

A World of Cities:

comparison across the disciplines



**A World of Cities?
Comparison across the Disciplines**

Kevin Ward (Ed.)

Contents

Contributors	1
Acknowledgements	3
About cities@manchester	4
Introduction Kevin Ward (University of Manchester)	5
Learning about the world of cities: a geographer's reflections from the bottom of Africa Sue Parnell (University of Cape Town)	7
Slums and intra-urban comparison: examples from Mumbai Colin McFarlane (Durham University)	13
Building a Southern perspective on urban planning using the comparative case method Vanessa Watson (University of Cape Town)	23
Space: a useless category for historical analysis? Leif Jerram (University of Manchester)	31
From expected to unexpected comparisons Garth Myers (Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut)	39
Urban perspectives of the world Jan Nijman (University of Amsterdam)	45

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About cities@manchester

cities@manchester draws both on the city of Manchester's unique place at the epicenter of industrial capitalism, and its subsequent strategies to set out its post-industrial futures, and the University of Manchester's position as one of the top universities in the world.

cities@manchester is committed to an increased understanding of the global urban condition, past, present and future. It brings together scholars and their work from across the arts and humanities, the social sciences and the business school and is committed both to studying and to changing the world through engaging with a range of global, national and local stakeholders.

cities@manchester has a strong international dimension. Scholars and students do fieldwork in both the global 'north' and 'south' and are involved in international academic, activist and practitioner networks in Africa, Asia, Europe and North America.

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Introduction

Kevin Ward



Everyone knows that comparative urbanism is difficult. (Dear 2005: 247)

Across the humanities and the social sciences there is a long tradition of comparative studies of cities (Ward 2010; Robinson 2011). In disciplines such as anthropology, history, human geography, languages, linguistics, planning, political science and sociology a great deal of work has been done comparing the differences and similarities between cities, with often one city emerging as the 'norm', against which others are compared. More often than not it has been cities in the Global North that have been constructed as 'models' from which cities in the Global South should learn, the benchmark against which the performance of other cities should be judged.

This has been more than a matter of empirical interest. Theoretically, cities in the North have been the basis for the construction of a range of urban theories. These have then been used to understand cities around the world. In urban studies, for example, think

of the Chicago School of the 1920s, and the LA school of the 1980s as the most extreme and obvious examples of this phenomenon. In both cases, theories were built on the experiences of particular cities at specific historical junctures. This in turn has shaped how scholars have understood and labelled other cities. For example, studies have compared cities across the world, positioning them as either more or less 'developed' on the basis of urban theories generated in a small number of cities in the North. Likewise, cities have become understood as more or less 'global', with little attention paid to historical trends and what comes with the notion of 'the global' that has been circulated.

This is also more than an issue of academic interest. Politically, the construction of cities in the North, as experimental and innovative, as ones from which to learn, and cities in the South as emulators, ones that do the learning, is politically disempowering. It privileges the experiences of certain cities over others. It ignores

the different – but equally valuable – achievements of cities around the world that are not rendered as model material.

Most recently there has been an intellectual drive to move beyond these distinctions and instead to consider a world of cities, moving beyond both simple categories and past assumptions in the construction of urban theories (Robinson 2005; McFarlane 2011; Roy and Ong 2011). This is part of a wider intellectual drive to re-think comparison between and within cities. What thinking about comparison in this way means for a comparative study of cities in the twenty first century remains unclear, however, and is the basis of this series of interventions that stem from a Hallsworth-sponsored cities@manchester workshop. The six of them all speak to issues related to theory and methods, policy and practice. They write out of a range of disciplines, each author making a series of arguments over the most pressing issues for the future comparative studies of cities. While there is much

that divides the contributions, they are also united by a series of common concerns. Four stand out.

First, is the need to trouble, if that is the right word, the relationship between cities in the North and South which has historically characterized comparative urbanism. This might involve reversing traditional ways of categorizing cities, taking a cue from the wider post-colonial critiques of knowledge production and its geographies and histories. Second, is the moving beyond rather static and fixed comparison of cities, and instead, a turn towards a comparison of the relationships between cities (Ward 2010; Robinson 2011). This relational comparative approach emphasises comparison, exchange and learning, getting 'to grips with persistently diverse but increasingly interconnected trajectories of socio-spatial change in different parts of the world' (Hart 2004: 91). It speaks to a wider consideration about the re-thinking of space in the social sciences. Third, is the attention paid to the movement of models, and what their travels might reveal about the power geometries at work under the current global urban condition. Post-political science work on policy mobilities has revealed the range of social actors involved in the construction of 'models' and the ways in which they morph and mutate on their journeys, encountering stops and starts, friction on the way (McCann and Ward 2011). Fourth, and finally, is the challenge of 'theorizing back'. While past comparative studies have produced a wealth of empirical findings, there

has been little attempt to reflect on what these might mean for existing methods and theories (Connell 2007). New empirical findings have tended to lead to the creation of new ideal-types rather than attendance 'to the difference the diversity of cities makes to theory' (Robinson 2002: 549). Robinson picks up on a point made over thirty years ago, when Abu-Lughod and Hay (1977: 3-4) argued that their book can 'serve those whose immediate concerns are with American cities ... After stretching their focus beyond the United States [they] may return to American cities with a new understanding of the basic and underlying processes of urban life.' This is more than a matter of empirical detail. It is a matter of theoretical reflection. It is a necessity in light of the wider insights generated by post-colonial critiques of the geographically uneven foundations of contemporary urban scholarship. It is to these issues that the papers included in this volume make a contribution.

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Learning about the world of cities: a geographer's reflections from the bottom of Africa

Sue Parnell

Introduction

For some years now geographers, including the organisers and some of the speakers at this workshop, have been at the forefront of the assertive calls to reshape the geographical orientations of urban studies (Robinson 2002; Ward and Jonas, 2004; Parnell et al. 2009; Myers 2011; Roy, 2011; McFarlane, this volume; Myers, this volume; Watson, this volume) [1]. Turning these generally well-received arguments into a different practice in the discipline implies a huge amount of new field based empirical work, and thus careful reflection on the methods and ethics of the alternative scholarship we advocate. There are clear indications (c.f. the forthcoming special issue of *Urban Geography*), that comparative urbanism is going to be an area of early adaptation in the fledgling area of global urbanism. To this end this paper seeks to frame our discussions on how a comparative global urban agenda can be rolled out more effectively, by reflecting on the politics of already existing practices

of comparative field research in the Global South. Specifically, I open up two difficult areas of methodological and ethical concern that stem from my own research engagements over the past few years. The first relates to how comparative research, by its nature an expensive multi site activity, is funded and what this means for the identification of researchers, the design of research questions and the distribution of research results beyond conventional disciplinary boundaries [2]. Second I explore the issue of the ethics of the city-scale field researcher, given the tensions most Southern researchers hold in their dual roles as formative and evaluative researchers.

How one undertakes field research is a fairly well worn area of geographical reflection (Bunge 1971; Phillips and Johns 2012), but the demands of city scale investigation needed for comparative research throw up new issues, not least when researchers are ambiguously positioned within their local professional, personal and political communities. Just because researchers are engaged in their

home-town does not mean formal field research is not being undertaken and that the enquiry process should not be subjected to conventional research norms (or, as I shall suggest, that these norms be assessed for their appropriateness). To this end I draw on some of my own experiences in post apartheid South Africa where, like many others in the global South, I occupy overlapping and poorly defined roles as activist, advisor and researcher simultaneously [3]. The issues of inter or trans-disciplinarily and political positionality are by no means the sum of all the challenges facing comparative urban field research, but they do expose some of the real politics that the academy cannot ignore in crafting the new intellectual and operational spaces of the comparative urban project.

The real politics of comparative urban research – design, funding and ‘impact’

It is hard to avoid the problem that the funder has a disproportionate influence over the research agenda, and this is especially so for comparative urban research. It is not just what issues or research methods that are given priority, but also which countries and cities are selected or excluded. Current focus on China for economic reasons and post conflict hubs such as Kabul detracts from other important cities and regions and raises ethical dilemmas and detracts from a key intention of comparative urbanism, which is to assess like against like, to draw out commonalities and differences across divergent conditions and to forefront the dynamics of urban change. Ironically what and where are of most interest to international funding bodies, may be of least interest to city practitioners, students and scholars in the everywhere cities we need to include in a more inclusive urbanism.

In moving beyond the established patterns of comparative urban research in Europe and North America, where independent researchers interested in comparison can draw on already funded work, the new global urbanists who seek to included unknown and under researched places are, sadly, more than usually dependant on what can be funded. My (unrepresentative) personal reflections on two such donor funded projects highlight the dangers (and possible opportunities that can be crafted) of donor led comparative research.

In a partnership that foreshadows that of the recent rounds of ESRC/DFID grants, in 1994 the then ESCOR and the newly named DFID gave a large grant to a consortium of UK partners including the the University of Birmingham, the LSE (DESTIN) and IIED for comparative research on urban poverty. The project ran for almost 5 years with a total budget of 5 million pounds. Almost a dozen cities were included to begin with and for those, like Johannesburg, that

stayed the course the local budgets were about 15 000 pounds. The grant emerged from the new Labour government's desire to understand urban poverty and was shamelessly intended to inform government policy on aid, raising issues of political interference in defining the research questions. In fact the lack of any urban expertise in DFID along with the wide consortium who responded to the call meant that there was no clear research agenda. In other words there was no need to be afraid of a predetermined and over interventionist funder. Other problems quickly emerged. To start there was both a very wide brief with no core questions and also diffuse intellectual leadership. Compounding tendencies to diffusion (confusion) were the imperatives of finding available (and competent) local partners, whose roles and skills sets were utterly undefined. Recruitment to such a vague comparative project generated a motley collection of geographers, planners, public administration specialists and also a significant number of professional



research consultants, whose modus operandi was not only outside the university and any discipline, but so was their monetary motive for doing the work.

The comparative method that evolved through extended workshops was largely descriptive, leaving the task (and opportunity) to write up the conceptual and comparative findings to a later date almost exclusively to the UK team (Devas et al. 2002). More seriously for a bigger project of comparative urbanism than whose 'names' now sit on the high impact publications, is that the way the research was undertaken was ad hoc – not necessarily transparent, replicable or even ethical in all conventional research terms. This is not to say that there were not significant and useful findings from this and other large multi site donor driven research programmes. In this case the time available was sufficient for core questions to distill, for some comparative assessments to be generated and for material from each case study city to find its way into the academic canon of urban studies (c.f. Beall et al. 2002; Benjamin 2003).

To a large extent the overriding success of this particular project is attributable to the fact that some of the leading development studies community, who were individually and collectively committed to building from and contributing to trusting relationships, put in considerable personal effort to making sure there were positive outcomes (c.f. the 2002 special issue of *Environment*

and Urbanisation). This consciously inclusive mode of work, although very time consuming, enabled bottom up learning and created space for everyone on the team to pursue their varied publication and dissemination ambitions. Of concern for the comparative agenda is that there was here, as there is in many such projects, a tendency for local dissemination and impact to be separated from the synthesis of findings of the project – and so the actual act of comparison was only really undertaken by the home team in the UK and comparative lessons were only shared with UK based funders and partners. One obvious point in mitigation of this internally oriented learning is that all of the published research results are available to everyone.

Because of the nature of the austerity-funding model that now prevails, not all multi site university based comparative urban interventions are purely research driven. Indeed the focus on impact means that applied interventions and capacity building are often included as a central part of the donor or funder design. In the scramble for research funding academics, especially those dependant on soft funded fiscal sources, are increasingly involved in this sort of applied comparative work. The wider university fiscal model encourages rather than discourages this kind of research funding and it would seem reasonable to assume that comparative urban research will depend in large part on applied funding streams, rather than lone researchers, to advance.

One such example that I have been involved with relates to an IDRC funded programme on Urban Food Security. Costing over 4 million \$Can and running in 11 cities in sub-Saharan Africa over a period of 4 years, the objectives are laudable both from a development perspective and from a scholarly one. The programme is designed to take the established interdisciplinary domain of food security (that draws on nutrition, public health, economics, anthropology, geography, planning) and bring it into urban rather than rural contexts. Because of the geographical focus on sub-Saharan Africa, where food security is most serious and where the ability to respond is weak, the programme has a heavy bias to capacity building. Hence the project objectives include the creation of new curricula, training of professionals across the cities, and impacting policy on urban food security. These objectives, however, have raised some unusual ethical contradictions. Though laudable in many respects, the fact that less than 20 per cent of the budget has been available for new research (in what is an as yet poorly defined area of research where there are almost no published texts), means that there are severe limitations to the research led ideals of a capacity building project. Funded teaching cannot lead a program if there is no high level research capacity or a body of work to teach from. In other words it is essential for research to precede other action and intervention, delaying the much anticipated impacts of the funders. Our experience suggests that even a 4 year programme

is nowhere near enough time to ensure impact in emerging areas of comparative urban work. A further lesson from this programme is that the push to include the new inter or trans-disciplinary element (of urban food security) displaced teaching and even research on other core areas of urban knowledge, raising critical questions about the foundational elements on which we should be driving comparative research. There are many aspects to this debate about what should lie at the heart of the comparative project, including which methods are best adopted (see Watson, this volume) and what values should inform the research design. One rarely acknowledged tension that the researcher faces in the execution of research intended for comparative purposes – how to manage the demands, which are intense in most cities of the global south, to produce formative rather than evaluative urban knowledge. Put more crudely, is the purpose of doing urban research to change the cities we live in or to

produce robust scholarly knowledge that assess why cities have evolved as they have and why a particular city differs from or aligns with other urban transitions. This is the pure versus applied research debate – and in the context of a comparative urbanism that embraces cities that face real time choices based on the findings of research, it is a critical point of reflection.

