduction of environmental injustices.

Through each of the mechanisms analysed, nature is ontologically reduced to a set of overriding values (e.g. the preservation of vital ecosystem services), legitimizing the need to prioritize interventions that in effect treat peri-urban areas as clay that can be moulded to attain sustainability at the expense of certain social groups or aspects of nature. The effectiveness of this operation is not only supported by different ways of framing differential sustainability on behalf of the ‘public good’ but also through the depoliticization of peri-urban territories, as a blank canvas devoid of history, power asymmetries, interests, conflicts and rights other than those backed up by private property. Through the former process the selective articulation of value is hidden and a surgical reorganization of the territory and society makes it possible to perpetuate environmental injustices in the name of the public good.

Mechanisms such as the ones reviewed throughout this chapter have been described by Ernstson and Sörlin (2013) as ‘technologies of globalization’, offering standardized diagnoses and remedies that shape the production of space on environmental grounds. As such, they represent a form of networked environmentalism enhanced through the professionalization and diffusion of sustainability planning. As argued by Haas (1992), uncertainty in how to address a policy issue tends to increase the demand for expert inputs, limiting non-expert participation in details of negotiation and enforcement. Indeed, all the mechanisms previously examined frame the pursuit of sustainability as a normative domain defined by professionals – whether working in the public or private sector – in which ordinary citizens are reduced to either green consumers, groups to be paternalistically protected or coerced to act on behalf of the common good, or individuals economically incentivized to keep their actions within pre-established thresholds. Moreover, those living and working informally in peri-urban territories are outside the vision and environmental practices prescribed as desirable and therefore further displaced or marginalized both from current urban development and from the city to be.

Will the differential sustainability dispositif overcome the crisis of socio-environmental regulation in which cities are currently immersed? My informed guess is probably not, though its efficacy should not be underestimated. Using a biological metaphor, differential sustainability could be seen as a virus, with the strength to reproduce itself, to penetrate all parts of the anatomy of society and the territory and to resist counter-policy treatments. Will emerging sites of resistance be able to eventually produce a shift to a more socially and environmentally just dispositif? My answer is, hopefully, yes. However, this is unlikely to be without further and deeper struggles, as differential sustainability appears to have the capacity to accommodate measures of social contention, while preserving exploitative capitalist accumulation. This in turn is likely to delay the deepening of the crisis and contradictions through which the commodification of nature is produced and reproduced throughout the peri-urbanizing global south. The above discussion does not mean that environmental planning is a practice inevitably geared towards the reproduction of differential sustainability but rather articulates the need to bring the notion of ‘environmental justice’ to the fore, as a productive and challenging means to inspect and deliberate about the politicity of sustainability planning praxis in the urbanizing global south.
References


Peri-urbanization and sustainability


Notes

1 It is reported that about 300 million middle-class peri-urban dwellers, for instance, live in housing estates built on previously held farmland in India and China, accounting for substantial increases in food prices for rich and poor alike (Douglas 2006).

2 As argued by Foucault (1980: 194), the notion of ‘dispositif’ captures ‘a thoroughly heterogeneous ensemble consisting of discourses, institutions, architectural forms, regulatory decisions, laws, administrative measures, scientific statements, philosophical, moral and philanthropic propositions – in short, the said as much as the unsaid’.

3 To examine the work of other authors endorsing a similar approach, see Becker and Raza (1999) and Jäger and Raza (2001).

4 Fieldwork observations by the author, based on a field trip conducted in Lima in May 2013.

5 In the early 1990s, several PES projects emerged in different parts of Mexico, some of which attempted to link peri-urban water services from forests to the cities of Durango and Puebla, although these were not actually implemented. In the late 1990s, discussions about adopting PES schemes linking water services and forest conservation became central in the context of climate change negotiations (Alix-García et al. 2005).

6 Portes and Roberts (2005) demonstrate that throughout the 1990s rising inequality came together with increased access by the privileged to sumptuous consumption habits across most Latin American metropolises.

7 Contrasting qualities manifested in the mushrooming of the so-called ‘architecture of fear’ are illustrated in crime rates, which in the RMBA increased 340 per cent in the 1990s alone, with the highest crime records reported in the wealthier peri-urban enclaves (Ayres 1998). In turn, this trend fed a vicious circle in which the privileged found a further justification for their ‘eco-enclaves’.

8 Between 2008 and 2012, the author coordinated the work of four groups of postgraduate students from the DPU MSc in Environment and Sustainable Development, who examined a number of sites where urban agriculture is currently being practised within AMA. Final outputs are available from http://bit.ly/KXPB3B.


10 Sustainability is a goal boasted by Accra’s declaration as a ‘Millennium City’ by the Earth Institute at Columbia University in 2010, under a scheme supporting selected cities in sub-Saharan Africa to design effective strategies towards the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).
PART VII

Big stories of urban change
BIG STORIES OF URBAN CHANGE

Susan Parnell

The future is urban. Global problems and their solutions will of necessity draw from and speak to the urban realities of the next centuries. The urban world is already a southern world and even though, as we have seen from the contributions in this Handbook, this delineation of ‘the southern’ is far from fixed, a collective repositioning of perspective in urban studies is currently underway. How we read cities and where we place them in a global lexicon is inevitably going to morph with the changes that are already evident within and between cities and towns. For now, however, a southern framing on global urban challenges is imperative if we are to have any intellectual and practical integrity or impact. Southern urbanism is thus a political construct, devised to shift assumptions and alter the locus of intellectual power, just as notions of planetary urbanism remind us of the global system of cities and the interconnectedness of all human and natural systems (Hodson and Marvin 2010; Madden 2012). In this final section of the book we consider the big forces that have brought us to where we are today, and which must configure our collective (re)engagement with the urban condition now and in the future.

Normally the economy takes centre stage in any discussion of the macro structural forces shaping cities, but reflecting on present and future urban challenges, as we do in this section, other questions loom large. Simply naming the thematic issues taken up in this section of The Handbook is daunting: food security (Crush), the burden of disease (Herrick), poverty (Satterthwaite), migration and gender relations (Tacoli and Chant), resource consumption and the urban metabolism (Fernandez) and, of course, climate change (Simon and Leck). The list of macro forces we cover here is not exhaustive; other areas, such as disaster risk (Pelling 2013), biodiversity (Elmqvist et al. 2013) or war and conflict (Beall et al. 2013), for instance, could (and perhaps should) have been included. The substantive point is, nonetheless, that no city emerges, exists or matures in isolation from wider economic, social, cultural or ecological change. While ordinary people make extraordinary efforts to survive and thrive in the city, wider forces of global environmental, economic and political change prescribe much of their circumstance in the city. Simon and Leck are clear: while climate change is key among the forces that the city shapes and is shaped by, it should not be essentialized or abstracted from a wider context of global transformation taking place at varied paces and differential scales.

What sets these chapters apart from other apocalyptic or utopian assessments of the human condition is the forefronting of the urban. Failure to ground policy research in the urban condition amounts, for Crush, to an anti-urban bias and a negation of commitment to evidence based research. In contrast, his carefully constructed account of urban food security traverses the food chain and takes up city-based issues of food production, distribution and access in cities where scarcity is the norm. Herrick is able to
build from a field where the urban specificities of the burden of disease are acknowledged, if not widely endorsed by the biomedical community; so, using the city as her frame, she takes up the north/south dichotomy/continuum to reflect on the academic treatment of urban health, providing a valuable sector-based insight into the kind of detailed city by city investigation and presentation of credible data that can then be scaled up to discern patterns of urban health. This extensive research undertaking, which must then be replicated across sectors such as transport, water or energy, is what will move forward the very general debate on the nature of the city of the global south that we introduced at the start of The Handbook.

Thus far in this large volume, we have desisted from presenting the big picture of demographic transition. It would be remiss, however, not to draw attention to the underlying dynamic of population growth, most of it located in cities of the global south, that informs each of the chapters that follow. The absolute expansion of the world’s urban population and its concentration in cities where there is limited fiscal or institutional capacity must provide a starting point for what urban research is undertaken and what urban questions are given priority. Tacoli and Chant reflect on the rural–urban contrast and the inexorable movement of people from the countryside to town. Central to their account is not only the geographical shift in the global distribution of population, but more importantly the social change this heralds, given the uneven terms on which men and women navigate the city.

The papers in this section reflect a normative position that puts poverty, inequality, ecological resilience and the intergenerational legacies of cities at the fore. In taking on the urban dimension of the big question that has been coined ‘future earth’,1 two things stand out from the chapters as a whole. The first is the imperative for collecting rigorous new knowledge (see Crush) that will enable trend analysis and comparative reflection (see Fernandez). The second is a concern about the extremely poor quality of data on which urban analysis depends. While noted elsewhere in The Handbook, this issue is articulated passionately by Satterthwaite here, whose devastating critique of existing global poverty statistics is matched only by his commitment to the presentation of comparative urban poverty data that reveals how incredibly varied progress in addressing poverty has been. As current debates about poverty and sustainability find their way into the global political processes associated with defined sustainable development goals, reflecting on southern cities more closely highlights first how unacceptable our record of making cities habitable for all residents has been and second, that the world’s cities are not ours alone; they are entrusted to our care for only a short moment in time.

References


Note

1 ‘Future Earth is a new 10-year international research initiative that will develop the knowledge for responding effectively to the risks and opportunities of global environmental change and for supporting transformation towards global sustainability in the coming decades. Future Earth will mobilize thousands of scientists while strengthening partnerships with policy makers and other stakeholders to provide sustainability options and solutions in the wake of Rio+20’ available http://www.icsu.org/future-earth, accessed 29 July 2013).
APPROACHING FOOD SECURITY IN CITIES OF THE GLOBAL SOUTH

Jonathan Crush

Introduction
The challenge of building sustainable and food secure cities has been identified as the critical development issue of the twenty-first century (Satterthwaite et al. 2010; Birch and Wachter 2011; Fox 2011). The cities of the south are being engulfed by a deepening crisis of food inaccessibility, characterized by growing food poverty, hunger and malnutrition, a lack of dietary diversity, child wasting and stunting, increased vulnerability to infectious and chronic disease, and a growing obesity epidemic (MSSRF 2010; Crush et al. 2012; Popkin et al. 2012). This urban crisis seems largely invisible to the policy and research communities concerned with global food security. Indeed, there was more research and policy debate on urban food insecurity in the 1990s, when the south was a lot less urbanized than it is today. Maxwell (1999) attributed the relative lack of attention to urban food security back then to the sheer complexity of the phenomenon. Since then, any residual concern with urban food security seems to have been swept aside by the new international food security agenda and its pervasive anti-urban bias (Crush and Frayne 2011). Significantly, the only aspect of urban food security that commands significant attention is urban agriculture, which is widely, but improbably, seen as the key to achieving food security in cities of the global south (Lee-Smith 2010).

Underlying the new international food security agenda are three propositions: first, the problem of food security is primarily one of inadequate national production and supply; second, the primary location of food insecurity is in the rural areas of the south; and, third, urbanization is an essentially problematic phenomenon which can be slowed and even halted by addressing the ‘root causes’ of food insecurity (rural poverty and declining smallholder agriculture) (Crush and Frayne 2011). Despite the current donor and philanthropic enthusiasm for further ‘green revolutions’ in the countryside, such efforts are highly unlikely either to stem the migration of people to the cities or to feed these newly urbanized populations. The global south faces an increasingly urban future and food insecurity will become a primarily urban challenge (Steel 2009; Chmielewska and Souza 2011; Teng et al. 2011; Zingel et al. 2011; Crush et al. 2012). The knowledge gaps are many and a wide-ranging programme of research is urgently needed to uncover the dimensions and complexities of the phenomenon. Out of this will hopefully emerge policy responses that move beyond the pervasive idea that urban households can and will feed themselves or be fed by their impoverished elderly relatives on small plots in rural areas.

This chapter first provides a mapping of current levels of urban food insecurity in the south using data from regional and national studies to illustrate the dimensions and magnitude of the crisis. Rapid
urbanization and growing food insecurity have also been accompanied by a major, and ongoing, transformation in food flows into and within cities of the south. This transformation – sometimes dubbed the supermarket revolution – has potentially significant implications for urban food insecurity. However, the links between supermarket penetration of food retail markets in the global south and the food security of the urban poor has not received a great deal of attention to date. This chapter therefore reviews the current state of knowledge on these connections, focusing on two central issues: first, the impact of supermarkets on the informal food economy and livelihoods in ‘traditional’ food systems; and second, the contradictory evidence concerning the impact of supermarkets on food accessibility and dietary quality amongst the urban poor across the south.

The crisis of urban food insecurity

In 1996, the Rome World Food Summit Plan of Action offered a new definition of food security which has since become embedded in academic and policy discourse: ‘Food security exists when all people, at all times, have physical and economic access to sufficient, safe and nutritious food to meet their dietary needs and food preferences for an active and healthy life’ (FAO 1996: Article 1). The staying power of this definition is due to the fact that it moves beyond the unsustainable idea that food insecurity is simply a matter of insufficient food production. In the urban context, in particular, where households have to purchase most of their food and other goods and services, food security ‘depends to a large extent on individual household circumstances as the household operates within this purchasing environment’ (Teng and Escaler 2010: 2).

The FAO definition suggests that a holistic understanding of food security should focus on four interlinked issues: food availability, food access, food utilization and food stability (Figure 45.1).

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Figure 45.1 The four dimensions of food security
Source: Burchi et al. 2011
Food security in cities

Understanding these different dimensions of food security and their inter-relationship is clearly a trans-disciplinary challenge (Drimie and McLachlan 2013). For example, the food utilization component in Figure 45.1 identifies ‘food preparation, nutrition knowledge and cultural traditions’ as determinants of food insecurity. Thus, people may be consuming a sufficient number of calories but if the food is unsafe, their dietary diversity is poor and they are forced to eat food they prefer not to, then, by this definition, they are food insecure. To fully comprehend these connections would require an approach that incorporated concepts and methodologies from the social sciences and humanities as well as nutrition and public health.

Anthropometric measures of food insecurity outcomes are widely used in the biomedical literature. The three most common are child wasting (low weight for height), stunting (low height for age) and underweight (low weight for age). A national study of urban food security in India recently reported, for example, that in all but one Indian state, more than a third of children in urban areas are stunted (Table 45.1) (MSSRF 2010). Levels of wasting vary from a low of 9 per cent in Kerala to a high of 37 per cent in Bihar. In almost every state, over 20 per cent of children are underweight. Apart from the very high levels of child under-nutrition captured in these figures, there are striking differences from state to state and, by extension, city to city.

Another conventional measure of food insecurity is the amount of dietary energy consumed by individuals or a household. Various cut-offs are generally used to classify the undernourished into increasingly deprived groups: for example, the subjacent hungry (1800–2200 kcals per person per day); the medial hungry (1600–1800 kcals per person per day) and the ultra hungry (less than 1600 kcals per person per day) (Ahmed et al. 2011). In a number of countries food-energy deficiencies are already higher in urban than rural areas (Figure 45.2). The Global Hunger Index (GHI) combines food-energy and anthropomorphic data including the proportion of people who are food-energy deficient, the prevalence of underweight children under five and the under-five child mortality rate (IFPRI 2012). The GHI is a useful composite measure for tracking changes over time but tends to rely primarily on national level data. As a result, its utility for tracking and mapping levels of urban food insecurity is untested.

### Table 45.1 Prevalence of undernutrition in children (age 6–36 months) in urban India, 2005–6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>State</th>
<th>% Stunted</th>
<th>% Wasted</th>
<th>% Underweight</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Andhra Pradesh</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Assam</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bihar</td>
<td>38</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gujarat</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Haryana</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karmataka</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kerala</td>
<td>27</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Madhya Pradesh</td>
<td>41</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maharashtra</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Orissa</td>
<td>36</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Punjab</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>20</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rajasthan</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tamil Naidu</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uttar Pradesh</td>
<td>33</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>West Bengal</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td><strong>37</strong></td>
<td><strong>19</strong></td>
<td><strong>30</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Source: MSSRF 2010: 72–5*
Another proxy measure for food insecurity, especially useful in the urban context, is the proportion of household income spent on food. As a general rule, the poorer the household, the higher the proportion. A recent study by the International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) examined poor urban household budgets in 13 countries across the south (Ahmed et al. 2011). In every country studied, poor households were spending over a third of their income on food (Table 45.2). In some countries, such as Burundi, Mozambique and Zambia, the figure was closer to 60 per cent. Amongst the ultra-poor (those earning less than USD1 per person per day), the proportion of income spent on food was around 50 per cent or more and nearly 70 per cent in some countries such as Ghana and Rwanda.

A more sophisticated set of cross-cultural measures of food insecurity was developed by the FANTA (Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance) Project in Washington DC (Swindale and Bilinsky 2006). The FANTA methodology was used in a 2008–9 baseline survey of 11 cities in Southern Africa by the African Food Security Urban Network (AFSUN) (Crush et al. 2012). The survey revealed a stark picture of food insecurity in poor urban neighbourhoods across the region. Only 17 per cent of the 6,453 households surveyed were classified as food secure on the FANTA scale. As many as 57 per cent

Table 45.2 Proportion of household income spent on food

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>US$1 per day and above</th>
<th>Less than US$1 per day</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Burundi</td>
<td>57</td>
<td>65</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghana</td>
<td>53</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Malawi</td>
<td>34</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rwanda</td>
<td>50</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mozambique</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zambia</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>61</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnam</td>
<td>46</td>
<td>49</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nicaragua</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peru</td>
<td>42</td>
<td>54</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Ahmed et al. 2011: 98–9
Food security in cities

Figure 45.3  Levels of food insecurity in Southern African cities
Source: (Crush et al. 2012)

were severely food insecure and another 19 per cent were moderately food insecure. In cities in crisis, such as Harare (Zimbabwe) and Manzini (Swaziland), food security rates were less than 7 per cent and severe food insecurity levels were over 70 per cent. Other findings included consistently low dietary diversity, severe fluctuations in levels of food insecurity during the year and particular vulnerability to food insecurity on the part of female-headed households.

Popkin and Gordon-Larsen (2004: S2) observe that ‘over the past 15 years, there has been increasing evidence that the structure of dietary intakes and the prevalence of obesity around the developing world have been changing at an increasingly rapid pace’. Urban food insecurity is therefore increasingly viewed as a problem of both undernutrition (insufficient good quality food) and overnutrition (too much of the wrong kinds of food) (Popkin et al. 2012). A review of 28 studies in West Africa, for example, found that the prevalence of urban obesity had doubled in the previous decade and a half (Akubakari et al. 2008). Another study of West and East African cities reported that the prevalence of obesity increased by nearly 35 per cent between 1992 and 2005 (Ziraba et al. 2009). The growing public health and economic burden of soaring rates of urban obesity has been documented most thoroughly in countries such as Mexico (Rtveladze et al. 2013). In the global south, obesity rates tend to be significantly higher amongst females than males and amongst urban than rural populations as high-fat, high-sugar urban diets displace more traditional fare (Subramanian and Davey Smith 2006). Obesity is also increasingly affecting the urban poor (Monteiro et al. 2007; Case and Menendez 2009). Studies in India show that poor migrants who move from the countryside to the city immediately begin to experience higher rates of obesity and chronic disease as a result of changes in diet (Ebrahim et al. 2010). In many households in poor urban communities in the south there is also evidence of a ‘nutrition transition paradox’ of child under-nutrition and adult obesity within the same household (Doak et al. 2005; Van Hook et al. 2013). As Caballero (2005: 1515) notes ‘cheap, energy-dense, nutrient-poor foods may adversely affect the growth of the child but may provide sufficient calories for the adult to gain excess weight’.

Changes in levels and types of food insecurity accompanying the urban transition in the global south are increasingly well-documented. Coherent strategies to mitigate rising levels of under-nutrition and overnutrition are, by contrast, virtually non-existent. Very few national and city governments, with the exception of certain cities in Brazil, have thought systematically about the challenges and developed food security plans for their burgeoning urban populations (Rocha 2009). One of the many complex challenges is the dramatic transformation in urban food systems over the last three decades. This
involves ‘extensive consolidation, very rapid institutional and organizational change, and progressive modernization of the procurement system’ (Reardon and Timmer 2012). The key question now, according to Peter Timmer (2009), is whether supermarkets change the food policy agenda.

The supermarket revolution

Four overlapping phases in the spatial diffusion of supermarkets across the global south have been identified (Reardon and Timmer 2012) (Table 45.3). The first phase saw supermarket expansion to and within the larger countries of Latin America such as Argentina and Brazil (where the food retail market share of supermarkets had reached around 50 per cent by 2002 and is projected to rise to 75 per cent by 2015). The second phase occurred in selected countries in East and Southeast Asia (such as Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and the Philippines) as well as South Africa. The third phase witnessed rapid supermarket growth in the smaller countries of Latin and Central America. The fourth is well underway in the larger Asian countries and the rest of Africa. In China, for example, supermarket sales are growing by 30−40 per cent per year, which is 200−300 per cent faster than in other regions of the south (Hu et al. 2004). Expansion in ‘latecomers’ such as India and Vietnam is occurring even faster than in China (Neilson and Pritchard 2007; Reardon and Minten 2011). Within countries, there is a consistent pattern of spread from large cities to intermediate towns and cities to small towns in predominantly rural areas (Reardon and Gulati 2008: 6).

Table 45.3 Supermarket share of food retail by country

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>2002</th>
<th>2015 (projected)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Global North</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>USA</td>
<td>90</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>UK</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>97</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Denmark</td>
<td>75</td>
<td>85</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Spain</td>
<td>60</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italy</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Global South</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1st Phase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Argentina</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chile</td>
<td>62</td>
<td>77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brazil</td>
<td>49</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd Phase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>55</td>
<td>83</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd Phase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>El Salvador</td>
<td>54</td>
<td>68</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Colombia</td>
<td>47</td>
<td>58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guatemala</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>44</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4th Phase</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>China</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Egypt</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kenya</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>India</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tunisia</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>18</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Morocco</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bangladesh</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pakistan</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Adapted from Traill 2006: 170
Food security in cities

Research on the relationship between the supermarket revolution and food security has focused on three main issues. First, there is the well-tilled field of whether supermarket expansion and procurement practices mitigate rural food insecurity through providing new market opportunities for smallholder farmers (Vorley et al. 2007; Reardon et al. 2012). A second question is whether the expansion of large-scale formal food retail impacts negatively on the livelihoods of small independent retailers and the informal food economy. Third, does the growing presence and power of supermarkets exacerbate or mitigate food insecurity amongst the urban poor? The first issue is of limited interest to this chapter. The remainder of the chapter discusses the second and third issues at greater length.

The highly charged public policy debate around the entry of Walmart to India and South Africa clearly delineated the fear of workers, governments and small business of unfair competition, job losses and a decline in incomes and working conditions for those employed at various stages in the food value chain. Also, as Kennedy et al. (2002: 1) pessimistically conclude,

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competition for a market share of food purchases tends to intensify with entry into the system of powerful new players such as large multinational fast food and supermarket chains. The losers tend to be the small local agents and traditional food markets and, to some extent, merchants selling ‘street foods’ and other items.
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In similar vein, Reardon and Gulati (2008: 17) conclude that ‘the mirror image of the spread of supermarkets is the decline of the traditional retail sector’. Suryadarma et al. (2007: 3) characterize the process as follows:

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The first traditional retailers to go out of business are usually those selling broad types of goods, processed foods, and dairy products, with fresh produce shops and wet markets following afterwards. After several years of competition, the traditional retailers that are usually still in business are those selling niche products or those in locations where supermarkets are legally prevented from entering.
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Humphrey (2007), on the other hand, argues that the impact of the supermarket revolution is greatly overestimated and that the food retail landscape in the south is likely to remain far more diverse than in the north. Economic and spatial competition between the formal and informal food sectors undoubtedly intensifies with the supermarket revolution. But is this inevitably destined to have the negative impact on small firms in the informal food economy?

