

Compendium of papers-  
*At the frontiers of the urban:  
thinking concepts and  
practices globally-* a 2019  
major international conference  
from UCL Urban Laboratory.

July 2021



# URBAN

# LAB



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Urban societies are undergoing immense changes; how are urban concepts and practices responding?

Over the next three days of cutting-edge scholarship and dialogue, this conference seeks to stimulate new conceptualisations of the urban resonant with distinctive urban experiences across the globe.

Our starting points are: how land, investment finance, law and the state are *reshaping urban spaces*; or how processes of reproducing everyday life, identity politics, popular mobilization and contestation are *remaking urban experiences*; or how challenges of urbanisation, such as climate change, data, health, housing and poverty are *redefining urban futures*.

Blurb from the Conference Programme

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**Prof Haim Yacobi, Dr Ronnen Ben-Arie and Dena Qaddumi**  
during Parallel Session E1. Urban Politics and Revolution

# Introduction

In November 2019, UCL Urban Laboratory hosted its first major international conference - At the Frontiers of the Urban: re-thinking concepts and practices globally - exploring emerging themes and critical methodologies at the frontiers of urban theory and practice. Comprised of 34 panels and 6 plenary sessions, it was organised according to three broad thematics: Reshaping Urban Spaces, Remaking Urban Experiences, and Redefining Urban Futures.

An open call was put out in June 2019, and our steering committee sifted through 174 initial submissions, selecting 60 papers for presentation, allocated across multiple, parallel sessions throughout 3 days of events. Including all presenters, chairpersons and respondents, the conference that emerged, held 10-12 November 2019, involved 186 researchers, from 86 institutions from 29 countries across the globe.

Six plenary sessions were held featuring Prof. Susan Parnell, Prof. Fulong Wu, Dr Gautam Bhan, Prof. Raquel Rolnik, Dr Pushpa Arabindoo, Dr Michelle Buckley, Prof. Christian Schmid, Prof. Phillip Harrison, Prof Partha Mukhopadhyay, Dr Balakrishnan Rajagopal, Dr Joanna Kusiak, Dr Romola Sanyal, Prof. Oren Yiftachel, Dr Susan Moore, Prof. Sophie Oldfield, Iromi Perera, Prof. Adriana Allen, Prof. Ayona Datta, Dr Hannah Knox, Prof. Vanessa Watson, Prof. AbdouMaliq Simone and Prof. Hyun Bang Shin.

The wider conference was split into 12 subgroups:

Dis/locating Urban Theory	Black and African Urbanisms
Extended Urbanisation: from the outside-in	Insecurities and urban violence
Thinking the urban globally	Transcalar Analysis
Land & Legality	Shaping the Future City
Sharing Public Space	Collaboration & Participation
Infrastructure	Alternative Futures

This document contains manuscripts presented at the conference as part of the 34 panels that comprised these subgroups.

We would like to thank again all those that contributed to the conference's organisation, delivered a talk or participated in a panel, or were one of the nearly 450 people to get a ticket to attend.

Clare Melhuish

Director, UCL Urban Laboratory

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# A1: Thinking from the East(s)

**Chair:** Dr Michał Murawski, Lecturer in Critical Area Studies, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL

**Discussant:** Prof. Oren Yiftachel, Chair of Urban Studies, Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Beersheba

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**How we theorised cities from the North and South but forgot to think with the Easts**

Prof. Martin Müller, Associate Professor, Faculty of Geosciences, University of Lausanne

Manuscript not available

**Comparison in the Cold War: Thinking the Third World through the Second World**

Dr Łukasz Stanek, Lecturer, Manchester Urban Institute, The University of Manchester

Manuscript not available

**Underresearched and undertheorized: on the (lack of) academic investigation of Central Asian cities**

Prof. Elena Trubina, Professor of Social Theory, Ural Federal University

## Thinking cities beyond North and South

NB: This is an outline for a longer article on which the presentation at the UCL conference will be based.

Martin Müller (Université de Lausanne)  
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The paper interrogates the dualism of North and South, which has marked much recent theorizing in urban studies, for its silences. It argues that current global urban theory produces an erasure of a large swathe of cities from its purview. Those cities – from Berlin to Beijing and from Teheran to Tokyo – sit uneasily between the hemispheric divide of North and South in what could be called the *global East*s: the in-between spaces of global urbanism.

The paper first shows how in Northern scholarship, focusing on the rich and powerful cities of the capitalist world economy, cities of the global East have become nothing more but epigones involved in a catch-up race of modernisation. But, second, the cities of the global East are also rendered largely invisible in the project of theorizing cities from the South. The paper shows through methods of corpus linguistics that the geographical imagination of the South, underpinned by a postcolonial approach, revolves around cities formerly under the rule or influence of European colonial powers. This imagination frays, however, in the convoluted urbanscapes of the global East, often situated beyond the influence of European colonial powers, where countries have been colonisers and colonies (and cities have been colonial centres and peripheries), sometimes both. Often these are also cities that are neither particularly poor nor particularly rich, therefore defying easy classification into a rich North and a poor South.

For bringing about urban futures where cities anywhere have an equal seat at the table, we need to move beyond hemispheric thinking in urban theory. It proposes not a Southern or Eastern urban theory, but a worlding of urban theory through a triple move of, first, expanding our geographical imagination, second, diversifying our theoretical repertoire and, third, equilibrating the skewed geopolitics of urban knowledge production.

Keywords: global urbanism, Global South, Global East, postcolonialism



## Introduction: ‘I am from Russia; and we don’t belong anywhere’

In February 2019, Radboud University in Nijmegen invited me to give the Alexander von Humboldt Lecture. I spoke about global urbanism. After the lecture, a student, Anna, walked up to me. She spoke softly when she said: ‘We talk about global urbanism all the time in our courses. We read lots of literature about theorising from the South. But I feel like I can never say anything. I am from Russia; and we don’t belong anywhere.’

Since the early 2000s, the discipline of urban studies has lived through what is perhaps the most exciting theoretical renewal since its existence – a renewal that has, among other things, led to the emergence of global urbanism. The call for ‘new geographies of theory’ (Roy 2009a), for ‘thinking cities through elsewhere’ (Robinson 2016; see also 2006) has shaken up old certainties of where in the world theories are produced. And it has brought new cities into the fold: Mumbai, Johannesburg, Jakarta and Rio de Janeiro are less and less seen as second-rate imitators of Western modernity and sites of application of Western theories, but as urban worlds in their own right and wellsprings of ideas to ‘theorise back’. Cities *anywhere* can, indeed must, participate in shaping global urban theory – that is the imperative, and the promise, of global urbanism.

Yet, global urbanism has its own blind spots. These blind spots emerge, to a large part, through what is the dominant framing device of global urbanism: Global North and Global South. This hemispheric binary leads to an erasure of all those cities that are uncomfortably located somewhere between, or beyond, North and South. Cities like Belgrade or Kyiv, like Istanbul and Teheran, like Astana and Beijing, like Moscow and Seoul. Cities that are not particularly rich, but not particularly poor either. Cities that are not in former European empires, but not in former European colonies either. In short: Cities that are not quite in the North, but not quite in the South either. No wonder then that Anna could not speak: she did not feel she had a position to speak from in the dominant categories of framing the urban.

This article argues that for global urbanism to redeem its inclusive promise, and for Anna to be able to speak, it must move beyond the hemispheric categories of North and South. This piece therefore shares and welcomes the emancipatory thrust of global urbanism as we know it, but, following Leitner and Sheppard’s (2016, 231) encourage of self-critique, seeks to expand it through a sympathetic critique of its silences. It does so by introducing the concept of the global East as a provisional *tertius quid*, or third term. With the global Easts, in the plural, the article interrogates what it calls the ‘hemispheric fallacy’ of global urbanism: that ‘North plus South equals World’. This fallacy has led to a dual blind spot vis-à-vis the Easts from both the Global North and the Global South. The piece traces how this blind spot rests on three interlinked

dynamics: circumscribed geographical imaginations; theoretical master narratives, and urban archetypes. It focuses on one of those Easts, the postsocialist East, although similar arguments could (and should) be made for other Easts, from the Middle East to the Asian East.

The following is an annotated outline of the structure of the main part of the article:

## Global urbanism and the hemispheric fallacy

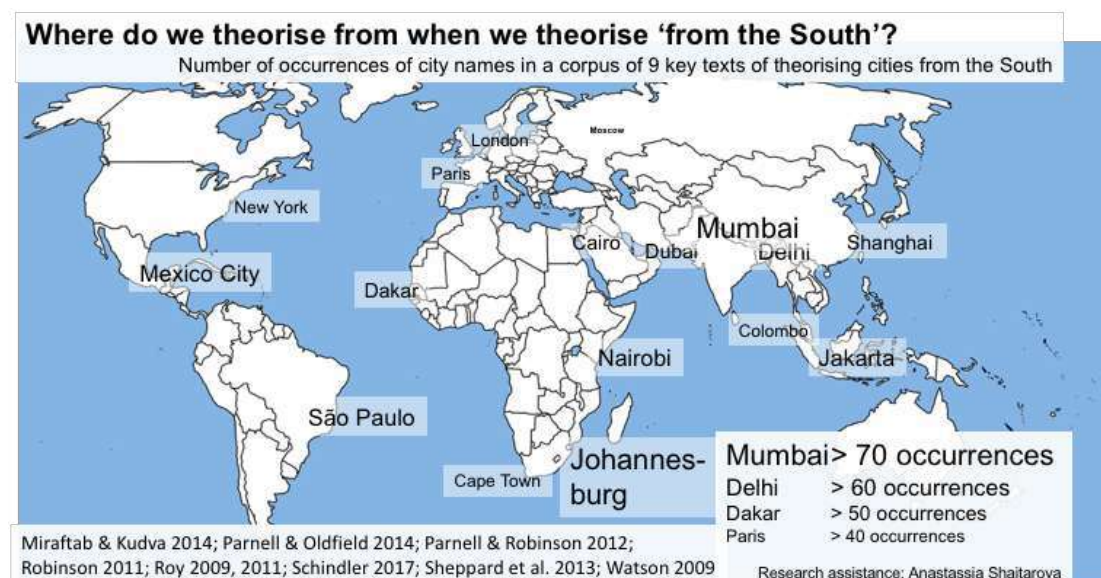
This section gives a short overview of the emergence of global urbanism in its current form through a critique of EuroAmerican universalism in urban theory (Robinson 2006; Roy 2009a; Simone 2001). In so doing, it highlights the shortcut that much of this critique has taken: that a rejection of Northern universalism must mean theorising from the South. This shortcut establishes the South as the privileged location of theory, leaving the Easts to the side. It creates the hemispheric fallacy that if we theorise from both the North and the South, in a geometric division of the world into two halves, we theorise from everywhere, thus rendering the Easts invisible.

## Circumscribed geographical imaginations

This section argues that the geographical imaginations attached to the North and South do not include the Easts. The geographical imagination of the North collapses with that of the West as both the cradle and beacon of Western modernity and home to the iconic cities of global urban theory. From the perspective of the Global North, cities of the East have been scripted as backward imitators of Western modernity, struggling to catch up with Western cities in introducing market economies, democratic governance and modern planning (Ferenčuhová 2016; O. Golubchikov 2004; Yiftachel 2006). They are placed at both a spatial and a temporal distance from the North, in an elsewhere and an elsewhen.

The Global South, by contrast, is typically defined as tantamount to the Third World, to the post-colonial or to the 'poorer nations' (Prashad 2013) (themselves terms that are not coterminous, making it a floating signifier (Müller 2019b)). It is most frequently circumscribed through invoking its Other of EuroAmerica. As such it is constituted in a dualist relationship with the North. Mapping the cities that are invoked in the recent push to theorise from the South (Miraftab and Kudva 2014; Parnell and Oldfield 2014; Parnell and Robinson 2012; Schindler 2017; Watson 2009) visualises the geographical imagination underlying the urban Global South (see Figure 1) and answers the question 'Where are we when we theorise from the South?'. The map centres around cities in the former European colonies, notably of the British

Empire or protectorates (Nairobi, Cairo, Dubai, Cape Town, Johannesburg, Colombo, Mumbai, Delhi) and, to a lesser degree, of the French (Dakar, Shanghai), Portuguese (Sao Paulo), Spanish (Mexico City) and Dutch (Jakarta) empires. The EuroAmerican Other, as contrasting foil, is also present (New York, Paris, London).



*Figure 1: Where do we theorise from when we theorise ‘from the South’*

By contrast, there is a complete absence of the East – those cities in non-European empires and their former colonies. Moscow, the largest city in Europe, does not appear until rank 70. This absence is also reflected in academic discourse, where edited volumes on global urbanism and global urban processes exhibit a conspicuous lack of contributions from the post-socialist East (e.g. Lees, Shin, and López-Morales 2016). In a parallel process, research on cities in the postsocialist East has become cloistered and territorialised in what some have called ‘the peripheries of urban knowledge’ (Gentile 2018; Tuvikene 2016).

## Theoretical master narratives

The geographical imaginations identified in the previous sections are accompanied by two contrasting theoretical master narratives of thinking cities (Ong 2011). In scholarship on the Global North, a major focus falls on how capitalism shapes cities and urban processes. This is evident in the concern with neoliberalism, gentrification, global cities and inequality which is underpinned by a broadly Marxian perspective (see the critique of Parnell and Robinson 2012). In scholarship on the Global South, by contrast, postcolonialism has been the dominant theoretical frame to argue for the particularity of the Southern urban experience and to highlight the struggle of the subaltern for voice and recognition (Roy 2016; Jazeel 2019).

Both master narratives, however, do not travel far in the postsocialist East. Neoliberalism has taken hold in a hybrid form, often crosspollinating with neopatrimonial and authoritarian economic and governmental arrangements (Oleg Golubchikov, Badyina, and Makhrova 2014; Trubina 2015). Neither does postcolonialism articulate easily with postsocialism. The postsocialist East has generally remained beyond the purview of postcolonial theorists, for various reasons (see Grzechnik 2019; Karkov and Valiavicharska 2018; Suchland 2011a; 2011b; Tlostanova 2012), where postcolonialism tends to focus on ‘non-European peoples’ (Comaroff and Comaroff 2011).

## Urban archetypes

Finally, a hemispheric imagination of global urbanism as divided into North and South is tied to different ideas about what processes and urban forms are typical of cities in the North and South, about urban archetypes. The quintessential northern metropolis is the global or globalising city, relatively rich and located in a network of global flows of capital, images, people and policies (McCann and Ward 2011; Sassen 2001; see the critique of Robinson 2002). The quintessential southern metropolis is the subaltern mega-city, marked by poverty and informality but also by diverse resources of collective action, improvisation and making do in the face of adversity (Roy 2011; Simone and Pieterse 2017).

None of these two archetypes resonates much with cities in the postsocialist East, where cities cut every which way. There are ‘alpha’ world cities and former imperial metropolises such as Moscow and Warsaw (Taylor and Derudder 2015) and there are subaltern, post-colonial cities such as Tbilisi and Dushanbe. Some cities, such as Moscow or Belgrade, can conceivably be discussed as representing both imperial and subaltern elements. There is informality, but it is not as prominent as in the Global South. There are command and control functions, but they are not as prominent as in the Global North. In other words, cities of the postsocialist East defy easy classification.

## Conclusion: why we need to think with the Easts

Precisely because cities of the Easts are difficult to classify into the hemispheric binaries of North and South, they are ideal third terms to work towards destabilising these binaries (cf. Peck 2015), making dialogues emerge across and, more importantly, beyond them. The article concludes to propose not a Southern or Eastern urban theory, seeing these categories instead as ‘interim moves’ (Robinson 2014, 61), but a worlding of urban theory through a triple gesture of moving ‘beyond’: first, expanding our geographical imagination beyond North and South;

second, activating theoretical repertoires beyond (critiques of) neoliberalism and postcolonialism; and, third, equilibrating the skewed geopolitics of urban knowledge production. With this move, it seeks to give voice to all those experiences, people and places that are beyond North and South, but resolutely of this (urban) world, ‘empowering new loci of enunciation ... from which to contest knowledge claims’ (Leitner and Sheppard 2016, 231). Thinking with the East then moves global urbanism towards a more even and a more comprehensive appreciation of the urban world in all its diverse entirety.

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## A2: Knowledge and Global Urban Studies

**Chair:** Prof Julio D Davila, Professor of Urban Policy and International Development, UCL

**Discussant:** Prof. Susan Parnell, Chair in Human Geography, University of Bristol

[Link to journal article](#)

**De-Colonising Planning Education? Exploring the Geographies of 6 Urban Planning Education Networks**  
Prof. Adriana Allen, Professor of Development Planning and Urban Sustainability, The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL

Julia Wesely, Research Fellow, The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL

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**The challenge of conflicting rationalities about urban development: experiences from Mistra Urban Futures' transdisciplinary urban research**

Prof. David Simon, Professor of Development Geography, Royal Holloway University of London

Dr Warren Smit, Research Manager, African Centre for Cities, University of Cape Town



## THE CHALLENGE OF CONFLICTING RATIONALITIES ABOUT URBAN DEVELOPMENT: EXPERIENCES FROM MISTRA URBAN FUTURES' TRANSDISCIPLINARY URBAN RESEARCH

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### Abstract

*This paper reflects on ten years of transdisciplinary urban research by Mistra Urban Futures, a global centre focusing on the co-production of knowledge for more just and sustainable cities across the global South and global North. The paper focuses on one of the key challenges that Mistra Urban Futures has faced in its work: in addition to the competing interests and agendas of participants in co-production processes, there are also often deeper underlying conflicting rationalities about many of the key concepts and substantive issues relating to making cities more just and sustainable,, driven by ideological, educational, contextual and personal factors. These differences can be even more polarised between different cities and countries, including deep divisions about the fundamental nature of the problem, the ultimate goals and objectives of urban development interventions, and key underlying concepts.*

*This paper explores these challenges and reflects on the various approaches adopted by Mistra Urban Futures to facilitate the understanding of these differences and identify commonalities and overlaps of interest. For example, most of the Mistra Urban Futures projects had initial phases to identify and understand the different views of participants in order to be able to identify common ground for collaboration. In some cases, the different terminologies and concepts used by people from different sectors or disciplines required developing a common conceptual vocabulary during this initial phase. In one particular project in Cape Town, the research method included the mapping of the different rationalities of key stakeholders as a basis for identifying opportunities for further collaboration. Ultimately, understanding and engaging with the different rationalities of participants in co-production processes is essential for different actors to work together to co-produce and operationalize knowledge for more just and sustainable cities.*

## Introduction

Mistra Urban Futures was established in 2010 as a global Centre focusing on the co-production of knowledge for just and sustainable cities, with core partners across the global North and global South. This paper focuses on one of the key challenges that Mistra Urban Futures has faced in its work: in addition to the competing interests and agendas of participant institutions in co-production processes (Simon et al. 2020), there are also often deeper underlying conflicting (or diverging) rationalities about urban development. Many of the key concepts and substantive issues relating to making cities more just and sustainable are highly contested. Within cities, people and organisations from different sectors and different disciplines often have very different understandings of the problems and solutions, driven by ideological, educational, contextual and personal factors. These differences can be even more polarised between different cities, countries, regions, sociocultural and geopolitical contexts, such as between cities in the global North and global South. For example, there can be deep divisions about the fundamental nature of the underlying problem (e.g. poverty, inequity, lack of economic growth, lack of political empowerment, unsustainability, lack of government capacity) and the ultimate goals and objectives of urban development interventions (such as equity, economic growth, maintaining the status quo or radical change). In addition, concepts such as “fairness”, “justice” and “resilience”, and substantive issues such as “public transport”, “sustainable urban food systems” and “tackling climate change”, can mean very different things to different people and in different places.