The real politics of comparative urban research – the compromises of research execution

As is the case for a large proportion of the 'local research teams' on whom comparative urban research depends I am selected for inclusion in large-scale research teams in part because I am one of the fairly small pool of urban researchers who is reasonably well positioned 'in the policy loop' [4]. As such I am only too aware of the academic tensions that my external profile generates for 'my day job'

at the university and for my ability to generate high impact academic outputs such as those valued by the UK REF or the South African NRF personalised research-rating scheme. The fact that many South African universities have introduced performance criteria that reward what, in my university is known as 'social responsiveness' ('impact' in current REF parlance), has not only saved me from running a double life, and has instead rewarded me in part for this 'extra university' involvement - where I was able to demonstrate that it was 'research led'. But even this somewhat unusual insistence by the University of Cape Town that there was an overtly scholarly dimension to my policy life has not removed all of the ethical or practical dilemmas of my position – and like the majority of the teams of southern researchers pulled into comparative programmes these tensions between an applied and scholarly emphasis to research work has to be navigated. To an increasing number of scholars



this dichotomy is not only false, but it may negate the various points of learning from practice on which the new comparative urbanism might be built (Parnell, et al, 2009; Anderson et al., in press). Faced with the imperative of assessing the intellectual quality not the utility of policy research, geographers have begun to debate the issues of the scholarly merit of policy related research more fully (c.f. Burgess, 2005; Bell, 2007). There is a deception that the role of university staff is simply to use their intellectual power and position to advance the public good and that the way to do this is by maintaining academic autonomy. The problem is how? Nobody wants politicians telling academics what to think and write. Bolstered by the perceived imperative of maintaining academic freedom and integrity, the formative role of the public intellectual has, however, increasingly been diluted (Davis 2004; Harvey 2006). Academic engagement is now equated with providing insightful critique, pointing out where and why things have gone wrong. Where there is direct academic involvement in policy formation it is typically set against a predetermined pool of rigorously assembled knowledge. Thus even the most conservative of scholars are comfortable with the well known radical geographer McDowell's intervention that we want policy relevant not policy driven research. The problem is that her nomenclature not only misses innovation on the ground, but deciding what is policy relevant not policy determined is complex to identify in

practice. It is certainly very difficult to predetermine from afar and in relation to multiple different urban sites. Such a dismissal of applied knowledge thus seems to be inappropriate for comparative urbanists. Making the call on what is policy relevant not policy determined is even more difficult in the global urban South, where the answers to urban problems of extreme unemployment, poverty, informality, and a weak local state are seldom found in academic journals that are dominated by Northern experiences. Even selecting conceptual vantage points from which to review and assess urban policy in places like South Africa is a rather hit and miss affair that detracts from a neat understanding of what it means to avoid being policy driven. In those cities without any coherent secondary literature (and these are numerous) there is an even greater dependence on engagement with contemporary urban leaders (in or out of opposition) as these are the intellectuals whose knowledge will most likely contribute to emerging accounts of the city and its formation. A purely academic encounter with the informants is unlikely.

Discussion

The combined drivers of a new global urbanism are the quest to fill the critical gaps in our knowledge about cities everywhere and the imperative to secure local relevance (if not acceptance) of our assessments of the drivers of change and the possibilities of the urban future. To achieve these expectations the urban studies community has to rethink what we

need to know, how we find out what we need to know and what the ethics are of constructing new accounts of cities, including how these are funded and then published.

Comparative research that takes full account of where cities are today has to start with new empirical research on individual cities in the Global South not just because the work that has been done has been shaped by a Northern agenda, but much more importantly because these cities have not yet been fully described, analysed or compared. This latter point about action is key because the demand for our academic expertise is likely to be from residents and practitioners keen to inform the future, rather than interpreting the past. This does not mean that there is no case for doing urban history. Rather, given the problems they face, our readers will be seeking comparative insights to enrich their transformative agendas and our work has to be legible for that purpose. Unlike the past decades where academics have battled to ensure take up of their findings, the new urbanism has an expectant audience that anticipates that our knowledge will be useful. This raises the bar on how we undertake urban research and gives it a practical purpose (it may retain other less utilitarian attributes as well). The new primary urban research may be applied and practice based as well as more conventionally assessment driven, but however it is undertaken it will create the platform for twenty first century comparative research and transformative action.

Footnotes

[1] The call for a more international scope of practice and theorisation is found in many other disciplines as well (c.f. Connell 2008; Watson 2009).

[2] There is not space to delve into the even more difficult terrain of how traditional research methods translate into conditions of informality and data paucity and what can and should be done to ensure robust and legitimate research analysis.

[3] The paper draws directly on text that was first produced for a special session of the South African Geography Conference in 2007 and subsequently published as part of a special issue as: Parnell, S. (2007) The academic -policy interface in post apartheid urban research – personal reflections, *South African Geographical Journal*, 89, 111-120.

[4] In South Africa this pool of urban researchers is much bigger than in many other African countries and I imagine the contradictions I sketch below must be far more acute for others.

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Slums and intra-urban comparison: examples from Mumbai

Colin McFarlane

Introduction

It is clear that there has been not just resurgence, but an emerging rethinking of comparison in urban geography. The context for this is three-fold. First, an emphasis on urban connections, especially through the economic networks upon which ideologies of neoliberal globalisation depend (Sassen 2001; Taylor 2004; Doel and Smith 2012). Second, an ever-expanding research agenda on different kinds of travelling urbanisms, whether policy, planning, activist, cultural, or ecological (Peck and Theodore 2010; Healey and Upton 2010; McCann and Ward 2011). And third, a largely postcolonial imperative to internationalise urban understanding, theory and imaginaries that shifts thinking away from polarisations around either the developmentalism of epistemo-institutional categories of global North/global South (Robinson, 2006), and depictions of elite urban models (e.g. Roy and Ong, 2011) set against dystopic megacities (Davis, 2006; and see Roy, 2011, on slum-as-metonym

for the megacity).

The upsurge in comparative research in recent years has been multi-faceted, and includes – and this is by no means exhaustive – efforts to compare one city with several, including Amelang (2007) on Barcelona, and Nijman (2007a) on Miami; comparing two cities, including Huchzermeyer (2007) on the production of informal settlements in Sao Paulo and Cape Town and Oliviera (1996) on the role of race and class in ghetto and favela formation in New York and Rio de Janeiro; exploring how *specific processes or features recur or diverge* in different cities, including Dick and Rimmer (1997) on the blurring of 'First World' / 'Third World city' through new and changing patterns of wealth and poverty, connection and disconnection, Gulger (2004) on world cities in the South, King (2004) on architecture, design and culture, Roy (2003, 2005) on planning and citizenship across North and South, and Smith (2002) on gentrification as a 'global urban strategy'; research outlining a *typology or exploring*

frameworks for comparative urban research, including Brenner (2001), Nijman (2007b), and Kantor and Savitch (2007); and work examining a more postcolonial (e.g. Robinson (2006, 2011; McFarlane, 2010) or explicitly relational comparative urbanism (e.g. Ward, 2008, 2010). In short, comparison is firmly on the agenda of urban studies, whether a way of experimenting with the diversity of cities across and beyond inheritances of global North/South or global city/megacity, or as a means for thinking through the relations between case studies and wider processes, or as a resource for locating difference rather than similarities (i.e. beyond comparativism between the 'usual suspects'). This is a lively and wide-ranging set of approaches that are experimenting with new ways of thinking about contemporary urbanism as well as critical questions around research methodologies (McFarlane and Robinson, forthcoming).

In this paper, I reflect on a specific empirical comparative project that compares not different cities, but two sites within one city. Reflecting on a project that examines everyday sanitation in two informal settlements in Mumbai, I argue for the value in comparing within cities. The resurgent debate on comparative urbanism has tended to focus on comparing sites and processes across two or more cities, perhaps because this growing interest in comparison emerges in part as a response to globalisation. But if the broad objective of this revival of comparison in urban geography is to work towards a wider, more plural conception of the constitution of urban life and urban politics, in this paper I argue that intra-urban comparisons have an important place as part of this effort. It is important, in this context, to reflect on the place of informal settlements in relation to these nascent comparative debates. While there has been little consideration of informal settlements in debates on comparison (Huchzermeyer, 2007, and Oliviera, 1996, are examples of some

of the few exceptions), given that one in three urbanites live in some form of informal settlement, and that the rate of urbanisation in informal settlements is generally greater than in cities more generally, it is imperative that issues around informal settlements contribute to the debate on comparativism.

As part of this, the final section of the paper reflects on some of the ways in which a comparative politics of the informal settlement operates in elite global agendas. It does so through the increasing valuation by international institutions, particularly the World Bank, and many states, on the *entrepreneurial slum*. There is a growing effort to spotlight particular slum spaces, projects and residents – including particular models of self-managed toilet blocks - as representative of an acceptable form of slum organisation that can be celebrated and promoted in line with more elite narratives about the urban future. Particular slum organisations can play important roles here in generating the models and techniques

that co-produce exclusionary and market-oriented ideologies and scripts for how cities should and could develop. The comparative move here is to pit particular sanitised success stories against 'inactive' majorities, an ideology that does nothing to unsettle a politics of blame or to disturb the shift of responsibilities from elites to the urban poor.

Worlds within worlds

It is often said that Mumbai is several cities within a city. Certainly if we work with a definition of Mumbai as the Mumbai Metropolitan Region, which includes large towns administered in part through their own municipalities, such as Navi Mumbai, Thane and Kalyan, the case for this claim appears self-evident. Or, we might think of Mumbai's multiple cities chronologically, from the historic colonial centre in the southern island city built around the Fort, to the increasing urbanisation of more northern areas through the cotton mill boom in the late 19th and early 20th century in particular, as well



Image – Mumbai. Courtesy of racoles on Flickr

as huge and controversial projects of land reclamation to construct commercial areas like Nariman Point in the south, or the postwar modernist project of Navi Mumbai, one of the largest planned cities in the world. But a more textured view would focus on the historic neighbourhoods that constitute the city, as Darryl D'Monte (2011: 97) describes:

...in areas like Gurgaum, there are wadis or precincts that are predominantly populated by one community. In this area, Hindu Pathare Prabhus, one of the oldest communities, live cheek by jowl with the next wadi with Hindus from the trading communities of Gujarat and 'East Indian' (after the company) Catholics...Mumbaikers tend to relate primarily to their neighbourhood, with communal tension arising only when specific incidents occur after provocation.

Another way in which we might think of multiple Mumbais is in relation not to territories but to the profound inequalities of the urban experience. Considering the following extract from the poem 'Mumbai' by the social activist and poet Narayan Surve. Surve, in this piece, considers the experience of the city from the perspective of Mumbai's many toilers:

(...)
We wander your streets,
squares and bazaars;
sometimes as citizens, householders
at times as loafers
These streets carry the festival of

lights
into the heart of the night;
balancing two separate worlds
with all their splendour.

The city of the urban toiler is, in Surve's rendering, simply a different city, a city he knew well as a former pavement dweller and, later, union activist. Notwithstanding the crucial connections between different groups in the city, in this case through the exploitation of working class labour and the materialisation of that labour in the built form, what I am suggesting here is that debates on urban comparativism, for all their undoubted energy and possibility, are perhaps moving past cities too quickly. If the resurgent project of comparative urbanism is in part about experimenting with a broader range of urbanisms in order to develop new understandings and theorisations of urban life, cultures, economies and politics, then it is important also to consider what large and diverse cities like Mumbai might offer. In particular, I am arguing for the importance of intra-urban comparison alongside the exciting debates around inter-urban comparisons.

In the everyday sanitation research project, Renu Desai (now at CEPT Ahmedabad), Steve Graham (Newcastle University) and myself sought to develop a detailed understanding of people's everyday experiences and perceptions of urban sanitation in informal settlements in Mumbai. Sixty per cent of Mumbai's population lives in informal settlements, but this

stark statistic hides a vast world of difference and complexity, from very established and relatively well-serviced neighbourhoods that include white-collar workers who struggle with Mumbai's ludicrously expensive real estate market, to extremely poor neighbourhoods deemed illegal by the state and almost lacking any services and infrastructures. Sanitation provision, access, use, and conditions vary greatly across the city and we believed it was important to foreground the difference that this geographical diversity makes to the lived experience and politics of sanitation. Following pilot research into several different neighbourhoods in the city, we selected two very different neighbourhoods which we believed would offer breadth to the study. The research examined two informal settlements: *Khotwadi*, an authorised, established neighbourhood in the west, and *Rafinagar*, an unauthorised, poorer neighbourhood in the east. Rafinagar comprises two parts: Part 1, which has been provided with some basic urban services, and Part 2, with almost no basic urban services.