The research evidence is scattered and ambiguous but it does tend to suggest that the relationship is a great deal more complicated than allowed by Kennedy and her colleagues. A recent study in Hanoi for example, found that poor urban households shop for food on an almost daily basis from a variety of outlets (Figué and Moustier 2009). Although they have a positive image of supermarkets (in terms of the diversity and quality of produce), they have very low rates of supermarket patronage. The authors attribute this to spatial and economic inaccessibility (distance from supermarkets and the higher cost of produce). The traditional food-retailing sector works better for poor consumers in terms of accessibility, credit and low prices. However, supermarket penetration in Vietnam is at a relatively early stage and this may partially explain their limited use as an everyday food source (Van Wijk et al. 2004).

A related study in Delhi, India, found that food is retailed by a large number of players including pushcarts, kinana (mom-and-pop) shops, wetmarkets (open fresh food markets), retailers, cooperative-modern retail chains of small shops, public sector distribution system chain stores and private-sector supermarket chains. Unlike in Hanoi, there are no serious spatial obstacles to the urban poor accessing supermarkets, which also offer cheaper processed and fresh food. However, the poor still patronize traditional suppliers because they are able to negotiate prices and foodstuffs can be bought in smaller,
affordable quantities. Similar conclusions about the resilience of the informal food economy as a food source for the urban poor have been reached in a variety of other urban contexts, including in China, Nicaragua, Thailand and Zambia (D’Haese et al. 2008; Abrahams 2010; Isaacs et al. 2010; Zhang and Pan 2013). However, all of these studies tend to be snapshots taken during the early stages of supermarket penetration. Missing are longitudinal studies which track impacts and interactions over time as well as studies in countries and cities where supermarkets are extremely well entrenched.

Some research is available on early supermarket adopters, including Brazil, South Africa and Indonesia. Given the dominance of supermarkets in urban food retail in these countries, it is worth asking what impact this has had on other formal and informal food retailers. Farina et al. (2005: 134) argue that the conventional wisdom in Brazil was that supermarkets would ‘eliminate’ all forms of competition simply because they were able to deliver food at lower prices than the competition. In practice, ‘different formats of retail stores cohabit (the) Brazilian market, compete for consumer preference and, at the same time, complement each other’. The informal food economy has proven to be much more resilient in smaller urban centres than the large urban conurbations such as São Paulo and Rio de Janeiro. However, in all centres small food retail survives despite having higher food costs than the large supermarket chains because it offers more convenience to the consumer and involves purchasing costs (transport, time) that are lower than the large chains.

South Africa is an unusual example in that the informal food economy was almost non-existent in the apartheid era and, as a result, supermarkets and the informal economy grew very much in tandem after 1990. The urban poor in South Africa source their food primarily from supermarkets, the informal economy and small retailers (Crush et al. 2012). In the three South African cities of Cape Town, Msunduzi and Johannesburg, over 95 per cent of poor households buy food at supermarkets. However, 69 per cent of households also purchase food from small formal outlets (such as cornerstores, grocers and fast-food outlets) and 68 per cent patronize the informal food economy on a regular basis. In other words, most households source food from more than one type of retail outlet and tend to shop for different things at different outlets. For example only 5 per cent of households patronize supermarkets on a daily basis, compared with 31 per cent who purchase from the informal food economy that frequently. The majority of poor urban households patronize supermarkets once or twice a month, generally to purchase staples such as maize and rice which can be bought in bulk and are considerably cheaper as a result. Perishables and cooked food, which cannot be easily stored or refrigerated, are sourced from more proximate informal vendors and small outlets. For reasons that require further exploration, the relative importance of each of the three food sources does vary from city to city (Figure 45.4).

Another country with a well-entrenched supermarket sector is Indonesia. Here, Suryadarma et al. (2007) have examined the impact of supermarkets on food traders in traditional markets since they are in direct competition with one another, selling many of the same products. While the traders experienced a significant decline in incomes in the early 2000s, none of this was directly attributable to supermarket competition. Instead, the lack of infrastructure in the markets, rising fuel prices and declining consumer spending power, and competition from within the informal food economy (by street traders) were the primary causes. As a result, ‘the decline in earnings and profit of traditional markets cannot be attributed to the presence of supermarkets near the traditional markets’ (Suryadarma et al. 2007: 25).

Although the evidence is still rather fragmentary, it does seem clear that the informal food economy in cities of the global south is not doomed to extinction even in areas with long supermarket histories (D’Andrea et al. 2006). On the contrary, rapid urbanization, the growth of poor urban populations, and the growth of informality (not just in the food sector) as an entrepreneurial rather than survival strategy, all suggest that the formal and informal food economies will compete, complement and coexist long into the future.
Urban food access

The final section of this chapter draws together the previous two, posing the question of whether the supermarket revolution is having a positive or negative impact on the food security of the urban poor. Global levels of urban food insecurity have continued to grow in the last two decades even as supermarket penetration has affected more and more countries and cities. However, the dramatic pace of urbanization and associated unemployment and poverty may be of such magnitude that it would be a mistake to automatically assume that supermarkets are responsible.

One impact that supermarkets’ supply chains and retail outlets are certainly having on food insecurity is that they are removing the ‘food availability’ component from the equation. Supermarkets are increasingly ensuring that there is rarely an absolute shortage of food in the city, except under extreme conditions such as civil war or severe economic crisis (such as in Zimbabwe in 2008–9 when the empty supermarket shelves were popularly seen as a sign of how far the country had fallen) (Tawodzera 2011). Supermarkets also have the potential to address other components of the food insecurity conundrum, smoothing seasonal variations and eliminating the (in)stability dimension of food insecurity. The central question is what impact the supermarket revolution has had on food access and food utilization by the urban poor.

Hawkes (2008) suggests that supermarkets do have important dietary implications but the precise impacts depend on their location, the prices they charge, the promotional strategies they use and the nutrition-related activities they implement. Whether poor households can access the food available for purchase in supermarkets in urban environments depends on two key variables: household income and the price of food. In many cities in the south, income, or the lack thereof, drives food insecurity. Households with one or more members in waged employment tend to be more food secure than those who do not or those who rely on other income streams such as casual work, social grants or renting accommodation. This immediately puts female-headed households at a distinct disadvantage since
urban labour markets are often highly gendered in the south and women find it harder to access decent paying jobs.

The other key determinant of food access for the urban poor is food pricing. Some have suggested that the comparative price advantage of supermarkets increases over time. In the early stages of supermarket penetration of a new market, prices of processed and fresh produce are equal to or higher than traditional sources. Later, processed food becomes cheaper while fresh produce is comparable in price. Finally, all food prices tend to be cheaper in supermarkets as ‘procurement systems become more efficient through better supply chain management and in-store and in-distribution-center inventory management and handling’ (Minten et al. 2010: 1775–6). However, this downward trend is not irreversible. During 2008–9, for example, world food prices soared and the supermarkets passed many of the additional costs on to consumers. Across the global south, levels of food insecurity escalated dramatically in the space of a few months (Cohen and Garrett 2010).

The final aspect of food security which supermarkets might logically be expected to influence is the nutritional quality of urban diets, including dietary diversity. Most agree that the presence of supermarkets encourages people to eat more, if they can afford it (Hawkes 2008). However, there is a lack of research on the impact of supermarkets on the diets and consumption practices of poor households. The case studies that do exist draw contrasting conclusions. In Guatemala, for example, Asfaw (2008: 237) concludes that supermarkets have a negative impact on poor households by increasing the calorie share of partially and highly processed foods in the diet at the expense of staple and ‘healthy’ food items. In addition, an increase in supermarket purchase significantly increases overweight and obesity. In Tunisia, on the other hand, Tessier et al. (2008) found that regular use of supermarkets leads to a slight increase in dietary quality. A review by Hawkes (2008) of other scattered global evidence found that the dietary implications are both positive (supermarkets can make a more diverse diet available and accessible to more people) and negative (they can reduce the ability of marginalized populations to purchase a high-quality diet, and encourage the consumption of energy-dense, nutrient-poor highly-processed foods).

The global growth in obesity, documented above, has certainly been attributed to the simultaneous expansion of supermarkets into the developing world (Ford and Dzewaltowski 2008; Popkin et al. 2012). However, the causal connections are unclear. Underlying the large literature on ‘food deserts’ in the north is the normative argument that poor neighbourhoods in the inner city are significantly disadvantaged by the lack of access to supermarkets. In other words, access to supermarkets is simply assumed to mean better and more nutritious diets for poor households. In South Africa, however, supermarkets are generally not inaccessible yet poor urban households have very limited dietary diversity. In other words, the ‘food deserts’ hypothesis (with its essentially benign view of supermarkets) cannot be uncritically transplanted to the global south (Battersby 2012).

**Conclusion**

This chapter sits at the confluence of three transformative processes in the global south. First, as many of the other chapters attest, the south is undergoing a rapid urban transition fuelled by natural population increase and migration. To paraphrase Lincoln Steffen’s famous aphorism: ‘I have seen the future, and it is urban’. The urban transition is throwing up many daunting challenges, not the least of which is how hungry cities and city-regions will actually be fed. Second, the cities of the south have witnessed major changes in the ways in which their food supply is organized. In the vanguard of this second transformation are national and international supermarket companies that are vertically integrating all aspects of the food value chain and incorporating cities into global food markets. Third, there is a major upsurge in levels and trends of food insecurity in the cities of the south. Rates of under-nutrition and overnutrition are both soaring, dietary diversity is declining and constant hunger is the lot of millions.
Most cities are awash with food; the key issue is not how to grow more food but to improve access to the food that is grown and available.

The links between these three processes are imperfectly understood, partly because they have been sidelined by the anti-urban bias of the new international food security agenda. If even a fraction of the resources now devoted to developing new seed types and supplying cellphones to agro-dealers were directed instead to applied research and policy-making on urban food insecurity, the countries and cities of the global south would be in a much better position to comprehend and respond to the growing crisis. New urbanites are not going to grow their own food nor are they going to be fed by the household members they left behind in the rural areas, places they left precisely so that they could locate an income and improve the food security and life chances of all. Failure to address the development challenge of urban food insecurity, rising food prices and low incomes will have serious unintended consequences for the global south.

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Food security in cities

HEALTHY CITIES OF/FROM THE SOUTH

Clare Herrick

Introduction

In all the debate on theorizing cities from and for the south, discussions of health remain relatively silent amid the rush to find adequate explanatory frameworks for a rapidly changing urban reality. This silence remains despite the fact that the broad canon of urban studies has actually been remarkably prolific in responding to Robinson’s (2006: x) assertion that urban theory has ‘excluded many cities and their citizens from their accounts of the excitement and potential of city life’ by corraling cities of the south into developmental frameworks, rather than theories of urban modernity. Indeed, while McFarlane (2008: 341) has argued that the south still exists as an ‘urban shadow’ on the ‘edges of urban theory’, there now seems to be an increasing movement towards making the shadows smaller (Myers 2011; Roy 2011; Roy 2009; Watson 2009b; Parnell and Robinson 2012). Inventive work is being undertaken in urban studies, but it remains the case, as Pieterse (2008: 1) contends, that contemporary studies of cities of the global south are bifurcated between those assuming an ‘apocalyptic view’ and those ‘who display an irrepressible optimism about the possibility of solving the myriad problems that beset such cities’. In turn, whether framed by apocalypse or optimism, ‘the categorisation of poorer cities through the lens of developmentalism has often meant that they are discursively constructed as a “problem”’ (McFarlane 2008: 345). Here, the difference between the two perspectives stems from the degree to which urbanists believe that cities and their residents hold the solutions or represent only their inevitable downfall. In matters of health, this tension points to a critical set of conceptual and policy debates.

Urban health in the global south is a particularly contentious and pernicious ‘problem’, especially given the paucity of evidence of ‘what works’ in an era of ‘evidence-based policy making’ (Macintyre 2003). This chapter questions the extent to which ‘healthy cities’ of the global south are possible as either material outcome or theoretical object of inquiry. In so doing, it aims to elide an apocalyptic and irrepressibly optimistic urban studies in a more syncretic vision of the healthy city. This approach is important as accounts of urban health have largely tended to bypass urban theory and vice versa. Indeed, a series of significant interventions on reframing urban planning theory and practice in the light of the importance of ‘new dynamics’ of the ‘stubborn realities’ (Watson 2012; Yiftachel 2009) of cities of the global south (see also Watson 2009a, 2009b) places health at the temporal and empirical margins of discussion. Here, the relationship between public health and planning is mainly viewed as a past aspiration of the modern, colonial endeavour, with the state now assuming the role of health
promoter through regulation, governance and service provision (Watson 2009b: 2270). Health does not appear on the roll-call of ‘21st century issues of poverty, inequality, rapid growth and environment’ (Watson 2009a: 153), an oversight which may, in part, be due to the fact that human health has largely been sidelined in discourses of ‘urban sustainability’ in favour of environmental concerns (Smit and Parnell 2012: 1). Health geographers have persuasively made the case for the importance of ‘place’ in health processes, policies and outcomes (Airey 2003; Cummins et al. 2007; Kearns et al. 2002; Kearns and Moon 2002; Kearns 1993), but urban theorists of the global south should also have much to contribute to this field. This chapter thus offers an initial exploration of how these fields may be brought into productive conversation in ways that tread the line between apocalypse and optimism with criticality and care.

Health in the ‘urban century’

The recurrent recitation of the percentage of people calling cities their home in this ‘Urban Century’ (Beall and Fox 2009) should leave us in little doubt as to the location of the most significant pressure points in the pursuit of universal health. However, if we accept that ‘urbanization is a major public health challenge for the twenty-first century … [especially] as urbanization itself is a determinant of health’ (Kjellström and Mercado 2008: 554), then we must also remember that ‘any discussion of urbanisation needs to acknowledge that the practice of dichotomising the world as “urban” and “rural” is problematic’ (Vlahov et al. 2011: 799), especially as rural communities become enfolded with an ever-growing peri-urban hinterland. The challenges posed by the unpredictability, magnitude and scale of urbanization processes reach their apex in the mega-cities of the global south which are argued to ‘embody the most extreme instances of economic injustice, ecological unsustainability, and spatial apartheid ever confronted by humanity’ (Dawson and Hayes Edwards 2004: 6). But, as Robinson’s work reminds us, we must move beyond categorizations and hierarchies of cities (see for example Beaverstock et al.’s 1999 roster of Alpha, Beta and Gamma World Cities) to reconsider the spaces in between explanations of modernity and discourses of development that characterize not only emergent mega-cities, but also the increasingly ‘mega’ medium and small cities of the south (Asdar Ali and Rieker 2008; World Health Organization 2008). It is in these multiple urban spaces that the urbanization of poverty (Ravallion et al. 2007) and the infrastructural burdens of growth are having profound health effects. That said, determining the causal and contributory factors in this urbanization-driven ‘public health challenge’ remains methodologically complex, undermining attempts to define what the healthy city might look like, function or aspire to be. The World Health Organization (WHO) asserts that urban settings themselves are ‘social determinants of health’ (see Marmot 2005), and that the factors driving poor health are at their most acute in the slums that characterize many cities of the global south. This ‘universe of urban slums and shanty towns’ (Davis 2004: 11) is estimated to currently house at least one billion people (World Health Organization 2008: 1; Sheuya 2008). By 2030, Mike Davis suggests that ‘at least 2 billion … will exist outside the formal relations of production, in Dickensian conditions or worse, ravaged by emergent diseases and subject to a menu of megadisasters following in the wake of global warming and the exhaustion of urban water supplies’ (Davis 2004: 13). Importantly, these conditions (hyperbole aside) threaten to unravel the ‘urban advantage’ long believed to convey better health to urban dwellers in the global south compared to their rural counterparts due to better education, higher incomes, reduced fertility, improved access to healthcare services, infrastructure and employment opportunities (Dye 2008).

In terms of absolute numbers of deaths in 2008, cardiovascular disease was the biggest global killer claiming 17.33 million lives and cancer, the second most significant cause of death (Figure 46.1). By contrast, diarrhoeal diseases caused 2.5 million deaths, HIV/AIDS 1.8 million deaths and malaria
827,000 deaths in 2008. This means that, as Figure 46.2 illustrates, non-communicable or chronic diseases actually accounted for almost 63 per cent of the global mortality burden; communicable (infectious), perinatal and maternal diseases 28 per cent and injuries 9 per cent in 2008. By contrast, the leading global cause of years of life lost (YLL) in 2008 (the most recent WHO data) are communicable disease at 48 per cent (Figure 46.3). Non-communicable diseases accounted for 38 per cent of years of life lost and injuries for 14 per cent. This pattern exhibits distinct variations between WHO regions, with 77 per cent of years of life lost in Africa accounted for by communicable disease, in contrast to 72 per cent of years of life lost attributable to non-communicable disease in Europe and 63 per cent in the Western Pacific and 59 per cent in the Americas. YLL is a measure of premature mortality and indicates that globally, communicable disease and injuries cause more adults and children to die before they reach average life expectancy than non-communicable conditions. In Africa, non-communicable diseases account for only 15 per cent of YLL, reflecting more than anything the age gradient of chronic disease as well as the low life expectancies of much across the continent. The discrepancy between the relative significance that can be attributed to communicable/non-communicable diseases depending on whether total deaths or YLL are considered, further highlights the epidemiological gaps in our knowledge and understanding of the intricate dynamics of the global health burden, let alone the urban health burden.

There are massive variations in the burden of disease not merely between the global north and south, but also between and within countries of the global south. Such discrepancies are further experienced across urban space, where the same city may have coexisting high rates of both infectious and chronic disease prevalent across different locales and population groups. Even at the scale of a household, a ‘dual burden’ of malnutrition (with its attendant elevated risks of contracting infectious disease) and obesity may increasingly be, if not the norm, then at least an issue of substantial concern for many middle-income countries (Doak et al. 2004).

![Figure 46.1](image-url)  
Figure 46.1 Global deaths in 2008 by leading causes  
Source: WHO 2011
With this in mind, one key question that faces the multi-disciplinary study of urban health is whether we are currently facing a shift from a previous state of ‘urban advantage’ to one of ‘urban penalty’. The answer to this question is limited by the fact that ‘there are no systematic, comparative studies of the health of the urban poor across the continents’ (Harpham 2009: 111), a situation brought into being by the relative paucity of health survey data in many countries and methodological barriers to comparing datasets. Moreover, there are often stark challenges in undertaking urban health research not least as the dynamics of causality, correlation and health outcomes are both incredibly complex and context-specific (Mathee et al. 2009), with questions over the relative contribution of ‘composition’ (i.e. demographics) or ‘context’ (i.e. place-based, structural factors) remaining open (Jen et al. 2009; Do
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and Finch 2008). Thus epidemiology and urban studies have much to learn from each other, particularly in the pursuit of bringing forth healthy cities. The gross inequalities characterizing many cities of the global south present a twin health challenge as ‘rich and poor people live in very different epidemiological worlds, even within the same city’ (Rydin et al. 2012a: 2079). In this case, the urban poor – whom Mike Davis (2004: 11) has characteristically referred to as the ‘outcast proletariat’ – occupying slum conditions face equal or worse health outcomes than rural dwellers (WHO/UN-Habitat 2009; Goebel et al. 2010). By contrast, the urban rich may enjoy significantly longer life expectancies, but may still be disproportionately affected by rising rates of non-communicable disease (Blas and Sivasankara Kurup 2010) compounded by behavioural risk factors including alcohol consumption, smoking, dietary choices, sedentarism as well as exposure to pollutants. Increasingly, however, non-communicable disease risk is not concentrated solely among the urban rich in the global south, for as Monteiro et al. (2004) suggest, as a country’s GDP rises, so too does the risk of obesity amongst the poorest and, furthermore, this relationship is strongest for women. Thus urban and economic growth present an increased risk of obesity. The complex dynamic between the urban rich and poor in terms of health outcomes is also manifest in the rising rate of road traffic accidents and injuries in the global south. Poor road infrastructure combines with scant regulation of driving laws and an increasing volume of traffic, producing a ‘neglected epidemic’ across the global south, but reaching their highest rates in the low and middle-income countries of Africa and the Middle East (Nantulya and Reich 2002). Although there is little comparative data, studies suggest that the greatest burden of mortality from road traffic accidents is among pedestrians rather than drivers rich enough to have cars, indicating the disproportionate vulnerability of the urban poor (Ameratunga et al. 2006).

Such a scenario paints a pretty grim picture of health in cities of the global south. This is compounded by the ‘Global Health’ enterprise’s concentration of political will and financial resources on infectious, maternal and child health, reflecting the demands of the Millennium Development Goals (United Nations 2010), rather than the evolving global burden of disease (Koplan et al. 2009). Thus, foreign aid donations and global organizations – e.g. the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the Global Fund, the Global Health Initiative, the Rockefeller Foundation, Bloomberg Initiative, Clinton Foundation etc. – that provide the bulk of the Global Health arsenal dispense funds according to priority intervention areas including malaria, HIV/AIDS, Tuberculosis (TB), tobacco control and maternal health. The Gates Foundation, for example, prioritizes the development of low-cost, mass-scale technological solutions including vaccinations, nutritional interventions and family planning programmes. The Global Fund prioritizes access, affordability and adherence to antiretroviral drugs; TB detection and treatment; and the distribution of insecticide-treated mosquito nets, malaria rapid diagnostic tests and treatment. Many of these organizations also lobby for the reformation of healthcare economics and markets to ensure that the poor in low and middle income countries have access to affordable drugs, as well as for greater health surveillance (i.e. data) capacity. Yet, while ‘global health is fashionable’, a burgeoning area of foreign policy and a major area of philanthropy (Daar et al. 2007); the urban is an implicit rather than explicit area of activity, investment and activism (Shetty 2011). This point is corroborated by Vlahov et al. (2011: 797) in their suggestion that ‘International agencies and nation-states have been ignorant of, or in denial about, the increasing vulnerability and consequent impact of urban environments.’ It is interesting to note, therefore, that a recent special issue of the Lancet on ‘Health in Brazil’ (Kleinert and Horton 2011) did not feature any explicitly ‘urban’ analyses and even a paper on chronic disease referred only to generic processes of ‘urbanization’ as a causal factor (Schmidt et al. 2011).

This ‘ignorance’ or ‘denial’ on the part of international agencies and nation-states has persisted despite significant lobbying efforts to raise urban health up global agendas. For example, the WHO chose the theme of ‘Urbanization and health’ for its 2010 World Health Day’s theme; UN-Habitat has invested heavily in its ‘State of the World’s Cities’ research and in 2009 focused its report solely on
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‘Urban health inequity and why it matters’. There has been a University College London/Lancet commission report (Rydin et al. 2012a) on ‘Healthy Cities’, the New York Academy of Medicine has an International Society for Urban Health and there have been a series of calls for attention to the ‘globalized’ (and thus urbanized) risks of non-communicable disease (Beaglehole and Yach 2003; Yach and Beaglehole 2004; Yach et al. 2005). On this latter point Beaglehole et al. (2011: 1438) assert that ‘the spread of non-communicable diseases (NCDs) presents a global crisis’ which needs to become ‘central to the long-term global development agenda’. Thus, there has been a parallel drive (by organizations such as the NCD Alliance) to revise the Millennium Development Goals in line with the complexities of the epidemiological transition in the global south. The model’s logic of a shift in the burden of disease from infectious to chronic has been problematized in many countries (especially in sub-Saharan Africa) where high rates of infectious and chronic disease not only coexist, but also act as risk factors for each other (Lopez and Mathers 2006). In sum, therefore, while Vlahov et al. (2011: 794) have convincingly argued that ‘Urban settings are a priority area of focus as they are the platform on which the 21st century mega-trends are played out’ and an array of books have been published in the last two decades arguing for the importance of urban health (Harpham et al. 1988; Harpham and Tanner 1995; Vlahov et al. 2010; Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2012) the Global Health endeavour (and therefore significant funding and research) still seems to be lagging behind this stream of thought.