Drawing on our experiences over the past ten years, we examine the challenges of conflicting rationalities regarding how these challenges can be addressed through co-production processes. First we survey the different ways to conceptualise rationalities, divergent views on the problems that conflicting rationalities can cause and the ways in which they can be overcome. We then provide a brief overview of Mistra Urban Futures and our approach to transdisciplinary co-production and comparative research, and the different contexts in which we work around the world. After this, we focus on several case studies showing the challenges of conflicting rationalities in our work, and how these challenges have been addressed. Sequentially, these reflect on conflicting rationalities with regard to the concept of ‘just cities’ in different contexts as part of Mistra Urban Futures’ comparative Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) project; dealing with different conceptualisations of “urban” and “rural” in the Urban Rural Gothenburg project; how the Mistra Urban Futures’ comparative food project dealt with and mapped the various perspectives on urban food systems amongst the researchers involved; and how the comparative transport project addressed different views and perspectives from different contexts. In the conclusion, we discuss key lessons about bridging conflicting rationalities through co-production. Ultimately, understanding and engaging with the different rationalities of participants in co-production processes is essential for different actors to work together effectively to co-produce and operationalize knowledge for more just and sustainable cities.

## Conceptual framework

Rationality as an abstract noun is the quality or state of being rational, that is, being based on or agreeable to reason. What is “reasonable”, of course, can vary considerably from person to person, from place to place, and over time. Max Weber distinguished between four different types of rationality: purposive/instrumental rationality, related to the expectations about the behaviour of other human beings or objects in the environment; value/belief-oriented rationality, where actions are undertaken for reasons intrinsic to the actor (e.g. ethical or religious beliefs) regardless of whether it will lead to success; affectual rationality, determined by an actor's specific affect, feeling, or emotion; and traditional/conventional rationality, determined by ingrained habits and traditions (Kalberg, 1980). Although influential, Weber's approach to rationalities has been criticised for being

devoid of social context and for not taking issues of power sufficiently into account (e.g. Habermas, 1984).

Subsequent to Weber, there was a major shift in philosophy towards seeing knowledge and social action as socially constructed. This shift is particularly associated with Michel Foucault's writings on discourse and governmentality (Foucault 1976/1998; Foucault, 1980/1997). Many approaches to rationalities draw on Foucauldian conceptions of discourse, seeing rationalities as "the changing discursive fields within which the exercise of power is conceptualized" (Rose and Miller, 1992: 175). A typical definition of rationalities from a Foucauldian perspective is that they are "socially and contextually shaped ways of seeing, interpreting and acting in the world, which also situate and characterise the 'others' who make up the cast of actors that interact within the setting" (De Satge and Watson, 2018). It is important to highlight that rationalities are "contingent, shaped by power relations, rather than context-free and objective" (Flyvbjerg and Richardson, 2002: 11), and are collective, relatively taken for granted and not particularly open to question by their practitioners (Dean, 1999: 16).

Foucault suggested that there is a distinctive governmental rationality which "combines forms of practical knowledge, with modes of perception, practices of calculation, vocabularies, types of authority, forms of judgement, architectural forms, human capacities, non-human objects and devices, inscriptions, techniques and so forth" (Rose, 1999: 52). Asymmetrical power relations underpin this perspective, with an emphasis on state surveillance and control. Following on from this, much of the literature on conflicting rationalities has distinguished between the rationality of the state and the rationality of grassroots communities, thus focusing on the conflict and mutual incomprehensibility that has occurred when "expert and bureaucratic power /knowledge encounter less visible, but no less assertive circuits of knowledge and power of groupings of the poor grounded in the particularities of space and place" (De Satge and Watson, 2018).

The concept of conflicting rationalities has resonated strongly in South Africa, a context with particularly stark divides, and a large literature has emerged on conflicting rationalities in different sectors in South Africa, largely showing how the state and the grassroots communities that it is attempting to govern have widely different perspectives on many issues and are thus unable to engage or even communicate effectively with one other. These conflicting rationalities have been documented in fields including urban planning (Watson, 2003; De Satge & Watson, 2018), housing delivery (Charlton, 2009; Huchzermeyer, 2011; Massey, 2013; Huchzermeyer & Misslewitz, 2016), and sanitation (Taing, 2015). In most cases, only two rationalities are identified and contrasted, those of the state and of grassroots communities. This, however, tends to gloss over the enormous range of perspectives within the state and within communities. Some scholars have attempted to go beyond the dichotomy of the state and communities and examine different rationalities within the state, communities or other sectors (for example, Ziervogel et al., 2016). Similarly, grassroots initiatives by community-based organisations such as the South African and Kenyan member organisations of Shack and Slum Dwellers International (SDI) and their 'Know Your City' campaign (e.g. SDI 2018), have revealed different perspectives and priorities within and among superficially comparable communities.

Co-production is widely seen by scholars and practitioners as a way to bring together stakeholders with different rationalities in order to integrate different types of knowledge. Such initiatives are increasingly common in bringing local authorities and their communities together to ensure more appropriate and legitimate service delivery (e.g. Durose and Richardson, 2016), but our focus here is on research and knowledge production, where demand and relevance are increasing rapidly. Through collaborative design and implementation, new hybrid models can be developed to bridge competing knowledges and rationalities (Harrison, 2006). Mediating organizations (also called

boundary or boundary crossing organizations), such as universities and NGOs, often play important roles in actively catalysing exchanges of knowledge between diverse nodes (Perry and May, 2010; Perry et al., 2018). Through bringing together different types of knowledge to develop a more holistic understanding of issues among a range of nodes, a platform for developing innovative collaborative interventions can be created (Huxham, 2000).

Transdisciplinary co-production research strives for new cultures and practices of research collaboration. Characteristically, this type of research is problem-oriented and based in real-world problems, addresses the complexity of these problems by involving a variety of researchers and other societal actors and accounting for the diversity of their perspectives, while aiming to generate normative and solution-oriented results with relevance for both research and practice (Polk, 2015).

A key purpose and challenge of transdisciplinary co-production research is forming a transdisciplinary team of both academic researchers and other societal actors who can work effectively and engage in mutual learning to integrate the best available knowledge in response to a reality-based problem (Lang et al., 2012, Pohl and Hirsch Hadorn, 2008). Ideally, the formation of this team is based on reflections on the significance of one's own as well as others' view of the problem, and involving considerations of, e.g., whose interests should be served, what the consequence of the research should be, what sources of power needs to be included, what should count as relearned knowledge, and what should be its role (Bammer, 2008). Next, the team engage in a process coined by several stages of deliberation and iteration, mutual learning and intentional reflection, in which different perspectives and ways of knowing intersect and become mutually relevant.

Whether transdisciplinary co-production processes are successful in achieving this depends on a range of factors, capabilities and capacities (Klenk and Meehan, 2017, Schuttenberg and Guth, 2015). The participants in these processes represent a diversity of perspectives, coming from a wide range of backgrounds, each with their own set of values and worldviews (Thompson et al., 2017). While this is an underlying rationale for pursuing this research in the first place, to harness such broad base of knowledge and expertise is methodologically challenging. Participants may agree collectively on the underlying rationale and need for a co-production approach to address a reality-based problem. In the process of conducting such research, however, underlying conflicts and tensions may emerge, shaping and influencing their incentives and commitment to the project (Norris et al., 2016, Thompson et al., 2017).

### **Mistra Urban Futures and its work on transdisciplinary co-production**

Mistra Urban Futures was established as an international centre focusing on the co-production of knowledge to realize sustainable and just cities. Mistra Urban Futures is headquartered in Gothenburg, with core partners in Greater Manchester (later also in Sheffield), Kisumu (Kenya) and Cape Town. Partners based in Stockholm and in Skåne, the southern region of Sweden (including the city of Malmö), later joined, along with project-specific partners in Buenos Aires (Argentina) and Shimla (India). The centre is set up through a network of local interaction platforms, organised in different ways mirroring local governance arrangements, institutional settings, and urban context conditions. Each platform works as a transdisciplinary university–local government partnership (Trencher et al., 2014) between one or more universities and local authorities, undertaking research on urban sustainability through transdisciplinary co-production.

The co-production of knowledge, involving not only academia but also public sector and combinations of NGOs, industry, citizens and other societal actors from the beginning is the cornerstone of Mistra Urban Futures' approach to the societal challenges for sustainable

development. During the initial years, each platform experimented with its own forms of transdisciplinary co-production suited to the particular context and blend of academic and practitioner partners and their respective priorities. The Platforms turned out to be “innovative responses” to the challenges and for experimentation with different contexts and shared functions (Perry et al., 2018).

Experiences and key lessons learned have been well documented (see Palmer and Walasek, 2016: 24–31; Perry et al., 2018). The partnerships have contributed to the breaking down of old barriers and forging trust, to the development of new research approaches and to the identification of “champions” at both political and professional levels. Entering into the second and final phase of the Mistra Urban Futures programme (2016–2019), further emphasis was put on the transdisciplinary co-production approach and a dimension of international comparisons was added to the local projects undertaken at each Platform (Simon et al., 2018, 2020).

The transition towards sustainable cities, which is the core of Mistra Urban Futures activities, cannot be undertaken without substantially reducing poverty and inequality; in an urban context this means more equitable and just cities. A transdisciplinary co-production of knowledge approach seems to be necessary to tackle such “wicked problems” (Rittel and Weber, 1973; Lazarus, 2009), which defy not only spatial, temporal and organisational borders, but also the expertise and decision-making levels of politicians, practitioners, researchers and civil society.

Building upon the past ten years of experience, Mistra Urban Futures is in the process of documenting and sharing the diverse methods undertaken to enable co-production research in and across its network of platforms. By giving examples of methods and tools and how they have enabled transdisciplinary co-production in disparate situations, the idea is to share procedural knowledge on how to co-address urban challenges. Most of these are not text-book methods, but means of collaborating that have evolved during research practice in a broad range of projects involving diverse participants, addressing varying challenges in different urban contexts. Reflecting the diversity of these context conditions, not only do these differ in means, but also in what the means need to support and enable for transdisciplinary co-production to take place. Details and case studies of a wide range of these methods will be published as a manual in 2020 (Hemström et al., 2020). As outlined by Van Breda and Swilling (2018), research processes have unfolded *from* and *within* different urban contexts, relating scientific capacities to real-world problems and other forms of knowledge in different ways, to address sustainability better.

### **Examples of conflicting rationalities in Mistra Urban Futures’ work**

Below we exemplify the conflicting rationalities encountered in Mistra Urban Futures’ work, and how these were addressed. First we discuss conflicting rationalities with regards to the concept of ‘just cities’ in different urban areas around the world as part of Mistra Urban Futures’ comparative SDGs project, and second we examine the challenge of conflicting rationalities in the CityLab programme in Cape Town. We then examine two cases from our food work: dealing with different conceptualisations of “urban” and “rural” in the Urban Rural Gothenburg project, and how Mistra Urban Futures’ comparative food project dealt with and mapped the various perspectives on urban food systems amongst the researchers involved. Finally, we discuss how Mistra Urban Futures’ transport comparative project addressed different views and perspectives from different contexts. In all cases, acknowledging and working with different rationalities was a key part of the transdisciplinary knowledge co-production process, and helped create new insights and innovative solutions.

#### *Contesting and negotiating meanings of ‘just cities’*

As Mistra Urban Futures transitioned from unilocal to increasingly comparative co-production in 2015-16, the centre secretariat and platform leaderships concluded that a bridge would be necessary to integrate a new vision and mission and the content of the knowledge and research programme. Accordingly, a framework for collaboration was negotiated that was acceptable and plausible for all platforms and nodes, so that each could localize and operationalize it appropriately to their respective contexts. The process was time-consuming and at times contested, not least because of different interpretations within and between platform teams over core concepts, as outlined here, but was essential to provide a coherent and universally legitimate umbrella as the basis for developing the comparative research agenda (Simon et al., 2018, 2020).

The emergent international collaborative framework had different components, all leading towards the *Vision*, “Sustainable urbanization where cities are fair, green and accessible”. The framework is entitled “Realising Just Cities”, a statement which was intended to – and did – provoke reflection, engagement and action in the respective city contexts throughout the four-year period. Indeed, all the self-reflexive learnings and comparisons have been evaluated annually by means of a purpose-designed quality, monitoring and evaluation (QME) framework that is appropriate to the transdisciplinary co-productive and comparative approach, and a comparative reflective project (see below). This blends conventional performance indicators with formative evaluation and innovative efforts to detect direct and indirect societal (so-called third order) effects or impacts. The provocation behind our Realising Just Cities framework includes a contested set of ideas, reflected in two orienting questions:

- What do just cities look like in different urban contexts?
- How might just cities be realised in different urban contexts?

It is now widely accepted that sustainability comprises many facets and that it will be unattainable at any scale if poverty and inequality persist. In the words of the renowned urban planner, John Friedmann (2002: 104), “... if injustice is to be corrected (or, for that matter, any other social evil), we will need the concrete imagery of utopian thinking to propose steps that would bring us a little closer to a more just world”. This has inspired Mistra Urban Futures’ approach, so that realising just cities encompasses the development of urban areas that are fair, green and accessible as the core characteristics of sustainability – as fully elucidated in *Rethinking Sustainable Cities* (Simon, 2016). Just cities afford everyone living in them the same opportunities and rights, and a fair distribution of resources and the opportunities to use them. However, reaching this point was not straightforward, since there were differences of perception and understanding both within and between the different city platform teams. Detailed and nuanced negotiations were required to navigate the diverse rationalities that reflected individual experience and positionality, cultural and linguistic differences mediated by gender and other dimensions of intersectionality, and differences reflecting disciplinary training and communities of practice, as well as national and local contexts.

Priorities and the relative importance of the respective dimensions of sustainability as encapsulated by ‘fair, green and accessible’ varied considerably, as did what should be subsumed under each of these. One example will suffice. The sequencing of the three key urban characteristics was debated intensely but in English and the outcome was intended to flow smoothly when spoken and to reflect the element of justice and distribution within each of them, culminating with ‘fair’ at the apex. A while later, a difficulty emerged with the Swedish translation, where the Gothenburg team ultimately felt that it was essential to reverse the order, i.e. to start with fair.

Such concerns stimulated the launch of one key comparative project, deliberately named Realising Just Cities, in order to explore systematically what just cities should look like in the diverse contexts of the cities where the Centre works, what practical steps we can take towards trying to achieve

them, and what impacts these steps have. This exemplifies our reflexive methodological approach and the findings, including societal impacts, are being brought together in an accessible book format during 2019. In similar vein, while all the comparative and local projects are mapped onto the relevant Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs),<sup>1</sup> one 'flagship' project is studying the diverse ways in which the seven cities on four continents where the Centre works are engaging with, considering and implementing the SDGs and New Urban Agenda. The divergent roles of contexts and conflicting rationalities within and between municipal departments, local and international research team members have emerged as crucial variables and mediating influences (Valencia et al., 2019, 2020).

#### *Conflicting rationalities in the CityLab programme*

The CityLab programme was initiated by the African Centre for Cities (ACC) in 2008 as an interdisciplinary applied research programme on sustainable urban development, intended to deal with real issues in a way that overcame disciplinary divides and the policy-practice divide (Anderson et al., 2013). When ACC became the anchor of the Mistra Urban Futures Cape Town Local Interaction Platform in 2010, the CityLab Programme became one of the main programmes of the platform. The CityLabs were essentially about bringing together relevant stakeholders to co-produce policy-relevant knowledge on the key urban challenges facing Cape Town. The topics of the CityLabs were identified through engagement with the two main government partners, the City of Cape Town, and the Western Cape Provincial Government, and eventually there were nine different CityLabs.

Dealing with the conflicting rationalities of the participants in the CityLabs was a major challenge, but also an opportunity for integrating different perspectives and different types of knowledge. These rationalities cut across different types of stakeholders (government officials, academic researchers, private sector practitioners, civil society) and were strongly linked to the disciplinary background and ideological beliefs of participants.

In the Healthy Cities CityLab, established to undertake research on the interface between health and the built environment, the participants came from very diverse disciplines, ranging from medicine and physical biology to sociology and urban planning. The first challenge was for participants to understand each other, as different disciplines/sectors had very different terminologies for describing the world. Much of the first few meetings was spent defining very basic concepts such as "health and wellbeing", "non-communicable diseases", "walkability" and "sufficient physical activity". On a deeper level, surfacing issues of theory was also important, as many of the health sciences are superficially atheoretical, but actually highly dependent on implicit theoretical underpinnings with regards to their understanding of the interaction of people and the built environment, most notably the "socio-ecological perspective" and "rational choice theory" (Smit et al., 2014). Participants from different disciplines also had very different world views. For example health scientists generally use a positivist paradigm and largely see their role as the analysis of patterns, trends and causes. Urban planners, on the other hand, are not from a positivist paradigm and see their role as much more normative, as urban planning is fundamentally about changing things. It was important for participants to recognise the partial nature of the bodies of knowledge of their respective disciplines, and to recognise how they could complement one another to build a more complete framework for the study of the relationship of the physical urban environment and health in the global South (see Nikulina et al., 2019, for a broader discussion of these issues).

The Urban Flooding CityLab brought together different stakeholders to share insights and undertake collaborative research on the flooding of informal settlements in Cape Town. The focus of the collaborative research was on identifying the different rationalities of key local government departments with regards to flooding in order to identify possibilities for collaboration. The officials of each department had very different understandings of the nature of the problem and the

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.mistraurbanfutures.org/en/our-research/research-agenda>

solutions, closely aligned to the disciplinary backgrounds of the officials in each department (Ziervogel et al., 2016). For, example, the officials of the Disaster Risk Management Centre, who came from a disaster risk science background, largely viewed the city in terms of hazards and risks posed to residents, infrastructures and service delivery by natural phenomena or human activities. With their disaster risk reduction lens on the flooding issue, DRMC staff identify the source of the problem as simultaneously one of people living in unsuitable locations and of excessive rainfall and high water levels. In practice, the focus of DRMC officials was on disaster risk relief. Roads and Storm Water officials had a civil engineering background, and saw the problem of flooding as essentially too much water being in certain places, which needed to be disposed of through better storm water drains (and better maintenance of storm water drains). Informal Settlements Management officials, who were mostly housing practitioners, saw flooding of informal settlements in Cape Town as mainly a problem of people being in the wrong place rather than as a problem of excess water; this is because the flooding problems they have to deal with are generally caused by people occupying low-lying, poorly drained areas that are not (in their present state) suitable for residential use. They thus saw the issue as a socio-political problem, with the solution as relocation and/or upgrading. These different rationalities can potentially be an obstacle to collaboration, but through mapping these different perspectives and through bringing together different stakeholders to integrate the different perspectives into a more holistic understanding of the flooding of informal settlements, it was possible to identify synergies and opportunities for collaboration and co-ordination.

#### *The conceptualization of 'urban' and 'rural' in the Gothenburg Urban Rural project*

The Urban Rural Gothenburg project reflects conflicting rationalities with regards to the terms 'urban' and 'rural'. Urban Rural Gothenburg was a three-year (2017-19) EU-sponsored project for sustainable development with the overarching aim to create improved conditions for green innovation and green business development between the city and the countryside. Operating in five test beds in four local hubs in north-eastern Gothenburg, the project sought to develop and implement new low-carbon approaches to local development, with particular linkages to food, logistics, tourism, and ecological business models, and is intended to serve as an accelerator for circular economies and green business development with a strong local anchoring.

Urban development is predicated on understanding the concept of the 'urban'. But 'urban' is not a given, and it is not neutral. 'Urban' is a spatial abstraction with multiple meanings and significations. It also comes with the burden of implications. In other words, ways in which we classify space will have an immense impact on the different paths of development a geographic area will be subjected to. Clearly, depending on what spatial definition is chosen, the synesthetic outcome will become diametrically different. This can be approached from several perspectives: philosophical (what is space?), semantic (how is space understood?), theoretical (how does research explain spatial interdependencies?), psycho-social (how do we learn to think spatially?) and empirical (how are assumed mental schemata reflected in materiality?) (Dymitrow, 2019). At the core of analysis lies the important notion that the problem of spatializing development projects carries the embedded risk of *concept-induced harm*, i.e. indirect harm caused not by actions, but by conceptual presuppositions triggering those actions (Dymitrow, 2018). An 'urban development project' is not 'just' a project designed especially for rural areas to best further their development. It is an isolated (individualised) set of assumptions turned into a rigid steering document with the power to govern areas of visible and invisible diversity.