Khotwadi, with a population of approximately 2000 households, has 24 toilet blocks and a total of 180 seats, whereas Rafinagar, with approximately 4000 households, has 6 toilet blocks with a total of 76 seats. Rafinagar, then, has twice the population and half the number of toilet seats, and Rafinagar Part 2 has only one formal toilet block (provided by the state government in 2011) and is also serviced by a range of

temporary hanging latrines. While the majority of residents in Khotwadi have a level of secure water access through unmetered municipal standposts, metered group connections and wells, the majority of Rafinagar's residents face profound difficulties and are forced to incur high expenditures for water and/or time and effort in collecting water. The condition of solid waste management in the two settlements is also uneven. Rafinagar in particular, partly due to its illegality and partly due to its marginal status as a predominantly Muslim settlement, suffers from infrequent instances of municipal cleaning of drains and collection and disposal of garbage.

We found significant differences between the two neighbourhoods. While in both securing access to adequate sanitation on a daily basis is a considerable labour for many people, the nature of that labour is radically different in both places. As a predominantly Hindu neighbourhood, Khotwadi is controlled by the dominant political party in the city, the right-wing ethno-religious and anti-Muslim Shiv Sena. The presence of the Shiv Sena in Khotwadi is critical to the production and maintenance of sanitation. For example, the Sena operates a 'complaint space' at its local office, and residents usually go to this office if there is work needing done in the area, from blocked drains and broken toilets to uncollected garbage. The party is able to take up and expedite requests far more quickly than if the residents had directly contacted the relevant municipal department. This constitutes a form

of patronage in the area that helps promote the Shiv Sena electorally through the soft politicisation of basic infrastructure.

In Rafinagar, however, given that it is a predominantly Muslim area, residential links are less to the Shiv Sena and more to more marginal political parties like the Samajwadi (socialist) party, and given that it is illegal, it is qualitatively more difficult to have any complaints dealt with. Here, there is a much slower, longer-term process of working through community groups, nongovernmental organisations, councillors and municipal officials in order to get basic work like the occasional cleaning of drains completed. There are few assurances that requests will ever be met, and people often feel left without any viable political outlet to meet basic sanitation needs. For example, on one occasion when a privately run toilet block in Rafinagar Part 1 increased pay-per-use charges from Rs. 10 to Rs. 20, local women protested by using their bodies. They defecated in the area around the toilet block until the caretaker gave in and reduced the costs. These kind of temporary, below-the-radar forms of protest are largely distinct from protest in Khotwadi and indicate that politics in Mumbai is less a universal sphere of action and instead a set of possibilities highly influenced by, if not determined by, local context, resources and connections.

Rafinagar is also far more vulnerable to shifts in urban politics than Khotwadi. For example, in the

winter of 2009-10, the municipal corporation used the so-called city-wide 'water shortage' (following a poor monsoon) to justify a violent clampdown on 'illegal' water. In Rafinagar, this culminated in the systematic cutting, in full public view, of a great deal of the neighbourhood's water infrastructure. After the savage cutting of Rafinagar's urban metabolism, which threw the daily routine of water and sanitation into disarray, a dramatic transformation was required through new forms of collectivizing infrastructure. A temporary arrangement of water infrastructure emerged, including municipal and private water tankers, with their irregular rhythms, municipal-installed water storage tanks, and evolving regimes of local control over tanks, mostly involving the labour of women. Households who sought municipal water could do so only through municipal water tankers and water storage tanks, and women and children were forced to wait in long queues with water cans, often for hours at a time. While water cuts are not unusual in Rafinagar, the intensity and level of municipal coordination – including through, unusually, police support – was new. Given Khotwadi's political context, this level of water cuts is extremely unlikely.

There are other important differences. For example, while in Khotwadi most residents regularly use toilet blocks, in Rafinagar – especially in Part 2 – open defecation is regular. During the monsoon, residents often construct makeshift hanging latrines from rudimentary materials in order to

provide a nearby toilet when the rains make it difficult to wade to the spaces used for open defecation. The latrines are vulnerable to erosion from rising tides and from demolition by the municipality. Residents have their own comparative framings for valuing these infrastructures. For example, one woman said of one hanging latrine: "There is a *world of difference* between this and a *pukka* [brick-built] toilet.

This one remains a bit open [meaning people can see inside], there is a fear of children falling, there is fear that it will get washed away in the high tide, there is a fear that it will break." If Khotwadi constitutes a different Mumbai from Rafinagar, here even a brick-built toilet block is positioned as not just a different material infrastructure, but the materialization of a 'world of difference'.

Taken together, the uncertain rhythm and politics of sanitation in these two neighbourhoods is predicated on a series of changing conditions and catalysts, from demolition, land erosion and changing land use, to reciprocal relations amongst residents and civil society groups, changing tariffs of toilets, and the identity politics connected to political parties. These rhythms reflect multiple temporalities that fold into different forms of collectives and politics. The contrasting sanitation conditions in Rafinagar and Khotwadi reflect not just different urban histories, social composition, and state-based or legal (dis) connections, but two quite different Mumbais, with distinct modes of infrastructure production and politics. Here, intra-urban comparison widens

our conception of infrastructure politics and the conditions through which urban metabolic life is collectively made and remade. If comparison is in part a strategy for pluralising the urban imagination, then intra-urban comparisons can be a fruitful reminder of the value of sticking with one city before rushing off to the next one.

If the nature and politics of everyday sanitation in two Mumbai slums is radically different, then we need to consider how we might develop a research agenda that connects the resurgence of urban comparativism to diverse and growing forms of slum urbanism. Responding to this is far beyond the scope of this paper, but before concluding I want in the next section to highlight one important sightline here. One starting point might be to ask not just how geographers and others research and think comparatively about urbanism but to critically engage with the ways in which elite groups privilege particular ideological forms of slum. There is an important politics to the comparisons – implicit and explicit – that elites make in relation to slum life. Slums are increasingly understood, for example by international institutions like the World Bank, as potential spaces of urban entrepreneurialism.

The entrepreneurial slum

In 2007, a toilet block in Khotwadi run by a community based organisation was awarded the prestigious Deutsche Bank Urban Age (DBUA) Award (Figure 1). The DBUA award is

designed to encourage citizens to take initiatives to improve their cities, and runs alongside the Urban Age Project, a joint initiative of the London School of Economics and Deutsche Bank's Alfred Herrhausen Society. Describing why the award was given for this toilet block, Deutsche Bank wrote that the project 'is a striking example of the poor helping themselves, and gives the lie to the stereotypical depiction of slum dwellers as helpless or indolent victims' (Deutsche Bank, 2007: no pagination). The award is far more than just prestige - US\$100,000 was given to the community-based organisation that runs the block, Triratana Prerana Mandal (TPM), that have subsequently used the award to help fund the construction of a large community sports centre along the road from the toilet block.

This is an award for citizen entrepreneurialism that refuses to wait for the state but instead takes matters – the most fundamental of matters – into its own management. Suketu Mehta (2011: 155), author of the celebrated 2004 book on Mumbai, *Maximum City*, and one of the Urban Age judges, described the toilet project as 'an ingenious as well as indigenous solution that needed very little investment and could be replicated in slum colonies around the world'. The award was given not just because TPM has built a well-maintained, clean block in the neighbourhood, but because the toilet block has become an unlikely focal point for a range of social activities. For example, 200 students from around the local area

attend basic computer classes at the block (upstairs from the toilets), paying Rs.750 for a three-month class. More recently, the block has attained solar hot water; set up a biogas plant, started rainwater harvesting and ground water through boring, all through new city and state environmental funding schemes. The practice of the sustainable eco-city becomes embodied in a slum toilet block and tied to generating capital through waste – a striking contrast to the pervasive representation of slums-as-waste amongst not just Indian elites, but more generally in India: "our aim is 0% garbage", one TPM activist said. 'We are making money [from user charges] and reinvesting it', he went on, in everything from a gymnasium and computer or dance classes, to a plant nursery behind the toilet and of course the running of the toilet itself. They have gained international funds for equipment, women's empowerment, and sustainable development. Indeed, one prominent Mumbai activist claimed TPM were running the block like a 'big business'.

The award given to the block, itself of course a laudable attempt to praise a genuinely committed and creative group of activists and to highlight the astonishingly neglected and vital issues around slum sanitation, is a reminder of the sorts of narratives and politics elite groups want to hear about sanitation – not the messy, dirty politics of daily grind that characterise so much of the life of sanitation in Rafinagar, but the shining and seemingly harmless success stories that fit with elite aspirations

to build more entrepreneurial cities. Understanding how success stories like the TPM block enter into circuits of entrepreneurial urbanism reveals both an expansion of entrepreneurial ideologies into particular valuations of urban slumming and a profound politics of comparison around the sorts of urbanism that are promoted and celebrated by elites and the sorts that are not. In celebrating the success stories of an active and creative few, awards like this resonate with ideologies of entrepreneurialism that set up implicit comparisons between an active poor leading the way and a passive poor unable to take responsibility. It both highlights a positive story of slum life and risk reinforcing stubborn narratives that the poor only have themselves to blame. In doing so, it resonates both with the shift in responsibility from the state to the poor in urban sanitation delivery, and to the concomitant emergence of forms of social and economic entrepreneurialism as important techniques of addressing sanitation inadequacy.

Sanitation is increasingly cast by the World Bank as one of many potential markets in slums, where the market is considered the most effective means to meet diverse urban conditions in often resource-poor cities. For example, Tova Solo, an urban specialist with the World Bank's Water and Sanitation Division, has argued that a loosely regulated market of small-scale entrepreneurs in the water and sanitation sector in lower-income cities could meet sanitation needs more effectively, flexibly and inclusively

than monopolistic state-run subsidised systems. Drawing on a range of examples, such as private providers of toilets blocks in Bangladesh running a 'brisk business', Solo (1999: 121, 129) argued for a 'new paradigm' in water and sanitation that shifted the focus from "price caps, subsidy issues and quality control to one of encouraging competition and sharing information". As Mike Davis (2006: 141) puts it in his discussion of slum toilets as 'cash-points', 'pay toilets are a growth industry throughout Third World slums'. We are witnessing the early stages of a shift from toilets as fundamental rights to gradually marketised commodities whose success depends on the entrepreneurial capacities of creative civil society groups and small companies: even bodily waste is not a limit-point to capital.

There is a much broader story to be told about the deepening of entrepreneurial ideology across other important domains in relation to slums, including microfinance (e.g. see Roy, 2010, on 'poverty as capital') and market creation through formalising informal housing (e.g. Hernando De Soto's (e.g. 2001) influential arguments that informal housing represents a deep pool of 'dead capital' in the form of economic and legal security, housing markets and surplus generation, potential future exchange and investment (including in new businesses), and the social capital associated with formalised status). Again, the comparative moves are implicit: between residents willing to help themselves through the

thrifty work of savings and loans to generate, for example, new businesses, as against those residents who fail to do so, or between residents that realise their market potential through housing formalisation as set against residents who are deemed to remain poor and precarious because they are locked out of these markets. These techniques of entrepreneurialism have had significant influence on the World Bank in particular, and position the slum as a key frontier in the development of new forms of urban entrepreneurialism. Understanding these models and critiques might lead to rethinking predominant conceptions of entrepreneurialism that have been so brilliantly developed in urban geography and elsewhere but which remain largely focussed, with some exceptions, on North America and Western Europe (e.g. Harvey, 1989; Hall and Hubbard, 1998; Hubbard, 2004; Jessop, 1997; Ward, 2006, 2011). But doing so requires careful attention to the politics of (often implicit) comparison at work in entrepreneurial ideology. These comparative moves can contribute to existing cultures of blame, can reinforce the shift in responsibility to provide fundamental services from states to residents, and effectively accept inequality as the necessary consequence of well-organised entrepreneurs set against passive urban majorities who, by extension, are not. One starting point for thinking through the relations between a resurgent comparative urbanism and the diversity of informal settlements, then, lies in critically engaging with the implicit and explicit

comparisons put to work by elite groups in efforts to script the nature and future of urban development.

Conclusion

If a key point of departure for contemporary urban geography is a conceptualisation of the city as relational (Jacobs 2011), the new comparative urbanisms being developed by geographers and others offer promising resources here. A relational comparativism disrupts the idea that cities are territorially bounded and contributes to wider efforts to understand and research the different forms, extents, and impacts of processes found in, connected by, or contested through different cities (Ward 2010). But in the rush to map and contest different urban political, economic, cultural, ecological relationalities and to produce new comparative forms of thinking and methodology, the tendency has often been to move beyond individual cities. However, intra-urban comparisons can reveal a plural range of ways in which urban life is made and politicised. Comparing Khotwadi and Rafinagar, for instance, reveals not just different kinds of sanitation politics, it leads a re-conceptualisation of the politics of urban infrastructure that takes us away, for instance, from the tendency to privilege privatization as the key politics of infrastructure fragmentation (particularly following Graham and Marvin's (2001) very influential 'splintering urbanism' thesis). Analysing the ways in which different Mumbais are produced, lived and

contested is itself a comparative project. Mumbai can be 'placed in context' not just through comparison with other megacities like Kolkata, São Paulo, Lagos or Bangkok, but through an understanding of how different Mumbai's are made and unmade. I am not, to be clear, arguing against inter-urban comparativism at all, but instead to pause amidst the debates on urban comparison, relationalities and mobilities and consider with what a comparative project within a city might offer.