For the Global Health enterprise to take urban health seriously would require a significant reframing of the locus of risk and vulnerability. In their recent Lancet Commission report, Yvonne Rydin and colleagues (2012b: 554) contend that healthy communities require eight amenities: clean water and good sanitation; clean air; clean land; safe homes; secure neighbourhoods; car-independence; green and blue spaces; and healthy facilities. The necessity of these amenities points to the importance of urban planning, management, governance and infrastructural upgrading. In turn, these raise issues of capacity and competence as problems of urban sustainability, and human health is compounded by ‘relatively rapid population growth combined with high levels of poverty and under resourced and under-capacitated local governments’ (Smit and Parnell 2012: 5). Moreover, while infrastructural issues of inadequate sanitation (water and drainage), pollution (indoor and outdoor), poor housing, and lack of services are most glaring in slum conditions (Sclar et al. 2005); in many cities of the global south, such concerns also mark the daily lives of all but the most wealthy. These are concerns that have yet to permeate the Global Health rubric. For example, Goebel et al. (2010: 57) assert that ‘housing is one of the basic human needs that have a profound impact on the health, welfare, social attitudes and economic productivity of the individual’. This acknowledgement locates risk and vulnerability in the built environment and suggests that some of the greatest returns in human health would be achieved through environmental upgrading. Put bluntly, the investment by the Gates Foundation, United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF) and the World Health Organization (WHO) in, for example, breastfeeding as a low-cost means of improving child and maternal health is laudable. However, its long-term effects on well-being will ultimately be undermined under conditions of food insecurity and inadequate sanitation. A turn to the urban environment as a site of both risk magnification and mitigation demands that we return to the concerns of urbanists of the global south highlighted at the start of this chapter. In particular, it is important to explore how the city and the urban figure in all the problems to which urban health discursively, materially, physiologically and psychologically makes reference. This task will be the concern of the rest of this chapter.

The healthy city: apocalypse or optimism?

Improving urban health in the global south is a significant and multidimensional development challenge (Satterthwaite 2011; Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2012), especially given the adverse impacts of inequalities. These fall along the socio-economic and demographic ‘fault lines’ of class, gender, ethnicity, religion,
education etc, but are also both cause and consequences of the infrastructural variances patterning cities of the global south (Sattherthwaite 2011; Mitlin and Sattherthwaite 2012). These conditions combine to produce inequities in health, in which the ‘spill-over effects such as crime, violence, the spread of infectious disease as well as alcohol and drug use, affect all of society’ (Pearce and Dorling 2009: 5). While there is agreement that inequalities of all kinds have pernicious effects at a number of spatial scales, this focus raises questions as to the relative impact and importance of the nested and interlaced social determinants of health set out in Figure 46.4. For, if we concur with de Leeuw (2012a: 3) that ‘health is a relative state and highly contextual, driven by individuals, groups and communities that constantly live and create health in a complex, changing and adaptive physical and social environment’, then these processes of ‘living’ and ‘creating’ health require us to question the theoretical and empirical state of the southern city. How, for example, are living and working conditions shaped by the intersections of political economy, the built environment and demographic factors in cities of the south? The ways in which health is dependent on ‘many interactions and feedback loops’ in the ‘complex systems’ characterizing cities (Rydin et al. 2012a: 2079) means that questioning the ‘situatedness’ of and multi-scalar nature of health-promoting and constraining practices is essential. Moreover, to do so means grappling with the most appropriate explanatory framework to explain the contemporary urban experience – a process that means balancing apocalypse and optimism in the hunt for the best ways to ensure that the ‘urban advantage’ remains possible. As both the poor and middle class swell in the global south (the latter arguably based on the disenfranchisement of the former), so too will the health challenges of southern cities (see for example Banerjee and Duflo 2008; Chua 2000), especially as behavioural risk factors such as sedentarism and unhealthy diets become globalized (Beaglehole and Yach 2003). In such conditions, neither apocalypse nor unfettered optimism at the entrepreneurial possibility of the human spirit seem particularly pertinent to the lived reality of an emergent and grossly under-studied social phenomenon.

In Planet of Slums, Mike Davis (2007) highlights an apocalyptic vision of the city where the huge burden and toll of infectious disease made worse by crumbling infrastructure, the retreat of the middle classes and rich from public infrastructural investment, the dangers of overcrowding, poor environmental conditions and forced resettlement of the urban poor to peripheral locations by rampant speculative development and lax planning laws have produced inherent and uncontrollable risks. He highlights the increasing intra-urban disparities in health between the rich and poor which have been exacerbated by the erosion of state healthcare provision and the resulting flight of trained healthcare practitioners by neoliberal structural adjustment, chronic underinvestment, the burden of national debt and the entrance of private healthcare providers. Such a situation sets up alternative realities for the rich and poor: the

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**Figure 46.4** Social determinants of health (after Marmot 2005; WHO/UN-Habitat 2009)

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former able to access the privatized means to good health and the latter cut out of even basic healthcare service provision due to a lack of provision and affordability (of services and medication). And, while the rich can afford to barricade themselves in the increasingly common suburban real estate developments or ‘privatopias’ (McKenzie 1996) that now ring many cities of the global south (see Roy 2011 on Delhi’s farmhouses and Calcutta’s new towns, and Glasze et al. 2006), they are still vulnerable to the health effects of these aspirational lifestyles. Indeed, the traffic congestion and air pollution that characterizes almost all southern mega-cities (and increasingly medium and small ones) – and that is doubtless worsened by suburbanization and edge-city development – represents one of the most visceral negative externalities of the movement out of poverty, and an inescapable health risk for all urban dwellers. A greater emphasis on middle-class lifestyles, pleasure-seeking and risk-taking in the global south is arguably significant for urban health futures and a central flaw in Davis’s consideration of health in Planet of Slums. Indeed, he neglects the growing burden of chronic disease that not only marks these middle-class enclaves and lifestyles, but is increasingly a new reality for the urban poor in the global south. Given the rising rate of NCDs in the global south, it is particularly worrying that ‘NCDs disproportionately affect those who are poor thus increasing inequalities ... NCDs also cause poverty’ (Beaglehole et al. 2011: 1439).

This side of the urban may be less Dickensian than Davis’s vision, but the lived realities and experiences of the middle classes and slum dwellers and those who fall between these categories raise questions concerning equitable access to health-promoting environments. In this ‘Health for all’ narrative, all citizens are important, but it remains crucial to remember that ‘the different worlds of city dwellers remain in the shadows, and the substantial health challenges of the disadvantaged go overlooked’ (WHO/UN-Habitat 2009: 33, emphasis added). The nature of these challenges bring us back to the relative importance of environmental and/or behavioural factors, an area of remarkably little research or evidence. For, as Butala et al. (2010: 936) note, ‘despite the explicit call and need for urban environmental interventions, relatively little research has focused on health outcomes and infrastructure improvement in urban areas’. In turn, even less is arguably known about how residents in cities of the south make, rationalize and implement health-related behavioural decisions. It is this type of lacuna that AbdouMaliq Simone’s 2010 work City Life arguably addresses in his concern with understanding urban life as a ‘combination of possibility and precariousness’ (p. 281). He suggests that we should be focusing our theoretical and empirical energies on exploring individual and collective forms of living in the city: the deliberations, calculations and engagements that render urban life both possible and full of possibility – rather than solely the ‘misery’ that such lives can engender (Simone 2010: 333). As he asks, ‘if we pay attention only to the misery and not to the often complex forms of deliberation, calculation and engagement through which residents try to do more than simply register the factualness of a bare existence, do we not inevitably make those conditions worse?’ (ibid.: 333).

While Simone, like the majority of his contemporaries never expressly dwells on health as a vital component of the urban condition, his work is arguably important to the study of healthy cities in its highlighting of choice and agency in everyday life, even (and especially) among the poor. This approach may speak more clearly to the optimistic accounts of urban life in the south, especially among those urban theorists keen to point to the entrepreneurial capacities of informality and informal settlements (Roy 2011) despite the failures of the state and private enterprise to provide adequate infrastructure, services and housing.

Such meta-narratives of catastrophe and possibility point, in turn, to vastly different ways of seeing the role of urban regulation. Smit and Parnell’s (2012: 5) recent work reminds us that achieving advances in health outcomes will ‘require good governance’, as ‘urban management clearly has an essential role to play in making cities healthier and more sustainable’. The need for effective governance, legislation and regulation of both the built environment and individual behaviours however runs counter to the vision of the urban as set forth by Simone. Instead he argues that
at the heart of city life is the capacity for its different people, spaces, activities and things to interact in ways that exceed any attempt to regulate them. While the absence of regulation is commonly seen as a bad thing, one must first start from the understanding that no form of regulation can keep the city ‘in line’.

(Simone 2010: 3)

The impossibility of regulation here is cast as an entrepreneurial triumph of those faced with the multiple decisions and possibilities that characterize the city of ‘intersections’ that forms one of his core analytical metaphors. To Simone, the ‘ungovernable city’ (p. 115) is thus an element of the ‘resourcefulness of urban life’ under conditions of volatility and uncertainty that produce surprisingly ‘substantial thickness to the relations among all the different things and persons that compose urban life’ (Simone 2010: 154). Simone’s vision of ‘cityness’ echoes that of Pieterse (2010) and offers a compelling antidote to the hopelessness put forward by Davis (2007). In many ways, health treads a delicate line between regulation and ‘cityness’, marking a terrain where individuals need to invoke their ingenuity and resourcefulness to the achievement of good health, but also require appropriate and enabling regulatory structures in order to be certain that their right to health is assured.

If social relations are characterized by an unexpected thickness and complexity, as Simone and others suggest, then what significance does this hold for the individual choice and agency that is seen as a vital discursive component of health policy in the global north (Herrick 2011)? Moreover, how does this then chime with accounts of urban health in the global south in which choice and personal responsibility are frequently neglected, or deemed to be superfluous to the more pressing concern of human rights? In the south, discourses of choice − even as applied to the middle class − are under-explored in contrast to more paternalistic concerns over the structural violence perpetrated by, for example, unclean water, unsafe housing, insufficient legislation, poor healthcare provision, gender imbalances, food insecurity and poor transport. In sum, it is argued that ‘entrenchment in urban slums represents a powerful barrier to health-promoting behaviours, regardless of the particular country in which these slums are housed’ (Greif. 2011: 956). This makes conceptual advances exploring the ‘new’ public health’s (Petersen 1997; Petersen and Lupton 1996) concern with bringing responsible, health-seeking subjects into being across a variety of geographic contexts, a theoretical artefact that many would argue has little relevance to the huge infrastructural crises facing cities of the global south. Here, instead, ‘the systems approach suggests that the most efficient way to improve health is to improve the environment’ (Weeks et al. 2012: 940; see also Rydin et al. 2012a) and, therefore by extension, alter human behaviour. However, in the race to cast cities as ‘complex systems’ or ‘networks’, urban spaces and their residents are often disembodied and muted, directly contradicting Simone’s (2010) vision of cityness and undermining attempts to understand the multiple ways in which cities are inhabited. Cityness, in Simone’s vision, is a result and reflection of the proliferation of active and reactive choices that are constantly being made and remade. It is important that these are made not just to survive, but also to enjoy life. Accounts of urban health in the global south factor out these pleasure-seeking processes, rendering poor urban residents victims of structural violence. This rhetoric is not limited to the poor, however. In a recent account of the rise of obesity among the Chinese middle class, Hawkes (2008: 155) argues that ‘as the agro-food supply chain has grown, the Chinese consumer has begun to eat excessive amounts of fat’. Here causality is framed as emanating directly from a change in the political economy of food, underplaying the roles consumer aspirations, trends, choices and responsibilities play in conditioning health outcomes.

It is also important to note that in a recent editorial on urban health, Satterthwaite (2011) points out that health is underexplored in discussions of the environment and development largely because many of the measures that aim to promote health and well-being fall under the remit of governmental agencies other than health (e.g. transport, treasury or social development). In turn, this leads
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municipal, regional and national governments to afford low priority to addressing the social determinants of health. Harpham has suggested that ‘health is not a politically sexy subject’ (2009: 114), perhaps due to the complexity inherent in situations where ‘urban change is massaged at a multiplicity of pressure points across the city and its institutional scaffolding’ (Pieterse 2008: 10). Not only are these pressure points socially and spatially contingent, not all are politically viable or desirable. The need for strong municipal leadership (Llorca I Ibañez: 2011) in generating healthier cities is doubtless vital, and the success of such initiatives often requires suspending the siloed remits and ambitions of government departments in a favour of cross-collaborative efforts that may not offer equal (and measurable) institutional rewards. The importance and nature of governance points to the need for a terrain of generative regulation that enables Simone’s (2010) vision of the possibility of city life to be brought into being, while still attending to the waves of economic, infrastructural and social crises that characterize Davis’s planet of slums (2007). Achieving better health for all means acting on the structural vulnerabilities of the poorest, but also the limitations placed on the ability of the middle classes and rich to mitigate the health risks posed by environmental pollution, the stresses of congestion, the lifestyles brought about by the privatized nature of access to many urban resources, as well, ultimately, as poor decision-making and irresponsible choices. Thus, planning and approaches to health must be ‘deeply embedded in local institutional structures and cultures and closely aligned to the tactics and strategies of survival of poor urban populations’ (Watson 2009a: 187) if they are to make a positive difference.

Conclusion

This chapter provides an initial foray into eliding the urban health literature (largely stemming from public health) with the growing canon calling for urban theory of the global south. That urban studies has largely bypassed questions of health is not, by itself, that surprising. That an urban studies of the global south has followed suit is perhaps more unexpected, given that many of the questions posed about how cities are inhabited, understood, navigated, negotiated and rationalized invoke questions of health. At the same time, there is growing interest in the field of urban health in which risks – and therefore sites of intervention – are seen to be predominantly (infra)structural. Here less attention is afforded to questions of inhabitation in favour of thinking through how ‘better health outcomes can be delivered through interventions in the urban environment’ (Rydin et al. 2012a: 2080), quite in contrast to the sociological and salutogenic vision of urban health set out in the WHO Healthy Cities remit (de Leeuw 2012b). Ultimately, at present there is a growing awareness of the need to address poor urban health outcomes in both the global north and south, but a lack of evidence of effective interventions impedes any progress in doing so. This should prompt two questions: First, if we are lacking in evidence of effective interventions, perhaps we are not framing the question correctly in the first place? Or second, perhaps we are not making the urgency of the case explicit enough for interventions to be either taken up, let alone evaluated? To make the case most urgently, an apocalyptic vision of the city and its future would no doubt offer the most powerful framing. However, in its concentration on the very poorest, it also holds the potential for ignoring and thereby distancing the middle class and urban rich from its message, reinforcing the trend towards a retrenchment from collective responsibility and an appreciation of the cumulative impact of individual choices. Similarly, Simone’s (2010) generative city of intersections speaks to the resourcefulness and resilience of the poor, a reality that many of the urban rich feel and experience as negative externality (e.g. crime, begging, panhandling etc.) and would sooner banish than celebrate. Thus, treading the line between apocalypse and optimism, where environmental interventions need to be combined with an appreciation that the poor have agency and choice in the pursuit of health, is essential to ensure that the healthy city is a shared aspiration that can be inhabited by all.
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References


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Introduction

This chapter seeks to provide an overview of what we know about urban poverty in low- and middle-income nations (for a more detailed coverage see Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2013). It draws on the literature not only on poverty but also on deprivations associated with poverty in regard to housing conditions, health, access to basic services, rule of law and voice. It suggests that the scale and depth of urban poverty in Africa and much of Asia and Latin America is greatly under-estimated because of inappropriate definitions and measurements. How ‘a problem’ is defined and measured obviously influences how a ‘solution’ is conceived, designed and implemented – and evaluated. The use of inappropriate poverty definitions that understate and misrepresent urban poverty helps explain why so little attention has been given to urban poverty reduction by aid agencies and development banks. It explains the paradox of so many poverty statistics apparently showing relatively little urban poverty despite the evidence showing the very large numbers living in poverty and facing many deprivations.

The scale of urban poverty in low- and middle-income nations

By 2013, urban areas in low- and middle-income nations had around 2.7 billion inhabitants (UNDESA 2012). There is no accurate basis for specifying the proportion of these that suffer from poverty because of the lack of data in many nations. For instance, in many nations, there are no accurate measures for the proportion of the urban population with incomes that are insufficient in relation to the costs of food and non-food needs (see for instance Chibuye 2011 for Zambia, Sabry 2010 for Egypt, Bapat 2009 for India). Table 47.1 gives some estimates for the number of urban dwellers who face poverty based on different deprivations.

This table may surprise many poverty specialists who have long focused on monetary poverty lines that are set, based on income or consumption levels. However, more attention has been given to ‘multi-dimensional’ poverty which acknowledges (and where possible seeks to measure) other deprivations (Satterthwaite 1997 and 2001 and Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2004; see also Moser et al. 1993; Chambers 1995; Wratten 1995; Baulch 1996; Moser 1996, 1998). There are also the national governments that have acknowledged the limitations in income/consumption-based poverty lines and collected data on unsatisfied basic needs, as in Argentina in the early 1990s (see Minujin 1995; Arrossi 1996).
Table 47.1 Estimates for the scale of different aspects of urban poverty in low- and middle-income nations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Type of poverty</th>
<th>Numbers of urban dwellers affected</th>
<th>Notes</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate income in relation to the cost of food and non-food needs</td>
<td>800–1,200 million</td>
<td>No accurate figures are available on this and the total varies, depending on the criteria used to set the poverty line (the ‘income-level’ required to ensure ‘basic needs’ are met)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Inadequate or no provision for safe, sufficient water and sanitation</td>
<td>In 2000, at least 680 million people for water and 850 million for sanitation. Official UN figures for 2010 suggest over 700 million urban dwellers without water piped to their premises and a similar number lacking sanitation</td>
<td>The estimates for 2000 are drawn from a global UN review of individual city/urban studies (UN-Habitat 2003a). The figures for 2010 are drawn from the UN (UNICEF and WHO 2012) but as discussed later, these greatly understate the number of urban dwellers lacking safe sufficient water and access to good quality toilets</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hunger</td>
<td>500 million+?</td>
<td>In many Asian and sub-Saharan African nations, 25–40 per cent of urban children are underweight and/or under height. In many nations, more than half the urban population suffers from food-energy deficiency including India, Pakistan and Bangladesh (Ahmed et al. 2007)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Living in poverty i.e. in housing that is overcrowded, insecure and/or of poor quality and often at risk of forced eviction</td>
<td>1 billion+? Many cities in Asia and Africa have 30–70 per cent of their population in informal settlements</td>
<td>Based on a 2003 global review of the number and proportion of people living in ‘slums’ (UN-Habitat 2003b) with an allowance for the increase in number since then</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Homelessness (i.e. living on the street or sleeping in open or public places)</td>
<td>c. 100 million</td>
<td>UN estimate. There are also large numbers of people living on temporary sites (for instance construction workers and often their families living on construction sites)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of access to health care, education and social protection; also to emergency services (for injuries or acute illness)</td>
<td>Hundreds of millions?</td>
<td>No global estimates but many case studies of informal settlements show the lack of provision. Access to these may require a legal address which those in informal settlements cannot produce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Absence of the rule of law in informal settlements</td>
<td>Hundreds of millions?</td>
<td>No global estimates on this but in a high proportion of informal settlements, there is little or no policing. The absence of the rule of law may show up in high levels of violence and high murder rates</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Lack of voice for residents of informal settlements</td>
<td>Hundreds of millions?</td>
<td>No global estimates — but to get on the voter’s register often depends on having a legal address and/or documentation that most urban poor groups do not have. Even if those in informal settlements can vote, this has rarely provided the ‘voice’ needed to get their needs and priority concerns addressed</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Deficiencies in indicators used to assess deprivation

The Millennium Development Goals have importance for poverty reduction in that they included specific commitments to reduce monetary poverty, hunger and access to a range of services. So to some extent, this recognizes different dimensions of poverty as its targets include reducing deficits in access to ‘safe drinking water and basic sanitation’ and primary schools (with a focus on eliminating gender disparities here and in other levels of education) – although this is hardly original in that an ‘MDG like’ approach had been recommended during the 1970s (see Ward 1976; ILO 1976). With the attention given by the MDGs to measurable goals and targets, there is much reporting on meeting the MDG targets to show ‘progress’ since the 1990 baseline. But the validity of many of the indicators used is in doubt, especially at the sub-national scale. Four examples will be given here: the indicator used to measure extreme poverty (the dollar a day poverty line), the indicator used to measure the number of slum dwellers with ‘significant improvements’ in their lives and the indicators for provision for water and sanitation.

The dollar-a-day poverty line (and its adjustment to USD1.25) is one example of the use of an overly simplistic income-based poverty line. This poverty line was chosen as one of two indicators for monitoring progress on the Millennium Development Goal of eradicating extreme poverty and hunger. It is at the core of why urban poverty is under-estimated. Set a poverty line unrealistically low and there is no poverty.

If we are to use a monetary measure for defining and measuring whose income or consumption is insufficient (and from this determining who is poor), this measure has to reflect the cost of food and of non-food needs. If the costs of food and non-food needs differ – for instance by nation and by location within each nation – this monetary measure has to be adjusted to reflect this. But the USD1.25 a day poverty line does not do this. Many urban centres (especially the more successful ones) are places where the costs of non-food needs are particularly high, especially for low-income groups who live in informal settlements where costs such as rent, water (from vendors or kiosks) and access to toilets (pay-to-use) are particularly high (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2013 reviews the many studies showing this). In most cities, large sections of the low-income population live in peripheral locations and face high time and monetary costs getting to and from work or accessing services. They often face high costs keeping their children at school (many have to send their children to cheap ‘private schools’ because they cannot get places in government schools) and for health care services (especially where there is no public provision for these).

In addition, the USD1.25 a day poverty line (and most other poverty lines) are set with no consideration of who lives in poverty – for instance of those who do not have reliable, good-quality and not-too costly access to water, sanitation, health care and schools, as well as having voice to influence public policies and being served by the rule of law. Aid and other forms of development assistance are legitimated on the basis that they meet the needs of ‘the poor’ but decisions about the use of development assistance do not include any role for ‘the poor’ nor are those who make such decisions accountable to ‘the poor’. Similarly, poverty lines are set without dialogue and without needed data – and so inaccurate poverty lines based on wholly inappropriate criteria are used to greatly overstate success in urban poverty reduction.

One of the main features of reports on the Millennium Development Goals is a graph apparently showing a large and rapid decrease in poverty globally. The proportion of the world’s population with below USD1.25 per person per day fell from 43.1 per cent in 1990 to 20.6 per cent in 2010 (World Bank and IMF 2013). This report also claimed that urban poverty rates were falling. It claimed that by 2008, there was virtually no urban poverty in Europe and Central Asia and the Middle East and North Africa. In Latin America, by 2008, only 3.1 per cent of the urban population was poor; in East Asia and the Pacific, only 4.3 per cent. An earlier World Bank estimate for China (for 2002) suggested that there was virtually no urban poverty there (Ravallion et al. 2007).
But go to detailed studies of poverty in particular cities or among urban populations in many nations in Latin America, the Middle East, North Africa and China and a different picture emerges. For China, the statistics on levels of urban poverty only appear so low because of inappropriate poverty lines and because more than 100 million urban dwellers are classified by the state as ‘temporary’ migrants and still registered as ‘rural’; it also misses large numbers of laid-off workers and others impacted by the withdrawal of job and welfare security and of free health care in cities (Solinger 2006; UNDP 2013). In India, urban poverty has long been under-estimated because official poverty lines take no account of the high cost of non-food needs in many urban contexts. In addition, many official figures for the number and proportion of city populations living in ‘slums’ are known to greatly underestimate the actual figure (Bhan 2009; Agarwal 2011). In addition, many settlements in India that should have been reclassified as urban remain ‘rural’ and this also contributes to a considerable under-count in the scale of urban poverty. This may be due to bureaucratic inertia or perhaps the possibility that being reclassified as urban makes it ineligible for rural development funds.

But it is not only the USD1.25 a day poverty line that is unrealistic and inappropriate. Most governments in Africa and many in Asia set and apply national poverty lines that are based mostly on the cost of food with little attention to the cost of non-food needs. There are many reasons for this – including the refusal to acknowledge the high costs of non-food needs and the assumption that the costs of meeting the needs of infants and children are only a small proportion of the costs of adult needs. One other reason is the refusal to acknowledge that the costs of food and non-food needs vary not only between nations but also within nations. Figure 47.1 illustrates this for Zambia, showing the much higher levels of poverty in particular cities when the real costs of food and non-food needs are taken into account. When international ‘experts’ and consultants work in low- and middle-income nations, they get daily allowances to cover their accommodation and living costs that are adjusted by country

Figure 47.1 The differences between official and JCTR poverty lines in Zambia in 2006. JCTR is the Jesuit Centre for Theological Reflection. This Centre has long conducted cost of living surveys in Lusaka and other towns in Zambia

Source: Chibuye 2011
Urban poverty

and by city or district within that country. This shows recognition that daily food and non-food costs for such experts can vary by a factor of five within a nation, depending on location. So why is no such recognition accorded to low-income groups?