The project's name, Urban Rural Gothenburg, consists only of spatial designators, with no indicators of intent, interest or action. This would suggest that the spatial designators are imbued with certain, not readily visible, assumptions, and that these assumptions form the undercurrent of the project's scope and plan of action. Indeed, statements about connecting the city and the countryside, the



rural-urban interface, and bringing “rural sense of community” into the city, resurface in many of the project’s deliverables. There were even attempts – eventually abandoned – at devising an ‘urban-rural method’.

In their analysis, Dymitrow, Kotze and Ingelhart (2019), found at least three trains of thought undercutting the spatialisation of URG. Firstly, it is argued that the city of Gothenburg encompasses different landscapes: ‘urban’ (built-up areas) and ‘rural’ (green areas). Secondly, it is argued that by introducing ‘rural economies’ (such as agriculture) into ‘urban areas’, we are creating new synergies. Thirdly, taking into account the demographic composition of North-East Gothenburg, comprising mostly lowly educated people from ‘developing’ countries, it is argued that new employment opportunities for them can be created through engagement in familiar primary economic activities.

While goodhearted, this reasoning contains an unfortunate syllogistic error, demonstrated by Dymitrow and Brauer (2017) in the context of ‘rurality’, namely the conflation of *spatial delimitation* with *activity delimitation* (and the same would apply to ‘urbanity’). When departing from a spatial delimitation, we usually focus on certain material manifestations of rurality (e.g. remoteness, open landscape, or ‘nature’), yet the entire variability of the studied area’s performances becomes rural by extension, normalising its definition through a morphological contingent. When departing from an activity delimitation, on the other hand, ‘rural activities’ are often identified from a preconceived traditionalist understanding of rurality (e.g. farming, hunting, mining, etc.), whereby any area exhibiting those traits becomes rural by extension, effectively normalising rurality’s definition by the actions of a few. And when *land* gets conflated with *people*, it may give rise to inadvertent consequences, including territorial stigmatization, resource wasting and disillusionment (Dymitrow and Brauer, 2016). This led to the project being criticized in the media, as “Some kind of exotic circus with immigrants, animals and cultivation plots” (Verdicchio, 2017). One of the participants in the project remarked pointedly that, “Had I wanted to work with animals or farms I would return to Namibia” (Jörnmark, 2018: 67). As Dymitrow and Brauer (2018: 18) put it: “Everything is certainly located in ‘space’, but if we keep elevating the role of space by way of ill-devised, self-denounced concepts, we slowly but surely undermine trust” in whatever we think we are doing.

#### *Identifying boundary positions for collaboration – the Urban Food Systems collaborative project*

In a predominantly urban world, urban food systems present a useful lens to engage a wide variety of urban (and global) challenges – so called ‘wicked problems’ (Rittel and Webber, 1973; Lazarus, 2009). The primary aim of the three-year comparative urban food systems project was to use existing city-scale projects to seek out wider urban food system solutions. Four research teams, from diverse cities, participated in this project. These included Gothenburg, Sheffield/Greater Manchester, Kisumu and Cape Town. Each city faces different urban sustainability and divergent food system challenges. From the outset, the project expected difference but it was expected that broader urban food-system approaches would align. Collaboration proved to be extremely challenging.

Initially it was assumed that the challenges were aligned to the nature of the urban food system in each city. However, it soon became evident that a deeper challenge needed to be addressed. The values held by researchers and their disciplinary “enclaves” presented significant boundaries (Hansson, 2001; Longino, 1990). These boundaries influenced how issues were understood and addressed. This had serious implications for the evolution of this project, which arrived at an impasse where three options were evident; to disband the project, to seek out some form of co-opted, weak or diluted agreement, or to embrace difference and use difference to ground the project. The project team chose the latter.

The work sought to deepen the notion of co-production (Polk and Kain, 2015; Polk, 2015), mediating engagements between academics and regions (as opposed to between academics and society). This was done by a deliberate identification of boundary positions. In this case four food system positionalities were constructed: a resource focus; a green focus; a food justice focus; and a scalar focus. As part of the collaboration process in this project, these binaries or food system positionalities were constructed as a tool or methodological instrument to expose positions which are often assumed to be universal (see Haysom et al., 2019). Researchers self-identified where they, and their respective food projects, were located in each of these positions. While simple, this clarification of positions resolved the deadlock. Instead of trying to force particular positions, researchers were better able to understand the position (and values) of others while remaining comfortable with their own.

Detailing these different value positions is useful for three reasons: The first is to assist in identifying the key positions held by different researchers, and which allows for a second, namely recognition of certain non-negotiable areas or issues that participants are not willing to surrender, or where context drives such a need. Finally and perhaps most importantly, when read as a collection of responses, all focusing on the same objective – that of food system transformation – it shows how all actors, despite holding different ideological positions, are in fact working towards a common goal, rather than opposite goals. This recognition is useful because while highlighting ideological positions, it has the potential to start discussions about where the middle ground may lie, where opportunities for compromise may sit.

#### *Transport and Sustainable Urban Development*

The Mistra Urban Futures Transport and Sustainable Urban Development comparative project has been a collaboration between the cities of Cape Town, Kisumu and Gothenburg focusing on *Comparative Analysis of Pursuing Transport Justice and its role in Realising Just Cities*. It explored how the role of transport has changed and evolved in the different contexts and geographical scale, how the justice discourse has evolved in each city and what social issues are being addressed in the different contexts.

The project involved people from very different contexts in Europe and Africa, and the three cities vary both in what challenges they are facing and in what the possibilities are in tackling these challenges. If we look deeper into the different contexts, different disciplines and sectors were engaged in the project. We had transport planners, urban planners and professors in urban planning, PhD students, thus involving people from academia as well as the public sector. Their different rationalities from different contexts created a challenging setting in taking forward the project in defining and developing common challenges, objectives and ground for the comparative work.

One challenge that arose during the phase of identifying a common objective was the issues of power and knowledge between the different contexts, and the lack of understanding of the differences across the respective cities. Since the project involved individuals from diverse contexts in both the Global South and North, people had different perceptions of what to prioritize as objectives. In this case there was the hierarchical aspect of Northerners presuming to know what needed to be done and the South being the subject of that knowledge. For example, in Cape Town, methods of co-creative planning were not transformable to the City Government, due to the disparity and power issues within the City of Cape Town making it impossible to plan with participatory planning methods, running the risk of using co-creation-based planning to rubber-stamp existing plans. Vanessa Watson (2014) points out the need for awareness of the complexities surrounding different contexts which often are taken for granted when trying to apply methods that

are developed in the global North in the global South and, by extension, in any very different context.

When conducting comparative research between different cities where contexts differ sharply, it is important that in the initial phase of the project creates a space for mutual understanding of the different contexts but also an understanding of what power dynamics exist between the different contexts and also within the research team. In this case, the challenges arose in a later phase of the project, creating a very conflictual situation between different partners. In this case, the project leader had an important role in creating an understanding of why this conflict arose and finding a way forward. This was done through informal meetings involving discussions on the underlying reasons for conflicting views, how the participants perceived the situation, and how the project could find a way forward within the original time plan.

A key lesson from this specific case is that it is important in the initial phase to set time to learn about the different contexts and partners involved. The project leader or facilitator has the responsibility to create a safe space for discussing these types of questions and uncertainties. This should also be built into the project process, so that the group has a space to discuss and reflect about the different differences and issues that might come up during the project.

## **Conclusion**

Many of sustainability's "wicked problems" are being engaged by academics and practitioners who, due to the complex nature of the challenge, have to traverse the domains of knowledge, policy and society. Naturally, the greater the disparities in institutional or social power and other variables, particularly in sharply polarised societies and cities, the more profound is the initial challenge of building mutual intelligibility as a prerequisite for developing a shared sense of purpose and rationality – all of which are essential if transdisciplinary co-production is to have a real prospect of success, however measured. Being able to identify new areas for engagement, novel approaches and spaces for collaboration, where, despite contextual differences, co-learning could take place made visible the spaces and processes that supported further dialogue and equitable collaboration. The identification of novel approaches to wicked problems is contingent on difference being brought to the fore. It is the identification of difference that made common positions evident, where spaces are created for the realisation of new perspectives, possibilities and axioms. Importantly, this created space for difference to be celebrated as opposed to being censored or muted. We would argue that noting these positions up front, at the start of a collaborative (or co-production) process would assist in avoiding lengthy and often conflictual processes. Without such processes, we argue that "agreement" is often curated, generally representing a false consensus.

As the Transport and Sustainable Urban Development comparative project showed, when conducting comparative research between different cities involved from different contexts in both the global South and North there is a need to set up an initial process to explore and define the purpose of the collaboration. As all the projects involved diverse teams with people from a range of disciplinary backgrounds and a range of perspectives, it was crucial to bring people together in interactive processes to agree on the overall objective and detailed research questions and methods of the comparative research. The first part of the comparative agenda, the Idea phase, can be time-consuming and complex in itself. During this period, there is a need for learning and reflection about the different local contexts but also about global geopolitical and structural power dynamics and to see what possibilities for collaboration exist. The second phase can be termed framing and rephrasing, during which the team conducts a series of activities (such as workshops or seminars) in order to try to identify the principal objectives and research questions. By the end of this phase, the group should have set up a common project plan. The third phase is the comparative research

phase, during which actual research is conducted. This can then be followed by subsequent phases focused on evaluation and dissemination.

Ultimately, understanding and engaging with the different and highly contextualised rationalities of participants in co-production processes is essential for different actors to work together effectively to co-produce and operationalize knowledge for more just and sustainable cities. This holds for interdisciplinary engagements within academia or any other single sector as well as for transdisciplinary engagements with participant from diverse sectors. In other words, whereas in conventional, expert-led research, academic rationalities and perspectives often dominate by design or default, in transdisciplinary co-production, the conflicting worldviews need to be addressed and worked through. While challenging and possibly time consuming, the process can turn a challenge into a valuable means for overcoming divisions and building effective teams through the shared experience and sense of achievement, thereby making the actual subsequent research more effective and giving substance to rhetoric about transformative action or adaptation for urban sustainability.

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# B1: Urban Studies—Starting in Africa: Land and Urban Conflict

**Chair:** Dr Colin Marx, Senior Lecturer, The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL

**Discussant:** Dr Beacon Mbiba, Senior Lecturer in Urban Policy and International Development, Oxford Brookes University

Manuscript not available

**Land use planning and traditional authorities in Lilongwe City, Malawi: spatial practices in the production of urban space**

Dr Evance Mwathunga, Lecturer and Head of Geography and Earth Sciences Department, Chancellor College, University of Malawi

Manuscript not available

**Urban land nexus in African cities: the State and the market at the cross-roads**

Prof. Wilbard Kombe, Professor of Urban Land Management and Director of the Institute of Human Settlements Studies, Ardhi University, Dar es Salaam

Manuscript not available

**Theorising from Black Global Souths: young people's embodied experiences of public space and everyday power relations in Accra, Ghana**

Victoria Okoye, PhD candidate, School of Architecture and Department of Urban Studies & Planning, The University of Sheffield



## B2: Black Urbanisms

**Chair:** Dr Kamna Patel, Associate Professor, The Bartlett  
Development Planning Unit, UCL

**Respondents:** Lioba Hirsch, Research Fellow, London  
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UCL African Studies  
Prof. Ola Uduku, Professor of Architecture,  
Manchester School of Architecture

Manuscript not available

**Black urbanism...**  
Prof. AbdouMaliq Simone, Senior Professorial Fellow,  
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# C1: Urban Landscapes of Displacement

**Chair:** Dr Jonathan Rock Rokem, Lecturer in Human Geography, University of Kent

**Discussant:** Dr Tatiana Thieme, Associate Professor, UCL Geography

Manuscript not available

**Forced displacement, urbanization, and the dark side of informality: a view from Lebanon**  
Prof. Mona Harb, Professor of Urban Studies and Politics, American University of Beirut

035

**Departure cities: on hyper-mobile urbanism and mobilisation of people 'on the move'**  
Dr Irit Katz, Lecturer, School of Architecture, The University of Sheffield

## Departure cities: On hyper-mobile urbanism and mobilisation of people 'on the move'

By Irit Katz

In a conversation at City Plaza – an eight story hotel in Athens occupied by a group of local and migrant squatters<sup>1</sup> during the so-called European 'migration crisis' – Olga Lafazani, one of those who initiated the squat, has reflected that while the squat's main aim was to create a dignified place for the migrants in the city, it was also about 'making a structure that respects mobility itself, respects a community which is on the move, [...] bends the rules of moving, creates an infrastructure for that'.<sup>2</sup>

This reflection provides an example for the new practices, spaces, identities, and politics of the ever-changing yet particular forms of urban existence and practices supporting 'people on the move' I wish to define in this paper as 'departure cities'. These are not only urban spaces of ordinary transience. Rather, departure cities, as this paper argues, increasingly form part of today's fortifying borderscapes when cities are used as a material, spatial, social and political resource by irregular migrants and those supporting them in the struggle against state and regional powers attempting to block irregular human mobility.

Within the expanding epistemologies, theorisation and conceptualisation of spaces of movement, displacement and refuge, 'departure cities' is a notion which is particularly concerned with the urban informal hyper-temporary spaces, alliances, practicalities, and politics around people on the move. Differently from 'arrival cities', where migrants wish to settle or at least to stay for a period of time, 'departure cities' function as jumping-off points and temporary resource for those who wish to move on as soon as they can while being unable to do so in an authorised manner. 'Departure cities' exist as part of the constantly-modified global web of irregular migration routes and their alternative infrastructures created by the 'politics and violence of im/mobility'. They appear, change and disappear according to broader geopolitical realities, and they take up various forms composed of changing urban practices responding to the restrictions and precarious realities imposed on irregular migrants in particular cities.

Departure cities could be created by secret hideaways such as the ones formed in cities near the Mexican-US border or in cities in the Sahel, the Maghreb and the Middle East where migrants wait before they cross – often with smugglers – the desert, the Mediterranean, or securitized state borders. They could also form as makeshift encampments or squats in capital or port cities, where train stations and urban squares are turned into migration hubs where migrants stay reluctantly while waiting for the chance to depart. These different urban contexts illustrate some of the various geographies creating 'departure cities' worldwide, with cities functioning as life-sustaining nodes on the global networks of irregular human movement.

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<sup>1</sup> On the problematic and changing categorization of "forced migrants," "displaced people," "refugees," "asylum seekers," and "irregular migrants" see Crawley et al. (2016) and Crawley and Skleparis (2017).

<sup>2</sup> A conversation with Olga Lafazani, City Plaza hotel, Athens, 20 February 2019.

## Theorising cities on the move

There is a growing tension between the global capitalist system which requires open borders to enable the relatively free yet differential movement of goods, services, and (a selected group of) people and between the territorial nation-state system and its notions of security and citizenship-related rights based on relatively fixed populations contained within relatively fixed territorial borders. These tensions are particularly evident in cities, where the mechanisms of borders and citizenship are not only performed and articulated but also resisted and reconfigured. Departure cities should therefore be examined in the intersection between border and citizenship practices, policies and struggles within the urban context.

### *Turbulent and pixelated borders*

Increasingly, borders are understood as spaces which are becoming mobile and reactive. Border spaces are 'fluid' and 'disjunctive' while the current 'pixelation of the border' means that borders penetrate to spaces within the territory, primarily to cities. Cities are now considered as key to the re-scaling of border control and the penetration of borders into everyday life, becoming places where 'local border control' is often being practised. In these urban dynamics state bordering mechanisms preventing unauthorised migration are enforced, but also contested and politicised – borders dynamics which 'departure cities' make part of.

### *Insurgent migrant citizenship*

While citizenship is often considered as a dividing instrument between citizens who can enjoy various degrees of rights and non-citizens who cannot, citizenship is increasingly formed as a dynamic political constellation. As Isin points out, 'globalization have challenged the nation-state as the *sole* source of authority of citizenship', and as Holston suggests, it is in cities where new radical 'transnational and diasporic' identities are created while provoking specific disturbances that challenge 'the dominant notion of citizenship as national identity'. Such forms could be associated with the proliferation of informal, makeshift, or 'gray spaces' created as a ceaseless process of producing new social and political relations.

This is where departure cities could be located – as the in-between spaces created, left behind or destroyed, and recreated – in a process where 'people on the move' create 'cities on the move' as part of their 'migrant citizenship' entangled with autonomous mobility, claiming for both a dignified stay and a successful departure.

### *Between hospitality and presence*

Departure cities involve intersecting struggles related to both movement and citizenship; while the first calls for *the right to stay* as an irregular migrant, the second calls for *the right to move* as one. This double claim for both 'movement and place' could also be described as what Darling calls the 'politics of presence', which opens up the institutional practices and politics of conditioned hospitality to 'a demand

for *both participation and mobility*' which may 'be enhanced through the negotiations of urban life'.

Examining the spatial and social practices and politics of 'departure cities' may provide new scripts of urban living based on mobilization around irregular migration, rather than only seeing the city as a site of border policing and conditioned hospitality.

### **Urban transnational analysis on the edges of Europe**

The choice of sites for this analysis – the cities of Athens and Calais - is intentional, comparing cities in different states yet in the same region responding to similar geopolitical realities in distinct yet associated manners. Both Athens and Calais are not destination cities but function as points of departure while temporarily hosting irregular migrants. I will focus on the City Plaza squat in Athens and the Jungle camp in Calais, both specific yet similar to other spaces of departure in these cities, looking at these spaces in relation to their spatial and urban attributes and their socio-political characteristics.

#### *Assembling spaces of departure*

While departure cities have particular attributes responding to their specific circumstances, they also have common characteristics. Urban spaces of irregular departure are often informal spaces created and inhabited 'under the radar', enabling migrants to avoid formal registration. In Europe, staying 'under the radar' is particularly important for those wishing to claim asylum in other European countries as EU's Dublin Regulations assign responsibility for asylum seekers to the first EU state in which they made an identifiable claim.

In Athens, squatting has become the most prevalent spatial form for irregular migrants living informally, supported by solidarity movements which mobilized to occupy empty buildings mainly in and around Exarchia, a known radical anarchist leftist neighbourhood where many buildings were squatted particularly following the Greek economic crisis. The first migrant squat was opened in September 2015 and followed by a series of squats linked through a political assembly – the Coordination of Refugees Squats.

City Plaza squat was created in April 2016 as a response to the EU-Turkey deal. Over the 36 month of its existence, over 2,500 immigrants from 13 different countries were hosted in the squat, with about 350 migrants hosted per period in 100 of its 126 hotel rooms. As a former hotel, the squat was particularly well equipped for the everyday provision of the migrants, with a large kitchen and dining room where meals were cooked and served. The squat, continuously hooking itself to the grid, had also a medical clinic run by volunteer doctors with donated medicine.

In Calais, informality has evolved in the form of makeshift encampments that were spread around the city until January 2015, when the municipality of Calais has indicated that these will be tolerated only in a derelict area of industrial waste near the new Jules Ferry Migrant Centre around 6 km from the city centre.

Basic provisions of water, hygienic facilities, and one hot meal a day were offered to the migrants camping near the Migrant Centre, yet the informal camp grew rapidly to host more than 6,000 migrants who tried to cross the English Channel. The camp developed into a city-like environment with a high-street with shops, restaurants and social and religious institutions while being a highly precarious space of institutional 'violent inaction'. The ability of the migrants to live in the camp while remaining unidentified, however, was crucial for their chances to be granted asylum in the UK.

Movement itself was actively supported by both these spaces. In City Plaza, rooms of people who tried to depart were kept for a number of days or until they announced on a safe arrival. In the Jungle, locked shelters of those who managed to depart were only then opened and 'inherited' to friends or family. These methods of occupancy have developed to reduce pressure and anxiety around losing the place of departure only due to the efforts to depart, while taking into account successes and failures which both make part of irregular journeys.

