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Introduction to the urban moment

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This book provides a critical assessment of key areas of urban scholarship. In eleven provocative chapters, expert contributors examine a range of important pressing topics from sustainability and gentrification to feminist interventions and globalization and from security/surveillance to an interesting take on food issues. Eight more regionally informed reviews report on recent urban research in Australia, East Asia, Eastern Europe and Russia, Middle East, South America and sub-Saharan Africa. All the chapters provide polemical assessments of current work and signposts for future research.

The urban moment

The book is timely. We are living in a time of planetary urbanization. A majority of people now lives in cities. Big cities are at the heart of the global political economy, the setting for a refining of progressive politics and new ecological contexts of city constellations surrounded by rural hinterlands that provide natural resources, recreational sites and waste dumps.

Across the globe there is an urban growth change and resurgence. It is of such major and global significance that I have described it as a Third Revolution (Short, 2012). The first saw the invention of cities round 5,000 years ago and the second was linked with the Industrial Revolution. The present one is associated with three trends: rapid urbanization across the globe; the growth of large cities (there are now over 400 cities with a population of over a million); and a widening metropolitan reach as giant urban regions form well beyond the traditional city boundary.

The picture varies. In the US, selected cities that were losing population for decades are now experiencing an influx of people, and inner city areas, long the black holes of capitalism, are now sites of major investments. The great suburban shift that occurred from 1950 to 1990 is being replaced by central city resurgence. The population of New York City declined steadily from 1950, bottomed out in 1980 and has now bounced back. It is not just a US phenomenon: London saw a steady population decline from 1951 until 1991 when population growth began to surge past 1951 figures. A similar trend is apparent in Paris and Berlin. A select range of big cities are witnessing new influxes of people, quite literally revitalizing the urban experience.

But not all cities are experiencing this resurgence. Former industrial cities, such as Baltimore or Detroit, that are unable to replace the lost industrial jobs, continue to lose population and fail to attract investment. In 1950, Baltimore had a population of 950,000 and, like many cities in the US of the time, a vibrant manufacturing base providing jobs and economic security. The magnet of jobs attracted black migrants from the South. Since the mid-1970s, though, there has been a steady loss of manufacturing jobs due to offshoring, relocation to suburbs in non-union areas of the US and increased productivity. By 2013 Baltimore's population had declined to just over 622,000. There are of course many Baltimores. Within the city boundaries, there are old established elite areas such as Roland Park and more recently gentrified areas such as Federal Hill. The Baltimore of the riots of 2015 was only part of the city, a swathe of inner city neighborhoods impacted by job loss, poor education and aggressive policing.

But there are other Baltimores outside of Maryland. They include Akron, Birmingham, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Detroit, Pittsburgh and Toledo. It is not just an inner city problem. There is an inner ring of suburbs in crisis (Hanlon et al., 2010). There are also the bleak areas in the cracks of the metropolis: the trailer parks and suburban rental units that house those pushed out of the city by gentrification and redevelopment. Baltimores of economic neglect, massive job loss, aggressive policing and multiple deprivations are found across the country. They are the places of despair that house the voiceless of the US political system; the marginalized of the US economy and those left behind in the commodification of US society.

Across urban America, and throughout the world, we see pockets of gentrification and gleaming downtown towers beside persistent pockets of poverty and enduring marginalization.

Meanwhile, urban growth picks up pace across much of the global urban South. The rates of growth are staggering. In 1950, Dhaka had a population of 336,000. By 2015 it was 15.6 million and estimated to rise to 20 million by 2025. The swell of population has often overwhelmed the market's ability to cope or the local government's ability to organize, and the result is formal economies and housing markets that are simply inadequate to deal with the demand for jobs and the need for housing.

The picture varies across the global South. One of the chapters in this book (Chapter 15) deals with the differences between India and China while another notes significant variations among cities in Colombia (Chapter 13). In this volume the broad categories of global North and South are given a more rigorous interrogation so that they do not become the often used but rarely examined categories of so much of contemporary scholarship.

New subjectivities

A central tenet of traditional urban theory of the Second Urban Revolution was that urbanization, the process of people moving into the city, creates a citizenry that in turn creates the potential for a new social order. Cities, according to Marx and Engels, rescued people from the idiocy of rural life. The alienating experience of the agricultural work was replaced, at least in this Marxist reading, with the emancipatory and possibly revolutionary experience of urban life, as 'classes in themselves' turned into 'classes for themselves'. This is a major theme in E. P. Thompson's magisterial *The Making of the English Working Class*. It was in the towns and cities of industrial Britain that class-consciousness was developed and hardened (Thompson, 1963). In the Chicago School, and especially the work of Robert Park, newcomers to the city are seen as active agents in the creation of a new urban society (Park, 1928). A bedrock assumption of the Chicago School is that there is a symbiotic relationship between the assimilation of immigrants and the creation of a new urban order. In both of these foundational urban theories, there is an implicit relationship between urbanization and the creation of a citizenry. But in the Third Revolution we have counterfactual examples of urbanization without citizenship.