If we consider the number of urban dwellers who ‘live in poverty’, the only global statistics are for slum populations produced by UN-Habitat. But there are serious doubts as to the accuracy of these ‘slum’ statistics for many nations − for instance those reported in UN-Habitat 2012. First, there are the criteria used for defining ‘slum’ households. A household is defined as a slum household if it lacks one or more of ‘improved’ water, ‘improved’ sanitation, durable housing or sufficient living area. But a large proportion of households with ‘improved’ water or ‘improved’ sanitation still lack provision to a standard that meets health needs (or, for water, what is specified in the Millennium Development Goals as sustainable access to safe drinking water). If there were the data available to apply a definition for who has provision for water and sanitation to a standard that cuts down health risks and ensures convenient and affordable access, the number of ‘slum’ dwellers would rise considerably in many nations. Second, the ‘slum population’ statistics show very large drops in the proportion of urban dwellers living in ‘slums’ in some nations for which there is little supporting evidence. For instance, UN-Habitat (2012) claims that the proportion of the urban population living in ‘slums’ in India fell from 54.9 per cent in 1990 to 29.4 per cent in 2009. For Bangladesh, the proportion is said to have fallen from 87.3 to 61.6 per cent in this same period. Where is the supporting evidence for this? It may be that most of the apparent fall in the slum population globally between 2000 and 2010 is simply the result of a change in definitions − when a wider range of (inadequate) sanitation provision was classified as ‘improved’.

Official United Nations statistics on provision for water and sanitation in urban areas produced by the Joint Monitoring Programme (JMP) suggest that problems are less serious than those shown in Table 47.1. This Programme’s figures show that the proportion of the urban population lacking ‘improved’ provision for water and sanitation is much lower − for instance, in 2000, 94 per cent of the urban population in low- and middle-income nations was said to have ‘improved’ provision for water which suggests only around 118 million urban dwellers lacked improved provision. In this same year, around 700 million urban dwellers lacked ‘improved’ sanitation (UNICEF and WHO 2012). These might be taken to suggest that the data in Figure 47.2 and Table 47.1 are exaggerating the problem. But as this Joint Monitoring Programme states, no data are available for most nations on the proportion of urban (and rural) dwellers with provision for water and sanitation to a standard that is adequate for health. ‘Improved provision’ is not adequate provision. For water, improved provision includes piped water into dwelling, yard or plot, public tap or standpipe, tubewell or borehole, protected dug well, protected spring or rainwater collection. For sanitation, improved provision includes use of flush or pour-flush toilets to piped sewer system, septic tank or pit latrine, ventilated improved pit latrine, pit latrine with slab or composting toilet (UNICEF and WHO 2012).

The only recent data on water and sanitation for most nations comes from a few questions asked to a nationally representative sample of households, within surveys whose main purpose is to collect demographic and health data. It is not possible to ascertain whether a household has adequate provision for water or sanitation from a few questions, especially when households rely on a range of water sources. Asking a household if it has access to piped supplies close by does not establish whether the water is of adequate quality or the supply is regular or access is easy (there may be a tap close by but it is often shared with hundreds of other people so long queues are common). Asking a household if they have access to an ‘improved’ toilet is no indication of whether the toilet is adequate or available or used by all household members (for instance toilets may be on the premises but with some inhabitants − for instance tenants − having limited access). It is also likely that most household surveys underrepresent the population living in illegal settlements in cities because those administering the surveys are frightened to undertake interviews there (see Sabry 2010) or because there are no maps or street names.
to guide the selection of households to be interviewed. This is why the Joint Monitoring Programme reports are so careful to state that their statistics (which draw heavily on these household surveys) do not reveal who does and does not have ‘adequate’ provision or safe drinking water. But the UN agencies reporting on water and sanitation provision for the MDGs use these statistics, often labelling them as indicators on provision of safe water or clean water. For instance, *The Millennium Development
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Goals Report (United Nations 2011: 54) uses the Joint Monitoring Programme statistics within a section that discusses ‘progress to improve access to clean drinking water’. It also claims that the MDG drinking water target is likely to be surpassed – but the MDG target is for ‘safe’ water not for ‘improved’ provision (ibid.).

However, the Joint Monitoring Programme recently provided statistics on the proportion of the urban population in each nation with water piped to their premises. For urban populations, this is a much better indicator of who has ‘adequate’ provision because reliance on any public source (standpipe, kiosk, vendor, tanker) rarely provides adequate supplies for good health and usually involves large time and cost burdens. It is still not a measure of adequate provision because this would also need data on the regularity of supply through the pipes, the quality of the water and the cost. But this data on the proportion of the urban population with water piped to their premises helps highlight two key issues. First, in many nations, the proportion of the urban population with water piped to their premises is much lower than the proportion said to have ‘improved provision’. In 2010, 700 million urban dwellers in low- and middle-income nations were reported not to have water piped to their premises compared to 130 million that do not have ‘improved’ provision (UNICEF and WHO 2012). Second, the findings indicate the very large number of nations where half or more of their urban population lacks such provision. For the 173 nations for which data were available for 2010, 18 nations had less than a quarter of their urban population with water piped to their premises; most are in sub-Saharan Africa but they also include Bangladesh, Myanmar, Afghanistan and Haiti. The inadequacies in provision for water and sanitation for large sections of the urban population in low-income and many middle-income nations are obvious contributors to large disease burdens.

Urban poverty and health

There is a growing literature on the very poor health among low-income urban dwellers or among residents of particular informal settlements (for a review of these see Sverdlik 2011; see also APHRC 2002 for Nairobi and Subbaraman et al. 2012 for an informal settlement in Mumbai). This literature includes data on the very large health burdens associated with urban poverty, including very high infant and child mortality rates, large percentages of children malnourished and large and easily prevented health burdens for children, adolescents and adults. But in regard to poverty and health, cities can be healthy places for those with low incomes too, if the key health determinants (social, economic, environmental and political) are available to them. There are vast disparities in urban environmental conditions and health outcomes, so low-income communities usually face much greater burdens than wealthier areas. Drawing on available studies, the following generalizations about conditions that relate to healthy environments seem valid for the urban population in low- and middle-income nations:

1. It is common for between a third and two-thirds of an urban centre’s population to live in housing of poor quality with high levels of overcrowding in terms of little indoor space per person and the number of persons per room. Much of the housing in which lower-income groups live is made in part or totally from non-permanent, often flammable materials.

2. A perhaps surprisingly large proportion of urban dwellers in most low-income and many middle-income nations still use dirty fuels for cooking and, where needed, heating, which also means risks from high levels of indoor air pollution and severe health impacts (Smith and Akbar 2003). In 2005, 700 million urban dwellers still lacked access to clean fuels and 279 million lacked electricity (Legros et al. 2009).
Much of the urban population lacks safe, regular, convenient supplies of water and provision for sanitation — far more so than the official statistics suggest, as discussed already. Good quality provision for water and sanitation is known to dramatically lower morbidity from a wide range of diseases including cholera, typhoid and many diarrhoeal diseases (WHO 1986).

Much of the urban population lack regular (or even irregular) services to collect household waste. Many live in settlements that lack the paved roads needed to allow garbage collection trucks to provide a door-to-door service. In low-income nations, it is common for large sections of middle- or even upper-income groups to have inadequate or no provision. As with provision for water and sanitation, it is likely that the extent of the problem in smaller urban centres is under-estimated, as most existing documentation concentrates on larger urban centres. The environmental health implications of a lack of garbage collection services in urban areas are obvious — most households dispose of their wastes on any available empty site, into nearby ditches or lakes, or simply along streets. The problems associated with this include the smells, the disease vectors and pests attracted by rubbish, and drainage channels blocked with waste. Where provision for sanitation is also inadequate (as it often is), many households dispose of their toilet waste into drains or dispose of faecal matter within their garbage. Uncollected waste is obviously a serious hazard, especially for children playing in and around the home as well as for those who sort through rubbish looking for items that can be reused or recycled (Hardoy et al. 2001).

There are very large health burdens from infectious and parasitic diseases and accidents. Even if there are relatively few detailed studies of the health problems of populations in urban centres, this is what available studies suggest (McGranahan 1991; Bradley et al. 1991; Hardoy et al. 2001; WHO 1992; Pryer 2003). A large part of the low-income population faces large health burdens arising from unsafe working conditions with exposure to diseases, chemical pollutants and physical hazards in the workplace being a significant contributor to premature death, injury and illness (and the obvious economic consequences of these). A considerable part of this occurs within the residential environment, since this is where a significant proportion of low-income people work in most cities.

In many urban locations, there are also large and often growing health burdens from non-communicable diseases — for instance, cancer, diabetes and strokes which often create ‘a double burden’ for low-income urban dwellers. (See Sverdlik 2011 and Montgomery et al. 2003; see also Moser 2011 for a powerful example of the economic impact of cancer on a low-income household.) But much more work is needed on understanding the health problems that impact on urban populations (and especially low-income urban populations) disaggregated by age, sex and occupation including the relative roles of specific non-communicable diseases (Reardon 2011). As Reardon (2011) notes, diabetes that comes from starvation is not the same as diabetes linked to obesity and the kinds of cancers and heart diseases that impact low-income groups are often not the same as those that impact high-income groups.

Physical hazards evident in the home and its surroundings are likely to be among the most common causes of serious injury and premature death in informal settlements and other housing types used by low-income urban dwellers — for example, burns, scalds and accidental fires, cuts and injuries from falls (Goldstein 1990; WHO 1999). The health burdens these cause are particularly large where housing is made of flammable materials and where there are high levels of overcrowding and open fires and stoves (Pharoah 2008). Risks of accidental fires are obviously much higher where flammable materials are used for housing and there is a reliance on open fires or unstable stoves for cooking and where needed heating and candles or kerosene lamps for lighting. Large health burdens and high levels of accidental death from physical hazards are also related to the lack of provision for rapid and appropriate treatment, from both health care and emergency services.

Road traffic accidents are among the most serious physical hazards in urban areas — although there are no data that separate rural from urban and little consideration of how these risks impact more on low-
Urban poverty

income populations. The World Health Organization reports that about 1.3 million people die each year as a result of road traffic crashes and over 90 per cent of these fatalities occur in low-income and middle-income countries, even though these have less than half of the world’s vehicles. Nearly half (46 per cent) of those dying are pedestrians, cyclists and motorcyclists — and these represent up to 80 per cent of all deaths from motor vehicle accidents in some low- and middle-income countries. Over 20 million more people suffer non-fatal injuries, with many incurring a disability as a result of their injury. Road traffic accidents did not figure, however, in the top ten causes of death for low-income nations in 2008 but were seventh in middle-income nations.1 Children and young people under the age of 25 years account for over 30 per cent of those killed and injured in road traffic crashes. Given that low-income groups will be disproportionately represented among those who walk or cycle, they are also likely to be more at risk from road traffic deaths or injuries. The WHO notes that ‘Even within high-income countries, people from lower socioeconomic backgrounds are more likely to be involved in road traffic crashes than their more affluent counterparts.’2

There are many cities and smaller urban centres, or particular settlements within cities, where levels of outdoor air pollution considerably exceed WHO guidelines — for example, certain centres of heavy industry, mining or quarrying, or cities with high concentrations of motor vehicles with elevated levels of polluting emissions. The World Health Organization has estimated that for 2008, the number of premature deaths attributable to urban outdoor air pollution was 1.34 million worldwide; of these, 1.09 million deaths could have been avoided if the WHO Air Quality Guideline values were implemented.3

The range and quality of data available on air pollution and traffic accidents and on their health impacts have improved considerably over the last 15 years but none of the global or national data (or for air pollution city data) has any information on where and when these have a disproportionate impact on low-income groups — or on residents of informal settlements. If we had more detailed, spatial data on this, it is obvious that certain informal settlements are likely to show up as having particularly high levels of road traffic accidents, for instance the informal settlements that develop beside major roads or highways which their inhabitants have to cross without traffic lights or bridges. It is also likely that the areas in cities with much higher than average air pollution levels will generally be predominantly low-income areas.

Hundreds of millions of people live in urban centres where at least in terms of public and environmental health there is no functioning government for them in their settlements — there is no government provision or management for piped water, sewers (or other excreta disposal systems that meet health standards), drains or solid waste collection. There is also no land-use management that helps ensure the availability of land for housing with infrastructure for lower-income groups. Nor is there pollution control. There is often no or limited public provision for schools and for health care for large sections of the urban population. In many ways they resemble the cities in Europe and North America in the mid-nineteenth century before government addressed public and environmental health issues. Life expectancies and infant and child mortality rates among these groups may be comparable to those in the mid-nineteenth-century cities in Europe and North America (see APHRC 2002; Bairoch 1988). We know little about some of the most deficient urban centres as there is the little or no documentation.

In India, for instance, the 2011 census recorded over 8,000 urban centres, and for most of these, there is no documentation of health problems. There are examples of the major cities in sub-Saharan Africa where there is, in effect, no government provision for public or environmental health for most of their population. For instance, the following sub-Saharan African cities have no sewers or sewers that reach a very small proportion of the population: Addis Ababa, Bamako, Benin, Brazzaville, Dar es Salaam, Douala, Freetown, Ibadan, Kaduna, Kinshasa, Kumasi, Lagos,
Lubumbashi, Maiduguri, Mbuji-Mayi, Port Harcourt, Yaoundé and Zaria. These are all major cities; all have populations of more than a million and many are much larger than this. Several other cities have reports of sewers serving a small proportion of their population and these were often reported to be in poor repair or no longer functioning. Of course, it is possible to have good quality sanitation in some urban contexts without sewers, but most of the cities named also have large proportions of their population living in dense informal settlements that do not have provision for septic tanks or good-quality, easily serviced pit latrines, for instance. Moreover, a high proportion of households have no toilet in their home.

Thus, in the absence of data available in each city or smaller urban centre on what are the most serious health problems, who is most at risk and where they live, it is obviously difficult to set priorities. Much of the data on which national policies and international support are based are from national sample surveys with sample sizes too small to reveal the inequalities within national urban populations or within individual cities. For instance, urban averages for health-related statistics get pulled up by the concentration of middle- and upper-income groups in urban areas, which hides how low-income urban dwellers can be facing comparable health problems to those faced by low-income rural dwellers—or in some instances, worse health problems. The concentration of people and housing in cities provides many potential agglomeration economies for health as the costs per person or household served with piped, safe water, good quality sanitation and drainage, health care, schools and the rule of law are lowered. But in the absence of a government capable of addressing these needs (or willing to do so) this same concentration brings profound health disadvantages. In addition, as noted above, the data collected in most nations on provision for water and sanitation provision do not show who has provision to a standard adequate for good health.

**Poverty and incomes**

In most urban centres, there is also little or no detailed data available on income levels. To survive, the urban poor have to find work that provides cash income. Finding income-earning opportunities that are more stable, less dangerous and provide a higher return is central to reducing their poverty or moving out of poverty. Yet for most urban centres, we actually know very little about the difficulties facing low-income urban dwellers in securing sufficient income and what would help them to do so. This is all the more remarkable when poverty is defined by income-based poverty lines. In part, this lack of knowledge is because such a high proportion of low-income groups work in what is termed the ‘informal’ economy on which little or no official data are collected. In part it is because the official data collected on employment has never been able to capture the variety, complexity and diversity of income-earning sources, working conditions and hours and their implications for health and income levels. But there are case studies that show the struggle of households to earn sufficient income (often involving children and their withdrawal from school), the often devastating impact of illness, injury or premature death on household income (Pryer 1993, 2003) and the societal limits faced by women in labour markets (especially formal jobs other than low-paying maids).

Much has been learnt about the difficulties faced by those working in the informal economy from particular studies (see, for instance, Moser 2009; Bapat 2009; Kantor 2009; Banks 2010; Perlman 2010). Of course, this is also part of a larger global picture where enterprises reduce their costs by employing temporary or casual workers (or day labourers) and drawing on suppliers and services from the informal economy. There are also the studies of particular trades within the informal economy—for instance of waste pickers (see for instance Fergutz et al. 2011), food vendors (for instance Iyenda 2005) or rickshaw pullers (Begum and Sen 2005). But given the importance for poverty reduction of understanding and acting on what constrains better incomes and working conditions for the urban poor, there is far too little study of this.
For many households, the home has great importance as the location for income-earning work – especially for women. We know remarkably little about the ways in which income circulates in low-income settlements and how this is influenced by relations with the wider city and more formal drivers of economic growth such as expanding industries and services. There is also the way that intense competition for income-earning sources reduces returns. We also know remarkably little about what best supports low-income groups in getting higher incomes although the availability of credit and being able to have a bank account, the extension of a reliable supply of piped water and electricity to the home (so useful for many income-earning opportunities), good social contacts, literacy and the completion of secondary school are among the factors that may help (Mitlin and Satterthwaite 2013).

Multi-dimensional poverty

The appearance of a multidimensional poverty index (Alkire and Santos 2010) that is now included in the UNDP Human Development Reports (see UNDP 2013) might appear to respond to the need for many aspects of urban deprivation to be considered. But this index relies on many of the global datasets whose accuracy and validity were questioned earlier, for instance for water and for sanitation. It produces an index just by aggregating existing health, education and standard of living indicators. It does not recognize key differences between urban and rural contexts – for instance for water and sanitation. The only data used in the index on housing quality is whether the floor is made of dirt, sand or dung and this is hardly appropriate in high-density urban settlements where much of the population live on second or third floors. The index does not include any measure of overcrowding.

Urban poverty and inequality

Most measures of poverty applied in low- and middle-income nations are for absolute poverty. They do not concern themselves with inequality. But it is not possible to understand poverty without an engagement with inequality and what underlies it. Studies of inequality, like studies of absolute poverty, usually focus on income. Yet many of the most dramatic (and unjust) inequalities are in relation to the other deprivations such as housing and living conditions, access to services, the rule of law and voice. These are also reflected in the very large inequalities in health status and in premature mortality (see Table 47.2). It is clear that inequalities in access to infrastructure and services within cities also reflect inequalities in political power, voice and capacity to hold government agencies to account and to access entitlements. In some nations, those living in settlements with no legal address cannot register as voters while in most informal settlements, residents face difficulties getting the official documents needed to get on the voter’s register, access entitlements and hold government or private service providers to account. In all nations, the inequalities faced by those living in informal settlements are reinforced by the stigma associated with living there.

Table 47.2 illustrates the scales of inequality in a range of health outcomes (including infant, child and maternal mortality rates) and a range of health determinants (including those relating to housing and living conditions). This highlights the differences between the best performing and the worse performing settlements in urban areas in low- and middle-income nations in so many aspects – including those that are important yet very rarely considered.

Understanding these deprivations also requires attention to the spatial aspects of inequalities – i.e. inequalities in these between neighbourhoods and districts within cities; so often, the data collected on incomes, living conditions or service provision are from too small a sample to show these spatial inequalities.

There are also other aspects of inequality that throw light on deprivation, for instance inequalities in household assets or capitals or inequalities caused or exacerbated by social or political status and
Table 47.2 Examples of differentials in health and in health determinants between the worst and best performing settlements within the urban population in low- and middle-income nations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health outcomes</th>
<th>Worst performing urban settlements</th>
<th>Best performing urban settlements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Infant mortality rates</td>
<td>Over 120/1000 live births</td>
<td>Under 3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Under five mortality rates</td>
<td>Over 250/1000 live births</td>
<td>Under 5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maternal mortality rates</td>
<td>Over 1,500/100,000 live births?</td>
<td>Under 10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life expectancy at birth</td>
<td>Under 20 years¹</td>
<td>Over 85 years</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prevalence of diarrhoea with blood in children</td>
<td>13+%</td>
<td>0?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>% of children under five who are underweight or under height for their age</td>
<td>Over half</td>
<td>0?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Home and neighbourhood environment</th>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Quality of house</td>
<td>Poor quality materials, often made of flammable materials and waste materials. Dirt floors. Poor ventilation. Often damp</td>
<td>Good quality safe home meeting official regulations for health and structural safety</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Size of house</td>
<td>Very small; often one small room per household and there can be less than 1 square metre per person</td>
<td>20–50 square metres per person; no need for children to have shared bedrooms</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision for water</td>
<td>No safe water supply within easy access; often high prices paid for water from vendors, kiosks or tankers. Also time burden queuing, fetching and carrying</td>
<td>Water of drinking quality piped to kitchens, bathrooms and toilets 24 hours a day</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision for sanitation</td>
<td>No toilet in the home (or limited access for tenants) and often no public or community toilet that is accessible and clean</td>
<td>At least one high quality easily cleaned toilet per household with provision for hand washing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision for solid waste collection</td>
<td>No collection</td>
<td>Regular collection</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision for drainage</td>
<td>Not served by storm drainage system</td>
<td>Protected from floods by comprehensive storm drainage system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision for clean energy</td>
<td>No electricity and reliance on dirty fuels (including wastes). Often means high levels of indoor air pollution; women and young children often with much greater exposure to these</td>
<td>Electricity available 24 hours a day; clean fuels for cooking and where needed heating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Provision for children’s play and recreation</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Good range of safe and varied provision within walking distance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability of loans to support buying or building better quality housing</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Loans available</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Urban Poverty

#### Home and neighbourhood environment (continued)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Worst performing urban settlements</th>
<th>Best performing urban settlements</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Tenure</td>
<td>Insecure tenure of home (usually as tenant) or land on which it is built; constant threat of eviction</td>
<td>Secure home; protection from forced eviction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Location of housing or settlement</td>
<td>Precarious sites often at high risk of landslides or located on floodplains or other areas at risk from flooding. High risk of fire from very dense settlements of flammable materials</td>
<td>Safe houses on safe sites</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Service provision (key health determinants)

| Provision for schools                  | No or very inadequate public provision. For the rule of law, this includes no secure policing providing the rule of law in the settlements where they live. This may also mean high levels of violence | Full public provision for all these services (and with sufficient income to purchase private provision if needed) |
| Provision for health care              |                                                                                                                                         | Good quality provision                                                |
| Provision for specialist health care services and outreach for infants, children, the elderly and those with disabilities – and for sexual and reproductive health |                                                                                                                                         | Effective early warning systems that reach all those at risk and provisions to support actions that need to be taken (e.g. temporary move) |
| Provision for emergency services – fire protection, ambulances, para-medics… |                                                                                                                                         | Homes and possessions fully covered by insurance                      |
| Provision for safety nets              | No public provision                                                                                                                     | On voter’s register and also with political influence. Also channels for complaints or redress if needed – local or national politicians, courts, ombudsmen… |
| Provision for the rule of law          | None                                                                                                                                   | Good quality provision                                                |
| Provision for public transport         |                                                                                                                                         | Effective early warning systems that reach all those at risk and provisions to support actions that need to be taken (e.g. temporary move) |
| Provision for disaster preparedness    |                                                                                                                                         | Homes and possessions fully covered by insurance                      |
| Protection of asset base              | No insurance available or affordable for housing or personal possessions                                                               | On voter’s register and also with political influence. Also channels for complaints or redress if needed – local or national politicians, courts, ombudsmen… |
| Provision for voice                    | Where there are elections, unable to get onto the voter’s register. No means to hold politicians or civil servants or public service provision agencies to account | High-quality environment, health and safety regulations enforced, health care services available and income support or compensation available for occupational injuries |
| Work environment                      | Very low quality and dangerous; no support for treatment if ill or injured or for lost income                                           | High-quality environment, health and safety regulations enforced, health care services available and income support or compensation available for occupational injuries |

Note: 1Life expectancy at birth is reported to be below 40 years for some cities in sub-Saharan Africa; it is likely that among low-income groups in these cities, it may be 20 years or less.
relations including discrimination. An understanding of inequality also needs to consider the implications for low-income groups of a larger and wealthier elite — for instance as their demands and influences restructure cities to serve their priorities. They can separate themselves from ‘the poor’ through gated communities and highways that link their homes, places of work and places for leisure.