Both the Jungle and City Plaza were also linked to core spaces of departure in their cities. While the Jungle was near the port and the Channel-tunnel entrance where migrants try to jump lorries crossing to the UK, City Plaza was near Victoria square, a main meeting point of smugglers and migrants.

#### *Radical urban hospitality and presence*

Calais, Athens, and other departure cities have evolved not only around spaces and practicalities of departure but also around the articulations of citizenship and rights employed both by the irregular migrants and those supporting them.

In Calais, the urban encampments and later the Jungle were not welcomed by the authorities and by some local residents, yet a multiplicity of local charity organisations and NGOs, solidarity groups and activists from both sides of the Channel have supported the migrants in creating and sustaining the camp, claiming that 'to create [together] is to resist'. The struggle for free movement and global citizenship was manifested in the Jungle's graffiti and its very existence; migrants have demanded a form of presence that was not conditioned in identification, control and restriction on movement, but in a way that supported their will to continue their journeys.

In Athens, activists have produced the squat as a 'free space' – where migrants could feel safe and protected - created for both 'freedom of movement and the right to stay'. Local solidarity groups of squatters did not see themselves as aid providers for the migrants but as partners in their antiauthoritarian struggle and resistance. The clear aim of City Plaza was 'not to be a "refugee" shelter, but a place of cohabitation and common everyday life'. Similar to other squats, this was a real political attempt to work against social structures and hierarchical host-guest relations, developing a system of management in which both local

and migrant squatters took part while sharing the day to day choirs, an approach reflected in their slogan 'we live together, we struggle together'.

Both the Calais Jungle and City Plaza were considered by migrants as human, even homely environments, as opposed to the dehumanizing spaces of the institutionalized camps. These spaces, similar to others, have also become the platforms for more performative political campaigns such as the demonstrations organized by City Plaza in the city with signs saying 'Open Borders, Open Buildings'.

### **A conclusion and a point of departure**

As a point of closure, which is also a point of departure to new understandings about cities, let's return to the words of Olga Lafazani, one of the establishers of City Plaza:

One of the greatest accomplishments of the project has been that, for hundreds of people, it has transformed what is a transitory period of their lives—an intermediate period of uncertainty, loneliness, intense insecurity, anxiety, and worry—into a time that also offers a sense of community, creativity, security, joy, and optimism. [...] Keys to City Plaza rooms are currently all over Europe; they are the keys that residents insisted on holding, or "forgot" to return; [...] that one day will bring them "home."

Lafazani's words reflect the sense of humane urban spaces created as part of the struggle against the oppressive powers of border regimes and disciplinary state apparatuses. While City Plaza and the Jungle no longer exist, Athens, Calais, and other cities in Europe continue to function as departure cities, with ongoing reports on surge in expanded evictions of temporary shelters and increasing attempts to depart.

Departure cities around the world constantly change and vary in their location, spatialities, and socio-political dynamics. Their investigations must be integrated into critical urban studies to develop an informed account on the constant formation of new urban realities, societies and identities that are formed and reformed in contemporary urban struggles which make part of the current age of turbulent global migration.

## C2: Land, Accumulation and the 'Postcolonial Suburb'

**Chair:** Prof. George Owusu, Department of Geography and Resource Development, University of Ghana

**Discussants:** Dr Rita Lambert, Teaching Fellow, The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL

Dr Paula Meth, Reader, Department of Urban Studies and Planning, The University of Sheffield

**041**

**Land, accumulation and the postcolonial suburb**

Prof. Claire Mercer, Professor of Human Geography, LSE



## **Un/mapping the suburban frontier: accumulation and authority at the state's urban edge in Dar es Salaam**

*Claire Mercer, Department of Geography and Environment, LSE*

***At the frontiers of the urban: thinking concepts and practices globally, UCL, 10-12<sup>th</sup> November 2019***

### **Suburban frontiers in African cities**

With 4.4 million people at the last census in 2012 (National Bureau of Statistics 2017), and a growth rate of 5.6% over the preceding decade, Dar es Salaam is Tanzania's largest and fastest growing city. This growth is evident in the city centre and inner suburbs which have become more densely populated, and also around the city's outer edges, which have experienced higher population growth rates than the city centre in recent years (Andreasen 2013). This population growth has fuelled the city's extension, almost all of it unplanned, into the former peri-urban and rural hinterlands, transforming them in to socially mixed, predominantly residential neighbourhoods (Briggs and Mwamfupe 2000, Mercer 2017, Owens 2004).

This is the suburban frontier, a "zone of desire and potential" (Tanya Murray Li 2014, page 15) for the accumulation of land and property and for the extension of state authority. In an environment in which land is the basis of significant political and economic resources for both residents and the state it is no surprise to learn that there is contestation over who owns land, who may exercise authority over it and who may extract value from it. Struggles over individual parcels of land are literally written on to the landscape: spray-painted signs on doors and walls vividly proclaim the intentions of plot owners, brokers and neighbours (*'nyumba hii haiuzwi'*, this house is not for sale; *'ogopa matapeli'*, beware brokers/conmen), or the edicts of under-resourced municipal planners condemning structures that violate planning regulations (*'bomoa'*, demolish; *'ondoa'*, remove; or simply a large red 'X'). The suburban frontier is a landscape under construction which house-builders, plot-owners, squatters, neighbours, brokers, government officials and politicians try to shape in their own interests.

McGregor and Chatiza (2019) have developed the concept of the frontier in urban Africa to capture the way in which the encroachment of informal settlements on previously white-owned farms around the edges of Harare can be understood as a specific form of statecraft. Here frontier politics and authority over space is intimately tied to the politics of the state and specifically of the political party, ZANUPF. In this paper I also mobilise the concept of

the frontier in order to think about accumulation and authority on the city's peripheries, but in a different political economy in which state authority and political actors have (arguably until recently) been less centralised and political parties have been one of a number of social forces shaping peri-urban space, rather than the dominant force. That said, Harare and Dar es Salaam share an unusual characteristic among African cities as their peripheries are not governed by overlapping forms of state and traditional forms of authority (see e.g. de Boeck 2016).

To examine the dynamics of the suburban frontier in northern Dar es Salaam I draw on and extend Roy's concept of 'unmapping', which describes a regime of urban governance that relies on the apparent chaos and disorder of urban informality in order to render land claims constantly negotiable with political actors in the state. In the cities discussed by Roy, and McGregor and Chatiza, Kolkata and Harare, political actors in the local state and the national political party are driving unmapping on the urban frontier. In Roy's (2003) account, unmapping is a distinct mode of governance which produces a condition of uncertainty around land ownership in which the urban poor are able to make claims to land, yet are unable to translate these into *rights* to land. In the case of Dar es Salaam, and I would suggest in many other African cities in which political parties' and state actors' power to shape peripheral urban space jostles with other forms of authority, the outcomes of unmapping have produced a much more socially variable distribution of land. Over the last three decades unmapping in Dar es Salaam has created the conditions in which the elite, the middle classes and the poor have been able to access suburban land. They have done so in unequal amounts, and in the past decade the suburban frontier has become an increasingly significant vector of elite and middle class accumulation. Nevertheless, unmapping in Dar es Salaam is a distributed set of practices in which local state actors and street level bureaucrats (Bierschenk and Olivier de Sardan 2014) are engaged by residents through a range of mechanisms including lower local government officials, community meetings, ward tribunals, private surveying companies, councillors and politicians, the municipality, and the Ministry of Lands Housing and Human Settlements Development (MLHSD), all of which are attempting to exert authority over suburban space. Unmapping here is better understood as a set of practices to claim space and shoring up that claim on the suburban frontier, and I will outline some of the ways in which this is done below. I further develop Roy's original formulation of unmapping in relation to the recent process of 'mapping' that is taking place across Tanzania's informal settlements. Attention to unmapping and mapping draws out continuities and change in the processes driving accumulation and authority that are shaping Dar es Salaam's suburban frontier.

The data on which this paper draws has been collected at intervals between 2012 and 2018, and has focused on repeat visits to the same administrative ward in Kinondoni. Wazo Ward is located approximately 25 km north of the city centre along the Ali Hassan Mwinyi Road, which is the main artery out of the city towards Bagamoyo. It is an area that has

experienced rapid residential development in the last two decades, nearly all of which has been built incrementally by residents on individual plots. My research has been focused on the three most densely populated *mitaa* (streets, or neighbourhoods) in the ward; Salasala, Kilimahewa and Kilimahewa Juu [see maps below]. Fieldwork utilised ethnographic methods with a small group of middle-class house builders, and interviews with a more extensive number of residents, as well as with lower local government officials, councillors, municipal officials, officials in the Ministry of Lands Housing and Human Settlements Development, and surveying companies.

### **‘Unmapping’ on the suburban frontier**

Dar es Salaam’s suburban frontier is overwhelmingly informal. Across the whole city, recent estimates suggest that at least 83% of land is informally occupied (Sheuya 2010), although allocation of urban land for planned residential development has fallen woefully short of demand since at least the 1940s (Kironde 2007, Brownell 2020). Land referred to as ‘informal’ includes that which has been invaded and occupied, held or exchanged under customary or quasi-customary tenure (formerly customary but where such laws are no longer followed), and which may be secured with written documents witnessed by the parties to the transaction, neighbours, or lower local government representatives (Kombe and Kreibich 2000, Lupala 2002, Kironde 2006). The residential suburbs of northern Kinondoni have been settled by a diversity of actors since the late nineteenth century, from Arab and then Greek sisal plantation owners in the pre-colonial and colonial periods, to farmers and smallholders who claimed or were allocated land after the foreign-owned plantations were nationalised in 1963, to more recent arrivals looking to purchase land on which to build a house. In Wazo Ward, residents gained access to their land in a number of ways. Some city dwellers were allocated what was then peri-urban farmland during the *Kilimo cha Kufa na Kupona* (‘Agriculture as a Matter of Life and Death’)<sup>1</sup> campaign of 1974, designed to increase food production for the city (Kombe and Kreibich 2000). Some bought peri-urban farmland in the late 1970s and 1980s from the indigenous Zaramo farmers, who moved further out from the city as a consequence (Owens 2010). Some government workers bought farmland from the government for a nominal fee in the 1970s and 1980s. By the 1990s, as the city continued to grow, these groups of ‘suburban pioneers’ (Owens 2004, 2010) decided to build homes on their farmland, transforming the peri-urban fringe into residential suburbs (Briggs and Mwamfupe 2000). Land values and land speculation have increased dramatically following the land law reform (the Land Act 1999 and the Village Land Act 1999), which among other things commodified land and stimulated a land market<sup>2</sup> in Tanzania (Kombe 2010, Dancer 2015). Land is now accessed in these new suburban spaces through purchase, inheritance or occupation, and in some areas, through

<sup>1</sup> *The Citizen* (2014) ‘Kilimo kwanza: where did we lose the plot?’ Dar es Salaam, 22<sup>nd</sup> May.

<sup>2</sup> The Land Act 1999 overturned the Land Ordinance 1923, which did not recognize the value of undeveloped land.

allocation by lower local government leaders (Kironde 2006). Suburban space in Wazo Ward is therefore socially mixed, although many of the earlier farmers have since sold parcels or all of their land and moved on (Msangi 2011).

This suburban transformation is reminiscent of what Roy (2003) calls ‘unmapping’ to describe a regime of urban governance that relies on the apparent chaos and disorder of urban informality in order to render land claims constantly negotiable with political actors in the state. In Roy’s (2003) original formulation, ‘unmapping’ on the eastern fringes of Kolkata arises from the absence of maps, producing a frontier politics in which a host of actors constantly make and renegotiate claims to land and state actors can benefit from the patronage possibilities therein, while the claims to land of the poor rarely translate to *rights* to land. Dar es Salaam’s suburban frontier is also mostly not mapped. The working Master Plan for the city dates from 1979 and bears little resemblance to actual land use. According to this plan the northern suburbs of Kinondoni were planned as an industrial zone, but in the absence of industrial development over time land invasions simply changed the land use on the ground. A new Master Plan has been anticipated for the last decade. Formal town planning map sheets exist but are outdated, inaccurate and inaccessible, stowed away in an old wooden map drawer under the gatekeeping eyes of the municipal planners. Lower local government officials in *mtaa* (‘street’, or neighbourhood) government offices have no maps of their neighbourhood. The lack of maps, a land register or property titles makes land vulnerable to competing claims as a result of encroachment or invasion. Yet as Roy (2003) argues, unmapping does not arise due to the absence of the state, and most land transactions involve the state in some way: records of transactions are usually kept in lower local government offices, and many land-owners with informally-acquired land have attempted to formalise their land by having it privately surveyed and receiving an ‘offer’ from the Municipality.<sup>3</sup> In addition, although tax due on formally owned land was often avoided, in recent years the state has been collecting taxes regardless of land title status. A highly unpredictable frontier-style land market has emerged over the last two decades in which people access and secure land via multiple channels (sellers, family and friends, neighbours, brokers, the street government, the ward council, the municipal government, the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development); land transactions are often characterised by mis-selling, double selling, inflated prices and fake documents; and the actions of recalcitrant neighbours, or occupiers, can always thwart carefully laid plans (Ally 2015). The competition for land on the suburban frontier produces a set of distinctive unmapping practices through which residents attempt to negotiate and secure their access to land.

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<sup>3</sup> Following survey and town planning drawings, a prospective property title owner receives an ‘offer’ of the title from a municipal Town Planner, which is converted in to a property title upon payment of fees at the Ministry of Lands, Housing and Human Settlements Development. Since the last stage is so expensive it is very common for people to ‘have an offer’ in relation to their land, where they anticipate paying the final fees at the MLHHS but have not yet managed to do so.

## Unmapping practices

Accessing land on the suburban frontier is a fraught process in which it is very difficult to know who owns what and whether a piece of land is legitimately for sale. One of the most common experiences of unmapping is to be found in land disputes, often between neighbours or parties to an exchange. Across the country, the number of land cases filed to District Land and Housing Tribunals<sup>4</sup> (DLHT) between July 2016 and mid-May 2017 was 26,245, while the 'stock' of pending cases is estimated to be increasing at a rate of 60% a year (Mramba 2018). A significant proportion of these land cases are located in Kinondoni District (pers comm.). Most of these cases are pending in the formal court system (the DLHT and above). However there is a whole further layer of land disputes that do not necessarily come before the DLHTs. These are brought to the ward tribunals, which provide a cheaper, non-professionalised and localized forum for dealing with land disputes in urban areas. Ward tribunals were established in 1985 as part of a broader reinvigoration of local government and were officially purposed with maintaining peace and stability in neighbourhoods by hearing and adjudicating on local conflicts related to land, marriage and debt. They are closely supervised by local government officials (Ward Executive Officers) and usually made up of *wazee*; local elders, many of whom have held previous lower local government or party<sup>5</sup> positions (Dancer 2015). In recent years, land cases have taken up an increasing amount of ward tribunals' time, as the following fieldnotes from April 2016 attest.

My research assistant and I were attending an afternoon sitting of the ward tribunal or *Baraza la Kata* in Wazo Ward, northern Kinondoni. The tribunal met in a single room in a small administrative building facing the only tarmacked road that ran through the suburb, which also housed the offices of the Executive Officer and the Street Chairperson of Kilimahewa, two of the key positions in lower local urban government.<sup>6</sup> The building had only recently been constructed and painted with input from local residents. In the small room sat seven *wazee* (elders), five men and two women. The Chair and Vice-Chair sat behind a small wooden desk flanked by a large cupboard in which were piled various papers and files, while the Secretary and the other four members sat on plastic chairs pushed up against the walls. Facing the desk and the chairs were two wooden benches on which the people outside waiting to have their cases heard were instructed to sit at the appropriate moment. We heard three judgements being given out to complainants who had previously brought their cases to the court, all of which happened to be concerned with land disputes, and which I later learned was fairly representative of the tribunal's business.

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<sup>4</sup> The lowest tier of the formal legal system.

<sup>5</sup> The *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* (CCM; Party of the Revolution), the second longest-ruling political party in Africa after the National Party (South Africa). It was founded in 1977.

<sup>6</sup> The Executive Officer is a government-appointed position, while the Street Chairperson is an elected position for which political parties field candidates. Street Chairpersons are usually local residents.

The first case concerned a dispute over the size of a plot. It was brought to the court by a man who complained that he had sold a plot to a woman who had subsequently attempted to increase the plot size by changing the unit of measurement on the documents from 'm' (for *miguu*, or 'steps'), to 'm' (for metres). The woman maintained that when the man had sold the plot to her, he had given the size of the plot in the unit of metres. Only afterwards did she discover that the plot measurements were in *miguu* and that the plot was actually smaller than she had anticipated. The tribunal had looked at the documents and decided that the woman had in fact changed the size of the plot on the documents from *miguu* to metres, and they directed her to change the unit of measurement on the documents back to *miguu*. She announced that she did not accept the judgement and that she would take the case to the DLHT. The man and the woman were dismissed.

The second case concerned a dispute over payment for a plot of land. The case was brought by a young man who had sold his plot for 10m/= (approximately £3,500). He and the buyer agreed that the payment would be made in instalments, with a first payment of 7m/= to be followed by the remaining 3m/= at a later date. They also agreed that on completion of the payment the buyer could demolish the existing building on the plot and re-use the materials. However, the buyer did not complete the payment, yet proceeded to remove the doors from the existing structure and to put an *mlinzi* (caretaker) in the house. The buyer had not attended the ward court hearing. Instead he had obtained a letter from the DLHT stating that he did not want the case to be heard at the ward tribunal, but that it should go to the DLHT. The complainant was dismissed.

The third case concerned a dispute over land ownership. It was brought by a man (Buyer Two) who had bought a plot from a bank. The plot in question had previously belonged to Buyer One, who had taken out a mortgage in order to finance the purchase, and who had subsequently defaulted on the loan. The bank had repossessed the plot and it had been sold to Buyer Two, the complainant. However, thereafter Buyer One proceeded to build a house on the very same plot. Buyer One had not attended the ward tribunal and a letter from him was instead read out, stating that he did not trust the ward tribunal and that he wanted the case referred to a higher court. The complainant was dismissed.

These three random cases brought before the ward tribunal on one afternoon provide a window on to the dispersed practices of unmapping on the suburban frontier. In the absence of a reliable land register underpinned by an accurate cadastral record and a local government with the capacity to exercise oversight of land transactions, buyers and sellers engage in a multitude of unmapping practices in which they improvise boundaries, documents, agreements and payments. In Kilimahewa, the only map of the administrative neighbourhood in the possession of the street government in April 2016 did not cover the whole neighbourhood, only showing the formal layout of the original resettlement plan for residents who were moved from Ubungo to make way for a gas pipeline after 2003. In one

corner, the words ‘forged document’ (in English) had been painted over with correction fluid. The town planning maps of the area drawn in 2004 are held in the municipal planning offices, but many avoid the ‘bureaucracy’ associated with the planning officers and simply proceed with transactions without consulting the plans which are, in any case, out of date. In this frontier environment the artefacts of plots and buildings themselves become unstable: cadastral beacons, maps, even the measurement units of plots, were all subject to being shifted as well as to shifting meanings and interpretations. One neighbour might move another’s beacon to increase the size of their plot, or they may place fake beacons to demarcate their claim to land. A plot may not really be for sale, nor belong to the person apparently selling it. The absence of maps and a land cadastre meant that any claim to land relied on the testimony of neighbours. Documents, signatures and certificates were routinely faked. In Kilimahewa, a copy of the official stamp of the *serikali ya mtaa* was available for use at the photocopy shop opposite the office.