China has witnessed unprecedented urbanization during the last four decades, and more than half of the national population now lives in urban areas. However, Chinese urbanization is a process in which large segments of the native population are denied citizenship: that is, there is urbanization without citizenship, as newcomers to the city are integrated into the city as workers but denied entry as political bodies. They are economic agents but not political agents. They inhabit the city but are not citizens of the city. A number of other examples can be noted, including South Asian workers in the Gulf States and Filipino and Indonesian domestics in Hong Kong. In both cases there are severe restrictions on the ability of workers to become anything more than temporary workers, with all sorts of barriers raised to the possibility of them becoming citizens. In Hong Kong, for example, there are currently around 300,000 women from the Philippines and Indonesia working as domestic servants. They were long excluded from minimum wage legislation, becoming eligible only from 2011. In 2013 the Final Court of Appeal ruled that they were ineligible for permanent residency, no matter how long they worked in the city. The case was brought by a woman who had lived and worked in the city for 28 years.

The denial of citizenship, common in authoritarian societies, where foreigners can be effectively denied citizenship, raises interesting questions about the right to the city. Although Lefebvre (1996) extended the right to all those who inhabit the city, most commentators concentrate on active citizenship and on those with access to the rights and privileges of citizenship. What are the rights to the city for the quasi citizens given economic rights but denied political rights? What are the rights to the city if the basic political right is denied?

The main form of subjectivity noted in the urban theory of the Second Urban Revolution was that of class. It still plays an important role, witness the rising

militancy of young female migrants to the factory cities of China's coastal belt; but it is interwoven with and undermined by traditional and new forms of identity including gender, ethnicity, faith and sexual orientation. A number of chapters deal with these themes.

The liberating potential of urbanization as predicted by Marx is a more complex affair with class-consciousness not the only source of political mobilization or personal subjectivity. Urban civil societies in the Third Urban Revolution are complex, with new and old subjectivities in the process of being and becoming in continual relational interaction.

Problems and opportunities

Cities are at the very heart of transformations of political economy, civil society and governmentality.

Metro areas in the US now house 83 percent of the population and are the main site for innovation and job growth. The 100 largest metro areas hold 69 percent of all jobs and are responsible for three-quarters of the nation's gross national product (GDP). The most dynamic parts of the economy, with more job opportunities and higher wage rates, are in the cultural creative economies of finance, advertising and all those sectors that require symbolic analysts. Data and narrative have replaced metal shaping and car manufacturing. This cognitive capitalism has a heavy urban bias, as it requires the close proximity of talented and creative people. There are strong economies of urban agglomeration because people living and working closely together generate the necessary increase in knowledge, creativity and innovation.

The possibility of urban transformation from low value to high value land use provides opportunities for great profit. This process, often lubricated, promoted and partnered by governments, attracts capital and investment from around the world. The frenzy of development, most of it speculative, can and does lead to short-term and even longer-term property slumps and housing bubbles. Even in places such as Dubai, awash in oil money, property slumps are a threat.

There are costs to this urban transformation that include the displacement of the poor, the suburbanization of poverty, the creation of more divided cities and the long-term sustainability of global urbanization. The resurgent city can also be the city where the less powerful are further marginalized as house prices and rents are beyond the reach of all but the wealthiest.

Cities are of course sites of problems. In much of the global urban South, the expansion of informal employment and housing results from the inability of the formal sector to provide jobs or housing. But cities are also places for innovative solutions of civil society. In the past 60 years between one and two billion people

have created self-build communities in cities all over the world. Cities are sites of regressive policies of neoliberalism but are also places of progressive political change as new communities emerge and new coalitions coalesce around issues of urban livability and the right to the city.

Consider climate change.

Cities and climate change

The high concentration of populations and investment puts cities at the very heart of climate change issues. Many of the world's cities are close to the sea, and many of the most vulnerable ones are those in coastal locations. Cities in the developing world, in particular, are often more vulnerable to natural disasters but less able to spend billions of dollars to upgrade their infrastructure to better withstand flooding or undertake similar measures. Cities such as Dhaka, Mumbai, Bangkok, Manila and Ho Chi Minh City are already in low-lying areas that now have the threat of increased flooding from extreme weather. The city of Jakarta, in Indonesia, is challenged by flooding that accompanies the yearly monsoons. But land subsidence from compaction by new skyscrapers, and increased groundwater extraction for a growing population, has caused the city to sink ten times faster than the Java Sea is rising because of climate change.