There are also some nations where governments have reduced some of the most profound inequalities among the urban population, for instance through extending provision for water, sanitation, schools and health care (and sometimes the rule of law) to a larger proportion of the low-income population or through transfer payments that reach large sections of the low-income population with supplements to their income; for instance pensions, conditional cash transfers and child allowances. Where these reach low-income groups, these certainly reduce absolute poverty although they may not reduce income inequality as incomes may rise more among high-income groups. But these cash transfers also do nothing to address the inequalities in provision for infrastructure and services.

Conclusions

So what has been learnt from this review of what we know about urban poverty? First, that the scale and depth of urban poverty can be greatly understated if inappropriate poverty lines are used. Second, that all nations need poverty lines that take into account the actual costs faced by low-income groups in regard to food and non-food needs and how these vary by location. And, third, that all nations need a consideration of other aspects of poverty and what underlies them — including poor-quality and insecure housing and lack of provision for basic services and voice.

For poverty specialists who have long focused on income or consumption-based poverty lines, this broader view of poverty will be problematic. Many of its aspects are not easily measured. Many are also not so much the result of poverty as state failures — mostly the incapacity or unwillingness of local governments to meet their responsibilities. They are also a product of a lack of attention to addressing these deficits by aid agencies and development banks and by national governments unwilling to support urban governments. But this broader understanding of poverty and the range of deprivations associated with it also provides more entry points and more scope for intervention. City and municipal governments may have limited capacity to increase incomes for the poorest groups but they have scope and capacity to address most other deprivations. This is also true for NGOs and for grassroots organizations as well as for international aid organizations.

Most important, however, the focus on poverty defined only by income or consumption also takes attention away from the multiple roles that housing and its immediate surrounds (or neighbourhoods) can have in reducing deprivation. A focus only on income poverty can mean that a low-income household with a secure home with good-quality provision for water, sanitation and drainage and with their children at school and access to health care is considered just as poor as a low-income household with none of these.

Moreover, there is also a broader and deeper issue of knowledge and data: what data are collected to inform government action on poverty. Why is there so little data available to inform urban governments on which residents, streets and neighbourhoods face the greatest inadequacies in provision for water, sanitation, drainage, paved roads, health care services, schools and policing? It is also evident that very few official measurements of urban poverty are made with dialogue with those who live in poverty and who struggle to live with inadequate incomes. It is always ‘experts’ who identify those who are ‘poor’ who may then be ‘targeted’ by some programme; at best, they become ‘objects’ of government policy which may bring some improvement in conditions but they are rarely seen as citizens with rights and legitimate demands who also have resources and capabilities that can contribute much to more effective poverty reduction programmes.
Lastly, reducing urban poverty requires a functioning state in each urban centre or district that seeks to address its responsibilities and is accountable to its low-income population. Such states ideally need to act in the public good (including especially low-income groups and their contexts and experiences as part of this public good too). The importance of local governments for meeting the MDGs in urban areas also needs acknowledging. Indeed, perhaps more attention should be given to involving local governments in the setting and monitoring of international goals and targets that fall within their jurisdiction – especially in the new aid framework being developed for after 2015 (as most MDG goals are meant to be met by then). In addition, a greater focus on supporting local governments might also encourage more attention to the data that local governments need. International agencies need to learn how to support city governments develop the capacity to meet their responsibilities. Also how to work with and support representative organizations of the urban poor, including funding streams that are accessible to and accountable to the urban poor and their organizations (see Satterthwaite and Mitlin 2014 for a detailed discussion on this). Some of the early signs on the post-MDG framework are encouraging. For instance, the report of the High Level Panel set up by the UN Secretary General to advise him on the post-2015 framework commits to universal coverage for basic services and to eliminating hunger and extreme poverty (unlike the partial targets of most of the MDGs). It recognizes the key roles of local governments in achieving this. It recognizes the inappropriateness of the USD1.25 a day poverty line. But it still sees urban poverty reduction as something international agencies and national governments do. There is still no consideration of needed changes in aid architecture to support and work with the organizations of the poor’. National governments and international agencies need their knowledge, competence and capacity if the universal goals this Report champions are really to be met.

References


Bhan, G. (2009) ‘This is no longer the city I once knew: Evictions, the urban poor and the right to the city in Millennial Delhi’, Environment and Urbanization, 21(1): 127–42.


Urban poverty


Notes


3 These guidelines refer to the mean annual concentration of particulate matter whose particles are smaller than 10 microns (called PM10) and smaller than 2.5 microns (called PM 2.5). These guidelines are 20 µg/m3 for PM10 and 10 for PM 2.5.

MIGRATION, URBANIZATION AND CHANGING GENDER RELATIONS IN THE SOUTH

Cecilia Tacoli and Sylvia Chant

Introduction

With more than half the world’s population now living in urban centres, interest in the nature and role of rural–urban migration is growing. In many respects, rural migrants are not welcome in the cities: a growing number of national governments in Africa and Asia adopt policies that aim to slow down rural–urban movement (United Nations 2008a), on the assumption that migrants do little but transfer rural poverty to urban contexts. Such views are held despite ample evidence showing that urbanization—that is, the proportion of the total population living in settlements designated as ‘urban’—reflects transformations in national economies, with growing numbers of people moving away from employment in agriculture and into service and industry sectors (Satterthwaite 2007; UNFPA 2007; World Bank 2009). Such movement is also a physical one: the concentration of employment opportunities in industry and services in urban areas is the root cause of rural–urban migration and urbanization. Moreover, employment in these sectors tends to be deeply gendered, with a high proportion of women in the workforce of export-oriented manufacturing and in domestic service, which helps explain the generally growing numbers of women migrating to cities of the south (Chant and McIlwaine 2009; Tacoli 2012).

Beyond this general observation, however, it is also essential to note the sometimes wide differences between countries, which in turn point to the crucial role of socio-cultural factors, in addition to economic transformations, in shaping gender relations. While urbanization often means greater independence for women, with better opportunities than in rural areas to engage in paid employment outside the family, better access to services, lower fertility rates and somewhat less rigidly patriarchal social values and norms, such gains can be minimal for the large number of women living in low-income settlements and working in low-paid, insecure jobs. While this also affects men, most urban women continue to experience profound disadvantages compared to men in their daily lives (Chant 2011, 2013; Tacoli 2012). This chapter describes the two main components of urbanization, natural population growth and rural–urban migration, with specific attention to changes in sex ratios in urban centres compared to the total population and rural areas. It then explores transformations in the organization and forms of urban households, with particular attention to women-headed households, and the gender-segregated nature of urban labour markets, especially those segments where migrant women concentrate. Finally, it concludes by summarizing how urbanization and migration intersect with changes in gender relations, with specific attention to the nature of urban poverty.
The demographic components of urbanization and their relation to gender

Fertility, location and poverty

Despite widespread perceptions of rural–urban migration as the main contributor to the growth of urban populations, this is not generally the case. In India, between 1961 and 2001, urban natural growth (the excess of births over deaths in the urban population) accounted for about 60 per cent of urban growth, with the remaining 40 per cent due to migration and the reclassification of rural areas as urban (Kundu 2011). This is in line with overall patterns in most low- and middle-income nations. Even in China, where migration is the main contemporary driver of urban growth, natural increase accounts for about 40 per cent (Montgomery 2008). Although most regions in the world experience increasing levels of population mobility, migrating to cities and towns can be difficult. For example, in the late 1990s, urban India overtook rural India in share of GDP, and urban per capita incomes are over three times those in rural areas. Rural areas, in turn, contribute 18 per cent of GDP although they employ 60 per cent of the population, with rural–urban migration having been constrained by high costs of living in urban centres and lack of formal sector jobs (Revi 2008).

Urban fertility rates are nevertheless generally lower than in rural areas. This can be explained by a number of reasons: the higher cost (both monetary and in terms of time) for parents to bring up each child; higher levels of education, or exposure to choice and different lifestyle models than in rural settings; including later marriage (at an older age, especially for women) than in rural areas; increased access to contraception and greater engagement of women in waged employment (Dyson 2010; National Research Council 2003).

Fertility levels can change very rapidly: rural–urban migrants’ fertility declines after their arrival in the urban areas, as they adapt to their new environment. However, when income levels and place of residence are taken into account, the differences between rural and urban fertility rates are not very significant (Schoumaker 2004). This reflects the fact that in low-income urban settlements and in many small towns in low-income countries, access to reproductive health services - and to basic services in general - is often less than adequate. Poor migrants living in low-income settlements face the same constraints in accessing services, and their unmet contraceptive needs are as high as those of non-migrant poor women. A study of Greater Cairo found that fertility rates were lowest in the city centre, but in the peri-urban areas they were similar to those of rural settlements (National Research Council 2003). Similarly, a study of fertility and access to family planning in urban Bangladesh and Pakistan shows that poor women remain worse off than their wealthier counterparts, despite the expansion of family planning services in Bangladesh (Speizer and Luseno 2010). Indeed, in Bangladesh, where an estimated 27 per cent of the population is urban, the Total Fertility Rate (TFR) in slums is 2.5 (just under the national rate of 2.6), compared with 1.9 in non-slum settlements (Schurmann 2009), and in major Indian cities the TFR is often higher by 0.2–0.5 births in slums than in non-slum areas (Gupta et al. 2009: 43). Such evidence suggests that poverty may be a better indicator of fertility patterns than rural or urban residence (UNFPA 2007).

Rural–urban migration and gender selectivity

Migration directions are largely determined by the level of urbanization within a specific country. Hence in highly urbanized nations such as most of those in Latin America, movement is predominantly between urban centres (Chant 1998; Chant and McIlwaine 2009). In contrast, in countries with low levels of urbanization and where agriculture remains the main economic activity, for example in sub-Saharan Africa, much migration is between rural settlements. The exception to this trend is China, which still has a relatively low level of urbanization but where extremely rapid industrial development
in the coastal areas in the past three decades has attracted unprecedented numbers of people moving from rural to urban areas.

Data on recent migrants (people moving during the six years preceding the interview) from demographic and health surveys and disaggregated by sex for 46 countries shows that women’s migration reflects these trends. Hence, rural–rural movement is the most common in 26 countries, especially in Africa and in South Asia. To a large extent, such movement is marriage-related and in these regions women traditionally marry outside their villages of origin. In 15 countries, urban–urban movement prevails among women, especially in Central and South America, which typically have high levels of urbanization. In countries with rapidly expanding export-oriented manufacturing, a sector that has traditionally shown preference for female workers, rural–urban migration is dominated by women (Chant 1998; United Nations 2008b).

It should be kept in mind, however, that aside from sample surveys, there is limited statistical evidence of the ‘feminization of migration’, especially with reference to international movement, partly because of the lack of disaggregated data by sex but also because of the large numbers of migrants who are simply not counted as they do not move through official channels (Pessar 2008). This is also to some extent the case with internal migration, and especially temporary and circular movement, which constitutes a large proportion of all movement, particularly in low-income nations, and for which not only sex composition but overall size of flows are, at best, estimates derived from small-scale qualitative studies.

Nevertheless, qualitative studies can contribute important insights. For example, while much of the large-scale rural–urban movement in China is unrecorded, making it difficult to ascertain its sex composition, there is evidence that increasing numbers of women, including young unmarried ones but also older married women in their late twenties and early thirties, are moving to urban centres to work in factories and services (Murphy 2006). In the Ecuadorian Amazon, young women are more likely than men to move to urban areas as they are more likely to find employment in domestic service, restaurants and retail employment (Barbieri and Carr 2005; Barbieri et al. 2009). Similar reasons underpin women’s preference for urban destinations in Vietnam’s Mekong Delta (Hoang et al. 2008), and in Bangladesh (Rao 2011).

While greater employment opportunities in urban areas are a key driver of gender-selective migration, it is essential to note that in many cases migration is equally the result of discrimination against women in access to rural land and inheritance, which is particularly problematic for women heading households. Especially in the case of young women, abusive family relations are also frequently a reason to move to the city (Mabala and Cooksey 2008). In addition, the pervasive decline in incomes from farming due to both market mechanisms and environmental stress pushes a growing proportion of rural households to diversify their income sources to reduce their vulnerability. This in many cases entails some form of mobility, with one or several family members’ remittances providing much-needed financial support to those that stay put. Even in areas where traditionally the independent (not marriage-related) migration of women would have been frowned upon, this is now considered acceptable, as long as they send remittances to their families (Bah et al. 2003; Tacoli 2010; Tacoli and Mabala 2010).

When considering migration, age is often as important as gender. A general observation in case studies around the world suggests that the age of young people moving on their own (without following their family) has decreased dramatically in recent years. In Bolivia and Tanzania, boys as young as 14 are moving on their own from poor rural areas to urban centres, often as part of a family strategy to diversify income sources and reduce their vulnerability to environmental change (Tacoli 2011). Young girls are also a growing group of migrants to the cities in many countries. In many cases, and especially when they are forced to live with employers (in the case of domestic workers) or do not have support from relatives, they may be especially vulnerable (Mabala and Cooksey 2008). Nevertheless, many girls
Migration and changing gender relations

move because they are determined to improve their circumstances, and urban centres provide the resources and opportunities to do so (Temin et al. 2013).

Changing urban sex ratios

Under normal conditions, there are typically between 105 and 107 boys for 100 girls at birth. However, population sex ratios (the rate of males to females in a population) tend to change due to a variety of factors. A normal population sex ratio is calculated at between 97.9 and 100.3, and abnormally high sex ratios typically reflect differences in mortality rates by sex which are the result of cultural and socio-economic factors.

In an arc of countries from East Asia through South Asia to the Middle East and North Africa, traditional son preference is the main cause for the excess of men. Discrimination against daughters results in worse nutrition and healthcare and higher infant and child mortality among girls. In 1990, Sen estimated that 100 million women were missing across the world (Sen 1992). Based on 2001 census data, the number of missing women across Afghanistan, Bangladesh, China, India, South Korea, Pakistan, Taiwan and Iran is now estimated to be between 67 and 92 million (Hesketh and Xing 2006).

Differences in female and male infant and child mortality have declined in some areas but son preference remains strong in other regions. As a result, excess female mortality, whether during childhood or adulthood, has changed little or even worsened in countries that have grown rapidly such as China, India and Angola, while it has dramatically declined in countries such as Nepal and Bangladesh that have experienced less economic growth, showing that gender inequality is not related to income growth but rather to a complex set of deeply entrenched patriarchal relations and normative roles that discriminate against women (Das Gupta 2009; Kabeer et al. 2013; Jackson 2010; Razavi 2011; World Bank 2011). Indeed, in a rapidly growing country such as Vietnam, a concerning recent trend is sex-selective abortion, resulting in an increasingly skewed sex ratio at birth (UNFPA Vietnam 2009).

In contrast, in the Latin American and Caribbean region there is a growing excess of women in the population, especially in urban areas. This is explained in part by a sharp decline in maternal mortality between 1950 and 2010, but also by very high rates of violent deaths (including homicides, traffic accidents, suicide) which are four times higher for men than they are for women (Alves et al. 2011).

In urban centres, gender-selective rural–urban migration is a significant additional factor in sex ratio differences, and one which is similarly influenced by socio-economic and cultural transformations. Hence, while movement between countryside and towns has long been male-dominated, in recent decades a growing number of women have moved to urban areas looking for employment or better access to healthcare, and/or as a result of conflict (see Hughes and Wickeri 2011).

There are significant variations in the urban sex ratios between countries and regions. This means that few generalizations can be made. For example, in several but not all sub-Saharan African nations for which data are available, men tend to outnumber women in urban centres. Kenya and Rwanda are particularly striking examples of highly unbalanced sex ratios and, in the case of Kenya, increasing rapidly over the decade 1999–2008. Overall, however, the traditional male bias in rural–urban migration seems to have declined, resulting in more balanced sex ratios in urban areas (see Table 48.1).

The situation is reversed in Central and South America, with more women than men living in urban centres, and the opposite in rural areas. These long-term trends are related in part to high levels of urbanization; hence, sex ratios are determined largely by natural population growth, which tends to be better balanced, than by gender-selective migration flows. It also partly relates to more women than men moving to urban centres, where they can find more employment opportunities (Chant 2007a).

In South Asia, urban sex ratios reflect national ones which, as mentioned above, are significantly unbalanced compared to the rest of the world. In some countries they can also be more unbalanced.
than national ones. In India, this is especially the case in the large ('million-plus') cities, which contain one-quarter of India’s urban population but where on average there are only 86 women per 100 men (Chant 2011). In much of Southeast Asia, on the other hand, selective migration of women to urban centres to work in manufacturing has influenced urban sex ratios.

Table 48.1 Trends in urban sex ratios, selected countries in Africa, Latin America and Asia, late 1990s and 2000s

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Country</th>
<th>Survey year in late 1990s</th>
<th>Survey year in 2000s</th>
<th>SEX RATIO URBAN (men per 100 women) Late 1990s</th>
<th>SEX RATIO URBAN (men per 100 women) 2000s</th>
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Changes in household forms and organization

Households are often portrayed as relatively static units, with extended forms prevalent in rural areas and nuclear forms in urban areas. The reality is that the composition of households is frequently much more fluid, and their organization changes as it is affected by the life course of their members (births, deaths, marriages), access to resources such as housing and income, and access to adequate education and health care (Buzar et al. 2005). Moreover, some members may reside in different locations for varying periods of time through seasonal or temporary migration (the latter often involving periods of several years) although in terms of commitments and obligations (including financial support) they can still be considered members of their household of origin (Bah et al. 2003; Chant and Radcliffe 1992).

In urban contexts, lack of access to adequate shelter is a common problem for the urban poor, leading to the expansion of households with grown-up children bringing their partners and children into the family (Chant and McIlwaine 2009; Moser 2009). In many cases, these extended multi-generation households include ‘embedded’ women-headed households, often but not always daughters with children but without a partner who benefit from emotional support and, crucially, childcare support from relatives which enables them to engage in paid work (Bradshaw 1995; Chant 2007b; Moser 2009). This is especially important for the urban poor in low-income countries where public provision of childcare is virtually non-existent.

For migrant workers moving without their families, renting a room or in many cases just a bed and sharing facilities and cooking together is common, especially when their income is low and more independent accommodation is not available or not affordable. Young women migrating on their own are also in many cases under the obligation to send remittances home to support their families. Renting rooms has the double benefit of reducing their accommodation costs and increasing their security and safety. Renting space and sharing housing with non-relatives, however, is not limited to migrants and a large proportion of residents of urban informal settlements in Africa, Asia and Latin America are tenants who rent rooms from people who may be as poor as them (Kumar 2010; Rakodi 2010).

But perhaps the most important difference in household organization is the higher prevalence of women-headed households in urban than in rural areas in a number of countries (Table 48.2). This is especially the case for de jure women-headed households, that is, those units where women live without a permanent partner on a more or less permanent basis and receive no economic support except for (in some cases) child maintenance (Chant 2007b). De facto women-headed households, on the other hand, are those units where male partners are absent on a temporary basis, usually because of labour migration, but contribute financially to the household expenditure and in many cases are the main decision-makers in this regard (Chant 2007b).

What explains the fact that there are usually more women-headed households in urban areas? Research in Honduras shows that the most critical stage for these households is their formation, when decisions need to be made by women on whether such organization is likely to be viable. A key factor is the availability of local income-generating opportunities, which is also where there are major differences between rural and urban areas. In rural Honduras, land is regarded as belonging to men, and separation in most cases means that women lose any claims to it. But even when widowhood is the reason for the formation of women-headed households, farming still requires labour, which can only be provided either by grown-up children or by paid labourers (Bradshaw 1995). Similar constraints explain the much higher incidence of women-headed households in small towns in Tanzania and Ethiopia (Baker 1995, 2012). Even when women have equal land rights, cultural constraints as well as lack of labour and capital make it difficult for women-headed households to rely on farming, and the wider income-generating opportunities in urban centres are a main reason for migration. Both of the authors cited above find that the proportion of rural–urban migrant women is higher among those heading their households.
<table>
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<th>Urban</th>
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Migration and changing gender relations

Gender-selective employment and migration

There is no doubt that urbanization holds great potential for women: the growing number of women and girls who move from rural areas to urban centres is proof of it. Yet, this potential is not always realized, and women continue to experience intense disadvantage compared to men. Paid employment can liberate women from dependence on relatives, often entailing unpaid family work, but at the same time women are more likely than men to be employed in low-paid, insecure jobs in the informal urban economy. Even in the formal sector, women concentrate in export manufacturing and non-core jobs, the most vulnerable during a recession. Indeed, a growing proportion of women workers in export-oriented industries are home-based and their earnings depend on the number of pieces produced, making the distinction between this form of employment and work in the informal sector increasingly blurred (Dedeoğlu 2010). While not all women employed in these sectors are migrants, gender-selective demand for labour in these industries is undoubtedly a significant ‘pull’ factor that contributes to gender-selective rural–urban migration.

Another growing sector of employment for women in urban areas is domestic service, a major category of employment for women in urban areas of low- and middle-income countries. In South Africa, in 2004 domestic service was the second-largest sector of employment for black women, employing some 755,000 workers, with a large proportion of internal migrants from rural areas (Peberdy and Dinat 2005). Work in private households is also a major source of employment for rural–urban migrant women in Vietnam (Hoang et al. 2008) and in Tanzania (Mabala and Cooksey 2008).

One important reason for the increase in paid domestic work is women’s increased labour-force participation in middle-income households. This, in turn, suggests that women are not a homogeneous category, making generalizations difficult. It also shows, however, that women’s engagement in the cash economy does not result in a more equal distribution of domestic responsibilities. Effectively, reproductive activities remain women’s work, whether performed by unpaid household members or by paid helpers. This is also reflected in the global demand for nannies and maids and the extraordinary increase in the number of international migrant women employed in these tasks in affluent countries. In the United States, the number of households employing paid domestic workers increased by 53 per cent between 1995 and 1999 (Ehrenreich 2003; Kabeer 2007). In Latin America, 7.6 million people are employed as domestic workers; the majority of these are women and many are migrants (Tokman 2010). These figures also reflect the inadequacy of public provision for childcare and care for the elderly and the persisting view that these are private, family responsibilities.

Wages in the domestic sector are low: in Latin America, they are about 40 per cent of the average urban wage, including the informal sector (ibid.). Nevertheless, ease of entry and the fact that accommodation is often provided in the employer’s home makes this relatively attractive employment, especially for migrant women. However, long working hours, potential abuse from employers and social isolation increase the vulnerability of workers, especially those who live with their employers.

Despite the low wages it often provides, women’s employment in the informal sector and domestic service is crucial for the survival of their families. Although the worth of remittances, especially if sent by migrant children and women, is typically under-estimated by those receiving them, they are a crucial source of cash for rural households (Bah et al. 2003; Hoang et al. 2008; Tacoli 2010; Tacoli and Mabala 2010). For low-income women, such work is not a choice but rather a lack of choice, as it is essential for their survival and that of their families while at the same time it is not a guarantee of moving out of poverty.