And yet, as Roy’s notion of ‘unmapping’ captures so well, none of this means that state authority, or the authority of local political actors, is absent. Rather in Dar es Salaam the national and local state have enabled the suburban frontier to develop in such a way that land has been more or less accessible through the market, inheritance, invasion or squatting. In Wazo, various officials in lower local government explained the procedure for transacting land via the *balози* (ten household leader, a position created by the socialist one-party state that has since become indistinguishable between state and party structures; Phillips 2015) and then registering the transaction with the *serikali ya mtaa* (street government). This is because *balози* are local residents and can verify owners of land and land boundaries, while documents can be stamped and a copy kept at the *serikali ya mtaa* office. The aim of these procedures is to minimise small-scale land conflicts such as those heard at the ward tribunal, and to aid urban planning by preventing the sale of any land that the state has designated for public use (such as schools or markets), or which is needed to provide pathways or roads. In practice, however, agents of the state at lower local government level, such as *balози*, street chairmen and ward officials, or at the municipality, such as planners and surveyors, do not follow these procedures. Instead, they are often actively involved in unmapping themselves. In Kilimahewa, the Executive Officer reported that the majority of land transactions were not registered at the *serikali ya mtaa*. Some transactions involve the *balози* and some do not. Some bypass the *serikali ya mtaa* by going straight to the municipality if they are seeking formal title for their plot. As a result, in April 2016 the Executive Officer told me that he didn’t know how many households were under his jurisdiction, nor who owned what land.

At the same time, the instability of the frontier environment creates conditions in which access to and authority over land is regularly scrutinised and challenged. As the suburban frontier has become a more desirable residential location, and land and property construction have become a relatively easier and profitable way of investing cash and

savings, the frontier environment is one in which the middle classes and the elite have been best placed to profit. Following economic and political liberalisation in the 1990s, a number of processes were set in motion which transformed the suburban frontier. Land reform in the late 1990s allowed bare land (not only improvements on it) to have value, which together with high demand for land among an increasing urban population, created the conditions not only for a more energetic land market, but also for hoarding, speculation, and accumulation. In the post-socialist era, land was a good investment for those with cash; or as one suburban resident noted, “there’s no better money than land.” In a context of ‘institutional pluralism’ (Lund and Boone 2014) in which buyers seek out those state officials who are most likely to authorise their claim to land, “if you have influence, the map can be re-drawn,” as another resident put it. In Tanzania ‘institutional pluralism’ describes the array of state officials at different scales and in different departments who can be called upon to legitimise land ownership.<sup>7</sup> One official’s decision can always be overturned at any time by another official at a different level or in a different department. To take the cases heard at the ward tribunal, it is no accident that the better-off and better-educated complainants insist on taking their cases to be heard in front of legal professionals in the DLHT. This is an option that is only open to those with the resources to pay for the legally trained personnel who staff the district tribunals. Land on the suburban frontier has therefore increasingly become a vehicle for speculation, accumulation and desirable living within reach of the city. In my other work on this I have explored how, from around 2010, the middle classes began to shape the suburban landscape to suit their needs and tastes (Mercer 2014, 2017, 2019). As the price of land has gone up, poorer suburban residents sell up or are pushed to small parcels of undesirable land in the suburban interstices – around gulleys or rubbish dumps, on marginal or disputed land, or in disused quarries. There is hardly any public space, and public services are virtually absent. At the same time, there has been a boom in private nurseries, primary schools, bars, and halls for hire. Living on the suburban frontier is increasingly about pioneering a distinctive lifestyle as it is about accumulating land and building houses.

## Mapping

When I returned to Kilimahewa in August 2017, I was astonished to encounter an up-to-date, largely accurate town planning map pinned to the wall in the office of the *serikali ya mtaa*. This map, it turned out, was the work of a local private surveying company which had begun work on a town planning map (showing all plots and land uses) for the neighbourhood. This map was the outcome of a neighbourhood-wide survey in which all plots, boundaries and land uses were recorded. As I visited other local government offices across Wazo Ward, I found similar mapping exercises under way. These mapping exercises represented potentially radical changes to the unmapping practices on the suburban

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<sup>7</sup> In other African countries ‘institutional pluralism’ can refer to the competing authority of, for example, states and traditional authorities.



frontier. Indeed, it turned out that the mapping projects were part of a new central government drive to regularise informal urban settlements across the country (interview, MLHHS August 2018). This was to be done by private companies rather than municipal and district planners. In fact the Minister for Lands Housing and Human Settlements Development (MLHHS), William Lukuvi, had announced during his 2016/17 budget speech that councils were 'banned from surveying land' on account of their lack of efficiency (*The Citizen* 2016).

In the three adjacent neighbourhoods of Salasala, Kilimahewa and Kilimahewa Juu a similar set of processes had unfolded over the previous year. Private surveying companies had availed their services to communities via the *serikali ya mtaa*, through which agreements had been reached on the cost of the neighbourhood survey. The costs varied between Tsh200,000 and Tsh350,000 (roughly £68 to £118) for the production of a town planning map which contained all of the necessary cadastral details of individual plots which could then be used to draw up title deeds at the MLHHS (and for which residents would have to pay extra). These costs were high in relation to many residents' ability to pay, but far lower than the cost of an average survey for an average plot.

The mapping exercises in the three neighbourhoods did not proceed smoothly. In Salasala, by August 2018 the surveying had not yet begun because a large area of land on which people had built residential homes fell in an area that had been zoned for industrial use in the 1979 Master Plan. The chairman of the *serikali ya mtaa* had been doggedly liaising with MLHHS officials who were refusing to regularise the plots for residential use since they considered the house-builders to be invaders who were squatting on government land meant for industry. In Kilimahewa Juu a surveying company had been appointed and a local committee tasked with aiding the surveyors in their work, which they had begun in April 2018. But in 2019 the surveying ground to a halt as a result of a land dispute in which high-end houses had been built in a disused quarry that had been earmarked by local and municipal government for a secondary school and a health centre. By contrast in Kilimahewa, in August 2018 the surveying had been completed and residents were being invited to community meetings to verify their plots on the map; but the cost recovery was slow, with only around 400 of the 950 eligible households having paid the survey fee over the previous year. No official at local or national level was able to explain what would happen in the event that people did not pay the survey fee.

### **Mapping authority and recognition**

If unmapping was a mode of governance that emerged through neglect but which nevertheless facilitated private accumulation while maintaining the state's right to appropriate land (in principle if not always in practice), the ambition to map the vast proportion of the city's informal settlements through neighbourhood surveying exercises

with the aim of handing property titles to plot-owners signalled potentially significant shifts in the dynamics shaping the suburban frontier. The suburban frontier is now on the frontline of the central state's attempts to assert its authority over the expanding city. The state is, in effect, trying to keep up. This is evident in the increasing visibility of the lower levels of the state bureaucracy as a result of the subdivision of the territories of lower local government to create more local administrative areas, and the building of infrastructure to enable this such as ward and *mtaa* offices and police stations. The state is now much more present on the suburban frontier than it was even a decade ago. But the attempt to extend state authority is also evident in the new mapping exercise, which sets out to survey, order, map and tax the suburban frontier. For as the state makes provisions to formalise rights to urban land in informal settlements, reversing over a century of exclusion of the urban majority from formal urban land rights, the government also draws urban residents in to the tax base. Indeed the central government's mapping directive can be read as an exercise in statecraft (McGregor and Chatiza 2019) through which the state is able to present itself as the guarantor of people's land rights while also protecting them from malevolent global and local forces which would dispossess them of their property and frustrate them in their attempts to make better lives for themselves. For example, government ministers and officials repeatedly claim that surveying will provide the solution to land conflicts across the country. As the country gears up for next October's presidential election, at which the incumbent Dr John Magufuli is planning to seek re-election to a second term on the CCM ticket, the discourse has shifted to more explicit promises in relation to the extinguishing of land conflicts by 2020, as long as people survey their land.<sup>8</sup> In a similar vein, Minister Lukuvi of the MLHSD often states that the wider uptake of formal property titles will protect citizens from predatory land brokers who engage in double selling and mis-selling plots of land, and municipal and district town planners most of whom "are dishonest" (*The Citizen* 2016).

Mapping then, is presented as a state-led project to protect the people and their access to land. But there are other ways to read the mapping exercise as a form of statecraft. It could be the latest iteration in the Tanzanian government's record of experimenting with de Soto's ideas about the necessity of liberating *dead capital* through the provision of land titles.<sup>9</sup> It could be part of a broader effort to increase domestic tax revenues, adding property and land taxes to that collected from businesses and investors (Goodfellow 2017, Pedersen and Jacob 2019, Collord 2018), part of a recent drive to 'Make Tanzania Great Again' (MATAGA) and which has severely dampened Western international interest in investment in the country (Poncian 2019). It could also offer a politically appealing route to attracting the urban vote which has increasingly voted for the opposition in recent

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<sup>8</sup> 'Lukuvi: migogoro ya ardhi Tanzania itamalizika mwaka 2020', *Mwananchi*, 22.11.18, last accessed 07.11.19

<sup>9</sup> The government has attempted small-scale residential licence (time-limited formal property rights) programmes in the past (refs).

elections, slimming the ruling party's national vote share to its lowest ever level, around 55%, in the 2015 election. It could, of course, be all of these simultaneously.

We must also recognise that the vast majority of residents on the suburban frontier want formal land rights. They want their most important investment – in land and property – to be secure. More specifically, they want the right to compensation in the event that the state decides to utilise their land for another purpose.<sup>10</sup> Even though the majority of suburban residents consider the state to have done little for them on the suburban frontier, and have not paid taxes for a long time, they nevertheless want state recognition and protection. People want more government offices, government services, and police stations, such that several of the lower local government buildings that have sprung up in the new administrative areas in recent years have been built with the contribution of local residents.

The shift to mapping as a mode of governing the suburban frontier has provided the state with an opportunity to extend its authority into these new residential neighbourhoods, but it also ushers in a new phase in the relationship between the state and urban residents. What should urban residents do (pay how much tax, abide by what planning rules)? What should states do (ensure what kinds of land rights, provide what level of public services and security)? These questions are currently being worked out in potentially radical ways, such as through the mapping and regularisation of informal settlements. But what will be the long-term outcomes? For as the state extends formal land rights, it also attempts to extend its authority into these self-built suburban frontiers. The paradox is that both the state and suburban residents want formal land rights, but for potentially irreconcilable reasons.

### **Concluding comments**

Limits to urban thinking – what about urban land in Africa?

I will end with the simple observation that we need to know more about land beyond the urban core of African cities – who owns what, who does what with what, who authorises what, how, and with what effects? Suburban and peri-urban land is, by definition, not well understood through our standard frameworks for urban or rural land. And yet, as others have noted, it is where the 'urban majority' lives, and will live, in Africa's urban future.

In earlier work (Mercer 2017) I have suggested that the 'postcolonial suburb' is a useful framework because it foregrounds such questions in African contexts. In Dar es Salaam and many other African cities, answers to these questions must necessarily draw on colonial history and its afterlives: for the urban majority, a history of exclusion from rights to urban land, a history of being refused recognition as urban citizens, and a history of under-

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<sup>10</sup> Since all land is vested in the President and rights to use land only can be acquired through leasehold.

provision of public services. Sue Parnell's (2017) notion of the 'palimpsest' in urban planning is useful here, since it draws our attention to the layers of land use, land rights and governance practices that have accreted over time in particular places. The colonial period, I would argue, is a particularly thick accretion which continues to shape African cities today.

In the case of Dar es Salaam, the central state appears poised to scratch out the contemporary consequences of exclusionary colonial urban land tenure. The question remains, how will the turn to mapping change the dynamics of authority and accumulation on the suburban frontier?

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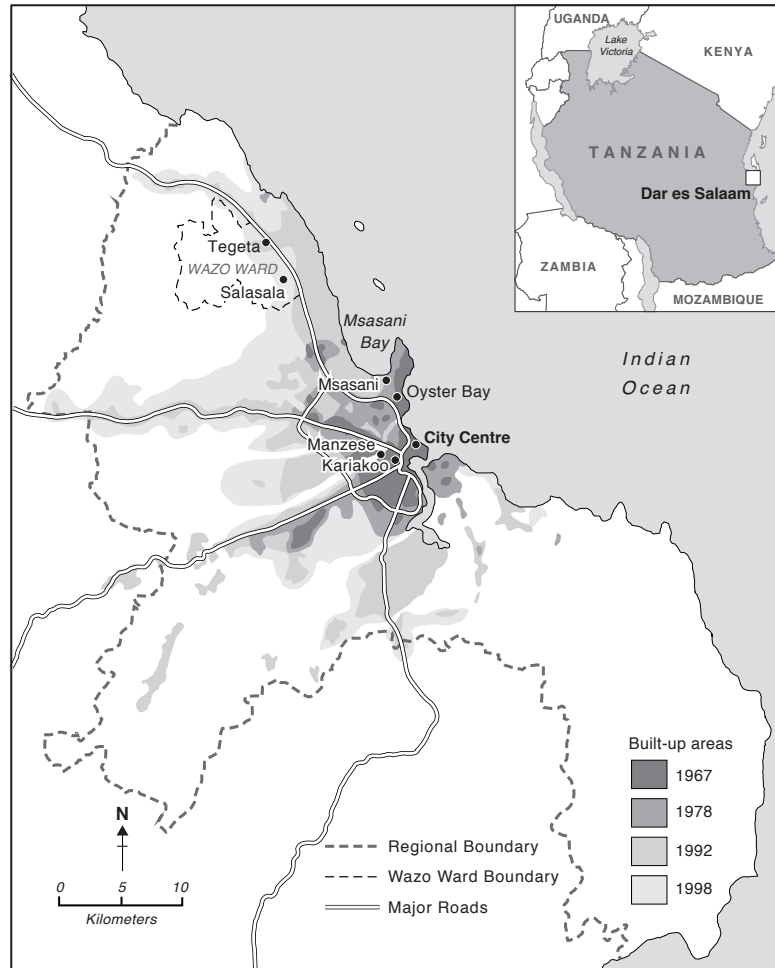
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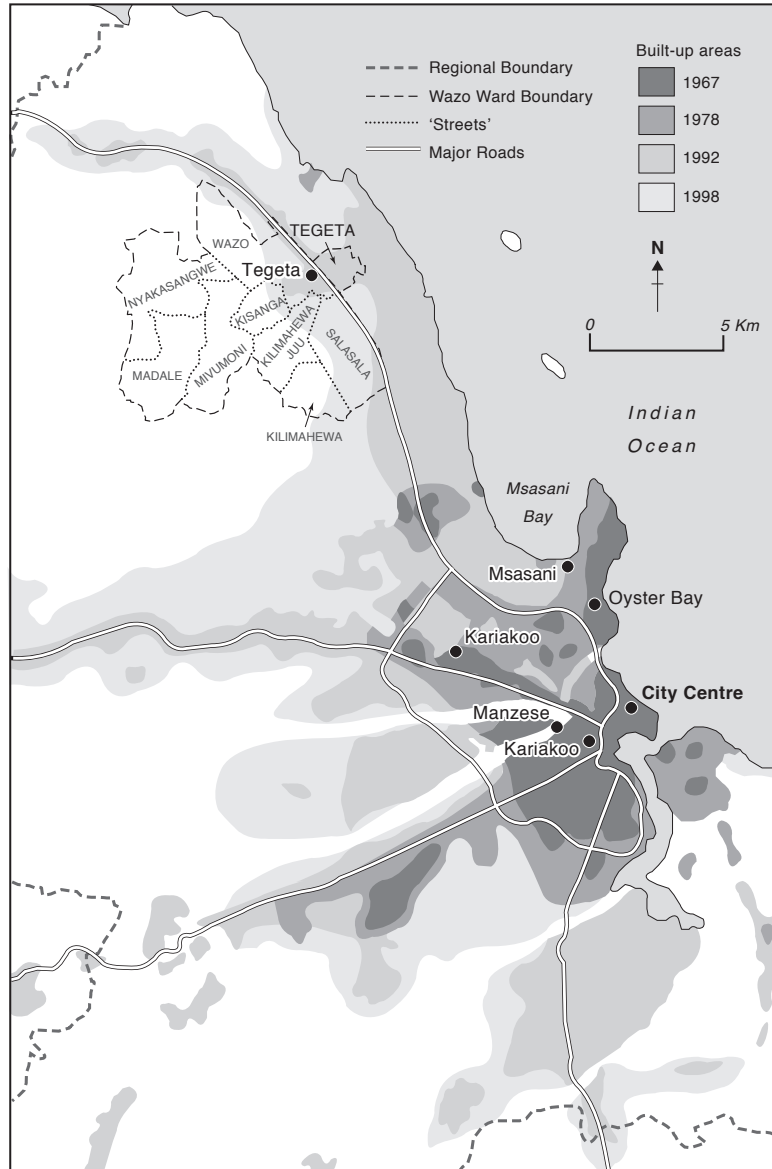
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Map 1: Wazo Ward, Dar es Salaam (LSE Design Unit, based on maps in Briggs and Mwamfupe 2000 and Andreasen 2013)



Map 2: Lower local government subdivisions in Wazo Ward showing Salasala, Kilimahewa and Kilimahewa Juu

# D1: Insecurities and Urban Violence

**Chair:** Dr Susan Moore, Associate Professor of Urban Development and Planning, UCL

**Discussant:** Dr Katherine Saunders-Hastings, Lecturer in Latin American Studies, UCL

Manuscript not available

**Governing urban life through violence and exclusion: lessons from Nigeria and South Africa**

Dr Laurent Fourchard, Director of Research, Fondation Nationale de Sciences Politiques

Manuscript not available

**More-than-human geographies of policing**

Prof. Rivke Jaffe, Professor of Urban Geography, University of Amsterdam



## D2: Urban Carcerality roundtable

**Chair:** Dr Caroline Oliver, Associate Professor of Sociology, Education, Practice & Society, UCL

Transcript not available

**Participants:** Hannah Elsis, Lecturer in Modern Middle East History, King's College London; PhD candidate, Merton College, University of Oxford

Dr Brian Jordan Jefferson (via video), Associate Professor of Geography and Geographic Information Science, University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

Prof. Bruce Stanley, Professor for International Relations, Richmond—The American International University in London

Dr Annie Pfingst, Visiting Research Fellow, Department of Sociology, Goldsmiths, University of London

## E1: Urban Politics and Revolution

**Chair/discussant:** Prof. Camillo Boano, Professor of Urban Design and Critical Theory, UCL

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**Decolonising space through appropriation of urban transformation**

Dr Ronnen Ben-Arie, Adjunct Lecturer, Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning, Technion—Israel Institute of Technology

Manuscript not available

**Tunis as revolutionary city**

Dena Qaddumi, PhD candidate (Architecture), Centre for Urban Conflicts Research, University of Cambridge

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**Gaza: space, violence and everyday non-life**

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## Decolonising space through appropriation of urban transformation

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On Friday evening, May 18 2018, hundreds of protestors gathered in Downtown Haifa, amidst dozens of ordinary people hanging out in the popular nightlife area, to demonstrate their solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza who have been protesting for weeks in front of the fence surrounding Gaza Strip. The Haifa demonstration was organised by 'Hirak Haifa' (Haifa movement), a local nonestablished independent activist group, following a series of demonstrations that took place in the city that week in response to the Israeli deadly response to the Nakba Day demonstrations in Gaza. For the local organisers, the significance of the demonstrations in Haifa was to manifest the unity of the Palestinian people, despite of decades of geographical separation. As the protestors gathered, they soon found themselves surrounded by dozens of fully armed riot policemen and quickly things became violent and the usually peaceful street turned into a struggle arena. After few hours of continuous clashes and pursuits in the nearby streets, the area calmed down with the result of 21 detainees at the police station, some of whom also needed medical treatment in hospital.

This event was a moment of collision between two competing processes that are part of the production of urban space in Downtown Haifa. Competing, but also, in some ways, mutually dependent. On the one hand, a municipality led urban regeneration project which is undergoing for the past twenty years or so; and on the other hand, a counter independent process led by young Palestinian political and cultural activists.

The basis for the municipality regeneration project is the decades long negligence and dereliction of the area that used to be the urban commercial and administrative center of the city during the first half of the 20th century. Under Ottoman and British rule, the city developed rapidly by the power of colonial investment in sea and land infrastructures, connecting the city to the entire region known as the Levant (Al-Sham), to become an economic center and a major port city on the eastern Mediterranean shoreline with a mixed population of Muslims, Christians and Jews and a prominent urban centre for both Palestinians and Jews (Seikaly 1995; Yazbak 1998).