Perhaps the very diversity of Mumbai makes it a more promising contender than other, smaller cities for forms of intra-urban research that produce pluralised understandings of the urban world. After all, there is a sense that Mumbai, as India's most cosmopolitan city, is a cultural microcosm of India, and indeed South Asia. The writer Pico Iyer (2003: 3), for example, described Mumbai as 'the center of the subcontinent's bright lights, big-city dreams...the 'Capital of Hope', to which hundreds of thousands of newcomers flock each year; dreaming of making their fortunes, and a decidedly ruthless place, where more visitors find jobs than homes'. It is, he continued, a 'multi-cultured port', a 'haven of tolerance' for Hindus, Muslims, Parsis, Christians, Sikhs, Jains, and others bound in a 'money-minded mix', as well as a space of moments of horrendous communal and class violence (ibid). Its comparative kindred spirits, he suggests, are those other island staging-posts of people, capital and modernity, Hong Kong and Manhattan.

At the same time, if Mumbai is often spoken and written of as India's most modern city, this discourse has taken a new turn with the emergence of a managerial and technical elite associated with the growth of global financial services in particular parts of the city. The geographies of these groups are increasingly segregated and exclusive, reflecting new spaces of global connection and local disconnection, and associated with particular images of what the modern Indian city should look like – this too is a comparative makeover of Mumbai. For example, the proliferation of new residential enclaves that mimic European and American cities, often expressed vertically given Bombay's high real estate costs, provide escape from the city of debris through elevation. These developments have been closely associated with the demolition of informal settlements, which in recent years have been coded less by religion and ethnicity than politico-corporate Bombay's self-declared trajectory to become the 'next Shanghai' by 2013 (Bombay First 2003). To this end, for instance, an estimated 90,000 huts were torn down during the winter of 2004-2005, leaving some 350,000 people homeless and without alternative accommodation. Mumbai is, then, perhaps more than most cities, an engine for comparative thinking and strategies with often deeply deleterious and violent consequences. The challenge for critical urban research is both to understand the different Mumbais that are being comparatively produced through different actors and power relations

and examine their consequences, and to deploy comparative methodologies as a means for developing a pluralised understanding of the unequal and multi-faceted agglomeration signified as 'Mumbai'.

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Building a Southern perspective on urban planning using the comparative case method

Vanessa Watson

Introduction

Theory in planning is in trouble. It is frequently based on research that is wanting in rigor; it struggles to negotiate the difficult bridge between knowledge and action, it has sometimes been found guilty of dubious generalization, and more recently it faces the challenge that its dominance by global North theorists and issues has left it with little to contribute to the most pressing planning problems of the time: in those urban environments where the bulk of the global urban population now resides, the cities and towns of the global South. This is not to deny the emergence of new strands of thought on planning in global South contexts but the number of planning theorists interested in this question is remarkably small.

This paper considers how planning theory has approached the issue of the comparative method, then moves to an argument in support of the value of this approach. It draws on the insights from a workshop hosted

by the African Centre for Cities in 2011 which drew together scholars from several global South regions to discuss how the comparative method could be used to shift the global geo-politics of knowledge production in urban and planning theory and to begin to build robust theory and praxis addressing issues of 21st century forms of urbanization.

Planning theory, comparison and case method

Urban planning has a long history of thinking geographically across contexts. Much of the colonized world still bears the imprint of British Garden Cities, US neighbourhood units, le Corbusian towers and freeways and German land use zoning systems. There was little comparison involved in this process, however. Rather it was assumed that such ideas represented progress and modernization, and could and should be introduced wherever new settlement was taking place throughout the world [1]. In more recent times this process has continued through 'best practice'

labelling of planning innovations, and through policy and planning mobility across the globe (Healey and Upton 2010), with the direction of transfer continuing to find its origin in global North territories (although with some exceptions).

Unlike other disciplines, a shift towards empirically based planning theory only began in the 1980s (Lauria and Wagner 2006) and then the focus was far less on the nature of cities but rather a pragmatic interest in documenting instances of planning practice and decision-making in order to inform both normative theory and action. This work did not necessarily produce theory as such, or generalizable ideas, but researchers claimed that their highly-specific, context-bound accounts of planning activity were able to bridge the gap between theory and practice and give better insight into the nature and possibilities of planning practice than previous theories were able to do (Innes 1995).

In a review of research in planning since the 1980s, Lauria and Wagner (2006) note that case study method began to dominate planning research, especially from 2000 onwards, using a range of approaches: historical, discourse, or policy analysis. The strong influence of Habermas on planning thought focussed attention on communication in planning and hence most empirical work was of planning processes and very little on the material subject of planning (the urban environment). The more recent influence of Foucauldian perspectives dislodged this communicative dominance and attracted work on governmentality, but the focus on process remained. And while there is a very recent emergence of planning research emanating from scholars and contexts outside of the global North, the dominance of these territories as geographical and thematic sources of scholarship remains.

Lauria and Wagner (2006) are somewhat critical of research quality in planning. They note that most journal articles reporting case

study research pay little attention to explaining method, that much research is strategically aimed at supporting certain interventive positions and hence there is much auto-confirmation of pre-existing ideas, and that similar cases generate very contradictory outcomes. They note a small rise in comparative case study work, particularly comparing the UK/Europe and the USA, or countries within Europe. Outside of the global North there is no clear evidence of interest in comparative case research in planning, and a literature review of case study research in Anglophone Africa [2] (Duminy 2009) post-1999 revealed only five articles claiming use of the comparative case approach.

Very recently there has been a renewed interest in comparison in planning, involving particularly countries of the EU and the UK [3], encouraged by EU cohesion policies and research funding. Booth (2011) claims that much of the recent comparative work that has occurred in planning has been instrumental and motivated by interest in 'idea

borrowing': if it worked in X can it work in Y? Implementing EU-wide policies in particular cities (for example the EU Capitals of Culture programme) has given impetus to this work, but much has been based on yet unsettled assumptions regarding the transferability of ideas and the degree to which there is convergence of policy systems across the EU region. In this field much comparative work has assumed spatial planning and urban policy-making to be neutral and technical processes which operate in similar ways regardless of context. Booth (2011) argues that comparative work should draw on a longer tradition of 'cultures of planning' (also see Sanyal 2005) which situates practice as a product of specific local and national cultures but within a globalizing world which promotes convergence.

A somewhat different approach to the idea of comparison in the planning field lies in the work of Bent Flyvbjerg, who has developed an intellectual logic and rationale for the use of case research in planning. His focus



Image – Sao Paulo. Courtesy of Fernando Stankuns on Flickr

has been on the single case but his arguments extend to comparative research as well. Addressing the knotty problem of how research connects to practice, Flyvbjerg (2004) argues for a phronetic (meaning 'practical judgement' informed by values) approach to planning research. This recognizes that, in planning, research is carried out to inform action and as such differs from analytical or scientific research in other disciplinary fields. Values in phronetic research are those of the researcher and various actors in a specific, context-defined, situation; values will inevitably differ with 'place' and an understanding of power (in the Foucauldian sense) needs to be at the heart of any research endeavour.

For Flyvbjerg, undertaking this kind of research requires close proximity to context, 'thick description' and understanding the daily practices of power. Such research is neither informed by universal assumptions (such as Habermas' communicative rationality which shapes much planning research on collaborative and communicative planning) nor is it aimed at producing generalizable solutions to planning problems. This importance of context means that the case study is a particularly useful methodological vehicle for undertaking planning research: planning action will always be informed by context-dependent judgement and situational ethics and not on universal theories or models, or 'best practice' solutions from other parts of the world. Flyvbjerg's (2011) more recent

work, however, suggests a rationale for comparison. Flyvbjerg points to the role of the case study in the process of human learning. He argues that expert knowledge of the kind used in planning is (or should be) developed not through learning rules or importing models, but through the development of judgement based on exposure to the details of many cases, written or experienced, and a comparison and selection of relevant insights in relation to the problem at hand (Donald Schon's 1983 notions of creative 'reflection in action' and 'reflective transfer'). Rather than the application of abstract and decontextualised rules, this process involves using judgement based on comparative experience and understanding. This approach to applied learning for action could also be used to describe the work of social movements such as Slum Dwellers International, which sets up networks of mutual learning opportunities, or 'horizontal exchanges,' involve groups of poor moving between sites to share knowledge and gains in savings, construction and engagement with authorities (Mitlin 2008; McFarlane 2011). Comparative learning for action is at the heart of this exercise.

Given that city and case comparison has not been a central interest in planning theory, and that much recent comparative work has been driven by particular EU agendas, the paper now turns to an attempt to raise this debate in the context of the work of the Association of African Planning Schools (AAPS) [4] and the African Centre for Cities (ACC)

[5] at the University of Cape Town. The significant difference between this initiative and SDI's horizontal exchanges is the specifically politico-strategic rationale for considering comparison.

Case comparison in planning as a way of 'seeing from the South' [6]

In 2009 AAPS (an educational and advocacy network of 46 planning schools in Anglophone Africa) initiated a project aimed at developing the case study approach to research and teaching in planning, influenced by Flyvbjerg's 'phronetic' approach to case research. The motivation was that case research would allow for deeper interrogation of context and a more nuanced understanding of African urban spaces and planning practices than is possible with other methods. The practical and concrete knowledge gained from the interrogation of cases would contribute to the body of research and publication on African cities, as well as provide material for teaching, and hence provide a counter to the dominance of global North theory and practice in African planning. The purpose of the project was therefore essentially strategic and political.

As this project came to an end in 2010 (having involved three major workshops, toolkits and writing and publishing initiatives) funding was secured to hold a global South workshop on the comparative case method. This was inspired as well by an existing MoU and partnership

between the ACC and the Indian Institute for Human Settlements: an ambitious project aimed at up-scaling the training of urban practitioners in India, making extensive use of the case method in teaching and research. The workshop was held at the ACC in Cape Town in March 2011, and involved Indian Institute staff, Kenyan planning academics, the Federal University of ABS Region (Brazil), the Observatório Das Metrôpoles (Brazil), and the Guateng Urban Observatory (South Africa).

One of the key aims of the workshop was to begin the development of a body of interventive urban theory from the South to redress global imbalances in the production and exchange of knowledge. Discussions over the three days demonstrated a general commitment to promoting South-South theory building as a means of contributing to a 'global learning process' and addressing imbalances in global systems of knowledge production and circulation. Comparative case research was affirmed as a useful means of building a body of urban theory rooted in the nuanced empirical processes of Southern 'cityness'. It was also seen to have a potentially effective role in pedagogical and curricular innovation' (Duminy 2011: 1). Other important motivations were to 'fill the gap' in southern urban knowledge and to provide work of use to social movements.

To an extent the political ambitions of both of the case study project and the global South workshop were

inspired by Raewyn Connell's (2007) call for 'southern theory' in sociology – to counter northern dominance in scholarship and to draw attention to global relationships: of authority, exclusion and inclusion, hegemony, and partnership. A common concern amongst workshop participants was, similarly, the strong hegemony of Northern theories and ideas which had a poor degree of 'fit' with the nature of urban problems that confronted them, and which promoted planning approaches based on assumptions about cities, societies and economies which did not hold in the contexts they worked in. These Northern positions rarely specified the context to which their ideas applied, and assumed a 'taken for granted' universalism which erased the reality of the world beyond the Euro-American territories. Connell's (2007) call to work at a world scale (through comparative case study research across global North and South) avoids generalizing from the metropole and places the relationship between metropole and periphery (still marked by processes of colonization) as a central explanatory element.

Workshop discussions over the three days illustrated just how difficult, but also how exciting, the idea of building Southern theory through comparative case work could be. Key issues of debate were as follows:

Finding common paradigmatic and epistemological ground for a shared intellectual project?

Different regions of the global South have very different intellectual traditions. Brazilian researchers typically have a strong theoretical orientation and the national research and university system is structured to incentivise publishing in mainstream (ie English language) journals. Hence the requirement to 'interpret' Brazilian urban issues to fit Northern theories and 'explain' the context to Northern audiences is a strong one. South African researchers would be similarly situated. A participant from Thailand told the workshop that East Asian researchers typically have a highly empirical focus, without a significant emphasis on producing theory. The fact that their work does not necessarily engage with popular Northern theoretical debates is one reason why it is difficult for some Asian (and other Southern) academics to publish in mainstream international journals. Hence a preliminary comparative project might need to be undertaken to understand different epistemic backgrounds and research cultures across different contexts. Some common paradigmatic and epistemological ground is needed for a shared intellectual project to emerge, but how is this to be achieved?

Inductive or deductive?

There was much discussion around comparative cases and theory building.

Should we start by deductively testing Northern theories, or alternatively generate propositions and hypotheses inductively? Which theoretical-analytical approaches allow for the comparability of a wide range of cities, yet offer potential for credible knowledge production? Does the purpose of the comparison play a role here: is it to challenge Northern theories or does it have a Southern politico-transformative intention of empowering certain groups and recognizing progressive policy discourses? Who is the audience for this work?

The production of historicised place-based cases could allow hypotheses and topics of comparison to emerge inductively. This 'more modest' approach could potentially build upon the research areas that already exist within participating institutions. The Indian team felt that place-based 'meta-cases' could be used in different ways: to challenge Northern theoretical assumptions, to generate new hypotheses, and to build an international network for long-term research co-operation as part of a more ambitious meta-theoretical exercise which linked up with place-based analysis.

A related discussion broached the issue of following previous comparative work in taking 'most similar' cases, which can lead to a general truncation of the range of cities for which comparison is possible, as well as the theoretical areas used in analysis. Being strategic about comparative case research in

the global South could mean paying close attention to the definition of analytical units and moving beyond 'most similar' approaches, so that processes of global urban theory-building may be made more uncertain and 'open-ended' by their exposure to a wider variety of diverse empirical urban contexts. To a degree this follows Connell's (2007) advice of taking common themes (e.g. land) across very different (North and South) contexts with a focus on global relationships as a causal factor explaining difference.