Conclusion: urbanization and gender relations

Despite sanguine predictions of an urban age in which prosperity for all beckons, it is vital to remember that cities remain contested and conflictive spaces, in which poor people, regardless of
gender or migrant origin, face enormous challenges to peace, full citizenship and rights. Balancing paid work and unpaid care work is one of the major constraints for urban women, and especially for poor urban women. Life in the city is more expensive than in rural areas, and in many cases it is more expensive for the residents of low-income settlements – many of whom are migrants – who have to pay high prices for inadequate accommodation, for water provided by private vendors and for access to latrines, where they exist (Chant 2013). Limited access to services, including those related to health, such as lack of sanitation and high concentrations of environmental hazards, and violence and crime, have a huge impact on women’s lives, as providing for their families is extremely difficult and time-consuming. While the root cause of urban poverty is inadequate incomes, living conditions affect disproportionately those who are responsible for unpaid care work – usually women. For urban women, fear of gender-based violence is also pervasive. However, while urbanization can heighten the risk factors for women, making them more vulnerable to violence, at the same time it creates opportunities to deal with it through informal and formal means such as rallying the support of neighbours, or turning to NGOs which have actively engaged with violence in slums through multi-stakeholder initiatives involving residents, medics and local police such as the ‘Bantay Banay’ ('FamilyWatch') scheme launched by Lihok Pilipina in Metro Cebu, the Philippines (see Chant 2011). Nevertheless, migrant women who may lack the support of social networks are likely to be more exposed to violence (McIlwaine 2013). At the same time, young urban men also often face an above-average risk of violent attack and premature mortality partly by making recourse to social networks which nominally help to validate their masculinity in the form of 'slum gangs', a phenomenon which has been most extensively documented in Latin America (Jones and Rodgers 2009; McIlwaine and Moser 2000). To a large extent, then, it is difficult to attribute greater disadvantage to migrant status. We should also keep in mind that migrants – like women – are not a homogenous category, and it is largely the wealthier and better educated rural residents who tend to move to urban centres. It is perhaps poverty, lack of voice and political representation as well as unequal gender relations that are the root causes of women’s disadvantage. All these can be exacerbated by being a migrant; but a narrow focus on migrants’ risks hides the wider challenges of urbanization for a large and increasing proportion of urban dwellers.

References


Migration and changing gender relations


Urban materials

All cities consume resources in similar ways. All cities consume resources in unique ways.

Both of these statements are correct from the proper perspective. All cities are founded and prosper on the dynamic alignment of individual interest and collective enterprise; this has been in evidence from the time of the earliest human settlements and was first articulated by Plato in the *Republic* of c. 360 BC. The lessons of contemporary urban economics demonstrate that cities arise from the combination of diverse and differentiated skills (workers) coupled to organized labour opportunities (firms) within the context of close proximity of housing and provision of transportation to produce the magic elixir that catalyses the local urban economy, known as *agglomeration economies* (e.g. Fujita *et al.* 1999; Pflüger 2004; Glaeser 2008; 2011). Whether considering Ho Chi Minh City in the Socialist Republic of Vietnam or Boise, Idaho in the United States, all urban economies are based on the provision of buildings, transportation, and the delivery of water, food and materials in the form of goods and services.

However, any student of cities understands that every city is unique. Unique in the manner in which it collects, organizes, stores and distributes every kind of material and energy resource and unique in the manner in which it collects, processes and disperses its waste stream. Every city is located in a unique place occupied by no other city. Every city is the embodiment of its own unique history. Particularities of geology and geography, climate, topography and indigenous flora and fauna are only a small selection of the unique qualities that distinguish every city from every other. Even similar cities such as Paris and Dusseldorf, Boston and Toronto, Caracas and Lima are unique in too many ways to list here.

The basis of a material view of agglomeration economies arises from the lessons of urban economics. That specialized branch of economics tells us that agglomeration economies generate the urban built environment including all infrastructure and buildings that serve to provide shelter for people and firms, transportation for people and goods, and the materials and energy required to provide all goods and services necessary to satisfy the production demands of firms and the consumption demands of the resident population. Buildings are composed of a limited set of common materials; stone and gravel, concrete, iron and steel, glass and plastics. Transportation systems comprise various devices and machines, such as vehicles and signalling systems that are dependent on a steady and reliable provision of energy carriers, in the form of gas, liquid and electrical flows. The material constituents of urban
goods and services include almost every element and hundreds of thousands of compounds; alloys, polymer blends, biomass, concrete and ceramics, processed and maintained by heat, electricity and many other material and energy forms.

Today, we are challenged to develop modes of thinking and plans of action for shaping our economies to address the pressing issues of resource limits and the environmental consequences of modern industrial society. More than ever the link between the behaviour of the economy and the material requirements and environmental consequences of that economy are under scrutiny. Cities and their urban economies are central to any movement toward a sustainable future.

Urban metabolism is the study of material and energy flows serving the city (e.g. Wolman 1965; Boydon et al. 1981; Douglas 1983; Douglas et al. 2002; McGranahan and Satterthwaite 2003; Bai 2007; Kennedy 2010; Holmes and Pincell 2012). Consumption of urban resources is a result as well as a driver of the urban economy and without material and energy flows there can be no urban economy. In accounting for urban resource flows, identifying the mechanisms behind the mobilization of these resources and measuring the intensity and efficiency of urban consumption have led to much work in the field of urban metabolism focused on cities of the north; cities to be found in developed and industrialized regions of the world. To date, studies of urban resource flows of diverse scope and focus have been completed for Geneva, Paris, Hamburg, Beijing, Taipei, Bangkok, Miami, London, York, Tokyo, Brussels, Hong Kong, Singapore, Sydney, Cape Town, Toronto, Lisbon, New Orleans and others (e.g. Zuzchetto 1975; Newcombe et al. 1978; Kennedy et al. 2007, 2009; Kennedy and Codoban 2008; Barrett et al. 2002; Hammer et al. 2003; Girardet 2004; Huang 1998; Huang and Tsu 2003; Huang et al. 2006; Huang and Chen 2009; Barles 2009; Emmenegger and Frischknecht 2003; Faerge et al. 2001; Ngo and Pataki 2008; Niza et al. 2009; Sahely et al. 2003; Schulz 2007; Quinn 2008).

In contrast, the urban metabolism of cities of the south has been relatively neglected. Some regional studies have been conducted in Latin America and there is now a great deal more attention placed on Asia (e.g. Russi et al. 2008; Bullock et al. 2008; Berkhout 2009a). In contrast, there is less work in comprehensive resource accounting and demands of African cities. Overall, there is a critical lack of attention to the nature and volume of resource flows serving the urban global south. This is also reflected in the imbalance that characterizes the scope and energy applied to analysis and policy formulation, implementation and real-world initiatives for the promotion of green cities in the developed world.

To list just a very small sample; Copenhagen, Oslo, Helsinki, Paris, Lisbon, New York City, Toronto, Portland, Los Angeles, Chicago, the cities of Japan and many other urban zones in the developed north have been vigorously pursuing models and plans for resource efficient and sustainable city form and systems. While the north can direct attention to renewable urban energy and green job creation, CO₂ emission reduction and mitigation of the urban heat island effect, creation and maintenance of urban green space and the development of ecosystem services, and the protection of biodiversity and habitat, the south is contending with providing basic services to its current residents while facing a steady stream of urban migrants adding to the pressure on already overstressed city infrastructure (Dittrich et al. 2012). African cities in particular are facing an urban future in which the increasing size of informal settlements completely overwhelms any hope of providing urban services (UNEP 2010). When urban sustainability is a stated priority of local municipal authorities the reality on the ground is that progress towards resource efficiency is met by immediate and critical problems of the lack of employment and persistent underemployment, poor urban health services, inequitable access to education and markets and unreliable and failing infrastructure.

All cities consume resources in similar ways, but this chapter will show that cities of the global south – that is, cities in developing regions – consume resources unlike other cities partly as a result of the difficulty of the conditions to be found in many developing regions. The urban global south confounds an easy definition of urban sustainability if it is framed in terms of the conditions of the developed and industrialized context of the north. Cities in developing regions constitute agglomeration economies
Urban metabolism of the global south

in the same ways as those in the developed regions of the globe, that is, they consume the same building materials, fuel the same kinds of transportation vehicles that travel along the same kinds of roads, and deliver many of the same energy carriers as cities in the north. Yet, there are fundamental differences in the access to these services and the resulting intensity of consumption of urban resources in the south. Endemic problems of effective municipal governance and the persistence of corruption coupled with the unreliable and intermittent flows of energy and critical materials, such as water, conspire to make it more difficult for urban residents of the south to consume at levels to be found in the north (UNEP 2010). While this may seem like a positive attribute of global south cities it is substantially the result of the fragmented and low-density sprawl that is not reached by municipal services (UN-Habitat 2012). In essence, many urban dwellers in the global south are quite resource efficient because they have no choice. One cannot consume great amounts of electricity if the power regularly cuts out. In fact, because of these conditions many cities of the south consume resources in similar ways, and in this sense, are more like each other than they are like their sister cities to the north (Asafu-Adjaye 2000; Lee 2005). The urban research community is well aware of these similarities on issues of problematic governance, economic inequalities and disparities, environmental injustice and lack of access to healthcare, education and basic goods and services. Less well known are similarities stemming from the composition and volume of resource flows and intensity of urban consumption and the most promising opportunities for resource efficiency improvements.

Approaching cities of the global south as deeply situated within a context of unique development conditions in contrast with the north prompts a systematic strategy that highlights the link between these conditions and the resulting resource flows. While city authorities of the global south find it challenging to focus on notions of urban sustainability in the light of the multiple dilemmas of employment, health, education and others already outlined above, there is a need to focus attention and deliver research progress on the ways in which these conditions may give rise to novel pathways for urban sustainability. The systematic strategy of the work described in this chapter is the characterization of several distinct and typological attributes of urban resource consumption of the global south. Through these attributes, several design and technology opportunities are described in more detail and the capacity for change is discussed.

A typological approach to urban resources

Cities are alike in their resource consumption in the following ways.

First, cities are society’s most powerful engines for resource acquisition. It is clear that agglomeration economies not only collect and concentrate economic activities and residents but also, as a consequence, they collect and concentrate physical resources; materials, energy, water, wastes, and pollutants (Decker et al. 2000). As a result, the inputs into a city regularly outweigh outputs (Bergbäck et al. 2001; Brunner 2007). As the long-lived stock of the city grows with more buildings, roads, water mains and sewers, the city accumulates and retains material for long periods of time. The lowest layers from the foundation of the city of Rome date back almost three thousand years; those of Damascus to 9000 BC. A great portion of the initial and accumulated material input to these cities remains in place. Of course, some of this material has been reused over and over again and while there are calls to mine the contemporary city for its concentrated and high-value material resources, such as primary metals (Graedel 2011), doing so has been common practice since the founding of cities. Later on in this chapter urban mining will be described as the overlooked fourth essential urban activity.

Second, waste production of diverse types originates in cities and accelerates with urban growth. Cities throughout time have been much more effective at collecting and consuming resources than in managing the collection and dispersal of wastes to prevent the accumulation from becoming an environmental and human health problem. Urbanization inevitably increases economic growth and
therefore physical by-products. In fact, this is an essential element of the engine that drives urban population growth and spatial expansion; the proliferation and often diversification of the economic capacity within or near urban zones. With increased economic growth comes greater resource consumption and generation of pollutants and waste including CO₂ emissions and urban heat (Grimm et al. 2008). It has been shown that global urbanization may contribute as much as 25 per cent of greenhouse gas emissions by 2100. In the coming decades a much greater proportion of these increases will result from the rapidly expanding urbanization and complementary increase in affluence in the global south (O’Neill et al. 2010). Additionally, the organized and responsible dispersion of solid and water-borne wastes in the global urban south, already under extreme stress, will be strained even more.

Third, cities catalyse and accelerate the global agricultural to industrial socio-metabolic transition; that broad transition from an economy based primarily on agricultural production and biomass flows to one of industrial production and a greater reliance on metals and minerals. The material intensity of global urbanization has relied heavily on the massive throughput of non-renewable minerals and metals especially during the twentieth century when the urban population increased tenfold. Large-scale investments in infrastructure were made and massive volumes of construction minerals and metals were mobilized. This urbanization and its attendant material requirements play a central role in driving societal metabolism toward greater consumption of non-renewable materials as additions to the long-lived stock of the urban built environment accumulates (Behrens et al. 2007; Krausmann et al. 2008, 2009). This is now especially true in the urbanizing global south as it enters into a long period of infrastructure development and industrialization (Schandl et al. 2009).

Lately, this massive movement of materials and the increase in absolute amounts of energy consumption in the world’s cities brought about by additions to the building stock and infrastructure has prompted the derivation of societal measures of resource efficiency. For example, a useful metric is MIPS, Material Intensity Per unit of Service; essentially a ratio of the amount of material or energy required to deliver one unit of a desired service or good, such as vehicle km of transport, or litre of water (Cleveland and Ruth 1998; Hinterberger and Schmidt, 1999; Robèrt et al. 2002; Ritthoff et al. 2003). This kind of measure can be used to assess the efficiency of societal and urban metabolism as resources are accounted for and attributed to the good or service provided. This is done by assigning a discrete resource, or collection of resources, as the necessary input to the delivery of a unit of a particular good or service and efficiency is measured in terms of this resource requirement.

![Figure 49.1](image)

**Figure 49.1** Two momentous trends of the twentieth century. On the left, sometime around 1960, global materials extraction became dominantly non-renewable for the first time in human history. This is very much a reflection of the global socio-metabolic transition from agriculture to industry as well as the enormous additions to infrastructure and the built environment serving a steadily urbanizing global population. Shown on the right, for the first time in history, the world’s population became majority city dwellers sometime around 2008.
Urban metabolism of the global south

A cold-hearted observer of urban physical flows would be correct to assert that cities of the global south are quite resource efficient, if efficiency is measured in MIPS by the number of urban residents served by an amount of material or energy in providing for basic urban services. For example, it has been shown that 40 terawatt hours of electricity consumption by 19.5 million people living in New York State in the United States is essentially equivalent to the electrical consumption of 791 million people living in sub-Saharan Africa (WHO 2009). This represents the extreme disparity in both the intensity of electrical use in an affluent society versus a poverty-stricken region and the lack of access that bedevils millions of Africans and others in the developing south. This kind of energy poverty is a crippling obstacle to a reasonably humane urban future and can be found in South Asia and India, and, to a lesser extent, Latin America as well.

This kind of resource efficiency measure of societal metabolism is directed towards generating knowledge and understanding that can be applied to the scale of cities within one country or region. With a few notable exceptions, much of the work produced to assess the resource intensity of urban zones has been focused on individual cities and regions without attempting to compare multiple regions and city types (Kennedy et al. 2009). As stated above, from the perspective of a detailed accounting of resource intensity for a particular urban zone, all cities are unique. However, recent work has revealed marked similarities between cities of the global south in the nature and intensity of their resource consumption and accompanying emissions and waste generation. These similarities are the evidence upon which a systematic approach based on establishing typological distinctions was employed to arrive at correlations between the economies of cities in the global south and their resulting resource consumption.

A typological approach begins with the question of whether cities can be clustered into groups based on their overall resource consumption profiles. Grouping cities in terms of characteristic resource intensities may contribute to an understanding of the resource intensity of diverse cities globally but doing so requires consideration of diverse conditions of geography, climate and economic and technological development. While generalizations linking certain city-types with their respective levels of resource consumption have been attempted (especially within the diverse urban metabolism community of environmental scientists, industrial ecologists, climate change policy makers, and others) a statistically robust and rigorous classification based on distinctive urban resource profiles would be helpful in understanding the distinct opportunities for resource efficiency for one type versus another. Without such analytical comparisons the study of urban resources will remain relatively labour intensive and expensive as researchers approach cities of interest individually and separately. Also, it may be more difficult to establish clear linkages between diverse cities and generic consumption attributes without the findings of a robust analytical approach.

Several researchers have attempted or proposed classifications and proto-typologies of cities based on a number of socio-economic, spatial, density, geometric, resource intensity measures, evolutionary development and others (Friedmann 1986; Beaverstock et al. 1999; Adolphe 2001; Bai and Imura 2000; Bai 2003; Dear 2005; Bettencourt et al. 2010; Kennedy 2010). However, to date there have been only tentative steps taken towards producing a typology based on the nature and intensity of urban resource consumption (Khamis 2012). The research result of this chapter is a typology of cities based on statistical analysis of urban resource and socio-economic data (Saldivar-Sali 2010; Fernandez et al. 2012). This data represents aggregate consumption of resources and unlike MIPS, does not establish a measure of efficiency but rather highlights the overall resource intensity of the city.

The typology outlined here, for instance, was completed during the summer of 2012 in the Urban Metabolism Group of the Department of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology under the direction of the author. Employing scaled national data of 200 cities in 150 countries in every climate zone of the Köppen–Geiger Climate Classification system and the full range of human development index (HDI), population density and overall population, GDP per capita, Gini index and other socio-economic
attributes reveals statistically significant commonalities that provide the foundation for a working typology. The project identified eight resources as independent variables for city clustering: biomass, fossil fuels, total energy, electricity, $CO_2$ emissions (as a proxy for total consumption), industrial metals and minerals, total materials, and construction materials. The first phase of work resulted in a typology of 15 city-types using a trained classification tree analysis and dozens of data sources. Both types of data, unscaled and scaled to the spatial extent of the city, was used in the analysis, though the unscaled proved problematic and was not used extensively because it did not accurately represent urban consumption. The second phase employed several more statistical methods including hierarchical clustering, kmeans and mclust\textsuperscript{2} that resulted in a final typology of seven distinct city types. Another phase of work considered a variety of socio-economic data but that work is not described here.

The seven city types generally follow development levels with some exceptions. The first cluster exhibits the lowest consumption of materials and energy for all variables except for biomass. The next cluster also comprises cities of these three regions at a slightly elevated consumption of all resources except for biomass. The next three clusters (3–5) are a combination of northern and southern cities in regions of medium range HDI and population densities. These types consume all resources at relatively elevated levels and are located mostly in temperate continental or dry-arid climates, with some exceptions. In this group, cluster 5 is composed entirely of Japanese cities that exhibit a unique combination of high consumption levels for water and construction materials and low levels for biomass and energy. The two highest levels of urban resource consumption are located in low density and generally northern regions of the globe with high HDIs. These two types of cities consume all resources at very high levels, with cluster 7 exceeding every other type in the consumption of all resources and the emission of $CO_2$.

Cities of a variety of sizes in the global south display low levels of resource consumption of most resources, except for biomass consumed for fuel. Many sub-Saharan African, Indian and south Asian cities are well represented by this profile including Freetown, Kinshasa, Lagos, Bangui, Monrovia, Lilongwe, Banjul, Dhaka, Mumbai, Yangon, Phnom Penh, Ho Chi Minh City, among others, and with some variations Dhaka, Damascus, Jakarta, Islamabad, Dar es Salaam, Dakar, and others. Several Latin American cities closely resemble this profile including, Quito, Guatemala City, Cali, Panama City, Porto Alegre, though consumption of water and total domestic material extraction is greater.

\begin{figure}
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\caption{Comparative juxtaposition of two contrasting urban resource profiles. On the left is a city type of low human development index (HDI) of the global south, on the right a city-type of high HDI. Independent variables include biomass (Bio), fossil fuels (FF), total energy (TE), electricity (EL), carbon dioxide emissions ($CO_2$), industrial metals and minerals (Ind), total materials (TM), and construction materials (Con). The scale is a relative measure of per capita consumption.}
\end{figure}
The right hand diagram of Figure 49.2 illustrates one type of city in a developed region of the world, namely cities found in developed oil-producing nations, primarily in the Middle East. This profile shows high fossil fuel, overall energy and electricity and relatively high construction and overall materials consumption. These cities are expanding and consuming vast quantities of materials for construction. They are also consumption destinations that provide for high levels of interior environmental comfort in buildings and do not provide extensive mass transport opportunities. Biomass is not used for fuel, and manufacturing within these cities is a relatively minor dimension of the urban economy. This profile is representative of cities like Dubai, Kuwait City, Riyadh, Doha and Bandar Seri Begawan.

This typology is used here to derive several associations between existing conditions of resource consumption in the global south and the potential for effective pathways toward urban resource efficiency. These associations are inherently at a distance from the localized priorities and agendas of specific cities because of the nature of a typological approach. However, they offer a high level basis for establishing common attributes of policies and technological pathways that serve one city type versus another.

First, as a consequence of a generally lower human development index, cities of the global south consume fewer resources per capita. This is an obvious consequence of lower affluence. However, the reasons for this lower consumption are not simple. One reason includes lack of access and intermittent

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**Figure 49.3** Increases in resource intensity closely follow the development of the urban economy. As a city’s host nation transitions from an economy of the global south (GS) and becomes a transition economy (TE) and finally a country of the developed north (DN), resource consumption is expected to increase steadily with the exception in the latter stage of construction and industrial materials which decrease slightly due to a slowdown in infrastructure investments and improvements in efficiency of industrial processes.
delivery of basic services, especially energy and water. Also, lower per capita consumption is masked by the often large-scale consumption served by the informal economy. Furthermore, lower aggregate consumption overall does not fairly represent the sometimes extreme inequalities in resource availability and consumption of the wealthy few compared with that of the lower middle-classes and urban poor. As in the north, urban sustainability has become a key element in conceiving a better future for cities of the global south, but for reasons already stated, the prospects for progress are complicated by the uneven and irregular provision of basic urban services and resources.

Second, the collection and organization of wastes is inconsistent. As a result, the residence time for materials, that is the time that materials circulate within a city, is greatly extended in the urban zones of developing regions. A positive reason for this is recycling and reuse of primary metals, plastics, cementitious materials (concrete) and vitreous ceramics (tiles) is routine and achieved at very high rates. A negative consequence of this extended residence time is the concentration of hazardous, unhealthy and environmentally caustic materials and wastes within the urban zone. The urban space of the global south generally accepts the accumulation of greater concentrations of urban water-borne and solid wastes than cities of the north. This may present an opportunity to enhance the organized local reclamation of materials toward a widespread industry of urban mining; that is the organized collection of valuable metals and minerals within the urban space, much as mining is the organized collection of ores and other materials from an open pit or underground. In the global south, this mining of materials from cities is already well underway albeit in a fragmented manner; from the curbside disassembly of all kinds of products to the legions of trash pickers that work in municipal waste dumps from Lagos to Lima.

Third, typological comparisons highlight the resource intensity of full-scale centralized infrastructure systems in the developed north versus irregular coverage in the global south and cities in the middle range displaying elements of each. While critical resources like electricity and water underserve significant proportions of the urban population, this cannot be a model for resource efficiency. However, the irregularity of centralized urban services and the subsequent development of technologies that can take advantage of localized harvesting and distribution of renewable resources, like solar energy and grey water treatment and storage, can prompt alternative pathways for resource efficient urban infrastructure. These kinds of alternative urban technologies may also generate diverse avenues for urban employment.

While this kind of typological work does not replace or prioritize diverse understandings of contemporary city form and the complex web of urban resources, it is intended to augment the deep and sustained interest in grouping cities in terms of various aspects of their economy and social structure while providing guidance towards understanding the drivers of urban resource consumption. This guidance is meant to inform the derivation of green city plans and the development of appropriate urban technologies and infrastructure solutions based on typological similarities. More work will be required to uncover additional important attributes of urban resource consumption in the global south.

Urban transitions and resource efficiency in the global south

A poignant reminder of the gap between the prospects for urban sustainability in the global south and that of the north is the power grid infrastructure of Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. While northern European and American cities are taking steps towards the evolution of the power system toward a smart grid in which distribution of electricity is dynamically managed to optimize system performance and accommodate renewable energy sources and demand side management is facilitated by efficient devices and home appliances, the reality in the global south makes this type of infrastructure evolution seem improbable because of the current state of system.
Figure 49.4 Ho Chi Minh City power transmission lines radiating from and almost completely encasing the structural poles that support them. Rationalizing the urban infrastructure of cities in developing regions will require, in some cases, a complete overhaul of the architecture for distribution and the physical systems that serve as the backbone for critical resources.

Photo: John Fernández

Figure 49.4 illustrates the seemingly tortuous process that will be required, and thus the difficulty for success in implementing sophisticated urban technologies and systems for urban resource efficiency. The image both shows the need for clarification of the working elements of the system and implies the substantial effort that would be required to rationalize the current physical infrastructure to accept new devices from novel system architecture. The chaos of the power system is typical of many aspects of the infrastructure to be found today in cities of the global south. Transportation, water, solid and water-borne waste systems, communications and information systems are all routinely compromised by the results of a legacy of underfunding and corruption, sub-standard construction and quality control, delayed or completely absent maintenance and poor design. This is well known as these challenges of the urban global south have received a great deal of attention and yet there is good evidence to suggest that these issues will not abate with development. Research shows that, in many regions of the developing world, environmental and resource issues will continue to deteriorate with increasing income and affluence (Ooi 2007). In addition, with rising incomes comes greater consumption and material and energy intensity. It is wise to take note that large-scale efforts to decrease resource intensity in the developed world through the introduction of novel technologies rarely deliver promised savings as they become mired in rebound effects and result in absolute increases in consumption; the automobile with a dramatically energy efficient engine grows larger and becomes more luxurious and laden with energy intensive options and the result is no savings overall in total energy consumed in transportation (Greening et al. 2000). This has been especially true in transportation (Banister 2007).