This completely changed with the 1948 war when 95% of the city's Palestinian population, half of the city's total population at the time, were forced out of the city to become refugees in neighbouring countries and other localities, and the old city was demolished and razed to the ground, leaving ruins and derelicts even to this day (Ben-Arie 2016; Khalidi 2008; Goren 1994). As a result of the war and the establishment of the state of Israel, the city was cut off from its arteries and lines of supply and the Downtown area deteriorated while other urban centers developed, the Palestinian population was confined into a delimited area and Haifa continued to develop as one of Israel's major cities. The destruction of Palestinian urbanity – urban space and society – by the Israeli regime, which didn't take place only in Haifa, but also in other major Palestinian cities such as Jaffa, Akka, Lydda, Ramleh and other cities, has been acknowledged in recent years as holding a crucial role in the Palestinian 'Nakba' and the evolution of Palestinian society after the 1948 war (Bishara 1999; Hasan 2005; Pappé 2006). It is also a constitutive component of the formation of the settler colonial spatio-political order of the state of Israel. The settler colonial logic of the formation of a settler society through the deformation of a native society, by using practices of elimination, dispossession, displacement, erasure and assimilation (Veracini 2010; Wolfe 1999, 2006), is manifested and actualised also in the production of the urban space. As Porter and Yiftachel (2019) assert, because "such cities are symbols of the profound displacement, erasure and often destruction of Indigenous histories and geographies and are at the same time precisely the form that keeps that displacement hidden", they "represent a most thorny site for questions of Indigenous visibility, sovereignty and justice". Thus, the question how to decolonise urban space becomes an acute problem in settler colonial cities, such as Haifa.

Nowadays' urban regeneration project, first in the German Colony (completed in 2000) and currently in the Downtown area (since 2005), is based on neoliberal practices such as the privatisation of properties and planning procedures, public-private partnership, rehabilitation and rebranding of urban space and encouragement of private investment and gentrification, but also continues the erasure of Palestinian historic and symbolic urban space and the dispossession and displacement of

Palestinians, leaving them the option to remain and be part of urban transformation only as long as they take upon themselves a role which supports the regeneration aims, such as in promoting and realising an image of a safe multicultural diverse city, as Haifa is often labelled and marketed. As the municipal regeneration process continues and evolves, another process, which is counter to it but also builds upon it, takes place. In the following, I will give two such examples. The regeneration project of the German Colony, initiated in the 1990's, aimed ultimately to bring back the design principles of the Templar street and houses. This was to be achieved by conservation and renovation of the facades of Templar historic houses, creating wide walkways on both sides of the street, and designing small squares along the boulevard as a commemoration of the Templar gardens. Signs narrating the story of the place, emphasizing the Templars' role in the development of the neighbourhood and in the city's development and progress, were posted along the boulevard. In addition to the physical regeneration, efforts were made in order to increase the population in the neighbourhood and the number of operating businesses and shops. Abandoned houses were leased and others were sold to their present tenants; the municipality encouraged the opening of restaurants, cafés, bars, gift shops, a tourist's information bureau, hotels and galleries; and the Haifa City Museum was opened in a renovated Templar school. For Palestinians in Haifa in the 1990's, the regeneration project of the German Colony seemed no more than another institutional attempt to eradicate Palestinian presence and past from the public space.

But things have developed differently. Soon as the renovation project was close to completion, cafés and restaurants owned by Palestinians were opened and became centers for extensive cultural activities of young Palestinian artists and intellectuals. That was the beginning of a Palestinian cultural revival that was focused in and around the German Colony (Natour and Giladi 2011). Two important socio-political trends have conjoined to enable and support this process. First, Haifa has become the main scene for the evolvment of a new 'middle-class' of mostly young educated Palestinians (Karkabi 2018), bringing new needs and demands for public places for entertainment, leisure and cultural activities. And second, due to the Second Intifada and the violent events of October 2000 that took place in Palestinian cities within Israel, including in Haifa, and the continuous fighting in the Occupied Territories and suicide bombings within Israeli cities, distrust, suspicion and estrangement between Israelis and Palestinians have increased, and local Palestinian residents in Haifa felt unwelcome anymore in entertainment and leisure spots they used to go to before. This atmosphere has caused many Palestinians to look for and create new places in which they will feel at home, separately from the Jewish population, or at least be the ones who set the rules. The German Colony, being, on the one hand, located in the lower part of the city, close to the populated Palestinian neighbourhoods, and itself inhabited mostly by Palestinians, and still, on the other hand, being outside the more traditional neighbourhoods, appeared to be the perfect place to answer these two trends and to evolve as a new public space which is conceived to be more open and free. The German Colony did not become an exclusive place for Palestinians, but rather functions as a very popular space also for Israeli Jews and tourists. As Jabareen (2009) shows, the space has different meanings for different groups, and it operates as a space of trust and encounter between the groups, supporting in many ways the image of a multicultural diverse city.

For young Palestinians in Haifa, growing up in the 2000s, the German Colony was the ultimate urban public space. Located between several Palestinian high-schools and outside the more traditional inhabited Palestinian neighbourhoods, and being already acknowledged as a Palestinian public space, it became for them the place to meet and hang out on a daily basis. The place to see and be seen. That is, the space of appearance. Hence, for them it was not only a space for leisure and entertainment, but also a space for political action. And indeed, since 2012, when the first political demonstration, in support of the hunger strike of Palestinian prisoners in Israeli jails, took place in a small square that since gained the popular name "The Prisoner's Square", the German Colony has become the major location for demonstrations and protests of the city's Palestinian population. From demonstrations against Israeli policies against the Bedouin population in the Naqab, through demonstrations in support of animal rights, to actions against patriarchal violence in the Palestinian society, all causes and actions take place there. Thus, the public space planned for tourism and consumption has transformed into a political space of protest and collective action.

The current municipality led urban regeneration project in the Downtown area is one which seems all too well known. A transformative intervention that is directed towards the built environment as well as its inhabitants. Signs of destruction, desolation and neglect, ruins, half demolished houses and empty and deserted buildings are apprehended as the physical stratum on which manipulation is needed in order to produce the new desired urban space. The municipality's campaign aims also to transform the meanings attributed to the urban space and to rebrand the area as a hip young neighbourhood and encourage young families, artists, hipsters and so on, to move in. This is intended as a straightforward process of gentrification, which, on the one hand, makes clear who are the desired inhabitants of the renovated urban space and what is deemed to be their life style and appropriate environment; and on the other hand, it is also obvious who is to be excluded and removed – those who have inhabited the area throughout its deterioration, mainly low- and middle-class Palestinian residents.

Up to now, the success of the project has been partial. The built environment has largely changed due to buildings and streets renovation and purchase and rent rates have risen distinctively as many real estate transactions were made. But the flow of new-coming residents is rather slow. The more significant change that has taken place in the past few years is the opening of many new businesses, mostly bars, cafes and restaurants, and some trendy shops and galleries, and the transformation of the neighbourhood into a popular place for hanging out and consumption. Many of the new businesses, and often the trendier ones, are owned and operated by young Palestinians, and Palestinians make a significant part of the customers and consumers. However, some of these new venues have an agenda that stands out of this consumption economy. In the past few years, several spaces for cultural activities were established in the Downtown area, including an independent theatre, music venues, galleries and art studios, all dedicated to Palestinian culture. The activities include performances of both local artists and musicians and others from other parts of Palestine, including the Occupied Territories, and from round the Arab world. In addition to the ongoing regular activities, these venues produce yearly joint events such as an independent film festival and a jazz festival. The cultural activists behind these initiatives insist on independent funding from the public or funds, or by ways of income, and not being funded or supported in any way by the Israeli government or the municipality. Most of the venues operate in buildings previously owned by Palestinians, some of which not occupied and neglected for years, now available for use on the private market.

Reutilising the old buildings, while telling the stories of their long-gone owners, is part of what these activists state as their cultural and political vocation. Moreover, they give great significance to being active in an urban environment, aiming to revitalise the lost Palestinian urbanity in the place where it used to thrive, insisting on doing that through reconnecting Haifa to the Arab region and Palestinian people it was cut off from. Thus, once again, a planned urban space meant for consumption and economic profit, is being transformed into a political and cultural space which serves as a foundation for the recreation of a Palestinian urban collectivity.

These actions and interventions in the urban space raise questions regarding the possibilities to decolonise the settler colonial city under a neoliberal urban development regime. Does the political and cultural activity that makes place for Palestinian presence and visibility in the urban space, but is being enabled through the practices of neoliberal urban development really challenges the current regime, or is it only a manifestation of the possibility of being part of the urban space only as long as that presence has an economic value? What kind of Palestinian subjectivity and collectivity are produced through this kind of cultural actions and how does it effect and transforms traditional political action? What might be the real material effect of such actions on ongoing threats of dispossession and displacement in the city and beyond?

The May 2018 demonstration, detailed at the beginning of this paper, aimed to bring together these movements. The choice of the location was not coincidental. It aimed to challenge the municipality development of the Downtown as a space of consumption and to manifest the possibility for Palestinians to be part of this urban space not just as consumers or as providers of economic value,

but rather as full political subjects in an urban space to which they belong. The violent response was harsh and quick to set anew the limits for political action in the settler colonial city. Considering revolutionary politics of the urban space, we can conclude that transformation might not occur on a revolutionary way but unexpected changes and deviations in the production of urban space are always an open possibility.

## E2: Unaffordable Housing

**Chair:** Prof. Miraftab Faranak, Professor of Urban and Regional Planning, University of California, Berkeley

**Discussant:** Dr Joe Penny, Lecturer in Economic Geography, School of Geography, Queen Mary University of London

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**Broken cities: inside the global housing crisis**

Dr Deborah Potts, Emeritus Reader, Department of Geography, School of Global Affairs, King's College London

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**Housing and the authoritarian turn**

Dr David Madden, Associate Professor in Sociology, Department of Sociology, LSE

# F1: Thinking (through) Infrastructure

**Chair:** Dr Jenny McArthur, Lecturer in Urban Infrastructure and Public Policy, UCL

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**Designing the off-grid city: empowering the transactions of infrastructure**

Prof. Aseem Inam, Chair in Urban Design, Cardiff University

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**The materiality of pipes: heterogenous infrastructures**

Dr Maria Rusca, Researcher in Water and Society, Department of Earth Sciences, Uppsala University

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**The infrastructural 'WE': the gendered materiality of infrastructure and its governing**

Dr Hanna Rusczyk, Postdoctoral Research Associate, Department of Geography, Durham University

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**Is the 'neoliberal' trope enough to think (through) water infrastructure? Reflections from Indian urban diverse realities**

Marie-Hélène Zérah, Research Director (Urban Studies), Institute of Research for Development; Centre d'études en sciences sociales sur les mondes africains, américains et asiatiques, Université Paris Diderot



## UCL: Urban Lab Conference

At the Frontiers of the Urban: Thinking Concepts and Practices Globally  
November 10-12, 2019 London

“Designing the Off-Grid City: Empowering the Transactions of Infrastructure”

Dr. Aseem Inam, Professor and Chair in Urban Design, Cardiff University, UK<sup>1</sup>

## INTRODUCTION

What follows is not a conventional academic paper. Rather, it is a proposal for a research project—in terms of being a larger intellectual and operational endeavor—that consists of a theoretical framework driven by sets of research questions and objectives, and an operational strategy articulated by research methods, outputs and impacts. Thus, it is nakedly much more of a proposed collective brainstorming and work in progress, rather than a supposedly finished and clearly defined scholarly paper. I adopt this stance because in order to confront the myriad of challenges and crises that cities face in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, we need more open-ended, collaborative and experimental approaches that will lead to fundamental change; that is, towards urban transformation.

The research project examines how residents interact with urban infrastructure in highly creative and productive ways in the global south, including via informal strategies and social innovations. Further, the project fundamentally rethinks what constitutes urban infrastructure and its design by proposing approaches based on two innovative premises. The first is that the conjunctions of people and their transactions with each other and with infrastructure in fact constitute a type of unique infrastructure itself [i.e. people as infrastructure]. The second is that these types of people/people and people/infrastructure transactions can be further designed to empower residents and create transformative urban practices [i.e. designing urban transformation]. The ultimate goal of this project is to create a global platform that will reshape the disciplinary landscape of urbanism and create empowered urban practices through south-south learning and north-south knowledge exchange.

The first innovative premise for this research project, people as infrastructure, is derived from the work of AbdouMaliq Simone [e.g. 2004 article “People as Infrastructure: Intersecting Fragments in Johannesburg,” 2018 book “Improvised Lives: Rhythms of Endurance in an Urban South”]. Infrastructure [e.g. water, sanitation, energy, transport and communications] is commonly understood in physical terms, as systems of highways, pipes, wires, or cables. I thus extend the notion of infrastructure to people’s activities in the city. Cities in the global south are characterized by flexible, mobile and provisional intersections

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of residents that operate depending on the ability of residents to engage complex combinations of objects, spaces, people and urban practices [Simone 2004, 2018]. These networks and conjunctions become themselves a platform and an infrastructure providing for and reproducing life in the city. This is how we can fundamentally rethink urban infrastructure, its transactions with people, and its future design.

Thus, a significant source of innovation in cities are informal urbanisms. I define informal urbanisms as the transactional conditions of ambiguity that exist between what is acceptable and what is unacceptable in cities. In this manner, informal urbanisms constitute the transactive realm between coded formalities [e.g. engineered infrastructures, legal and financial rules and regulations] and fluid informalities [e.g. social networks, political negotiations over resources and spaces]. In fact, informal urbanisms are not marginalized forms of urban practices and places; rather, they are central to understanding the logic of urbanism because they constitute debates about what is legal and illegal in the city, what is legitimate and illegitimate, and with what effects. As an illustrative example, informal urbanisms are partly constituted by the everyday informal strategies that the most marginalized [e.g. least resourced] residents deploy to navigate the everyday city in order to survive and even thrive [e.g. service delivery innovations such as potable water delivery to informal settlements, political negotiations to obtain services such as sanitation systems, extralegal housing and infrastructure construction of things like roads]. This research project will develop a systematic and in-depth understanding of these types of informal urbanisms, in order to develop their potential for transforming cities through off-grid strategies. The purpose is to harness the everyday knowledge and informal strategies of marginalized residents in order to flip the narrative of them being marginalized to them being empowered, especially in face of urban change and crises.

The second innovative premise for this research project, designing urban transformation, draws from the work of Aseem Inam, [e.g. 2014 book “Designing Urban Transformation,” 2016 chapter “Extending Place: The Global South and Informal Urbanisms,” 2019 article “Designing New Practices of Transformative Urbanism: An Experiment in Toronto.”]. The argument of this work is a theoretical one [i.e. we need radical shifts in how we think about how cities are actually shaped or “designed”], and an empirical one [i.e. there are existing yet sometimes overlooked design strategies and transformative urban practices we can learn from]. Thus, we can understand informal strategies as potentially transformative design practices that yield systemic, long-term and larger-scale impacts. This transformative approach can yield far more empowered ways of redesigning urban infrastructure.

The research project thus examines the potential of the off-grid city via the powerful lens of design, which has witnessed increasing interest from and collaboration with the social sciences and policy fields. Design can be empowering in terms of spatial political-economy of the city because [Inam 2014, 2016, 2019]:

- Design emerges out of human creativity, an inventiveness that every citizen and every organization have the potential of imagining and realizing bright new futures, provided there are mechanisms and networks that enable such potential,
- Design is inherently transdisciplinary, because it rests on the premise that design projects require cutting across conventional disciplinary boundaries while focusing in-depth on the issue at hand, such as the design future of urban infrastructure seen from different perspectives,
- Design engages with the everyday material realities of the city, including infrastructure, because it engages directly with matters of space and place,

- Design embodies learning by doing, in which we test ideas in iterative and reflective ways with partners and collaborators, and
- Design is propositive [i.e. focused on putting forth intentional propositions], such that while it understands the need to conduct serious research in order to systematically understand existing problems, in the end it is policy- and action-oriented.

Through this lens of design, we can acknowledge that while cities face enormous challenges and crises, they also constitute places and networks of innovation and transformation.

There is a growing and rich body of work on urban infrastructure to draw from. For example, Karvonen and van Heur [2014] describe urban laboratories and experimentation, Coutard and Rutherford [2016] explicate the post-network city hypothesis, and Björkman and Harris [2018] analyze the relationships between power, politics, materiality and urban engineering. While there is some overlap with this literature, my focus is much more on investigating and designing [i.e. in highly creative and spatial ways] the off-grid [i.e. informal] city by [i.e. collaboratively] empowering the [people/people and people/infrastructure] transactive nature of urban infrastructure. Essentially, I am treading substantially new ground at the intersection of the two seminal bodies of work referenced at the beginning of this section, and by also drawing from related literature on urban informality [e.g. Bunnell and Harris 2012, McFarlane 2012] and on design innovation [e.g. Bhan 2019, Hou 2010]. These approaches are investigated and further developed by first examining a series of research questions and establishing a set of objectives, described in the next sections.

## RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The multi-year multi-partner multi-country multi-city collaborative research project will be driven by a number of critical research questions that have implications for new theories of contemporary urbanism as well as alternative forms of urban practice, especially transformative approaches that can bring about fundamental changes to the local spatial political-economy of urban infrastructure [e.g. how power is exercised over spatially expressed outcomes in cities, including how policy decisions are made and how resources are allocated, such as for distribution of infrastructure investments to meet urban challenges and crises]:

- What are contemporary findings and their implications in theories of urbanism and empirical research in terms of creative and innovative approaches to human/infrastructure transactions [i.e. interactive exchanges] in cities of the global south?
- What does existing research indicate about the more creative types of interactions [e.g. using informal strategies and social innovations] between people and infrastructure and among people themselves, especially the most marginalized urban residents?
- What are specific ways in which creative transactions among people [e.g. social, economic and political interactive exchanges such as around provision of water, sanitation, energy, transport and communications – such as self-build, self-financed or cooperative models] constitute “people as infrastructure”?
- Drawing from the previous research questions, existing literature and further interactive in-person discussions among all of this research project’s multiple partners, what is an emerging analytical framework to conduct original research and fieldwork across the 6 different case studies in 6 different countries so as to highlight both contextual differences and common similarities?
- For each in-depth case study analysis [see brief descriptions of potential and illustrative case studies below], how is the concept of “people as infrastructure” and the potential

of “designing urban transformation” [see concept descriptions above] embodied and operationalized?

- Viewed through the lens of transformative design practices, what are more creative and effective [i.e. more open, democratic and transformative] approaches to designing the off-grid city, such that they not only challenge conventional disciplinary boundaries but also develop new theoretical and policy frameworks for effective action in human/infrastructure transactions?

## OBJECTIVES

The research project will significantly advance our knowledge of cities as complex systems, particularly how the most marginalized urban residents not only transact with existing infrastructures [e.g. water, sanitation, energy, transport and communications] but also how they create their own vital infrastructure through symbiotic transactions with each other. This will contribute to a greater understanding of how such transactions are often based on informal and innovative strategies throughout the cities in the global south and how they possess the potential of being further designed as empowered and indeed, transformative urban practices.