Common themes or areas of comparison

Some workshop participants had clear ideas about issues to be compared across contexts. There was a (theory-driven) interest in comparing the limits and potentials of conventional regime and regulation theories, and testing the idea of 'social regime' theory (understanding the city as an interaction of market, state and community/family) to examine how wider structural variations associated with globalisation, in conjunction with the specific historical trajectories of particular cities, are expressed through changing interactions and relations between these three spheres in processes of urban development. Such research needs to weave together 'structure, contingency and complexity' in the description and explanation of urban processes, with an emphasis on geo-historical specificities.

Other participants took local issues

as a starting point. There was interest in understanding historical processes of regime or governance shift, rupture or 'break', and what caused this; and how 'strategic transversal themes' such as land, social conflict, multi-scalar governance, city-regional governance under global restructuring, the formal/informal interface, and the urban/environmental agenda, could be compared across contexts. The question: 'why is it so difficult to reduce inequality in city X' resonated with all participants.

The Observatório Das Metrôpoles (ODM), a national network of Brazilian institutions, has the methodological aim of comparing the different developmental trajectories of Brazilian cities in light of contextual factors relating to globalisation, institutional restructuring, and legislative reform. This approach was deemed particularly useful for analysis of Brazilian cities, which for geo-historical reasons display a massive degree of regional variation, yet are generally affected by similar overarching processes. The focus on 'urban trajectories' allows for the understanding of how contemporary urban changes may be generally similar, yet at the same time cities have particular historical-developmental trajectories which exert a strong influence on how those structural changes manifest in urban settings.

All participants agreed on the need for interdisciplinarity to undertake the comparative task. Disciplinary 'silos', often regionally produced, have stultified the production of knowledge.

The Indian team declared their aim to produce interdisciplinary research that transcends gaps between academia and practice, providing an innovative, contextually grounded, and analytically sound voice in discussions about Indian urban spaces and urbanization. There was general agreement that interdisciplinarity was important for generating knowledge about highly complex urban environments, and for promoting a more holistic and reflexive mode of learning.

The particular issue of comparative cases and teaching

Using comparative cases for teaching and learning was important to everyone. Alternative approaches to educating urban practitioners are particularly necessary in Southern contexts, where outdated (Northern inspired) pedagogical practices often fail to develop professionals with the context-dependent knowledge and intellectual flexibility required to understand and address highly dynamic urban processes. Case-based teaching is one pedagogical approach that has potential to promote a reflective mode of learning, and to foster skills in complex problem solving (see Flyvbjerg 2011).

The workshop provided a useful starting point for a South-South conversation on comparative urban work and a set of institutions keen to collaborate on this. Unfortunately funding has not yet been secured to take this the next step.

Conclusion

Comparative research has not been a central interest in the planning field, but this paper has considered two reasons why it perhaps should be, particularly given the need to refocus on pressing urban issues in global South regions. The first reason has to do with encouraging a 'phronetic' approach to planning which understands action as ethical judgement based on deep situational understanding, and the strategic synthesis of knowledge from a range of informative cases. The second reason is the need to counterbalance Northern dominance in urban research and policy production, which also leaves the global South ill-equipped in terms of conceptual ideas and practices to inform both understanding and action in Southern cities. Here comparative case work has a potential role to play in building new theoretical perspectives from a far wider range of sources than has been available so far.

Footnotes

[1] See Watson (2009a)

[2] Undertaken as part of the Association of African Planning Schools' case study research project

[3] See special issues of *Town Planning Review* 82(1), 2011; *Planning Practice and Research* 27(1), 2012

[4] <http://www.africanplanningschools.org.za/>

[5] <http://africancentreforcities.net/>

[6] Watson (2009b)

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Space: a useless category for historical analysis?

Leif Jerram

It is a commonplace to assert, across a range of disciplines, that there has been a 'spatial turn' in the humanities in the last few years, and that we need to give more attention to space in order to understand the things which interest us. But there are some problems with this 'turn' towards space, not least of which is that few scholars (myself included) explain what they mean by space, or how it operates [1]. And when scholars have reflected on what space is, it is often a dimension of the human imaginary. This limits clarity about what is being analysed, and stalls progress in understanding space in its tracks. This paper is an attempt to bring this confusion out into the open – but not to clear it up!

Potentially, the role of any particular space itself is a mere curiosity – a tautology, embellishing processes originating elsewhere, but not productive of them [2]. It may be that it is easy to accept that space occasionally directs action in a trivial way (people walk on pavements, not on roads), but even to say that

leaves us without a mechanism for how it does so. It may be that the built environment (a particularly conspicuous intervention in space to achieve effects in human society) is largely irrelevant (or at least, secondary) to human actions, mentalities or 'society'. This is a powerful argument (although not impregnable), but if it is correct, we should explain why and then abandon our pretensions that space holds a special key to understanding, and discard the spatial turn. If it is not correct, we need to specify exactly why not. Tough tasks, both.

A confusion of terms

A significant problem is that in academic usage place and space can all refer to many things which often overlap, with the net result that one cannot really be sure what a scholar is talking about. While the two words are often used interchangeably, they *both* are used to refer, in fact, to *two* or more of *three* distinct things:

1. The proximate physical disposition of things in relation to each other and to humans – like walls, streets, motorways, telephones, air-vents, mountains. This is space as meant in the following sentence: 'the lack of space meant four families had to share the same flat, and four people had to live in the same room.' I propose calling this phenomenon, 'space'.

2. The location of things on the earth's surface, and the relationship between those locations, and the scale/density/complexity/distribution of those relationships. This usage uses places to mean locations, and space as a generic universal plane on which locations are situated. This is the sense of space as most geographers mean it: *spacing*, where space is a meaningless vector throughout which things (meanings, items, practices) are distributed [3]. (Though they may also use space to refer to meaning 1.) I propose calling these 'situational' features by names more congruent with their true significance – location, area, distance, density and so on.



3. The values, beliefs, codes and practices that surround a particular location, whether that location is real or imagined – for example: the ways that sleeping arrangements are organised differently in varying cultures; or visions of heaven in different religions; or the ways the Cenotaph in London comes to carry meanings of mourning, nation, monarchy; or the ways the kitchens are characterised as a 'woman's place' [4]. I propose calling this phenomenon 'place'.

To sum up: in my taxonomy, space is material, location is relational or positional, place is meaningful. If we accept this division (even if only as a heuristic device), we will see the occasional rich and fruitful (albeit under-theorised) use of 'place' and location, but the somewhat impoverished (or at least, confusing) use of the word 'space' in much scholarship, my own included. This should stimulate us to think through space more thoroughly, if we are still convinced that it matters, or to ditch it as a term and the 'turn' if we are not.



The idea, though, that 'space' can have a meaning is not helpful to effective spatial analysis, because it rests on a crass anthropomorphisation. The problematic anthropomorphisation of space can be highlighted by looking at the two images below, and reflecting on the ways scholars sometimes talk about spaces with human, cultural or social qualities: in this case, 'gay space'. [5] (There are so many anthropomorphised 'spaces' in scholarship – gendered, capitalist, sacred, dangerous, safe, colonial – the list is long.) One is a picture of a gay bar in contemporary Manchester, the other is of a straight bar in the same city.

Looking at the space in each photo, is it possible to tell which is which is a 'gay space' and which is a 'straight space'? Without the information provided by the people in it, can one detect either a gay space, or a straight one *from the space*? No. Only by an act of bold anthropomorphism, reading onto a set of things (spaces) a quality they could not possibly possess (sexuality), can one ascribe a sexuality

to the space itself. Far too often in the spatial turn, knowledge generated from humans (in this case, about the sexuality of people in a bar) is read into or onto a space, and then read back off the space as if the space itself were the source of the knowledge. The real challenge seems to be to me to ask whether we can gather data about a space, and work out how we can (or if we can) apply it to the people there. If we cannot, then really, there hasn't been a 'spatial turn'; there's just been a co-opting of spaces into the cultural turn, neutering them as material objects.

The value of place

The situation with the word 'place' is marginally better, though there are some confusing linguistic overlaps to bring to consciousness here too. Place is used sometimes to refer to location, but sometimes to something quite different – the qualities, practices, beliefs, representations and symbols that humans cluster at that location. While most geographers use 'place' to mean 'location', they

Images: Two bars in Manchester: One is 'straight', one is 'gay'. Is it possible to detect from the space which one is which? Or is the sexuality of the space an anthropomorphism?

tend also to mean the values, symbols, performances, habits and meanings associated with that location too. Geographer Tim Cresswell states, '[p]laces have space between them', implying that 'place' is like a point on a map, and that space is a void between things [6]. But as Cresswell also demonstrates clearly in his work, there is a consensus about the performative and cultural aspects of place amongst geographers:

'[T]he majority of writing about place focuses on the realm of meaning and experience. Place is how we make the world meaningful and the way we experience the world. Place, at a basic level, is space invested with meaning' [7].

Drawing on a phenomenological philosophical tradition reaching back through Merleau-Ponty, to Heidegger, Husserl and Kant, and beyond, 'place' has come to be seen by many scholars as a structuring precondition of human consciousness and being in the world [8]. Phenomenological approaches reason that to be conscious is to be conscious of something else other than the consciousness-forming organ, and that the first thing of which a human is conscious is its environment. This approach emphasises that being and consciousness implicitly mean being somewhere, and being conscious of being somewhere, simultaneously. In short, 'to be' is 'to be in place', and therefore any account of being (or experience or memory) without place would be insufficient, incomplete and problematic.

Some scholars, urban cultural historians included, have been particularly effective at capturing the 'emplaced' natures of their subjects, albeit usually without much theoretical underpinning. But they have also unwittingly engaged with another key concern of geographers: the ways that handling multiple locations offers a method to highlight plural simultaneities, rather than flattening the diversity of human experience into one, coherent 'moment'.

Scholars' usage of plural sites to construct parallel narratives actions, albeit usually unconsciously, address some of the most potent arguments of influential geographer, Doreen Massey. For Massey, engaging with a pluralism of locations is a way of overcoming the 'prison-house of synchrony', and opening up a world of plural, dynamic, simultaneity, to reach the conclusion that difference exists and we do not need to correct for it, but rather, embrace it [9]. But while her work is entitled *For Space*, space again appears here as a meaningless void to coordinate the relationships of particular sites. A more accurate descriptive title of the work would be *For Location*. Bringing both the emplacement of experience and the plurality and inter-relatedness of sites and locations into our work (where it is not there) would liberate us from a certain chronological and spatial 'flatness' or homogenisation which can often appear, especially in chronological and geographical taxonomic categories like 'contemporary' or 'Britain'.

A fractured whole. Or, can the space speak?

The interchangeability of space and place in much writing is not always accidental. It relates to a deliberate set of elisions, and one which reinforces the incapacity that we have to describe space materially. In doing the research for this article, I was surprised by the almost visceral a priori assertions of holism that I encountered [10]. Historian Patrick Joyce and social theorist Tony Bennett recently stated that:

'The crucial intellectual move... is one that turns towards... the erasure of familiar conceptual distinctions between the natural and the social, the human and the non-human, and the material and the cultural, divisions that are all in the first place predicated on the immaterial/material divide' [11].

This type of conclusion is widespread. Joyce and Bennett argue that this holism is an important innovation, but in fact, it can be found in thinking about sites for some 40 or so years, with the net effect that it is rare that spaces are described in their material forms, or in a non-anthropomorphic vocabulary. This holism is vibrant, assertive, and longstanding, and permeates the literature on space and place.

Henri Lefebvre is perhaps the heaviest of heavy hands on the shoulders of discussions about space, and a longstanding apostle of holism. Binary theories, he argued, which posit a res

cogitans and a res extensa, imply a 'dualism which is entirely mental, and strips everything which makes for living activity from life, thought and society (i.e. from the physical, mental and social, as from the lived, perceived and conceived)' [12]. So he argued that to view these things as dual was itself an illusion produced by the human mind, just as Joyce and Bennett would do forty or so years later: It is something of a caricature, but his famous tripartite division of space into spatial practice, representations of space, and representational space offers one system of people doing things, and two systems of people representing things. But no things [13]. All materiality is elided into the mental (symbolic) or bodily (people doing things) world – explicitly so: 'in absolute [physical] space the absolute has no place, for otherwise it would be a "non-place"' [14].

Leading scholars in many disciplines have concurred in this a priori holism, at least in the attempt to overcome a divide between the internal and the external [15]. They have 'reject[ed] the division between inner and outer worlds – respectively of mind and matter, meaning and substance' [16]. Some have gone as far as to propose a new category to defeat the problems of thinking about the world in terms of the cultural/social and the material, like geographer Ed Soja proposing a whole new category of analysis: *thirdspace* [17]. The interplay of two measurables (or studiables) has to be profitable to scholarship; but eliding them into a new whole, *thirdspace*, again marginalises

materiality by denying it a legitimate language. Materiality is exceptionally marginal in this model, if it exists at all. Poverty and wealth are two mutually constitutive phenomena, producing each other in a network, but few in the humanities would say that scholars cannot focus on studying one of them. And few would insist that the network was labile and contingent. We need to find a way that acknowledges the dialectical relationship between mind and matter, but acknowledges that to understand the relationship, we need to understand the partners in it better, and that some things are relatively stable and hard to change.