There is an unevenness to the risk; the urban poor, infants and elderly are most vulnerable.

The brute facts of climate change vulnerability in cities are prompting a new and more pronounced urban environmental sensitivity. People in cities are responding with both climate change mitigation and adaption. Mitigation focuses on reducing the concentrations of greenhouse gases by using alternative energy sources, encouraging greater energy efficiency and conservation, and through the promotion of carbon sinks by planting trees. Curitiba in Brazil is the showcase for many successful policies, including the integration of green spaces within the city, a widely used public transportation system and reduction of waste.

Separately, cities are adapting to the effects of climate change. Chicago has developed policies anticipating a hotter and wetter climate by repaving its roads with permeable materials, planting more trees and offering tax incentives to encourage green office roofs.

Why this shift? Part of it is a bottom-up movement from residents pushing for a better quality of urban life. Global climate change issues such as the shrinking ice sheets are real, but these problems are distant, long term and difficult for urban residents to solve. These residents, however, have an immediate experience of poor environmental quality in their city and a greater ability to leverage local policies to effect change. Global issues that seem distant yet pressing create a sense of anxiety

without a clear route to immediate political response, since solutions struck in international negotiations can take decades. Cities provide a more amenable platform for civil society to enact real and positive changes.

The nation state, the political prize of progressive movement for the past 130 years, can be both too big to deal with urban issues and too small to affect global affairs. National legislatures, such as the US Congress, whose debates are shaped more by big-monied interests than the everyday needs of local citizens, can too often get locked in ideological disputes and policy paralysis.

By contrast, the city – and its government – is small enough to connect with citizens and tailor specific policies, while large enough to make a real difference. For that reason, cities are the ideal stage for developing policies and practices of sustainability compared with global and national bodies. Cities are the sweet spot of many progressive policies.

There is also growing competition among cities. As the world globalizes, cities are assessed by international standards in the competition for investment, skilled people and creative industries. Cities need to respond to the demands of an increasingly mobile and ecologically aware capital and global talent pool. Cities are now ranked, compared and assessed by the greenness of their environment and their success in moving toward more sustainable policies.

There is cooperation as well as competition. Cities are nodes in a global network of flows of people, ideas and practices. While the world is often described as a map of separate national states, it can be also visualized as a global urban network. Cities are learning from each other and testing policies, with the more successful ones diffused, adopted and adapted around the global network. Chapter 16 in this book looks at the context and circulation of the Singapore model of urban development.

By 2014, the US Conference of Mayors Climate Change Agreement included 1,054 mayors representing a total population of more than 88 million citizens. The C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group is a group of the world's largest cities committed to tackling climate change to reduce carbon emissions and to increase energy efficiency. Forty cities signed up in 2006, hence the name, but now more than 75 cities are committed to the project. Their combined population is over half a billion.

The remit

The city is now a crucial arena strategically located between global flows and national surfaces. We are living in an urban moment of some significance. The chapters in this book provide an indispensable and accessible guide to urban research across the globe at this crucial juncture.

I approached the contributors with a simple request: rather than writing a simple review they were encouraged to write a polemical piece outlining where we are now and suggesting possible avenues for research. The aim was to take stock, but also to shape current debates, not simply to report on them. The chapters give us a critical review of existing research. The book aims to stimulate discussions. The chapters have an open-ended sense of outlining avenues of future research based on what we know now after decades of urban research.

The chapters of the book

The remaining chapters are roughly classified into four sections. In Part I, *The Global City*, three chapters take different tacks on the nexus between globalization and the city. Yeong-Hyun Kim (Chapter 2) explores the conceptual and empirical limitation to global city research and highlights academic and public discontent with global city status. Jonathan V. Beaverstock (Chapter 3), a leading figure in the measurement of the globalization in cities, casts a critical eye over the field and identifies five challenges to understanding the city in global flows. David Murakami Wood (Chapter 4) sheds light on the panopticon formed in the nexus of globalization and urbanization, what he terms 'a planetary urban surveillance'.