So, in the harsh light of these challenges what does urban resource efficiency in the urban global south look like?

Figure 49.5 shows a schematic of material flows through the urban economy. Shown are the imports of materials into the economy, the urban activities that drive those imports and the resulting exports in...
Based on material flow analysis the diagram illustrates the imports, exports, economic and biogeochemical drivers and internal flows of the urban economy and the role of the immediate hinterland. The diagram does not illustrate the role of the extended, or global hinterland.
Urban metabolism of the global south

the form of goods and wastes. Intersecting the urban economy is the hinterland that actively and passively exchanges materials and energy with the urban space. The diagram identifies major points of opportunity for increasing urban resource consumption efficiency at A, B and C, and difficulties at D and E.

At A, the interface between materials traditionally discarded and added to the municipal sink, materials that result from demolition and other end of life processes, and their reintroduction back into the active portion of the city economy, cities of the global south are well positioned to formalize and enhance an already vibrant and diverse set of skills and industries centred on reclaiming a variety of materials and energy. These materials are derived primarily from outflows of the long-lived stock of the city and the dispersion of wastes within the urban core. Both of these sources are already delivering a steady stream of plastics, metals, cellulose-based papers and cardboards, glass, ceramics and other materials. These flows feed the accumulation of materials in a box at Point B; Urban Mining.

Urban mining has been noted by urban thinkers as a fundamental dynamic in the growth of cities from the beginning of urbanization and is now counted among the most important of urban resource efficiency measures for the future (Bugliarello 2003, 2008; Müller et al., 2006; Halada et al. 2009; Graedel 2011). The foundations of older buildings and the stone of their fallen walls has always been a key resource in the building of new edifices. Urban economics does not take into account the value and use of these resources as a major stock feeding the urban economy. At Point B this diagram proposes that urban mining is and has always been the fourth primary element of agglomeration economies alongside the provision of shelter to residents and firms, the presence of transportation and the provision of goods and services. The distinction of urban mining as a fundamental and always present aspect of the urban economy is important, in the sense that it already exists in every urban economy and is much enhanced and more widespread in the urban global south than in the north. This urban mining capacity can be supported and enhanced to become a hallmark of twenty-first century urban dynamics.

Much urban mining activity serves as important employment opportunities for those living in informal urban settlements especially as these are employment opportunities with very low thresholds for entry. Globally, and especially in Africa, an enormous population continues to live in informal settlements. Furthermore, these areas are growing in cities. The proportion of the urban population living in slums reaches into the 80 and 90 per cent range in some sub-Saharan countries. Urban slum populations have risen in Malawi to 70 per cent of the urban population total, in Mozambique to 81 per cent and, in the Central African Republic, a staggering 96 per cent (UNEP 2010). This may be seen as compelling evidence of a complete breakdown of the urban system; a complete system crash resulting in a collapse of humane urban conditions. Nonetheless, these are also sites of intensive urban mining.

From point B to C, the reclaimed materials from urban mining are reinserted into the economy. Point C highlights the promise of efficiency in the urban economy, through energy-efficient buildings, resource-efficient transportation and green goods and services. As noted earlier, the promise of a sustainable future through technology has provided little in actual results. However, there may be substantial promise in the efficiency that results from not raising the expectation for services to the levels expected in the developed north. Efficiencies derived from delayed or altogether unmet elevated expectations may yield great savings. Transition to fossil fuels from biomass and the continuing socio-metabolic transition will characterize a major shift in urban energy use in developing countries. Today, fully 40 per cent of the population of developing countries burns wood as their primary fuel source. Most of these people live in Asia and sub-Saharan Africa (WHO 2009: 16, 17). With substantial migration to the city from the countryside, the use of solid fuels will diminish while the distribution of liquid fuels and the use of electricity will increase.

The diagram also highlights two elements that hold the potential for further degradation of the global environment and resources through the urban economy. Point D, outside the spatial extent and
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economy of the city, reminds us of the degradation of the hinterland, the extended space adjacent to
the host city that provides the urban economy with critical material and energy resources while acting
as a sink for the dispersion of wastes. Hinterlands have always suffered as a result of the metabolism of
cities in their vicinity. In the global south, regional planning and stewardship is even weaker than urban
planning and environmental protection. The degradation of valuable renewable resources in the
hinterlands, such as timberland, watersheds and other elements of the biogeochemical context reduce
the resilience of urban systems.

Additionally, Point E is a result of the consequences of disorganized and irregular collection and
transport out of the city core of all manner of environmentally unhealthy waste streams. The irregularity
of this service results in greater concentrations of wastes in the core of cities of the global south than in
the north.

Growth is overtaking any credible expectation of improved environmental conditions in many
cities of the global south. This is a fundamental reversion to urban conditions of nineteenth-century
England when the city was considered to be the only available sink for the dispersal of wastes. Today,
widespread caustic urban air pollution is endemic to many cities of Asia and Africa and the urban
environment is host to an ever-increasing level of harmful waste materials.

Discussion

In contrast to Figure 49.4, a mind’s eye image from Ho Chi Minh City leads to speculation in a very
different direction. Urban Vietnam is both cursed and blessed with the extensive use of smaller vehicles
in the city. Scooters, motorcycles, tuk-tuks, small cars and of course, bicycles share every kind of
roadway in a continuous stream of negotiated merging, perpendicular crossing, even travel against
prevailing traffic. Every size of vehicle, from the smallest to the largest, occupies every size road from
small dirt paths to the largest highways in the country. It is not unusual to pass a slow moving bicyclist
on a major national highway. One dominant attribute of travelling through cities in Vietnam is
immediately apparent; the traffic stream very rarely stops. It is not unusual to traverse through large
swathes of Ho Chi Min City by car during a 30-minute or longer drive and never once come to a
complete stop. The fluidity of the traffic flow closely resembles the dynamics of swarms in groups of
organisms like flocks of birds and schools of fish. The efficiency of this kind of behaviour is obvious.
Of course, there are downsides to this kind of system; most importantly the high rate of accidents as
vehicles collide from time to time and pedestrians are struck. In 2009, road traffic deaths in Vietnam
numbered 16.1 per 100,000 (WHO 2010) and this has been cited as a gross underreporting of the actual
number. In contrast, road deaths per 100,000 in 2010 numbered 6.1 in Australia, 4.5 in Japan, 2.8 in
Sweden, 10.6 in the United States, and 3.1 in the United Kingdom (IRTAD 2011).

Now, imagine a scenario in which a sensor-laden environment manages these flows and directs
vehicles in their travels within an intelligent ether that simultaneously locates each vehicle and directs
it to follow along a path that optimizes its destination priorities with the overall energy consumption
of the entire group. This synthetic swarm behaviour management requires massive computation and
integration of sensor devices both in the vehicles and potentially in the roadway and other infrastructure
elements. Such a system could make path decisions for passengers as it monitors the state of the system
and diagnoses instances of congestion. The benefits of supporting this kind of fluid traffic flow while
reducing, and possibly eliminating the occurrence of accidents may lead to real innovation in resource
efficiency in this global south context. Tapping into a mode of travel that accepts the complexity and
informality of swarm behavior already could enable a leapfrog toward sophisticated technology with a
high likelihood of consumer adoption.

A critical determinant of the pathway towards any urban future is the capacity for change resulting
from the political, economic, social and cultural ethos of a place. The capacity for change can be
considered as the inverse of the level of lock-in in societal and technical structures. Many of the challenges towards urban sustainability have been reviewed in numerous studies (Bai 2003; Lebel et al. 2007; Berkhout et al. 2009a; 2009b; Angel and Rock 2009). It is clear that competent and sustained government support in collaboration with private enterprise and economic development all within a context of broad public support has ushered in an era when some of these challenges are being met (Angel and Rock 2009).

Some strong evidence suggests that transformation in the urban space towards resource efficiency and sustainability is primarily affected by the level of political will and vertical linkages that bring together national, regional, municipal, and local governance with private and non-governmental actors (Bai et al. 2009). It is also clear that action begets action and analysis often does not engage real world stakeholders. Cities learn primarily from each other, not from the scientific literature and technological factors are much less important than political commitment as drivers toward urban sustainability (Bai 2011). International development also contributes to the possibility of transformation but often leads to single experiments that are difficult to transfer to other locations and are resistant to easy generalization. Therefore local action, supported by political commitment and popular support, has proven most effective thus far.

Real progress in reducing resource intensity and decoupling it from urban affluence is rare and seemingly ephemeral. Despite willing governments and diverse stakeholders from many sectors of the economy and intellectual and activist communities, pathways towards resource efficiency and reductions in greenhouse gas emissions will continue to be strongly challenged by the simple and overwhelming fact of rapid increases in global south urban population. Ensuring satisfaction of the needs of the present and future generations will be difficult to accomplish while limiting the intensity of extraction, production and consumption of critical resources from primary metals to water to food. Therefore, it is clear that resource efficiency alone is not a sufficient condition for urban sustainability in the global south and may, in many regions, run counter to responsible urban growth in meeting the needs of the present and the future.

References


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Notes

1 CO₂ emissions are a result, essentially a waste stream, of a number of urban activities. It was included as an overall measure, a proxy, of the intensity of urban resource consumption of many types, from fuel consumption in transportation to heating and cooling of buildings, etc.

2 These methods are accepted statistical techniques for clustering elements that are more like each other than like other members of a set.
Introduction

The spectre of actual and anticipated future impacts of anthropogenic (global) environmental change (GEC) worldwide has become a leading global debate and policy focus over the last 20-odd years. The subject remains controversial and debate often highly charged. Climate sceptics still claim that climate variation is predominantly a natural phenomenon, and there is growing evidence from quaternary science and cognate research that dramatic past environmental changes, such as those that wiped out the dinosaurs, sometimes occurred over just a few years rather than being the outcome of slow, progressive shifts. Nevertheless, the balance of scientific evidence appears now decisively to accept that human impacts are greatly exacerbating and accelerating any natural changes.

Over the last decade, attention has therefore focused increasingly on the implications for urban areas, in which the majority of humankind now lives. Even so, we know far more about such issues in relation to many towns and cities in the global north than all but perhaps a small handful in the global south (Rosenzweig et al. 2011; Romero-Lankao et al. 2012). This reflects the unequal geographies of research capacity and funding, as well as greater engagement in GEC debates and concerns by northern politicians and city managers. Not least because the urgency is growing as actual and perceived vulnerabilities and risks become better understood, and as innovative funding mechanisms come on stream, many key stakeholders in the south are now also attaching greater priority to the GEC agenda. Accordingly, in this chapter we examine the key issues and challenges for southern urban areas in general, although current knowledge is disproportionately concentrated in and on a select group of mega- and large cities.

Similarly, we are acutely conscious that many of the issues, processes and challenges are global in scope, albeit differing in relative importance across space and time, even within particular countries and (sub-)regions. Hence, in many respects, the global south is an artificial container and we do not attribute any particular salience to its boundaries, even as we highlight some of the principal GEC issues and concerns in relation to urban areas of poorer countries and regions. Diversity within the south is nowadays so profound on all variables, including state forms and economic and demographic dynamics, that comparable historical colonial legacies are no longer adequate markers of post-colonial identities and senses of shared futures. For instance, several recently industrialized countries, including
the city state of Singapore, see themselves as ‘developed’ and outperform various northern countries on numerous economic and social indicators. Regional identities and other networks often have stronger relevance today. Furthermore, the relationships between major cities and their national governments are often increasingly loose, especially where they are integrated into transnational networks of cities and circulation – a key feature characterizing the development of many urban climate agendas.

As with public discourse and common usage, most of the relevant research literature refers to climate change (CC), meaning changes in prevailing atmospheric temperatures as a result of the greenhouse effect, and associated changes in variables like prevailing winds, atmospheric water vapour content, rainfall patterns and temperature regimes. However, GEC is a broader concept that includes diverse environmental changes and interactions, which are indirect effects of climate change, such as sea level rise and groundwater salinization. Although the two terms are often confused or used interchangeably, GEC is analytically more useful. This applies particularly to urban contexts, since it includes the bidirectional feedbacks between urban areas and the biosphere. In other words, concerns include both emissions generated in urban areas contributing to GEC through increased atmospheric concentrations of greenhouse gases (GHGs) and with the impacts of GEC on urban areas, including urban biodiversity (Sánchez-Rodríguez et al. 2005; Balk et al. 2008; Sánchez-Rodriguez 2008; Simon 2010; Elmqvist et al. 2013).

The two major conventional categories of GEC research and policy also relate to these distinctions: mitigation (often referred to as climate change mitigation) seeks to understand and reduce the generation of GHGs, and the vulnerability of people and the environment to GEC, whereas adaptation (or climate change adaptation) seeks to promote the ability of people and their environments (including urban areas) to cope with and adapt progressively to changing conditions (IPCC 2007). While these two approaches are often − and inaccurately − regarded as mutually exclusive, they overlap and have many helpful complementarities, so should be pursued jointly, especially where resources are scarce. Nevertheless, mitigation is often regarded as principally a northern responsibility within global GEC negotiations, while adaptation is held to be the main response appropriate to the global south − a very unhelpful dichotomy (see below). Even so, limitations of various kinds to mitigation and adaptation, on account of the strength of prevailing vested interests and sources of institutional inertia or rigidity embedded in the existing structure and form of the urban built environment, may preclude sustainability under prevailing social, economic and political conditions. Hence more fundamental urban and societal transformations are likely to be necessary, requiring higher levels of mobilization and resourcing (Moser 2009; Folke et al. 2010; Kates et al. 2012; Pelling 2010).

Partly for reasons of geopolitical history, global environmental governance negotiations within the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) over renewal of the Kyoto Protocol, for instance, have institutionalized an unfortunate dichotomy, regarding mitigation as principally the challenge for the global north, which historically produced most GHG emissions, and adaptation to be the urgent priority for the global south. This has prompted a situation where southern governments are able to deflect domestic or non-governmental pressure to tackle emissions by claiming that it is not their role or responsibility, despite many large cities in the south now being global emission hotspots due to the combination of industrialization with polluting industries and rapid motor vehicle growth. As will be exemplified below, well-targeted urban interventions have the potential to mitigate the effects of GEC as well as promote adaptation. Such multiple benefits gain added importance in terms of avoiding the often-claimed contradictions or trade-offs between tackling GEC and promoting development.

GEC actually comprises two distinct elements, the increasing frequency and probable severity of extreme events, and slower-onset changes to prevailing conditions like sea level rise. Extreme events have long formed the focus of research and policymaking on disaster risk reduction (DRR), initially exclusively so-called natural disasters but later including anthropogenic ones. The last few years have
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also witnessed an increasing coming together of GEC and DRR perspectives in recognition of their common interests and that GEC is not simply a special case of DRR as had often been claimed by DRR specialists until then.1

To wit, the authoritative Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) recently published a special report on extreme events (SREX) (IPCC 2012) separately from its period GEC Assessment Reports. Also indicative of this integration is that urban GEC research is increasingly focusing on anticipating and coping with the impacts of extreme events as a tool for GEC mitigation and adaptation planning, as will be exemplified below.

This overview commences with a consideration of how urban areas in the south have been portrayed and understood in relation to GEC, and which social-scientific conceptual frameworks are seen as most appropriate nowadays. We highlight the significance of an ‘urban turn’ in recent theoretical and policy agendas, and the need for a more relational understanding of urban dynamics, sensitive to local historico-cultural conditions as well as how urban areas constitute parts of broader circuits and networks of ideas and flows. Emerging concepts with a particular urban relevance such as teleconnections are introduced, and the importance of avoiding conflicts between mitigation and adaptation, and between these and on-going developmental agendas through ‘mainstreaming’ them into existing urban policies and practices, is emphasized. Important in our perspective is the nature of agency and recognizing that governments, urban areas and people in the south are not helpless victims or subjects wholly dependent on northern ideas, skills and resources to address GEC but sometimes demonstrate high degrees of responsiveness and innovation in the face of often powerful external forces with meagre resources.

Conceptual frameworks

From theory into practice: challenges of operationalization

GEC research and policy engagement by social scientists has flourished since the 1990s, having initially been monopolized by the natural sciences. What we might call the ‘urban turn’ within social scientific engagement is more recent and reflects growing recognition of the importance of urban areas within overall GHG emissions on the one hand, and the vulnerabilities of urban areas and their populations to the effects of GEC on the other. Occupying approximately only 3 per cent of the global land surface, urban areas nonetheless concentrate people and economic activities in dense nodes of highly networked multi-scalar relations that often dominate national and regional economies. Moreover, the on-going demographic shift of Homo sapiens to the point where we are now a predominantly urban species has been occurring principally in poor and low-income countries and regions of the global south, where urban growth and urbanization over the coming decades are also predicted to be increasingly concentrated (UN-Habitat 2012a; Seto et al. 2012).

The growing literature on the urban politics of GEC highlights a range of critical issues including the role of cities in linking local and national scales for climate action and the politicized nature of GEC responses (e.g. Bulkeley and Betsill 2005, 2013). Yet, urban areas across the global south vary considerably in their capacities to respond to the challenges of changing environments and climatic conditions. Indeed, there are multiple emerging pathways of urban response to GEC, which are mobilized and contested in various ways. Urban GEC agendas are underpinned by multi-faceted governance complexities and have been shaped by diverse networks of governmental and non-governmental actors, sometimes acting in partnership but often with overlaps and duplication of efforts due to ineffective communication and inadequate co-operation. Nonetheless, urban local governments have considerable power to make policies, allocate resources and direct development trajectories, which shape GEC response capacities at multiple scales. However, these actions are always embedded within wider political-economic systems. Thus, effective GEC responses require collaborative multi-scalar
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governance arrangements that support the deployment of complementary skills and resources from all
the relevant local, regional and national institutions, as exemplified below.

Diverse conceptual approaches have been deployed in order to integrate urban GEC research into
broader frameworks, most of them inevitably drawn from northern intellectual traditions and discourses.
As researchers in and working on parts or all of the global south have become more numerous and
influential, an intellectual counter-movement — consistent with that addressed in other chapters in this
volume — has highlighted the need to understand both the historical, cultural and political-economic
differences between much of the south and the global north, and also the diversity within the south.
Such awareness is a prerequisite for realistic assessments of current problems and the formulation of
more appropriate strategies to address them. Simplistic global or even southern blueprint approaches
cannot find adequate intellectual or policy purchase because one size does not fit all.

Additionally, in relation to GEC, the costs of, and opportunities for, tackling current problems and
adapting to anticipated future changes in poorer cities and countries are of a far greater magnitude
relative to Gross National or Domestic Product (i.e. measured formal-sector economic activity) and
governance capacity. Fundamentally, GEC challenges need to be addressed in contexts where people,
community-based and non-governmental organizations, local authorities and national governments
are often still struggling to meet immediate basic human needs and fulfil other development priorities.
This is arguably the principal reason why many southern intellectuals, politicians and policy makers
were sceptical about GEC discourses and pressure from the north to take actions that they perceive(d)
as inimical to short-term priorities. When understood together with the inescapable historical reality
of Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) countries having contributed
the bulk of past GHG emissions responsible for current GEC, and earlier arguments that GEC impacts
to date have been modest but will increase in severity, especially during the second half of this century,
such positions seem reasonable rather than reactionary or obfuscatory as often claimed by northern
politicians and environmentalists.

However, as predictions of the scale of GEC impacts have been revised upwards in successive IPCC
and other research reports, and evidence that current impacts in both rural and urban areas of the south
are already problematic and are proving more costly than previously believed, attitudes have begun to
shift. Engaged social scientists have sought to break the logjam and encourage proactive measures to
tackle GEC by highlighting that — in much the same way that mitigation and adaptation need not
conflict but can be mutually reinforcing — tackling GEC and meeting current development needs can
be integrated successfully rather than constituting contradictory demands on scarce financial and
human capital resources. In other words, appropriate infrastructural or construction design standards
and other specific measures for mitigating or adapting to GEC (such as urban greening) should be
incorporated into on-going routine development procedures and mechanisms. This requires that the
potential for ‘mainstreaming’ GEC into development agendas be pursued, rather than appropriate
measures constituting a separate priority list to be funded independently and in competition with
resources for other pressing development interventions (Ayers and Dodman 2010; Simon 2011). This
approach is receiving much interest. The GEC mainstreaming notion also links to earlier widespread
appeals to recognize interdependencies between human and environment systems or urban ‘green’ and
‘brown’ agendas and foster synergies between these.

This interdependence and need for mainstreaming GEC interventions can often be demonstrated
most clearly in urban contexts precisely because of their concentrations of people, skills, infrastructure
and economic facilities. Urban areas therefore represent both major development opportunities and
drivers, and risks and vulnerabilities in the face of extreme events and longer term GEC impacts. Hence
a failure to mitigate and proactively to adapt to changing environmental conditions risks jeopardizing
existing and planned development infrastructure in the urban built environment and the health and
livelihoods of its inhabitants (e.g. Schipper and Pelling 2006; Parnell et al. 2007; Ziervogel and Taylor
Recognizing these concerns, climate compatible development (CCD) (linked to on-going mainstreaming debates) has been proposed as a useful frame to guide responses to GEC, especially in developing contexts (Mitchell and Maxwell 2010). The objective of CCD is to transgress separatist mitigation, adaptation and development activities and encourage ‘triple win’ strategies that reduce emissions, support adaptation and promote development concurrently (ibid.). For example, tree planting and the expansion of green open spaces mitigate GEC by acting as carbon sinks for GHGs, humidifying the air through transpiration and providing shade to reduce temperatures. Simultaneously, adaptation is promoted through the provision of outdoor recreational facilities and activity spaces for healthier living. Similarly, improved public transport on dedicated routes and multimodal integration reduce emissions by encouraging commuters to switch from private vehicles and reducing travel times, while also improving the quality of life, enhancing urban sustainability and facilitating other development initiatives. Examples will be provided below. However, there is an absence of policy guidance on how to understand and address the potential synergies between adaptation, mitigation and development. As Tompkins et al. (2013) argue, the evidence base for such ‘triple wins’ remains scant and they warn that although such wins occur, much more research is required on how to evaluate them in view of the complexities of identification in situations where multiple inter-related variables change simultaneously, where relevant impacts may become apparent over different time periods, and where unanticipated negative effects of interventions may also arise.

Urban GEC research is also characterized by a complex landscape of proposed theoretical and conceptual devices for addressing GEC. Alongside these debates, resilience thinking with the intention of creating more ‘resilient’ cities or pursuing climate resilient development, has permeated academic and policy circles and consequently underpinned the development of many emerging urban GEC agendas in recent years. While interpretations vary considerably, resilience has been widely construed as the ability of a city or other unit or system of analysis to withstand and recover from shocks such as GEC impacts and thereby maintain functional persistence. Thus, if interpreted in this way, promoting resilience can risk cementing, rather than overcoming, stressors (sources of stress or pressure such as inadequate access to basic services) and challenging or unsustainable situations such as sharp inequalities and social or environmental injustice. Thus, if the ability to ‘bounce back’ − to be resilient − results in re-establishing a previous state of inadequate urban governance and unsustainable development paths, then more than resilience is necessary for effective GEC adaptation. Indeed, transformative approaches to GEC adaptation and other actions (also labelled ‘radical approaches’ to resilience (Davoudi 2012)) to foster new conditions that support effective adaptation is an emergent and rapidly growing framing within GEC literature and indeed most recent IPCC (2012) reports.