The title to this section cheekily borrows Gyatri Chakravorty Spivak's question, 'Can the subaltern speak?', and deliberately so [18]. In her seminal essay, Chakravorty Spivak proposes that the structure of knowledge with which modern scholars work emerged in a particular time (the nineteenth century) and location (Europe), which means that the structure of knowledge has been designed so that one perspective frames all possible discourses. Words may come from a colonised subject, but they are expressed only in terms allowed by the colonising culture. We have reached the same point with words and space. We have so privileged the word since the cultural turn that matter has become almost immaterial [19].

How, then, might spaces be brought to speak? Central to resolving our capacity to tackle space will be a fair amount of intellectual work and

debate about materiality. Many of the difficulties of materiality point the scholar back to a particularly fertile area of its discussion: science and technology studies, and it is on this field that I wish to conclude. Latour's model of the network of actors, some human, some not, is important, albeit problematic. Science and technology studies have been significant in advancing theories or models of agency which transcend conventional models. In one of his most accessible and stimulating essays on matter, Latour proposes something of a 'democratisation' of who and what can act, suggesting we look for the 'missing masses' of the world, but only inasmuch as we accept a model of a network or group as something profoundly unstable and contingent [20]. But if one is to posit a world of networks, then however labile and contingent the network might be, it behoves us to attend to the points between which we see human experience taking place (and which are not so unstable or contingent), in order to work up to the network as a whole. Starting with the whole, and not the parts, can risk being too mystical.

Yet the recent willingness to think about what things do is not without its problems, partly because of the 'culture of holism' discussed above, and partly because as scholars we struggle to explain the influence of matter while distancing ourselves from determinism. Latour's insistence that objects can author actions is promising, but with the tendency to argue that agency and structure

be collapsed into 'hybrid' forms, all those things which are 'culture and nature', he once again overcomes the distinction between the world out there, and the world in here, by collapsing it [21]. Once collapsed like this, its existence must then be re-established, on what must be, in my view, far less useful foundations (although they may be intellectually more pure). I do not wish to argue that the immaterial lives of things do not matter; only that in our unremitting emphasis on them and their contingency on more fluid human perceptions since the cultural turn, we preclude a vocabulary – let alone a theory – to talk about materiality an sich. There are many scholars in the field of science studies who offer us pointers – I will focus on just one.

Thomas Gieryn is a sociologist who is interested in how space and place are used in science. In his article 'What Buildings Do', he expands on the materiality of buildings [22]. Gieryn's way out of the problem of matter is one which is surprisingly useful to historians, not least because of its micro-periodisation. In exploring the life of a building he proposes a tipping point, when infinite malleability takes on a solid form which is not immutable, but very hard to change – one might add, just as class and gender and sexuality are always mutable, but rarely mutate in an easy or convenient way to people possessing them. He explains: 'Some designs get built. What once was a malleable plan – an unsettled thing pushed in different

directions by competing interests during negotiation and compromise – now attains stability. Many possibilities become one actuality. Constructivists use the term "closure" to describe the transition of plastic plans into obdurate machines or buildings. The resulting "black box" secures a material artefact and those social relations now built into its design. Once sealed shut, machines are capable of steering social action in ways not always meaningfully apprehended by actors or necessarily congruent with their interests or values' [23].

As historians, we have a potent set of chronological phases here for a scholarly practice that starts to engage with buildings, as some of the most conspicuous instances of the genuine production of space. First, we can attend to all the cultural, symbolic and performative processes by which certain spaces come to be configured, used and valued in the way that they are – i.e., place as I have defined it. But then we reach a problem, and one which will require substantial work to overcome: closure. Thereafter, it becomes remarkably difficult (though not impossible) to adapt the 'thing', and thereafter the material artefact in all its complexity 'configures the user', in the language of science studies. But how?

If we are content to view a building (or a motorway, a house, an estate or a colony) as a material artefact 'capable of steering social action in ways not always meaningfully apprehended by actors', then we need

to start the long, slow process of asking (and theorising):

1. How that steering might happen. What is doing what to what – and whom? What is the mechanism of action, the line of reasoning that runs from spatial cause human effect?
2. How scholars might meaningfully apprehend it, if users cannot.
3. What evidence might be discoverable and admissible to address the problem.

Alternatively, if we do not accept that a material artefact (a space) is capable of doing this, we need to stop claiming we are writing about space, and admit we are writing about an often under-theorized place (at best), or just human actions and beliefs. Pursuing the tantalising offering of a world where 'things' do, would mean abandoning, even only briefly or heuristically, our attempts to erase the nature/nurture dichotomy and asking what new types of evidence are out there and how we might handle them. We would then, having found the matter and studied it, be able to explain more clearly the relationships (networks) in which a space sits; we could, if we chose, resume the quest for holism on a surer footing. Alternatively, we might reject the 'spatial turn' as the emperor's new clothes. But if we genuinely believe that where we are does not in any way shape how we live (or think or love or play or socialise or have sex), that position too needs some uncomfortable theorisation. From

academics acutely sensitive to where their offices are or how their homes are arranged, this would be a tall order indeed.

Footnotes

[1] See in particular Leif Jerram, *Streetlife: The Untold Story of Europe's Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 2011), *Germany's Other Modernity: Munich and the Building of Metropolis* (Manchester, 2007); 'Kitchen Sink Dramas: Women, Modernity and Space in Weimar Germany', *Cultural Geographies* 13 (2006), 538-556.

[2] This is a well-established view. See, for example, the work of David Harvey on Paris's fabric and the capitalist system – most recently, *Paris: Capital of Modernity* (London, 2005), or Loïc Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts: A Comparative Sociology of Advanced Marginality* (Cambridge).

[3] See, for example: Eric Sheppard, 'The Spaces and Times of Globalization: Place, Scale, Networks and Positionality', *Economic Geography* 3 (2002), 307-330; Doreen Massey, 'A Global Sense of Place' in T. Barnes and D. Gregory (eds.), *Reading Human Geography* (London, 1997), 315-323; *For Space* (London, 2005), 81-143; Nigel Thrift, 'From Born to Made: Technology, Biology and Space', *Transactions of the Institute of British Geographers* 30 (2005), 463-476; Jonathan Murdoch, *Post-Structuralist Geography* (London, 2006); Anthony Giddens (borrowing from Hägerstrand), *The Constitution of Society: An Outline of a Theory of*

Structuration (London, 1986), 110-158. It's as if space is to geographers what chronology (or time) is to historians: meaningless in itself, but useful for sorting. If this is the case, organising a scholarly 'turn' around a meaningless thing does not look wise.

[4] This tripartite division resembles that in Thomas Gieryn, 'A Space for Place in Sociology', *Annual Review of Sociology* 26 (2000), 463-496, but queries the definitions offered there.

[5] 'Gay space' or 'queer space' is but one of a variety of ways that scholars give human qualities to spaces. Many scholars have discussed gay space. See, for example: Gavin Brown, 'Listening to Queer Maps of the City: Gay Men's Narratives of Pleasure and Danger in London's East End', *Oral History* 1 (2001), 48-61; Scott Gunther, 'Building a More Stately Closet: French Gay Movements since the Early 1980s', *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 3 (2004), 326-347.

[6] Tim Cresswell, *Place: A Short Introduction* (Oxford, 2004), 5.

[7] Cresswell, *Place*, 5, 12.

[8] Some influential scholars who have surveyed this trend, and contributed to it, would be Tim Ingold, *The Perception of the Environment: Essays in Livelihood, Dwelling and Skill* (London, 2000) esp. 157-171; Yi-Fu Tuan, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes and Values* (New York, 1974); *Space and Place: The Perspective of Experience* (London, 1977); Edward Relph, *Place*

and Placelessness (London, 1976); Marc Augé, *Non-Places: An Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (London, 2009 [Paris, 1992]); Daniel Miller, *Stuff* (London, 2010); *The Comfort of Things* (Cambridge, 2008); Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (London, 1988), 117-8; Edward Casey, *The Fate of Place: A Philosophical History* (London, 1997), 202-285; Samuel Todes, *Body and World* (Cambridge, MA, 2001); Philip Ethington, 'Placing the Past: Groundwork for a Spatial Theory of History', *Rethinking History* 4 (2007), 465-493.

[9] Doreen Massey, *For Space* (London, 2005), 36-47, 81-104.

[10] See, for example, Tim Ingold's positively Damascene account: *Perception of the Environment*, 3.

[11] Patrick Joyce and Tony Bennett, Intro, p. 4.

[12] Henri Lefebvre, *The Production of Space* (Oxford, 1991 [Paris, 1974]), 39.

[13] Lefebvre, *Production*, 39.

[14] Lefebvre, *Production*, 35.

[15] For example: Ingold, *Perception*, 3, 191; De Certeau, *Practice of Everyday Life*, 35-6; Nigel Thrift, *Non-Representational Theory: Space, Politics, Affect* (Abingdon, 2008); Pierre Bourdieu, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste* (London, 1984 [Paris, 1979]), 466-482.

[16] Ingold, *Perception*, 191.

[17] Edward Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Oxford, 1996), 6.

[18] Gyatri Chakravorty Spivak, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', in C. Nelson and L. Grossberg (eds.), *Marxism and the Interpretation of Culture* (Basingstoke, 1988), 271-313.

[19] For an interesting discussion of some of these issues, see Loretta

Lees, 'Rematerializing Geography: the "New" Urban Geography', *Progress in Human Geography*, 1 (2002), 101-112; 'A "Building Event of Fear": Thinking through the Geography of Architecture', *Social and Cultural Geography* 2 (2011), 107-122.

[20] Bruno Latour, 'Where are the Missing Masses? The Sociology of a Few Mundane Artifacts', in Wiebe Bijker and John Law (eds.), *Shaping Technology/Building Society: Studies in*

Sociotechnical Change (Cambridge, MA, 1992), 225-258.

[21] See for example the way the material kilogramme has a hybridity immediately imposed on it in Latour, *Reassembling the Social*, 228.

[22] Thomas Gieryn, 'What Buildings Do', *Theory and Society* 34 (2002), 35-74.

[23] Gieryn, 'What Buildings Do', 43.

From expected to unexpected comparisons

Garth Myers

Introduction

I have conducted three major projects of comparative urban research in cities in Africa. The first compared the legacies of British colonial planning in four cities, the second addressed policy connectivities in urban environmental governance in three cities, and the third examined five comparable themes across more than a dozen cities on the continent. I am now beginning a comparative urban project working from African cities back to US cities. In this paper, I want to explore what changes when one shifts from intra-regional comparative urban studies to the arena of research exploring common ground and reciprocal idea flows between Global North and Global South urban context, but let me begin with the rationale for my previous projects.

The expected comparison

One profound problem confronting urban geography is that of where to start on our journey toward comparative urban studies. As Jenny

Robinson has shown, urban studies has carried a legacy of dividing the world into types of cities forward into the contemporary era of globalization and increased interconnectivity, and these divides have serious consequences (Robinson 2006, 2011). What they often mean is that scholarship gets divided by world regions, and by economic or ideological categorizations into developed/developing world, 1st/3rd world, or, indeed, Global North and South. Robinson (2011: 2) further notes that ‘when comparisons are undertaken, they are highly circumscribed in the range of cities attended to.’ Her criticisms are largely aimed at urban studies in the developed/1st/North side of the divide in the literature, but my own comparative work largely falls along lines she critiques: I have done the expected, circumscribed comparisons.

I am trained in African studies, and I have largely studied cities in Africa. When it came time to write my first three books, in each case I stayed within this regional zonation, albeit

growing somewhat more ambitious with each step. The first book examined policy circulations and the personal interconnections of planners and architects for Nairobi, Lusaka, Zanzibar and Lilongwe, as a means of analyzing British colonialism’s legacies. All of the cities are relatively close to each other, and their stories are fairly intimately intertwined. Although I read broadly to write the book, I confess to having had little ambition to speak to the Western-oriented field of ‘urban studies.’

To my surprise, the book registered significantly with non-Africa focused urbanists. This broader reaction led me to rethink my scope of expectations in my second book. While I again stayed within an African realm of research comfort, comparing Lusaka, Dar es Salaam, and Zanzibar, my comparison analyzed a United Nations program in 45 cities around the world, the Sustainable Cities Program. I critiqued the program’s failings in economic, political, environmental and cultural terms applicable across these 45

cities. I emphatically brought a heavily empirical dimension into the formulation. Specifically, I found that nearly everywhere the program’s policy priority was solid waste management. I showed in *Disposable Cities* that neoliberal economic policies, good governance and democratization, sustainability discourse, and a politics of cultural difference lay intertwined at the roots of SCP’s failures. The book’s critique of neoliberalism and sustainability discourse are comparatively global. I followed many scholars of Global South urbanism, in demanding ‘that the cities they study deserve wider consideration in theoretical analysis’ (Robinson 2011: 4) in light of post-colonial critiques of urban studies. Still, I was doing the expected thing, making a plea for African distinctiveness, examining cities largely through a developmentalist lens (Robinson 2006, 2011); the effort might be charged with parochialism.