Within this overall goal, these are the principal objectives and, in some cases, sub-objectives:

1. Through critical analysis of existing research and literature, to fundamentally rethink the concept of urban infrastructure in terms of human transactions with each other and with material grids and service flows in the cities of the global south
2. Through systematic documentation and analysis of grounded case studies in different contexts of the global south, to gain an in-depth understanding of the vast creative potential of informal strategies that marginalized residents already deploy individually and collectively to address current urban challenges and crises
  - a. Through a collaborative and interactive workshop with all collaborating partners early in the life of the research project, to examine different theoretical perspectives, appropriate and innovative [e.g. participatory] research methods, and potential design implications of informal strategies
3. Through collaborations, partnerships and networks with researchers, practitioners and activists across the global south [e.g. Brazil, Colombia, Egypt, India, Malaysia, Mexico – see examples of case studies] and the global north [e.g. UK, US, Sweden, Canada], to develop common understandings and to examine the propoitive implications of this fundamental rethinking of urban infrastructure as systems of informal transactions
  - a. Through panels at international conferences and a major international and public conference, to bring together communities of activists, practitioners, researchers and policy actors, to develop an edited book of collected case studies and papers
4. Through urban practice implications of the literature review, case study analyses and south/south and north/south knowledge exchange, to propose new ideas about the power of design, in terms of the everyday creativity of citizens and the transdisciplinary collaboration necessary to address pressing urban challenges and crises
5. Through new ideas about the empowering potential of transformative design practices, to suggest alternative approaches that are more accessible, affordable and adaptive in meeting SDG infrastructure goals in water and sanitation [SDG6], clean energy [SDG7], transportation [SDG9] and information and communication technologies [SDG11].
6. Through the in-depth research, on-the-ground fieldwork and international collaboration enabled by this research project, to shift the disciplinary landscape of urbanism

and the thinking behind urban practice towards a more open, democratic and transformative approach that challenges conventional disciplinary boundaries by developing new theoretical and policy frameworks for effective action

a. Through the opportunities and collaborations created by a large grant, to further develop long-lasting partnerships at the nexus of research and practice with academic scholars, policy makers, local practitioners and grassroots activists beyond the life of the grant [e.g. by seeking out further funding and working with international research and policy communities]

## RESEARCH METHODS

One of the biggest strengths of this research project would be that it would operate across multiple cases and multiple geographies in particular ways: (a) it plays close attention to the specifics of particular social, political and economic contexts while simultaneously seeking generalizable commonalities across the cases from different parts of the world, and (b) it further refines comparative research methods collaboratively, especially by highlighting perspectives from the global south as well as south-south learning through the global platform that the project creates. The detailed and in-depth case study analyses offered the kind of fine-grained empirical analysis will yield the thick descriptions necessary to tease out truly creative and innovative urban practices found within the contextually social and political nuances that sometimes get lost in broad-brush universal generalizations. I will now describe a number of potential and illustrative case studies to document and analyze and ultimately, to illuminate—and indeed, to probably modify—the basic theoretical framework proposed in this project.

Bogota, Colombia: Residents-run artisanal water systems in San Germán

San Germán is a spontaneous settlement located in Usme on the eastern side of Entrenubes Park in Bogota. This location describes an urban edge territory over an area declared as a protected. Its growth has been monitored for fifteen years by district entities. However, institutional actions have not been efficient to control the growth of the occupation or guarantee better living conditions for the inhabitants. Even when public investment in settlements of informal origin is not viable in Colombia, this type of self-managed development continues to increase in urban peripheries.

Recent research of the Universidad de Los Andes in Colombia tackles the Spontaneous Planning and Management in urban planning scenarios on the south urban edge of Bogotá. The initial diagnosis describes San Germán as an isolated and highly cohesive settlement. This approach to the territorial dynamics exposes that the collective actions have promoted the growth and development of artisanal water systems. Without legal recognition by the relevant entities, the inhabitants have even established dialogues with entities that provide services such as electricity. Moreover, the autonomy of the inhabitants in the decision making allowed to evidence the effects of the lack of water supply and sewage infrastructure on social cohesion or health.

In this sense, San Germán is an auspicious territory to be studied for four main reasons: first, there converge the tensions between formal and spontaneous logics that shape the city; second, it represents an alternative response to the basic needs of a population; third, this settlement exposes the importance of understanding the links established between the community and infrastructure from the self-management of the informal city; fourth, it

exposes the inefficiency of the institutional action resulting from the ignorance of the territorial dynamics that shape urban informality.

#### Guadalajara, Mexico: Independent moto-taxi operators in Tlajomulco de Zúñiga

Low-cost housing in Mexico and in many other countries, mainly in Latin America, are located in the peripheries, resulting in a great amount of the population living away from work, education and health facilities, with very few public transportation options for them. Guadalajara's Metropolitan Area grew rapidly towards the south in the early 2000s in a municipality called Tlajomulco de Zúñiga. This spread-out urbanization created long walking journeys from the bus stop to the houses, most of them being more than a few kilometres from public transport, schools or shops. The former conditions have triggered spontaneous and off-grid movements to offer solutions to having long trips, especially for disabled people, or when carrying groceries, walking with young children, etc.

The movement started with a few neighbours who decided to offer the "bicitaxi", which is a cart mobilized by a bicycle, to provide low cost rides through the subdivisions. This idea evolved to "moto-taxi" allowing the drivers to travel greater distances and having more trips a day, but still being a cheaper option against regular taxis. The 'moto-taxi' appears to be fulfilling the need of local mobility, addressing a problem caused by current developers, in an informal way but that has nowadays become part of the urban infrastructure.

#### Cairo, Egypt: Zabaleen informal garbage collectors in El Mokattam

Cairo, being one of the largest cities in the world, is home to more than 15 million inhabitants. Like other mega-cities, solid waste management is a huge challenge for Cairo municipality and other stakeholders. The city produces more than 15,000 tons of solid waste every day which is putting tremendous strain on city's infrastructure. Waste collection services in Cairo are provided by formal as well as informal sectors. While local authorities, such as the Cairo Cleanliness and Beautification Authority, form the formal public sector, the informal public sector is comprised of traditional garbage-collectors (i.d. the Zabbaleen).

The Zabaleen are Cairo's informal garbage collectors since approximately the 1940s. They are spread around seven different settlements in Cairo with the largest settlement at the Mokattam Mountain where the population is approximately 30,000. There they sort the garbage, and then sell it to a middleman or create new products from their recycled garbage. The Zabaleen recycle up to 80 percent of the waste that they collect, soliciting the help of goats and pigs to consume much of the organic waste. This is a hardworking community and self-sustaining people offering informal and yet organized service throughout the city and represent the off-grid city.

#### Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia: Street traders and light rail lines in central business district

The case study consists of five LRT Stations (i.e. light rail transit) that cut across the heritage zone, the recently regenerated River of Life and the central business district of Kuala Lumpur, starting from the Central Market LRT Station (one of the stations in the heritage zone) to the Ampang Park LRT Station (one of the stations in the CBD zone). Within a walkable distance from each of these stations are informal street traders that temporarily use and appropriate the sidewalks and roadsides either from their tables or

trucks, in the morning, afternoon and evening, offering quick breakfast, lunch and evening take-aways for urban commuters and corporate office workers. The demographics of those getting on and off at these stations are mostly locals and expats who commute daily from the outer suburbs to work in the city.

Informal trading here works as a highly complex, flexible and adaptive marketplace in goods and services, geared to flows of people and their many desires. Although the LRT Stations are provided with built-in convenient shops and kiosks, the informal traders take the opportunity to provide more selections of food and goods to the commuters as they walk in and out of the stations. However, as designs for more modern and integrated transportation networks evolve, the inclusion of the everyday social needs such as street food are often not integrated into the overall planning of the stations and spaces around it. It is undeniable that the street food culture is a significant daily essential for Malaysians in the urban area for their affordable price, fast to purchase and a plethora of local menu, while at the same time, a key source of income for the poor. It is also anticipated that major transport nodes such as the LRT stations in the urban area would attract street traders. Still, the integration of this informal phenomenon into the transport planning network is missed due to oversight, leaving potential street entrepreneurs to be seen as merely illegal or out of place traders who become a hazard to the pedestrian and vehicular movements and contributors of sanitation problems.

There is an irony between the fast-paced urban development that seeks for a more striated city, and the ephemeral economic interstices that are still largely off-grid and emerge on the margins of the formal city. The capacity of urban design to address the issue of informal street trading depends on an in-depth understanding of how such urban practices integrate with the livelihoods of the low-income community and collective benefits of poverty reduction. If the state wishes to formalise informal trading the key question is: How can the off-grid street trading activities intersect or puncture into formal infrastructure planning and evolve so that they are not marginalised?

Surat, India: Stakeholder coalitions around water and power provisions

This case study looks at the design of governance networks that shape access to two specific infrastructures: water and power. The emphasis on designing governance networks is deliberate -- I understand governance networks broadly and to include state, and non-state actors, institutions, civil society, and grassroots communities. Therefore, rather than focusing on state-led analyses of access to infrastructure, I take a broader perspective and examine how coalitions of a range of stakeholders may be brought together to improve the manner in which access to water and power is governed. In a coastal city in western India, Surat, we can examine how marginalised and vulnerable communities can become more resilient to environmental and economic shocks as a result of variable and unreliable access to water and power. Surat has a long history of widespread engagement across different communities, socio-economic groups, as well as state and regional institutions to deal with pressing environmental, economic, and public health challenges.

São Paulo, Brazil: Squatters who create cultural infrastructure in abandoned buildings

The social movements for housing and related infrastructure are organized movements that demand from the State more effective policies in Brazil since the re-democratization

process in the 1980s. The first demands of these movements have been focused on the outskirts of the city, where land is cheaper.

In the 1990s, the demand of part of the movements has shifted, from land and housing to the right to the city. In 1997 they started to promote organized squatting of buildings in the central areas, where the city is complete with jobs, infra-structure and facilities. Since then dozens of buildings have been squatted, and some of them converted into social housing projects.

The first squatted buildings were heavily guarded and enclosed spaces, reflecting the need to protect from the police and forced evictions. In the last 5 years a different kind of squatting started to appear, more connected to the surrounding areas by performing as neighbourhood infrastructure. The strategy has changed, and instead of isolating, the squats started to connect to the rest of the city.

In São Paulo the research project will focus on two squatted buildings in the city that took this offensive – rather than defensive – strategy, Hotel Cambridge and Ocupação Nove de Julho, becoming part of the city's material, social and cultural infrastructure. They offer meals at reasonable prices, spaces for workshops and exhibitions, and have reserved rooms for residents. Turning the squatted buildings as part of the city's cultural infrastructure, the social movements for housing thereby strengthen their political position and avoid evictions by organizing for longer-term stability.

Apart from well-established and rigorous social science research methods such as literature review and case study analysis, the research project will employ innovative methods such as:

- A collaborative brainstorming workshop early in the life of the project that will bring together all partners and stakeholders to further discuss in person: (a) an overall analytical framework for the various case studies, (b) initial ideas about differences and similarities between the case studies, and (c) different approaches to the case study analysis, including the potential of participatory action research, smartphone-based online surveys, ethnography as non-linear dynamic system, journal-keeping as reporting and as research, crafting and telling of narratives of analytical research, visual story-telling by participants, diagramming power networks of power structures and dynamics, identifying infrastructure as agent in actor-network theory, etc.
- A series of collaborative workshops with stakeholders of each case study in each city for collaborative documentation, as a form of self-reflective urban practice and to investigate future creative potential in terms of “people as infrastructure” and “designing urban transformation,” each of which will be broadly defined – as described previously described – such that they are adaptable to each context. Rather than traditional top-down versus bottom-up research methods, the local workshops form a kind of sideways collaboration for mutual learning and benefit between research project team members and community stakeholders to investigate – together – ideas of “people as infrastructure” and “designing urban transformation”
- The overarching research design cuts across not only traditional academic boundaries [e.g. political-economy, geography, design], but also challenges traditional academic hierarchies [e.g. senior versus junior scholars] by developing a more horizontal and collaborative research process [e.g. local stakeholders and research assistants working with the principal investigator and co-investigators]. Each member of the team and case study stakeholders bring their own knowledge, experience and perspective to the



research project in a process of mutual learning and benefit, through the workshops as well as the final public conference, which is as much about presenting research project findings as it is about learning from others [e.g. invited keynote speakers and selected speakers from an open call for papers, including from activists and practitioners]

## OUTPUTS AND IMPACTS

While there is increasing and ongoing research on informalities in the cities of the global south, the fact of the matter is that we actually do not know enough about the everyday urban practices in many parts of the world. In addition, even with this emerging research, we have not yet generated enough shared concepts and new directions that shape urban theory and policy. The other value of examining the cities of the global south via such a research project is that it is there that the majority of the population lives in a constant state of economic, political and ecological precarity, a condition that is prevalent in the rest of the world as we face the urgency of the climate crisis and increasing urban poverty and inequality.

In order to maximize its impact, the research project will be developed in partnership with collaborators in each of the countries where it will be carried out [e.g. Brazil, Colombia, Egypt, India, Malaysia, Mexico]. We should be embedded in the partners' own networks at the local, national and international levels. In addition, the core team led by the principal investigator will have previous experience working on the topic across multiple countries. Thus, there is a clear demand, relevance and sensitivity towards residents and beneficiaries for the "Designing the Off-Grid City: Empowering the Transactions of Infrastructure" project.

The final set of outputs from the research project will be:

- Events: Interactive and collaborative workshop among the research project team members early on in the project, local workshops in each city with case study stakeholders and local research teams, and a major public conference at the end of the research project
- Presentations and publications: Conference papers in panels at international conferences such as Royal Geography Society [RGS], Association of European Schools of Planning [AESOP], American Association of Geographers [AAG] and Urban Affairs Association [UAA], peer-reviewed journal articles either as special issues or as individual pieces, and peer-reviewed edited book [either one or two volumes depending on quality of papers presented at the final public conference with research project team members and selected presenters]
- Online platform: Free website accessible from anywhere in the world [including and especially from case study cities] to make research more visual [with images, maps and diagrams of case study analysis] to foster future research collaboration

The impact of these outputs will be multiple:

- Building a global platform of an international network for collaboration, including south-south learning and south-north exchange of ideas and knowledge,
- Fostering new models of mutual learning and mutual benefit between senior and junior scholars, between scholars and practitioners, between practitioners and activists, and between different geographical contexts
- Bringing the most marginalized urban residents from the fringe to the center by making them not only the primary focus of practice-oriented research, but also bring a

comparative and collaborative aspect to their creative efforts and accomplishments in human/infrastructure transactions

- Providing both context-based and more generalizable urban practices and common patterns for local stakeholders, municipal governments, and international networks of organizations and scholars to test out, learn from and develop further to address human/infrastructure transactions in the face of pressing urban challenges and crises

Through this research project, I am proposing building a global network for intellectual exchange around the topic of designing off-grid cities via informal human-infrastructure transactions. In this sense, we will foster relationships of mutual benefit with our fellow academics in the global south: We will learn from them as much as they will learn from us. The in-depth case study analyses from different countries will allow us to highlight locally-grounded practices and cross-border lessons, as well as emergent commonalities and more generalized patterns of practice, with theoretical implications. Such network-based globally-oriented research projects are being increasingly deployed. However, we should think carefully about beneficiaries to remedy the current power and resource imbalance of the countries of the global north vis-à-vis the global south.

Finally, I return to the question of design, its role in these processes, and its future. I propose that we further pursue the benefits to academics and educational institutions by looking into the impact of our research project into design-related curricula in the global north and global south. The suggestion resonates with me and many of my colleagues because it is something of great interest to many of us around the world, it is very much part of the discussions that come up in conferences, and most of all, it is what some of us are already pursuing. In fact, one of the explicit impacts of the outputs of this project was to foster "new models of mutual learning and mutual benefits" between different realms of engagement, such as academic scholarship and grassroots practice. The same principle can be applied systematically to revisiting and revising design curricula at partner universities, especially since many of us are in leadership positions that can help initiate such discussions at our respective departments.<sup>2</sup>

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## The Infrastructural 'WE': the Gendered Materiality of Infrastructure and its Governing

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### Key words

Infrastructure, gender, feminist, invisibility, governing, Nepal

### Labouring invisible infrastructure

Building on the burgeoning collective of urban infrastructure literature, this paper pushes the concept of infrastructure further into the gendered, social sphere of overlooked, regional cities of the global South. This research is a call to consider what manifests urban infrastructure through a feminist lens focusing on power relations, scales and gendered relations in cities. Infrastructure is a collective term highlighting a plurality of integrated parts that are understood to support some higher order project taking place in the words of Carse. Larkin argues that the act of defining something as an infrastructure is a categorizing moment. Harvey et al suggest that while “anything can be called into being as an infrastructure”, what is important to consider is that once something is called infrastructure, there are implications related to sites of governance. Infrastructure can be found on multiple scales in the city and defining an infrastructure is a political act focusing attention on certain aspects of infrastructure while ignoring others. Berlant questions “what kind of form of life an infrastructure is”. Furthermore, she argues that:

“Infrastructure is not identical to system or structure, as we currently see them, because infrastructure is defined by the movement or patterning of social form. It is the living mediation of what organizes life: the lifeworld of structure”.

This paper utilises the understanding of infrastructure as living labour, providing social structure to life in urban spaces such as Nepal that are temporally, spatially and materially changing in ways we cannot fully understand but nevertheless they warrant analysis. If we broaden the understanding of infrastructure to include people (especially women), then people as the infrastructural 'WE' prevent the city from failure. More recent scholarship has shown that women “sustain cities at a basic level of functioning” (De Coss and Stokes). Furthermore, not only do women sustain cities, but also the patriarchy recognises the importance of their labour and so governs the materiality of this infrastructure.

This paper follows the example of anthropologist, Julia Elyachar who expands on the gendered social and financial infrastructure through which women's labour in Cairo allows their communities and male family members to be successful. People, viewed as a form of “essential infrastructure”, allow the city to continue functioning, albeit at a substratal level, without crumbling or collapsing. Fredericks also provides essential signposting by paying particular attention to overly burdened female bodies that comprise the materiality of rubbish collection in Dakar, Senegal. Fredericks utilises a materialist reading of infrastructure through which the definition of infrastructure is expanded to recalibrate how we think through material and social aspects of labour

and working bodies. Fredericks's work showcases new ways of thinking in African cities and also traces the practices that are happening. This paper suggests this is also happening simultaneously in Asia. Feminist and postcolonial urban thinking bring valuable lenses to considering forms of invisible, socially essential infrastructure. This conceptual undertaking, of viewing infrastructure as social and laboured, creates a scholarly opening to consider what is of value in the city (Peake and Rieker), what the state deems relevant to provide, and who it is that provides the multiplicity of infrastructure in the city, thus ensuring the city does not fail.

This paper addresses two gaps in urban studies. **Firstly**, the conceptualisation of urban infrastructure is broadened to consider infrastructure in the form of gendered, social 'WE' ness. The collective 'WE' as invisible, laboured social infrastructure becomes an object of inquiry. These forms of 'WE' ness occur within women's groups and neighbourhood groups, informal groups that residents create and participate in their everyday lives. This paper specifically showcases the invisible yet vital infrastructural role women's groups implement in the form of social labour. Through this infrastructure, Nepalese cities are sustained and maintained. Simone's understanding of people as infrastructure serves as a conceptual marker for this paper by emphasising that "Such infrastructure remains largely invisible unless we reconceptualise the notion of belonging". Through this broadened interpretation of infrastructure, gendered aspects of the city and women working in collectives can be made visible. Through action in informal collectives, women are able to labour as social infrastructure (Simone) subsequently allowing forms of physical infrastructures (roads) to be developed.

Nepal is radically changing due to dramatic political, economic, social and environmental processes. Nepal is a post-conflict, hazard prone country where international remittances are the backbone of the economy. In under-researched regional urban spaces in Nepal, where the urban was until recently confined to conurbations such as Kathmandu Valley, municipalities and the urban overlap in ways that obfuscate what is happening in relation to infrastructure as well as who and what is being governed. There is a "profound failure by the [Nepalese] state to provide services and stable government" (Nightingale et al) for its citizens, but simultaneously the Nepalese government is able to continue to function in some contexts. This temporary suspended space, in which the government is not visibly active yet continues to govern in some spheres, is exhausting for residents. These 'temporary' periods of prolonged uncertainty, also known as being in 'transition', have dominated in Nepal throughout the civil war (the 'Maoist People's War') of 1996-2006, in which over 13,000 people died, and continued through the earthquake of 2015, in which almost 9,000 people died, until the present time. People desire the government to lead and to govern in consultation with society. In urban areas similar 'user groups' are a contemporary component of the fabric of local governance, and focus on creating visible physical infrastructure such as road construction and street lighting. This urban 'WE' ness (Simone) influences how the city is being developed by the creation of new physical infrastructure. Social forms of engaging in the city can be witnessed in the form of localised, geographically-based community groups: women's groups and neighbourhood groups called tole level organisations (TLOs).