While transformative theory and practice have diverse disciplinary roots, key discernible characteristics of transformation or transformational adaptation include attempts to transcend incremental and transitional actions by focusing on addressing root causes of vulnerability, creating opportunities for revision and replacement of existing unsustainable development paths, successful negotiation of power relations, building empowerment, encouraging innovation and protecting positive gains such as inclusive modes of governance already achieved (Folke et al. 2010; Tanner and Bahadur 2012; Kates et al. 2012; Pelling 2010; 2012). Thus, a focus on transformative adaptation goes some way to addressing the concern that mainstreaming in contexts where current development paths conflict with adaptation imperatives by increasing vulnerabilities will be ineffective and ultimately lead to maladaptation (inappropriate or ‘no adaptation’) (Smithers and Smit 2009). However, while striving for transformational GEC action is apparently desirable, especially in the global south, the translation of a transformative conceptual device into action faces considerable structural, political-economic and other constraints. Kates et al. (2012: 7156) propose that adaptations
can be described as transformational, rather than incremental, when ‘they are adopted at a much
larger scale or intensity, those that are truly new to a particular region or resource system, and those
that transform places and shift locations’. However, in reality the differences between incremental
and transformational adaptations may be difficult to distinguish, especially in the short-term (Pelling
2012; Kates et al. 2012). Achieving transformations in practice is highly complex and will entail
transcending business-as-usual and challenging the status quo, which requires political will and
overcoming inertias that reflect the vested interests of existing power relations embedded in political
institutions, large private companies and non-governmental organizations, access to and rights over
(peri-) urban land, and even more supposedly ‘technical’ mechanisms such as land-use and planning
regulations. Thus as explained further below, much more research is required to understand case
study examples and catalysts for transformation to inform broader policy formulation (e.g. Tanner
and Bahadur 2012).

Recognition that much research on GEC from different perspectives has been undertaken at macro-
scales or somewhat aspatially, has led urban researchers to ‘urbanize’ these approaches by demonstrating
their relevance to understanding urban problems and challenges. The Human Security approach is a
case in point, where a multi-faceted approach to understanding the perceived as well as empirically
measurable priorities for reducing vulnerability and promoting resilience at individual, household,
neighbourhood or urban scales in the distinctive context of particular urban situations has considerable

Indeed, broadening out this point, such integrative or holistic approaches are particularly appropriate
in urban GEC research in order to incorporate and account for a variety of interacting non-climatic
stressors rather than focusing on GEC impacts in isolation, as has often been the case in scientific
studies. Accordingly, they are also helpful in ‘mainstreaming’ GEC issues so as to minimize conflicts
and trade-offs with development or other environmental priorities. GEC research is also demonstrating
how the trans-boundary nature of these phenomena and their interdependencies can inform urban
research in other spheres, for example how application of the notion of ‘teleconnections’ from climate
science helps elucidate interrelationships within networks and systems of cities, as well as with rural
areas, at all scales up to the global. Teleconnections refer to situations where a change of technology or
demand for a particular resource or commodity in a city or set of urban areas has impacts that are felt
across great distances in place(s) where those technologies are utilized or the resources are produced. A
good example is how mobile phones require coltan, a rare and valuable mineral mined under often
problematic circumstances in the war-torn eastern Democratic Republic of Congo, thereby exacerbating
the conflict there (Seto et al. 2012) (Figure 50.1).

Linked to the human security literature, political, ecological and sustainable livelihoods analyses
are also useful for developing insights into GEC response dynamics in urban locales (Simon and Leck
2010). Livelihoods analysis can support investigations of how people adapt their behaviour and
activities to changing circumstances and vulnerabilities. The application of political ecology as an
analytical lens for vulnerability, transformational and other GEC investigations can be effective for
uncovering structural inequalities at the broader city scale and supporting multi-scalar analyses of
political-economic and socio-cultural influences on GEC adaptation and mitigation. Key
considerations include the role of various discourses and knowledge systems, which are shaped by
cultural, religious, educational and other influences (Leck et al. 2011). Indeed, these approaches have
been increasingly applied in urban GEC research and in various combinations can potentially
integrate structure and agency within a holistic framework for examining the dynamic forces shaping
responses to GEC threats and impacts (Parnell et al. 2007; Simon and Leck 2010, 2013). This is
important since understanding GEC vulnerabilities requires a nuanced consideration of underlying
structural causes as well as human agency, yet is a complex task in reality and thus often inadequately
considered (Wisner 2009).
The above discussion has provided a broad overview of some of the diverse conceptual approaches and framing lenses deployed to investigate a range of urban GEC challenges and to better understand the urban politics of GEC in the global south. Rather than seeking universal or blueprint conceptual devices, it is critical to consider the contextual specificities of urban GEC challenges across the global south and develop innovative analytical devices accordingly. The following section outlines a range of emerging issues, including GEC impacts on and in urban areas and relates these to the analytical framings introduced above.

**Emerging issues**

*The range of GEC impacts on and in urban areas*

Inland and coastal social ecological systems across the global south are exposed to multiple social, economic and environmental changes. It is well recognized that there is widespread vulnerability to accelerating GEC and its multiple effects, which are already being felt with urban areas showing increasing vulnerability to floods, heat waves and drought. Although coastal and inland urban areas face some similar GEC challenges, there are also marked differences (Table 50.1). In particular, urban heat island effects and associated morbidity and health problems, as well as potential water shortages resulting from declining rainfall, will generally be more serious for inland cities. Conversely, coastal
Table 50.1 Principal predicted GEC impacts affecting urban areas across Africa

### Rising temperatures, reduced rainfall

- agricultural production and food security problems
- deserts and semi-deserts expanding
- forest losses increasing
- rainfall falling or fluctuating more widely in several regions
- urban heat islands, especially inland
  - hence threats to urban energy, water supply & food security, sanitation systems

### Sea level rise: up to c. 1m by 2100

- many low elevation coastal zones
- lagoons and estuaries (biodiversity and leisure hotspots) vulnerable
- major coastal cities and port infrastructure at risk
- salinization of littoral water table and aquifers
- many livelihoods depend on coastal areas

*Source:* compiled from diverse reports, especially IPCC 2007 and Parnell and Walawege 2011

Inundation – both from increasingly severe and perhaps frequent storm surges and from rising sea levels – and associated salinization of coastal aquifers and water tables, as well as threats to biologically highly productive and economically and socially important lagoons and estuaries, pose particular challenges to many coastal cities (IPCC 2007; Parnell and Walawege 2011). However, all urban areas are integrally connected to their hinterlands and draw on food and other resources from many distant areas; hence urban food insecurity and water shortages will result from agricultural production and water supply fluctuations in rural areas of their or neighbouring countries or even other continents – an example of the ‘teleconnections’ phenomenon (Seto et al. 2012). Mitigation and adaptation actions may counter or limit such impacts, as exemplified below, but are unlikely in many contexts to ensure long-term sustainability without more fundamental transformations, i.e. redesign of urban structures, functions, technologies and lifestyles.

### Ecosystem-based adaptation and climate-compatible development

As cities expand, demands for scarce resources such as clean water and green open space escalate. These increasing demands, combined with GEC pressures, also present an opportunity for innovation in eco-efficiency, poverty alleviation, reduction of urban ecological footprints and so forth. Cities and their inhabitants are strongly dependent on healthy and functioning ecosystems, which underpin human well-being and sustainable development. However, vital urban ecosystem services – services performed by a functioning natural environment and which should thus be appropriately valued, such as resources like natural medicines and environmental services and processes like waste decomposition and water cycling – are subject to constant threat from a variety of pressures such as fragmentation and exploitation to meet ever-growing resource demands. There have thus been increasing calls for ecosystem services to be incorporated into urban development and much research attention in valuing urban ecosystem services. Recently, the roles of biodiversity, ecosystems and more specifically ecosystem-based adaptation (EBA) in supporting mainstreaming, CCD or synergistic responses to GEC have gained growing interest. EBA is increasingly promoted as a useful approach in urban areas of the global south.
where, in many cases, development and environmental conservation have historically been viewed as conflicting agendas. For example, binary thinking regarding development and environmental issues is deep-rooted in many African contexts (end elsewhere) where local communities were subject to extensive land and livelihood losses for ‘nature conservation’ purposes by colonial and apartheid governments (McDonald 2002; Leck et al. 2011). EBA can also support ‘pro-poor’ adaptation to GEC, deemed particularly important in urban centres of the global south characterized by vastly disproportionate and differentiated vulnerabilities to GEC (Moser and Sattherthwaite 2008).

EBA promotes ‘green’/’natural’ infrastructure as supporting core functions for climate change response actions and is underpinned by attempts to link environment and development agendas. EBA integrates the use of biodiversity and ecosystems to help reduce socio-ecological system vulnerability to GEC and support synergistic adaptation and mitigation (Pérez et al. 2010). For example, restoration and conservation of coastal habitats such as mangrove swamps and dune grasslands can provide storm-surge protection, prevent coastal erosion and saline intrusion, as well as promote eco-tourism. Despite the potential of EBA for supporting GEC adaptation in urban areas, there are large gaps in monitoring and evaluating the overall effectiveness of EBA interventions in terms of biodiversity, ecosystem services and socio-economic impacts to determine whether they are successful in achieving their objectives (Roberts et al. 2012).

Community-based approaches to adaptation (CBA), which emphasize empowerment of local communities to build resilience and implement local adaptation to GEC, have also gained increasing currency in recent years and are proliferating across the global south (Dodman and Mitlin 2011; Girot et al. 2012). Given their overlaps and synergies, there is considerable potential for integrating EBA and CBA into more holistic responses to GEC and to support the transcendence of false community/ ecosystem (or society/nature) divides at various scales where the interdependency between social and ecological systems is overlooked (Roberts et al. 2012). More research is required to identify, synthesize and analyse successful case studies to support broader GEC policy formulation.

Mitigation, adaptation and urban greening

Such concerns also link to broader urban greening agendas, which are very diverse in terms of their underlying conceptualization and objectives. They can also provide multiple mitigation, adaptation and sustainability/transformational benefits, sometimes at absolutely or relatively little cost to local authorities and communities, making them particularly attractive options in resource-scarce contexts (Simon 2013). An important example of particular relevance to the global south is the promotion of urban and peri-urban agriculture (UPA) as a way of simultaneously helping poor residents to feed themselves and provide a livelihood through sales of produce; reducing dependence on rural food supplies in contexts where these are becoming or are predicted to become less secure and hence more costly; providing a productive use for locally generated organic waste (including treated animal and human excreta); and increasing carbon capture capacity (i.e. absorption of carbon dioxide from the atmosphere) during the growing phases of the crops. To be sure, there are some potential problems relating to cultivation on contaminated ground, using dangerously contaminated water for irrigation and possibly pesticide safety and, in some cultures, the unacceptability of human excreta being used as fertilizer (Cole et al. 2008; Rosenzweig et al. 2011; Frayne et al. 2012; Lwasa et al. 2013; Simon 2013).

Another category of greening is the expansion and integration of individual nature reserves and recreational areas into networks or corridors of so-called green infrastructure to provide more ground cover, shade, erosion protection, carbon sinks and recreational space, especially in currently underprovided areas of cities. Significantly, this diverse set of ecosystem services includes both mitigation and adaptation measures, while simultaneously promoting human well-being through improved environmental quality and access to outdoor leisure facilities. This is one example of the
'triple win' approach discussed earlier. Marginal land along river banks, disused or abandoned railway lines or industrial land, and around reservoirs, lakes and sports stadia could be incorporated more readily than high-value land in cities where open spaces are increasingly scarce and earmarked for development or often become occupied by informal settlements. The Durban Metropolitan Open Space System (D’MOSS) developed by eThekwini Municipality in South Africa, for instance, is one of the world’s most extensive such networks, comprising some 74,000 ha including in low-income communities (Carmin et al. 2012; Roberts et al. 2012; Schäffler and Swilling 2013; Simon 2013: 207).

Other examples comprise the promotion of efficient and affordable public transport, ranging from priority bus lanes and cycle lanes to integrated termini for buses, minibus taxis and trains or light rapid transport; and various interventions to promote lower carbon transitions, such as the promotion of renewable energy generation, not least through solar panels; retrofitting buildings for energy efficiency against heat or cold as appropriate; encouraging the use of indigenous construction materials and styles that are more environmentally appropriate; and the replacement of old, polluting and energy-inefficient power generation and industrial plant. Integrated or composite risk assessment and identification of mitigation and adaptation action points to enable synergies and consistency of interventions across all key infrastructure, services and health arenas, such as that undertaken in Hyderabad, India, by bringing together multi-disciplinary teams from various local authority departments and other stakeholders, point the way forward and are likely to be more successful in implementation than piecemeal measures or projects (Mukheibir and Ziervogel 2009; Revi 2009; Rosenzweig et al. 2011: 152–4; Colenbrander et al. 2012; Simon 2013). This notwithstanding, urban governments are often constrained by the larger political-economic systems within which they operate and lack the power to influence country-level decisions over broader energy systems and use and other macro-scale developmental decisions which influence local adaptation and mitigation possibilities.

**Transforming urban areas and prospects for low-carbon cities**

As implied above, achieving urban transformations in existing towns and cities faces many obstacles of entrenched power relations, institutional and regulatory inertia and the difficulty of reorganizing the built environment beyond redevelopment of individual buildings or city blocks. Only very rarely, such as when shanty areas are destroyed in wildfires, when comprehensive slum clearance takes place or global mega-events are used as the means to revitalize depressed inner cities – as has happened with Olympic Games venues since Barcelona’s pioneering efforts in 1992 – is more comprehensive redevelopment possible in multiparty democratic systems.

In China, the centralized political system and state land ownership have facilitated such redevelopment with large-scale evictions for the 2008 Olympics in Beijing and the transformation of Shanghai, especially in the Pudong area, to reflect aspirations for world city status. Other notable examples of rapid new urban development dot the shores of the Arabian Gulf, nowhere more dramatically than Dubai and Abu Dhabi, where small trading centres have been transformed since independence in 1971 into global entrepots (and Dubai also as an elite playground, complete with massive artificial offshore island retreats) characterized by hypermodern architecture and efficient transport systems (Mohammad and Sidaway 2012). However, these and other comparable examples demonstrate little if any concern for GEC and its implications, adopting the latest ‘western’ styles and technologies in extremely energy- and water-intensive developments that will probably go down in history as the epitomes of unsustainable urbanization and missed opportunities to demonstrate alternative urban (post-)modernities.

In sharp contrast, ambitious initiatives have been launched in recent years to build entirely new cities or neighbourhoods adjacent to existing cities to demonstrate the viability of low carbon urbanization. The most highly publicized is Dongtan Eco-city on Chongming island off Shanghai, designed by the international architectural consultancy firm Arup to house half a million people and
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to be entirely self-sufficient in energy through energy-neutral buildings and renewable power from a combination of solar panels, wind turbines and bio-fuels. Dongtan’s location so close to a hypermodern high-carbon city (as just explained) and Arup’s commissioning in 2005 by the Shanghai Industrial Investment Corporation in a move heralding China’s acceptance of the need for a low carbon development transition to more sustainable living and ambition to become a world leader in this sphere, are very significant. However, for reasons linked to political processes and the economic ramifications of the global financial crisis, these plans have stalled and ‘... the only indication on Chongming today of the city to be is a solitary wind turbine farm’ (Danish Architecture Centre 2013; see also Chang and Sheppard 2013).

A smaller prototype, Songdo International Business District on the waterfront of the Korean city of Incheon, and designed by another global architectural firm, Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates, is already under construction with a design population of 70,000 residents and 300,000 commuters. Construction commenced in 2004 and Phase 1 had been completed by 2009, including a 100 ha Central Park inspired by its New York City namesake; completion is due in 2015. Forty per cent of the land area is to become open space, while the area will have integrated transport and solar-passive buildings, many with green roofs. Interestingly, it comprises a pastiche of architectural styles from around the world and resembles hypermodern Dubai or Abu-Dhabi, demonstrating that appearances can be deceptive (Meinhold 2009; Kohn Pedersen Fox Associates 2013; Shwayri 2013).

How far such large-scale model city initiatives point the way to low-carbon urban futures more widely remains to be seen. However, it is noteworthy that these examples and others like Masdar City in Abu Dhabi, UAE (Cugurullo 2013) are very high-tech and modernist in concept and implementation rather than seeking more hybrid combinations of ‘western’ and local indigenous architectural styles and urban design principles, many of which are more environmentally sensitive and appropriate and might point the way to alternative low-energy solutions in the context of resource constraints and the need to mitigate and adapt to GEC. China, Korea and the Middle East all have strong indigenous cultures with associated architectural styles and urban traditions. Yet, all the examples cited above are in high-income countries seeking to invent new urbanities to symbolize their recent economic dynamism and international elite leadership aspirations. In this context, it is significant and noteworthy that global architectural and urban planning consultancies have been commissioned to implement the designs in this image, rather than locally based firms, some of which are highly experienced in hybridized styles and designs, often using greater local resource content as well. These are the kinds of expertise likely to be of importance in driving transitions to more sustainable low-carbon urban futures in poorer countries and in low-income communities within them.

Leaders, laggards and learning networks

GEC presents complex problems and a range of variously scaled interventions, as illustrated in the discussion of impacts above. In the context of this complexity, officials and representatives serving in all levels of government in the global south were often slower to engage with GEC issues than in the north. Indeed, something of a paradox emerged in that the first responses were generally broad national strategy framework and policy documents, often linked to participation in the UNFCCC intergovernmental negotiation process, but many of the concrete responsibilities for implementing mitigation and adaptation actions lie with local authorities, particularly in urban areas. The Chilean national climate change strategy illustrates this clearly. Externally funded mitigation measures to reduce emissions through specific projects funded by the UNFCCC’s Clean Development Mechanism (CDM) in the capital city, Santiago, have been easier to implement than to undertake coherent adaptation measures that change behaviour or elements of urban design, especially for vulnerable coastal communities (Rosenzweig et al. 2011: 125–6). Crucially, however, especially in
intermediate and smaller urban areas as well as linked peri-urban and rural districts, professional and financial resources are often grossly inadequate for normal operations, let alone taking on new priorities like addressing GEC. Hence, these urban areas have generally been referred to as laggards in this respect.

A few cities took early leads, usually as a result of the influential role of key officials or leaders (often referred to as ‘champions’) with particularly progressive agendas or international contacts, which facilitated access to donor funds. This enabled them to become leader cities, experimenting with often-innovative measures and gaining international prominence, often ahead of and in the absence of clear national level guidance or policy. Perhaps the most remarkable example of how influential a charismatic and committed leader can be is provided by Lagos, Nigeria’s commercial capital and Africa’s second largest megacity, which has long been notorious for inadequate infrastructure and municipal services and chronic congestion. Since becoming governor in 2007, Babatunde Fashola has led an impressive turnaround in the city’s operations and public health by addressing many of these deficiencies and demonstrating how mitigation, adaptation and greening can be addressed simultaneously with conventional local authority activities and developmental interventions ranging from improved drainage and refuse collection to road reconstruction and the introduction of priority bus lanes and large-scale tree and shrub planting (Rosenzweig et al. 2011: 29–33, 117–20; Simon 2013: 206–7). These are helping to reduce travel time and emissions, promote greater economic efficiency and reduce vulnerability to floods, waterborne diseases and other prevailing problems being exacerbated by GEC.

A noteworthy factor in Lagos’s achievements has been its membership (along with only three others in Africa) of a global network of leading cities known as the C40. Such ‘learning networks’ provide mayors and other leaders and senior officials with regular opportunities to meet in one another’s cities and to learn from their respective experiences through site visits and staff presentations. Michael Blumberg, mayor of New York City, was an active proponent of the C40, which also demonstrates – perhaps against the odds in view of its diverse membership – that self-selecting groupings of cities which transcend conventional categories such as global north and south but share key problems (in this case governance of large or mega-cities in the face of unprecedented challenges including GEC) can be effective under dynamic leadership. The ability of such networks to avoid bureaucracy and to work through personal relationships built up by leaders and senior staff with a clear sense of shared challenges is highly significant (Rosenzweig et al. 2011: 33, 119; Simon 2013: 207). Other networks link large cities (or specific groups of officials like urban planners) within particular geographical regions or within continental or global national membership organizations (such as the Commonwealth) (Simon 2010: 241). Recent research into how cities around the world address GEC by experimental as much as programmed intervention also shows responses that transgress traditional geopolitical groupings (Bulkeley and Castán Broto 2013).

At a different level, the Sustainable Urban Development Network (SUD-Net) of UN-Habitat, the United Nations specialist agency promoting urban shelter and sustainability in low- and middle-income countries, launched a focused Cities and Climate Change Initiative (CCCI) in 2008. From the initial pilot quartet of Esmeraldas (Ecuador), Kampala (Uganda), Maputo (Mozambique) and Sorsogon (Philippines), it now covers a diverse range of over 40 capital, secondary and intermediate cities mostly in Africa and Asia; Esmeraldas is the only Latin American participant. CCCI provides technical and substantive policy advice and assistance and increasingly also a mutual learning network for exchanges of ideas and lessons in comparable contexts (see UN-Habitat 2012b).

Shifting these marked contrasts between forerunners and laggards characterizing the mosaic of urban GEC responses across the global south will require increased collaboration, lesson sharing and joined-up action across broader inter-linking city regions, as well as between higher government levels.
Conclusions

Cities across the global south have shown increasing willingness to, and recent progress and innovation in, addressing GEC. However, their response agendas face significant implementational challenges in what are already socio-economically, environmentally and politically stressed contexts, not least perceived conflicts with short-term development priorities. As we have shown, while such trade-offs can be real, in many cases well-focused and carefully targeted interventions can have multiple purposes, progressing mitigation, adaptation and developmental objectives. Inevitably, many responses and projects to date have been small scale and incremental in nature but, particularly in resource-constrained urban contexts, these are often cost-effective and the benefits of a series of individual interventions may well prove cumulative, especially where they achieve multiple benefits in relation to urban greening, food security, energy efficiency or transport efficiency, for instance. In such cases, they can make real contributions to the liveability and sustainability of the towns and cities concerned, as well as to the resilience of vulnerable groups and localities.

Mutual learning between cities of the global south and northern counterparts is vital to developing effective GEC responses. Nevertheless, the diversity of urban contexts requires a deep understanding of how GEC mitigation and adaptation efforts are played out in specific localities and they need to be tailored to contextual particularities. Rooting out the causes of vulnerability should be central to urban GEC agendas with explicit recognition of climate stress as one of many (albeit often principal) interlocking drivers of vulnerability.

Conceptual approaches to the GEC challenge have been diverse, reflecting the philosophical and professional backgrounds and geopolitical contexts of their authors. All the specific urban interventions outlined above can be linked back to one or more such positions, even though they are often expressed and implemented as if they were essentially practical and technical projects or value-neutral. Even more progressive approaches like EBA and ecosystem services have roots in neoclassical environmental/welfare economics. Nevertheless, their importance lies in their ability to demonstrate and justify interventions through assigning positive values to environmental services and environmentally sensitive projects that would not otherwise show net formal economic benefits. ‘Radical’ alternatives appear to date to be restricted to individual buildings and small schemes funded by communities or local NGOs out of idealism or a desire to reduce reliance on the globalized world economy. Further, while the situation is slowly beginning to shift, GEC is not yet firmly embedded as a priority issue on political agendas and climate scepticism persists among key politicians in many settings. Vested interests in the status quo and short-termism in urban politics and political outlooks often defy long-term fundamental reshaping of city systems and development trajectories. Combined with the persistence of the false environment—development schism in diverse contexts, these factors constrain the urgent widespread advancement of urban GEC adaptation and mitigation agendas.

In consequence, urban transformation in relation to GEC adaptation and sustainability, let alone in developmental terms, remains a long way off, with the first model schemes, such as Songdo and Dongtan, not yet complete. If they meet their objectives in this respect, they will surely be emulated for the new middle classes in new industrialized and other ‘upwardly mobile’ countries like the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa). At present, though, it seems doubtful how useful such large-scale examples will be to the majority of poorer countries and city governments. Smaller-scale initiatives, focusing on locally appropriate technologies and building materials, linked to local economies and localized sustainabilities (including energy generation and waste recycling), are likely to have the potential to benefit many poorer residents for whom the hypermodernities of Dongtan and Songdo will appear little different and no more accessible than those of Dubai and Abu Dhabi. This notwithstanding, principles to guide transformative adaptation and development can go
some way in supporting the significant change required in deep-rooted political-economic and socio-cultural systems and relations to reduce widespread GEC vulnerabilities in cities of the global south.

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Note
Perhaps the DRR exponents were seeking to retain the pre-eminence that their approach had enjoyed in the global south due to the delayed engagement with GEC there until very recently.
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