In Part II, *The Lived City*, four chapters explore new subjectivities and different understandings of life in the city. Gavin Brown (Chapter 5) reviews the utopian promise that queer was believed to offer for alternative ways of living in urban space and answers the question 'where next?' for queer urbanism and the emancipatory promise it once offered. Phil Hubbard, Andrew Gorman-Murray and Catherine J. Nash (Chapter 6) discuss recent work on desire and the erotic in urban studies and explore the different ways of living and loving in the city. Linda Peake (Chapter 7) shows the deeply gendered nature of urbanization and makes visible the urban gendered geographies of inequality, poverty and social justice. James Farrer (Chapter 8) broadens the notion of urban foodways to show how food studies may uniquely contribute to urban studies. He draws from his own research on foodways in East Asian global cities, particularly Hong Kong, Shanghai, Singapore and Tokyo.

There are four chapters in Part III, *Changes in the City*. Elvin Wyly (Chapter 9) challenges the standard interpretations of gentrification and argues for a reassessment of the history, definition and future of gentrification as the leading edge of intensified, evolutionary human competition for urban space and life. Bernadette Hanlon (Chapter 10) assesses the measurement and examination of suburban sprawl and how the traditional metropolitan model is increasingly challenged by recent shifts in suburban conditions worldwide. Tom Hutton (Chapter 11) interrogates the concept of the creative city and excavates experiences of polarization, inequality and dislocation. Lisa Benton-Short and Melissa Keeley (Chapter 12) evaluate work on urban sustainability. They identify four opportunities for urban scholars to advance and support urban sustainability planning and implementation: governance and

integration; setting priorities; benchmarking, measuring and mapping; and equity and access.

Part IV, *Cities in Place*, marks a change in focus. While the previous chapters were all acutely aware of the difference in the urban condition across the world, the chapters in this section take the difference as the starting point as they review urban research and urban trends in specific regions of the world. This is to counteract the usual Eurocentric bias of most urban books. Urban ideas are generated in specific places. This is often forgotten in the dominance of the Euro–US experience. The global North is given pride of place, an exalted position that is normalized to the point that US and European cities are the primary datum point and ground zero for theory on which to assess the progress and conditions of other regions of the world. The chapters presented here are reports from active research frontiers, and together they provide a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding of urbanization and urban research. The chapters undermine the taken-for-granted assumption that Eurocentric/US dominated models provide the royal road to understanding this urban moment. The chapters widen the debate about the nature of urbanization and open our eyes to a more global perspective.

Lina Martínez (Chapter 13) provides the most focused account as she recounts changes in Cali, Colombia. It is an example of research in cities in the global South. Data is used to show how the quality of life in Cali has changed over the last years. The analysis helps us understand traumatized cities heavily impacted by crime and drug-trafficking. Thomas J. Vicino (Chapter 14) reviews the history and characteristics of urbanization in Brazil.

Xuefei Ren (Chapter 15) compares urban work on China and India. Both fields have witnessed tremendous intellectual output in the past two decades, yet both are struggling to find a new vocabulary to better theorize urbanism. Housing policies toward informal settlements in Shanghai, Guangzhou and Mumbai are used as illustrations.

Orlando Woods and Lily Kong (Chapter 16) draw on the case study of Singapore as an example of the global circulation of urban models. They propose a future research agenda that focuses on the origin and circulation of policy and urban theory around the world. Edgar Pieterse (Chapter 17) outlines how various traditions of academic research have responded to the specificities of African urbanization. He advances a project for interdisciplinary research to make sense of the elusive nature of the African city and raises questions that form the core of a new research agenda. Ahmed Kanna (Chapter 18) surveys the development of urban studies in the Middle East and North Africa. He shows how research has shifted from identifying an Islamic city to more recent work that has a more sophisticated theoretical engagement.

Australia is one of the most urbanized nations in the world. Robert Freestone, Bill Randolph and Andrew Wheeler (Chapter 19) plot the emergence of urban studies

since the 1960s as a succession of confrontations with urban planning and policy issues around themes of infrastructure, employment, housing, health, justice and environmental quality.

Cities in Eastern Europe have recently experienced extraordinary transformations associated with the politico-economic transition from state socialism to neoliberal capitalism. Oleg Golubchikov (Chapter 20) discusses how post-socialist cities represent a particularly fruitful lens to explore the entanglements of the urban and the ideological, including the workings of capitalism in reshaping societies and spatialities, and the centrality of the urban in the production of new social relationships.

Utterances and silences

The book packs a big punch. But urban studies are too varied and too numerous to be contained in one edited volume. Some may argue for more accounts of the postcolonial city, the right to the city or the political economy of the city, or for a consideration of even more regions of the world, such as Central America, North America and Western Europe. However, the present volume, intended as the start and not the end of a conversation about the urban moment, gives readers a sense of the range, dynamism and sheer variety of work on the city. The contributors provide us with the necessary intellectual tools to understand how cities are productive and competitive but also an empathetic response to how they could be and should be sustainable, livable and fair.

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