My third book ratcheted up comparative ambitions to overcome the pitfalls of potential parochialism

and to use a broad regionalist comparativism to speak back to dominant universalisms on global urbanism. My personal motivations are hidden in the acknowledgments. At a Kansas geography faculty meeting in 2000, the department wanted to axe a class called ‘Advanced Urban Geography’ for apparent lack of faculty expertise:

‘I sheepishly suggested that, actually, I could teach this course. In the days that followed... I started to trace out why I would not have been thought of – or have thought of myself – as an urban geographer. In graduate school, ... somehow, somewhere in the subliminal messages of my trip through the ‘LA School’ of urban studies... my urban geography credentials earned an asterisk... even in my own head, because I studied cities in Africa. This is a book about removing the asterisk’ (Myers 2011: xi).

With one of my mentors as foil, I ask, in my first chapter, ‘‘What if the postmetropolis is Lusaka?’’

What happens if we place cities like Lusaka ‘‘in the center of urban studies instead’’ of the margins (Myers 2011: 24)? I’m not convinced the comparative narrative evaluating themes – postcoloniality, informality, governance, violence and cosmopolitanism – across case studies from Accra to Zanzibar answered that question. But the book shares one key asterisk-removing conclusion with Maliq Simone (2010: 15), in his insistence that cities of the global North and South ‘move toward’ each other ‘... in gestures and inclinations shaped by the search for economic and political strategies that enhance their ‘normalization’ as viable cities according to standards still largely shaped by occidental notions of modernity.’ I point to future research that might study that movement toward one another starting from Africa, moving to the West, in other words ‘to put African cities at the center from the outset, to start from there, unapologetically’ in a way that might ‘lead to global rethinking of ... all the stuff of urban geography’ (Myers 2011: 197). Let me explore doing this



Image – Nairobi. Courtesy of DoctorWho on Flickr

re-centering below, on a journey from cities in Africa to the city in which I now work, Hartford, Connecticut, as a brief thought experiment.

The unexpected comparison

My first premise is that American cities can learn from African cities. In most urban studies, that premise is reversed – the unspoken assumption is that African cities can learn from American or European cities. A growing set of exceptions exists to the trend of seeing cities in Africa as not-quite-cities, but the stars of urban studies still seldom reference Africa, or they put its cities in footnotes and margins, or – as Saskia Sassen did in her “Honorary Geographer” lecture at the 2012 AAG meetings – they use superficial snapshots from intellectual safaris there to drum up some Afro-pessimism for the masses. In so doing, they miss opportunities for seeing African cities as important sites of global processes or generators of urban stories worth telling and learning from.

I don't want to further chastise such scholars for missing the point about cities in Africa. Instead, I wonder how the multifaceted urbanity in African contexts might be of value to global understanding of urbanism, as a starting place for those whose focus may not be on Africa. Specifically, I want to explore how divided cities in Africa move toward becoming inclusive cities – looking at what works and what doesn't, as part of valuing alternative visions of urban theory and urban practices from Africa. If the

stereotypes and generalizations are to be believed, cities in Africa are deeply poor and divided – so why aren't these the cities we study from the get-go to understand urban divides and how to overcome them? Let's start from divided African cities to work back to Hartford, and not the other way round (Beall, et al. 2002).

I'll start in Nairobi, Kenya, with the UN Habitat, an important force in re-centering the vision of urban studies. Particularly under Executive Director Anna Tibaijuka (2000 to 2010), Habitat emerged as a voice for reshaping urban policy across the globe toward a more inclusive city. Might Habitat's (2008) *State of the World's Cities 2010/2011: Bridging the Urban Divide*, for example, provide a baseline from Africa for what makes a city 'divided' and what can make it 'inclusive'? Might this be an appropriate baseline for approaching Hartford? In her introduction to this book, Tibaijuka contended that 'achieving sustainable development is likely to prove impossible if the urban divide is allowed not only to persist but to continue growing, opening up... in some cities a gulf, an open wound, which can produce social instability' (UN Habitat 2008: iv).

Habitat divided the divide, if you will, into four divisions - the economic, spatial, opportunity, and social divides. Let me just examine the first two. The economic divide is defined mainly in terms of income inequality, via the Gini coefficient, classifying urban income inequality at the national and individual city scale across the world,

from Group 1's 'low inequality' (scores below 0.3) to Group 6's 'extremely high inequality' (scores above 0.6). The UN only lists three countries in Group 6; all three are in southern Africa – Namibia, South Africa, and Zambia. Another five African countries belong to Group 5, with 'very high inequality' (Gini coefficients above 0.50). The report largely excludes North America and Western Europe – except for a boxed discussion of US cities and their 'legacy of deep divides,' which notes the high Gini coefficients of US urban areas (UN Habitat 2008: 80). The highest US Gini coefficient of urban income inequality belongs to Bridgeport, Connecticut, down the road from Hartford, at 0.542, comparable to Nairobi, Abidjan or Accra; Connecticut is home to 4 of the 5 worst US Metropolitan Statistical Areas for income inequality (Hero 2009). While the Gini coefficient for Hartford is slightly lower, at 0.456 (Hero 2009), the Brookings Institution recently calculated Hartford as the world's richest metropolitan area by GDP/capita (Istrate et al. 2012: 6), when it also has the 2nd-worst percentage of children living in poverty of any US city (Simmons 2008). Clearly Hartford is a city of the sorts of dramatic economic contrasts that southern African cities have long had (Sacks 2008).

The spatial divide is a more multifaceted manifestation of urban divisions. What Habitat refers to as the 'stark segregation between rich and poor' creates a 'poverty trap': people in the city's poor parts experience

a vicious combination of severe job restrictions, gender disparities, worsening living conditions, social exclusion, lack of social interaction, and a high incidence of crime (UN Habitat 2008: 82). These geographical disparities are compounded by intangible deprivations that 'reinforce the spatial divide' – e.g. assumptions about criminality (UN Habitat 2008: 89). This is a pitch-perfect description of my city.

With all four of their divide-types, Habitat portrays the situation as bleakest in Africa, but given the enormous wealth of Connecticut (the richest US state) and the deprivation in its inner cities – amply displayed in metropolitan Hartford - these divides are more shocking than the gulf from, say, Constantia to Khayelitsha in Cape Town, or Mathare to Muthaiga in Nairobi. The most excluded and underprivileged groups in the seven African cities in Habitat's world remain the poorest of the poor - disabled, homeless slum dwellers and the elderly - after more than a decade of policy emphasis on enhancing the rights and capabilities of these groups in those cities. One could easily tell a similar narrative in Hartford, America's 'Insurance City' ... where more than half of children lack health insurance coverage (Simmons 2008).

To counter the persistence of barriers to inclusivity, UN Habitat advocated five steps to an inclusive city and laid out "five levers of inclusiveness". There are some tangible elements to these steps and levers, and a lot to like in Habitat's cogent analysis of

causes of urban divides, with great relevance to Hartford. But when it turns to proscriptions for making cities inclusive, it resorts to toothless bureaucracy-speak.

So we might make more headway toward an African-origin idea of what to do about America's urban divides by examining the work of urban theorists who embrace the messy, unplanned, often incoherent and complicated vibe from cities in Africa, a vibe that seems to pulse a few blocks away from my office, on Park Street in Hartford's Frog Hollow neighborhood. For one instance; in Edgar Pieterse's (2008) *City Futures: Confronting the Crisis of Urban Development*, he spends more than one-fourth of the book critiquing Habitat's core policy agendas and programs that claim to be about making cities more inclusive, fostering participation, democracy, deliberation, and popular consensus in urban planning and urban development. The core of his critique centers on three flawed assumptions these programs, strategies and campaigns have. These are, first, that "a shared vision of the future is definable through deliberation and negotiation between various... stakeholders" in a city; second, that 'a well-structured process... of dialogue will lead to... a 'rational consensus'', and third, that "the diverse and wide-ranging challenges facing the city are knowable... and can be broken down into discrete parcels... to inform... interventions' (Pieterse 2008: 73-74). Cities are far more complex, dynamic and unpredictable than Habitat's style

of thinking or planning allows for, and shared visions or rational consensus prove unlikely in what Pieterse (2008: 78) calls 'a context of deep social cleavages and structural inequalities.' Perhaps as a result of his own frustration with planning practice in post-apartheid South Africa, Pieterse (2010: 205) more recently decried 'the preponderance of policy-oriented research on the development challenges and absences of African cities, as opposed to a more rounded theorization of urban life (urbanism) or cityness.' Hartford needs this kind of rounded theorization as much as, or more than, Dar es Salaam or Cape Town.

Pieterse (2010: 206) says it is 'simply wrong' to expect a 'rational policy fix' to Africa's urban divides, given the vast ignorance which exists about how Africans live in cities, how Africans produce space and urban sociality. Yet even while dealing with these philosophical or theoretical issues Pieterse (2008) still brings us closer to issues of real concern to a city like Hartford than the Habitat book, in his model of how urban development practitioners (state, private sector, or civil society actors) work through five domains of political engagement toward a 'relational city.' By 'relational' cities, Pieterse (2008: 106) means ones that have a fuller understanding of the 'plurality of action spaces,' where the broad and quite varied collection of actors in urban development engage with one another across divides between 'formal and informal, symbolic and concrete, collaborative

and contestatory.' Pieterse (2008: 106) hopes to incite "more comprehensive analytical accounts of political practices in the city" through examination of representative politics, stakeholder forums, direct action, grassroots development, and symbolic politics. Before any sort of remapping of urban policies for any specific city, he argues (following Robinson, Parnell, and others) we need to 'produce a more patient, in-depth and nuanced account of the mobile, diverse and complex socialities that form and reform at the intersection of multiple identities, spaces, networks and imaginary registers' (Pieterse 2010: 209). This sort of relational approach to studying urban practice is essential if one is to grasp the 'multiplexity' embedded in African cities (Pieterse 2008: 87), and it has great potential utility in analyzing a city like Hartford.

The list is long of 21st century African cities which provide us with possible examples for further analysis of the social life and relationality of divided cities, or paths for remaking the divides toward inclusivity. South Africa's cities have embarked on arguably the world's most ambitious program of undoing division, in attempting to remake apartheid's urban geography. UN Habitat highlights how South African cities managed to reduce, slightly, their world-worst Gini coefficients, bring tens of thousands of people out of slums, and produce mechanisms for political empowerment and racial inclusion. Pieterse (2008, 2010) points us in a different and more honest direction. While acknowledging that

there are policy gains within the post-apartheid city, he hones in on the pervasive violence of everyday life for the urban poor; and the multiple disconnections and political-cultural misunderstandings which define cityness for them (Pieterse 2010). Yet he has supported the activist, community-based program for Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading in Khayelitsha, which worked through many principles he espouses and reduced violent crime by 40% while improving the neighborhood.

It would be possible to draw further contrasting images from a Tibajuka vision and a Pieterse vision, if you will, of urban dynamics for contemporary Nairobi, Cairo, Abidjan, Kinshasa, Dakar, or Tripoli. But most of my research has been in Tanzania, and so allow me to use Dar es Salaam, where Tibajuka now works and resides, as my last comparative starting place. Dar es Salaam served as the global pilot city for Habitat's SCP, and, by way of contrast with Connecticut cities, lands in Habitat's 'low income inequality' group, with a Gini coefficient of 0.30. Wouldn't a study of how it became a more inclusive city, or of engaging with understanding Tanzanian cityness and how it might develop deeper democratic practice, have lessons for Hartford? Despite a huge gap between government, elites, and donors on the one hand, and the urban poor on the other, any vision of Dar as dystopia hides nuances of governance in everyday life, the 'cityness' that Pieterse wants us to focus on. What would planning look

like if it built from the conversations and dialogue that define day-to-day neighborly interaction, institutionalizing what I term Tanzania's 'sisi-kwa-sisi' (us-for-us) system of social interaction, the neighborliness and reciprocity which people seek to deploy in obtaining services?

Conclusion

How can Hartford learn from Dar es Salaam, or Cape Town? Does Hartford have its version of a sisi-kwa-sisi cityness? What are the experiments, 'trial balloons' and popular cultural possibilities for making peripheralized citizens of Hartford part of inclusive, relational cities (Simone 2010: 314-16)? The violence in and around the vicinity of my college's neighborhood in 2011-12 provides palpable, tangible reasons for urgency in attaining inclusivity and relationality. It is worthwhile for Trinity and Hartford to examine the experiences of Cape Town's Violence Prevention through Urban Upgrading program. The hallmarks of this program include vigorous public participation, engaged citizenship, rigorous adherence to principles of trust and accountability, and balancing socio-economic development with crime prevention. Similarly, the ambitious and contentious story of Dar's Rapid Transit busway presages what is beginning to transpire with the billion-dollar plans of the Hartford Rapid Transit busway, in ways that behoove scholars of urban development to seek lessons for Hartford from the Dar case. The last thing I would ever want to suggest

is that these African programs are unvarnished successes to be cut out of the Cape Flats or Kinondoni and plunked down on top of Frog Hollow. I'm mindful of Pieterse's critique of Habitat for assumptions that we can define a shared vision of a city, that dialogue will lead to a rational consensus, or that we can really know a city's challenges and break them down into neat little parcels and tick off solutions. Cities are always in the process of becoming. Perhaps the greatest lesson cities in Africa may have for a city like Hartford is to never lose sight of the fluid, flexible, undetermined, non-linear, ever-changing, unpredictable and surprising things that await us around any corner in a city.

More straightforwardly, this thought experiment of reversing the flow of intellectual authority in comparative urbanism suggests three themes for our research. First, while it may make a political point, it is not thoroughly necessary to start the discussion from cities in Africa, or the Global South – the key contention is more about placing cities on a level analytical plain in comparative studies. Second, one vital avenue of commensurable comparability is that of the mobility and circulation of urban policy – in my experiment here, interesting questions surround what is going on to turn so many seemingly very different cities toward the prevention of violence through landscape architecture or toward the Curitibaization of public bus systems, rather than a simple turning-round of the telescope to look from African

contexts onto Connecticut. However, my third suggestion is that this sort of more comprehensive and multi-regional comparison is only possible to carry forward with any meaningful sophistication via broad, multi-cultural research teams and networks of researchers.

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Urban perspectives of the world

Jan Nijman

I

About twelve years ago, during a lecture at the Indian Institute for Technology in Mumbai, I was confronted with a question from the audience as to 'where Mumbai ranks among world cities' (the lecture was not about that topic and the question came out of left field). This was just over a decade ago, and the city hardly figured in any of the existing studies at that point. I remember trying to bring the news gently but to no avail. The audience was taken aback by what they considered a striking lack of appreciation by 'world city scholars' of Mumbai's 'obvious' significance as the economic capital of a country with nearly one-sixth of humanity. While I was not ready to submit to the biases of local city boosters, I vividly remember feeling compelled to rethink the validity of world city theory. As the audience would have it, surely something was wrong with it.

About six months later, I gave a talk at UCLA and I reiterated my experience in Mumbai. The reaction of the

audience there was, as I recall, quite blunt: surely we should not let our understanding of the urban world be influenced by the subjective views of Mumbaikars?! I was left somewhat frustrated with this point of discussion because, at the time, I could not quite articulate what I felt was the crux of the issue and why it mattered. But in hindsight it did become more clear, and it actually was not that simple.

While it is not necessarily true that all knowledge is local, there is a good deal of truth to the point that world-views are – from Mumbai to Los Angeles. There is no such thing as a view from nowhere. The fascinating confluence of urban studies and globalization studies exhibits this inherent tension between the 'local' and the 'global' – not just in terms of broad perspectives but also in terms of methodological approaches. It is especially manifest in the hugely interesting and important concept of the 'global urban network' which is a lot easier to theorize than to circumscribe empirically. They are almost without exception constructed

from 'the' center outwards, i.e., London, or New York or other cities centrally placed on the mental maps of (predominantly western) scholars. And, almost by definition, other cities in the world then appear on the map on the basis of their importance to that center. It is bias, systematized.

From an empirical, methodological point of view, the global urban network (if we want it to carry a semblance to reality) must be constructed from 'the ground up', node by node, dyad by dyad, flow by flow. To be sure, it would involve an outrageous amount of localized data collection across the globe. Imagine, for a moment, that Mumbai were not at all connected to Europe or to the USA but it would still be urban centre to all of India – wouldn't it still matter on the global stage, even as the main node of a 'global subdivision'?

World-views, whether espoused in LA, Mumbai, or Amsterdam, are intrinsically biased. But if it is really the global that we are interested in, then a billion people can't be wrong.

II

Let us explore the changing corporate geographies of cities in the less-developed world in the context of economic globalization. We argue that the internal spatial structure of such cities can be understood in terms of their evolving roles in the wider-world political economy. Cities differ in the ways they are linked to the external economy. This differentiation is as much a function of the idiosyncratic features of the city as a place and location as it is of developments in the global economy. Let us concentrate on the latter and let us do so from a historical political-economy perspective.

We conceptualize the broader spatial context of cities in terms of a political economy because (sub) national government policies determine, to a large degree, the exposure of the urban arena to global economic forces. Many cities in the less-developed world have moved through distinct historical phases: indigenous, colonial, national, and global. The

global era is the most recent phase of restructuring. During each of these phases, urban geographies have changed in relation to the role of the cities in the global political economy.

We concentrate the investigation on two cities: Accra and Mumbai. A parallel study of urban change in two different cities in different settings helps to move beyond description and exceptionalism and allows some degree of generalization. This is a useful comparison because Mumbai and Accra have similar political-economic histories and presently both can be seen as gateway (port) cities; but they are entirely different in terms of cultural settings, size, and regional location.

The analysis is based on extensive parallel fieldwork and data collection in Accra and Mumbai between 1998 and 2000 on foreign and domestic corporations—their year of establishment, main activity, their 'reach', location, size, and so on. The analysis is carried out in relation to the rapid changes at that time

(and continuing today) as a result of national (!) liberalization policies that also affect these cities' global connections.

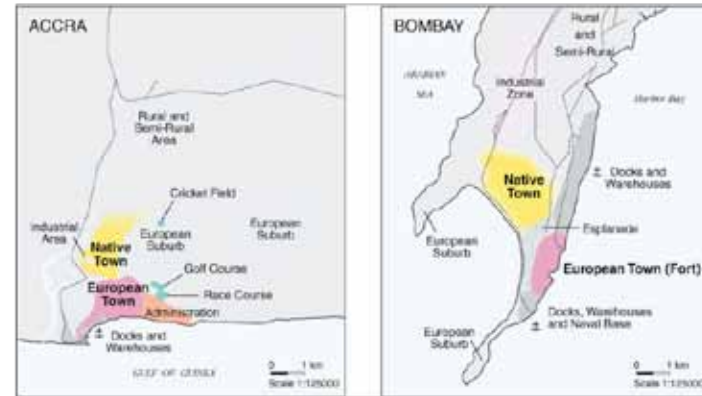
A parallel investigation guided by a single theoretical framework helps to avoid both structural determinism and localist empiricism. The conceptual framework may be summarized with the following series of propositions:

1. The internal spatial organization of gateway cities in the less-developed world is in part a reflection of the city's role in the global political economy.
2. The pre-colonial phase and the national phase are characterized by relative insulation from the global economy. At these times, urban form was in large measure determined in local and national contexts.
3. In contrast, the colonial phase and the global phase are characterized by a relatively high degree of connectivity to the global economy, with a powerful imprint on the urban landscape. This imprint is essentially reflected in a spatially delineated

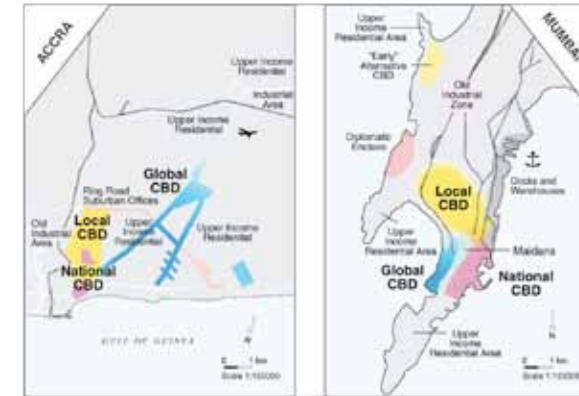


Image – Miami. Courtesy of humbertomoreno on Flickr

A schematic representation of the economic geographies of Accra and Bombay during the colonial phase.



A schematic representation of the economic geographies of Accra and Mumbai during the global phase.



foreign corporate presence. 4. For our purpose, the main difference between the global phase and the colonial phase lies in the political context of the linkages to the global economy. During colonial times, the city's economic linkages were by and large dictated by the colonial power, and economic relations were heavily biased to the 'mother country.' In addition, colonial governments exercised tight control over urban planning and land use in the city. During the global phase, the city's economic linkages are directly related to liberalization policies by national governments. The global connections are more intense and more diverse than in any previous phase. Further, urban form and land uses are less stringently regulated and are to a significant degree influenced by market forces.

The study allows us to compare the corporate geographies of Accra and Mumbai in colonial and global times, two phases with distinct external connections that were articulated in a very particular fashion in the

urban environment. Put differently, this shows us the 'production of space' along comparable lines in these two cities. The maps below reflect, schematically, the main features of the urban landscapes.

The geography of present-day cities in the less-developed world is fundamentally different from 'Third World cities' of the past and from globalizing cities in the West. Many cities in the less-developed world are changing rapidly to accommodate or cope with the influx of foreign investments. Like cities in the West, Mumbai and Accra have experienced rapid growth of finance and producer services, but these two cities have also witnessed processes of corporate segregation based on domestic and foreign ownership that are not seen in the West. It is a reflection of the spatially fragmented integration of societies in the less-developed world at large in the global political economy.

One would expect similar geographical configurations in other cities in the less-developed world

with comparable political-economic histories and present-day gateway functions, such as Chennai, Jakarta, Mombasa, Lagos, and others.

III

For a different kind of comparative approach, let us shift attention to Miami, USA, and the question as to under what historical-geographical conditions Miami emerged as a 'world city.' Let us employ a variation of the so-called case-oriented comparative strategy, that we shall label 'multiple individualizing comparisons.'

In this approach, we maintain a primary focus on one single case (Miami) and attain a richer understanding of that case through multiple comparisons with other selected cases. Multiple individualizing comparisons with other cities serve to highlight Miami's idiosyncrasies but at the same time reveal some 'deep analogies.' Such comparisons go beyond idiographic description and suggest theoretical arguments, yet they provide an important check on

generalization. Stinchcombe (1979) introduced the term 'deep analogies' to refer to particular processes that are at work in places that are widely separated in space and/or time.

Comparative study may expose the presence or absence of such deep analogies, but it can only do so if we focus the comparison on a precise question or research problem that, in fact, looks for such analogies. Multiple individualizing comparisons should be particularly helpful in showing how conditions combine in different ways and in different contexts to produce certain outcomes; they should allow us to expose place-particularity and deep analogies, and as such inform theory.

The four case-oriented comparisons—Amsterdam, Hong Kong, Shanghai, and Dublin—each serves to highlight the specific conditions of Miami's experience. The four other cities are selected on the basis of a particular world city feature, one that invokes association with Miami. Each case represents a very different spatiotemporal context, but within the broader context of the capitalist world economy. The comparative exercise is largely focused on a search for deep analogies so as to clarify the more general mechanisms that underlie Miami's rise as a world city. The limits of analogy, in turn, illustrate the bounds of generalization and the importance of place-particularity.

We observe significant parallels in the rise to world city status of Miami

and (early 17th century) *Amsterdam*. Both cases owed a great deal to a combination of geopolitics and exceptional political economy. Both Amsterdam and Miami offered what most other cities in the region did not: a secure and stable environment for doing business. This may well be the most fundamental condition for the emergence of world cities in general, since the formation of a capitalist world economy around the beginning of the 16th century.

The most pertinent aspect of the Miami–*Hong Kong* (post WWII) comparison lies in the particular economic roles of many of the refugees and immigrants. Hong Kong became 'the premier meeting-place of the Chinese and foreign social networks of capital in Asia.' Similarly, Miami is in the United States and thus integrated in the American political economy but Latin and Cubans are the single largest ethnic group. Hong Kong's economic hinterland is China and Miami's is Latin America. Many of the refugees and immigrants who fled communism had entrepreneurial skills, money, and business contacts across the region. Assuming a hybrid identity, these immigrants played a crucial role as agency in the development of world city functions.

There appear to be two 'deep analogies' that link 19th century *Shanghai* ('Whore of the Orient') and Miami ('Mistress of the Americas'). The first pertains to the crucial and politically dominant role of foreigners and recent immigrants. The disproportionately large role of

foreigners and foreign capital in both cities had the peculiar result that their international prominence exceeded their domestic status. Shanghai was, figuratively speaking, as far from Beijing as Miami has been from Washington, DC. Second, the dominating influence of foreigners and the absence of a controlling government created the opportunity for large-scale illicit activities. While illegal, these activities formed significant building blocks for the emergent urban economies and world city functions of both cities. Drug trafficking and money laundering activities were of massive proportions and reached into other economic sectors (especially banking and construction). Miami's international banking district, along Brickell Avenue, is reminiscent of the architectural prowess and trophy building on the Bund in Shanghai.

Compared to Miami, *Dublin* is more like a city-state, in that it plays a primary role in a small national economy and the national government is likely to be sensitive to the needs of its largest urban economy. To be sure, Miami figures a lot less prominently in the minds of the national policy makers in Washington, DC, and perhaps even in Tallahassee. Seen from that angle, it is not surprising that Irish policies resembled, in some ways, the strategies of small Southeast Asian countries like Taiwan or Singapore.

For Miami, this kind of government-assisted strategy is impossible because it would be limited to local urban governments that have considerably

less latitude in the economic arena. At any rate, it seems obvious that Dublin does not owe its miraculous emergence as a world city to its location or natural endowments. It is still a flight away from Europe's main business centers and the weather is still bad. In some ways, then, the contrast with Miami could not be greater. Miami's rise seems almost accidental. It owes a great deal to its advantageous location, sunshine and palm trees, and its multicultural population. If Miami's success was in part based on the large-scale immigration of Cubans and others, it should be remembered that none of that was planned (in fact, it met with considerable local resistance). Compared to Dublin, Miami is not a world city by design. Indeed, Miami's natural endowments, including its location, are so spectacular that it became a world city despite the lack of strategic local leadership, economic planning, and managerial competence.

In sum, the insights derived from these multiple individualizing comparisons suggest that Miami's rise to world city status was decisively influenced by the nature of state-city relations, regional exceptionalism in terms of political economy, the prevalence of illicit economic and financial conduits, and hybrid cultural identities. The emergence of world cities can only be understood in historical-geographical context and as a result of intricate agency-structure interplay.

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