**Secondly**, this article draws attention to the gendered materiality of infrastructure and how it is governed. An examination of gender relations and power struggles showcases how local authorities govern by deciding who is acknowledged as a form of ‘WE’ ness (only neighbourhood groups) and how the government manages this governance space through invisibility to suit its development agenda. Within the everyday urban landscape of Nepal, the individual does not have much power and control, especially if that individual is a woman. For the past decade, women have been organising themselves into women’s groups (or “mother’s groups” in the Nepalese language) with 60-100 members, on a local geographic level that appears to overlap with neighbourhood groups if they exist. The women themselves create these women’s groups, generally without the intervention of donor projects. For example, Dilu, who is the strategic advisor of the Little Flower women’s group, explains how her group serves as laboured, social infrastructure in the city:

“The women’s group must clean the roads. We work for empowerment of women. We solve problems in the community and resolve disputes. Women have great power in the community. We do a lot of work but it is unseen [by the local authorities]. The major issue is that the municipality does not want to communicate with the women’s groups. We are working *for* them, the government, [doing their work] but they are *still not seeing it*”.

Women in neighbourhoods are responsible for the regular sweeping of streets and the ongoing gathering of rubbish at pre-defined municipal collection points in their neighbourhoods. The local authorities and TLOs pressure wives and women’s groups’ members to serve as laboured environmental infrastructure in the city. Women are volunteered *by* and mobilised *by* the TLOs or their husbands to keep the streets tidy. Women are the city’s unpaid maintenance workers and serve as “essential infrastructure” (Elyachar) sustaining the city. This social infrastructure allows the local authority to reallocate its funding from street cleaning, which can then be mobilised by the local authority and TLOs for the provision of physical forms of infrastructure such as paved roads. This is fundamentally important to broadening understandings of infrastructure. Women’s bodies (Truelove) are a form of laboured infrastructure that is managed by those in power to fulfil their urban aspirations and not the aspirations of women. The local authority informally demands this infrastructural labour but, as Dilu’s words show, it also requires this infrastructure to be invisibly managed.

### **Neighbourhood groups govern and are governed**

Residents are also organising informal collectives in the form of neighbourhood groups called TLOs. The TLOs are based on a geographic area, comprising approximately four-blocks and between 50 and 150 households (most frequently approximately 100 households). There is never geographic overlap of these neighbourhood groups; rather in places there are no TLOs (where many tenants or businesses are located such as in city centres). Men, with limited participation of women, are managing the TLOs through committees. The TLOs raise funding monthly for physical infrastructure projects they would like to implement with the local authority.

Of relevance to this discussion is the fact that the local authority does not communicate directly with all TLOs. Rather, information is communicated informally, in a gray space, only to some TLOs. This politics of gray spacing in Nepal

allows the Government of Nepal, as well as some residents, to engage in creating urban policies and realities for an urban future. The gray space of governance allows negotiation and empowerment for some city residents while intentionally excluding others. Yiftachel reflects that in gray spaces, power relations are “heavily skewed in favour of the state, developers or middle class”, in particular middle class men. Importantly, the TLOs are aware of the financial limitations of the local authority and want to provide co-financing for physical infrastructure.

TLOs carve out an informal governance space; they improvise and act where the local authorities do not want to or cannot engage. The TLOs manage the laboured social infrastructure and also provide financing for physical infrastructure. The TLOs ensure the streets are cleaned by women (a function that could be considered a local authority obligation and thereby saving the local authority money) and also provide co-financing for the provision of urban physical infrastructure. When these residents organise, the outcomes of their action creates noticeable “social changes in urban structure and processes, in demography, and in public policy” (Bayat). They are part of the urban governance framework. Women are essential to the development of the city under the terms and conditions established by the patriarchy. This conceptual understanding of infrastructure as a ‘WE’, social and laboured, creates a scholarly opening for urban studies to consider the experiences, struggles, strategies and limitations of residents in a new light. This is only possible through interdisciplinary readings of infrastructure in regional overlooked cities of the south.



## F2: Comparative Urban Governance: What is Governed?

**Chair:** Prof. Claire Colomb, Professor of Urban Studies and Planning, UCL

**Discussant:** Prof. Joe Painter, Department of Geography, Durham University

Manuscript not available

**'What do left wing mayors achieve', a comparison (with E. Marques)**

Prof. Patrick Le Galès, CNRS Research Professor of Sociology and Politics, Sciences Po

Manuscript not available

**Policy trajectories in São Paulo: incrementalism, latency, and reanimation**

Prof. Eduardo Cesar Leão Marques, Department of Political Science and Centre for Metropolitan Studies, University of São Paulo

Manuscript not available

**Chinese investment into London's residential built environments**

Prof. Mike Raco, Chair of Urban Governance and Development, The Bartlett School of Planning, UCL

# G1: Nationalising the Urban Frontier? Cities and the Rise of (Neo)nationalism

**Chair:** Prof. Oren Yiftachel, Chair of Urban Studies,  
Ben Gurion University of the Negev, Beersheba

**Discussants:** Prof. Camillo Boano, Professor of Urban  
Design and Critical Theory, UCL  
Dr Moriel Ram, Research Associate in Israel Studies,  
SOAS University of London

**083**

**How might cities counter nationalist conflict?**  
Prof. James Anderson, School of Geography, Queen's  
University Belfast

**091**

**Between the national and the urban: the complex role  
of neighbourhood councils in East Jerusalem**  
Dr Nufar Avni, Marie Skłodowska-Curie Fellow, The Hebrew  
University of Jerusalem

**095**

**Dis/b/ordering urban space**  
Dr Kathryn Cassidy, Associate Professor of Human  
Geography, Northumbria University

**105**

**Bridging the urban and (Neo)national divide: bringing  
geopolitics and nationalism into the mainstream of  
comparative urban studies**  
Dr Jonathan Rock Rokem, Lecturer in Human Geography,  
University of Kent

CITY shapes CONFLICT UCL Nov.2019

## **At the frontiers of the urban: thinking concepts and practices globally**

Urban Laboratory, University College London, 10 – 12 November 2019

### **How do cities shape nationalist conflicts?**

James Anderson

Most nationalist conflicts now happen in cities but the question remains a 'blind spot'. Conflict specialists often don't even notice urban settings, much less grant them any causal significance. Likewise urban specialists, preoccupied with how conflict shapes the city, rarely ask how the city shapes the conflict: they may give some implicit answers and show the city potentially shaping conflict is already shaped - partly 'weaponised' - by it, but they seldom address the question explicitly or directly.

It is a difficult question. Cities are the complex economic, social, cultural, and - in the case of capital cities – political, hubs of increasingly urbanised societies. Capital cities symbolise, embody or materialise the 'abstract' state and the singular hierarchical sovereignty of its 'high politics' (e.g., housing its main institutions), while the 'low politics' of most 'ordinary' (relatively 'depoliticised') cities are, in contradictory fashion, 'hydra-headed' and more complex with multiple sources of authority rather than relatively simple singularity<sup>1</sup>.

Cities thus encompass most of the social forces involved in nationalist (and other) conflicts in today's highly urbanised world – peasant armies hiding in remote countryside are largely things of the past. Cities or parts of them are both the main contexts and prizes to be won or lost, contending forces using (or abusing) their resources, general urbanism and particular urban features – while constrained by them - as they pursue competing objectives. And thus we find that the *same* urban features or factors can produce very different, even diametrically opposite, effects – intensifying and prolonging conflict, or modifying or helping to resolve it. For example, high density

living in close proximity facilitates conflict but also facilitates cooperation; and actual outcomes can crucially depend on wider geopolitical forces at national and international as well as urban levels - whether constituting imperialist provocation (e.g., Russia in Bosnia) or peace initiatives (the USA in Ireland - but not in Israel).

Our difficult question is best addressed in ethno-nationally divided ('END') cities in contested states (e.g., Belfast, Jerusalem, Mostar...), though Ashutosh Varshney's study of Hindu-Muslim violence in Indian cities<sup>ii</sup> points to the substantial overlaps with right-wing populist neo-nationalism - in which Modi's India is a world-leader. The Muslim minority are not nationalists contesting India's statehood, but Hindu nationalists treat them *as if* they were.

And (leaving aside wider geopolitical circumstances) Varshney also points to seeing the immediate impact of urban settings in terms of: 1. the general nature of urbanism and contrasts with relative rurality; 2. the intentionality of specifically urban classes, groups and institutions; and 3. the equally if not more important *unintended* effects of urban symbolism, structures and processes.

Varshney sees Hindu-Muslim violence as over-whelmingly *urban*, with informal co-operation sufficing to keep the peace in rural village life (though he underplays the segregation into separate Hindu or Muslim villages in the Indian countryside (cf. separate Greek and Turkish villages across pre-partition Cyprus). In contrast, co-operation in the cities requires formal cross-community Muslim-Hindu *associations* (business groups, trade unions, sports clubs, etc); their presence or absence explains the huge variations in urban violence: where they existed they acted *intentionally* to pre-empt violence, nip it in the bud, before it escalated into the mass killings which happened in their absence (sometimes with elite encouragement). And the *unintended* effects of urban structural change were dramatically exemplified in the most violent city, Ahmedabad: massive de-industrialisation in the 1980s had decimated its cross-community trade unions and thus effectively removed its main bulwark against ethnic violence.

## Urbanism and contrasts with relative rurality

When the apparently well-integrated society in Bosnia descended into surprisingly vicious ethno-national violence in the 1990s there were two alternative theories: ancient primordial ethnic hatreds had simply resurfaced; or it had needed conscious, contemporary nationalist manipulations. But rather than being alternative explanations, it has been suggested that the first more or less fits the Bosnian countryside<sup>iii</sup>; and the second fits the cities – where in fact much of the ‘integration’, including inter-marrying, had taken place.<sup>iv</sup> And the extreme violence fits the theory that it is needed where divisions have to be *created*, rather than violence happening *because of* existing divisions (as in the much greater violence in ‘division-less’ Upper Silesia compared to divided Ulster, 1918-1922<sup>v</sup>).

Traditional ‘urban-rural’ contrasts are now continued in more urbanised societies as mainly ‘urban-urban’ contrasts: between large, internationally-networked and ethnically-diverse cities, and smaller cities and rural centres, often less able to adapt to global change – a distinction popularised in theories about the geography of populist neo-nationalism and support for Trump and Brexit in ‘left-behind regions’ (whose grievances echo older rural resentments against, but dependence on, the city).

But against facile assumptions of ‘rural idiocy’, we can note that *religious fundamentalism* first arose in large cities - among deprived or displaced urban communities who found that religious institutions were already dominated by settled elites – more specifically North American cities and Protestants in the 1920s,<sup>vi</sup> though other countries (e.g., Brazil) and the other world religions (Islam, Bhuddism, Hinduism... ) have since joined in.<sup>vii</sup>

## Intentionality of urban classes, groups and institutions

There are specifically urban concentrations of social classes and institutions intentionally pursuing distinct interests; and END city inhabitants are of course ‘intentional’ protagonists with various objectives, rather than simply the victims of

'outside' forces though they are often that as well. And urban *ethnocracy* – ethnically-biased urban government – and resistance to it, as theorised for Israel-Palestine <sup>viii</sup>, are widely applicable forms of urban intentionality.

Ethnocracies are inherently conflict-generating – 'digging a deeper hole' for themselves in a downward dynamic, unable to stop digging without outside help or pressure. But urban ethnocracy is not 'national ethnocracy writ small': urban politics are distinctly different (see below), with looser control, more open to the competing logic of capital:

An ironic example: new apartments intended to expand the Jewish occupation of East Jerusalem were occupied by Palestinians because they were prepared to pay more to the private developers. <sup>ix</sup> And another: in Belfast's oldest, '100% Protestant ghetto', Sandy Row, it was discovered that some new private apartments had Catholic tenants – if it had been a public, local government development there would have been protests against allegedly 'intentional social engineering', possibly riots, but as the motivation was 'only' capitalist money-making it passed with relatively little fuss...

### **Unintended effects of urban symbolism, structures and processes.**

These however are perhaps less obvious but more important than urban intentionality in shaping conflict. Presenting protagonists with opportunities and constraints, they can be seen as 'urban amplifiers' which boost tendencies or limitations inherent in the conflict, with different implications for those involved.

As **Symbols** cities attract conflict, especially *capital* cities which materially embody the national state (e.g., its central administration, assemblies, barracks, political leaders, rituals, etc.) - to be defended or captured, important prizes in national conflicts... 'capture' them and the state is usually captured even if not all its territory. Holy cities (e.g., Benares, Hebron) too have iconic status, and there are other examples. For publicity attention-seekers in a propaganda war, they attract the media, domestic and foreign.

**Urban structures** are important material amplifiers of conflict, and perhaps mainly because their in-built physical and/or social *inertia* can contribute to the intractability of conflict. For example, removing any assumptions for or against religious segregation, we estimated that de-segregating Belfast could still take over 50 years *after* the conflict ceases – most people do not move house very often, and they generally move only short distances. Some END cities retain historic ‘quarters’, and nationalist conflicts further increase segregation. Sometimes there is a ‘jig-saw’ of interlocking areas as in Belfast, sometimes the city is dichotomized, like Nicosia, Mostar, or Mitrovica, or the division is mainly ‘non-spatial’ as in Bilbao (where violent conflict was not inter-communal – as in Belfast or Mostar – but mainly pitted Basque nationalists against the state forces of Spanish nationalism). And here the city shaping the conflict is not some pristine ‘independent variable’ but one already itself (re-)shaped by conflict: its ‘weaponisation’ for conflict helps reproduce conflict.

**Urban processes** - These are mainly important for the opposite reason of being dynamic and de-stabilising the existing parameters of conflict, unintentionally undermining or sometimes reinforcing them. ‘Ordinary’ urban processes are often downplayed with people assuming ‘the conflict explains everything’. But in reality divided cities experience the same processes as cities in general, often with little or no conflict-related motivation: (sub-)urbanization, (de-)industrialization, gentrification, urban re-development, demographic change ... now generally driven by capitalist logic as in ‘ordinary’ cities (here meaning *not* ‘ethno-nationally divided’, but with the deeper implication that all cities should be seen as ‘ordinary’ in the first instance, not simply sub-categorised as ‘divided’, or ‘developing’, or whatever <sup>x</sup>).

The vulnerability of cities to disruption (e.g., a few car-bombs) can almost ‘invite’ attacks. On the other hand, most residents usually have strong vested interests in their own city (or their bits of it) functioning relatively ‘normally’. If ‘urbicide’ applies, it is usually attempted in conventional warfare by external forces (as in the Siege of Sarajevo after its Bosnian-Serbs had left) - total destruction is quite exceptional, unwanted by contending citizens.

## Urban politics and conflict resolution?

Modern state-city relations developed with industrial capitalism, and (since the days of 'city-states') have involved a loss of urban political autonomy (*de jure* and/or *de facto*), and a 'partial depoliticisation' (with some 're-politicisation' through globalisation). In a 'division of labour' the state monopolizes the 'high politics' of national sovereignty and security; the city concentrates on economics, culture and associated 'low politics' (based on a partial separation of the 'political' and 'economic' in capitalism - materialised in e.g., the division between the City of Westminster' and the City of London).

Warren Magnusson in *Seeing like a city* argues that state politics are simplified and hierarchical with singular sovereignty, whereas urban politics involve multiple authorities and hence (to quote):

"...urbanism is ultimately uncontainable.... If the state requires a monopoly of legitimate authority to persist as a state, the city as city does not.... The city ... [holds] sovereignty in suspense.... is not organized on the sovereignty principle, but instead on the principle of self organization....."

This points to the punchline that the city is under-utilized in trying to move beyond ethnocracy, or from conflict management towards conflict resolution.

However while cities are indeed under-utilised, END ones are marked exceptions to Magnusson's rather rosy (and arguably 'anti-state' anarchist) picture, and especially to the general rule of the 'partial de-politicisation' of most 'ordinary' cities. END cities share in the 'ordinary' city's multiple sources of authority and self-organisation, but they also share the state's preoccupation with national sovereignty precisely because they are caught up in serious conflicts about national statehood. Holding 'sovereignty in suspense' hardly applies where 'national sovereignty' is often a major motivation, 'down' to the neighbourhood level in fights over local territory (as in Jerusalem or Belfast).



Unfortunately this reduces the END cities' moderating potential, but not completely: their nationalist politics are still in fluctuating competition with urban politics and capitalist pressures (even in Jerusalem). Shaped by and shaping ethno-national conflict, END cities are simultaneously both 'ordinary' cities and 'extra-ordinary'. With one eye they 'see like a city', but with the other eye they 'see like a state'. Their conflicts have to be understood in terms of how the 'ordinary' and the 'extra-ordinary' interact.

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Cities are not the cause of nationalist conflicts - which arise from clashing nationalist ideologies and struggles for economic and political power. Nor do cities 'do' this or that except in shorthand. It is people, and to a significant degree the citizens themselves though never in isolation, who 'make history'. But in contemporary society, urban settings are increasingly the 'circumstances' in which history has to be made, and this merits more recognition in urban theory and practice.

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## ENDNOTES

i See further below; and in Magnusson 2013; and Anderson 2019.

ii Varshney 2002.

iii With supporting evidence from the Serbian countryside, Ramet 1996.

iv Johnston and Eastvold 2004.

v Wilson 2010.

vi Furseth 2010.

vii For more on religion and cities, see O'Dowd and McKnight 2013.

viii Yiftachel 2006.

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ix See Yacobi and Pullan 2014.

x See Robinson 2006.

## **Between the national and the urban: The Complex Role of Community Councils in East Jerusalem**

**Nufar Avni**

### **Introduction**

In the following paper, I will address urban and national political transformations in Jerusalem, an ethno-nationally divided city (an END city in James Anderson's terms). I will mainly refer to East Jerusalem, and by that I mean Palestinian Jerusalem unless mentioned otherwise. Even if one has not been to Jerusalem, they might know that in many respects, the national scale has always been extremely present in everyday life there, and the 'new' nationalism is not new at all. But at the same time, in the following paper I would like to suggest that there are some 'off-the-radar' processes of creating a new sense of urban citizenship, one that is based on civic engagement and community action, that potentially counteracts some new waves of nationalism. I will exemplify these processes mainly through the Community Councils in East Jerusalem but will also illustrate them with other examples from all across the city. At the same time, it is important to note that these processes are accompanied by a fear of losing one's national identity (I am referring here mainly to Palestinians in East Jerusalem), but are also viewed as necessary in light of the city's ongoing crisis. To a large extent, the transition from a 'national' to 'urban' logic partly derives from pragmatic considerations.

Before I proceed to talk about the Community Councils (CCs henceforth) in East Jerusalem, I would like to frame my paper as part of a bigger Horizon 2020 research project, called *Divided Communities*. In this project I'm examining issues of planning, infrastructure and civic engagement in physically and socially divided neighbourhoods in East Jerusalem. The emphasis is on everyday life under the occupation, on challenges as well as the strategies that people employ to overcome them, and the resulting urban citizenship. I'm engaging a global-south-east perspective to theorize about Jerusalem, and I pay attention to 'manifestations' of the national scale in city life.

### **Urban Nationalism in Jerusalem**

As an ethno-nationally divided city, the 'national' plays out an important part in city life in Jerusalem, and especially in East Jerusalem. For example, the soccer team of Beit Tzafafa (a Palestinian neighbourhood), similar to other sports teams in Palestinian Jerusalem, plays at the Palestinian soccer league, rather than the Jerusalem one. Just a couple months ago, Israeli police shut down a soccer tournament there, on the grounds that it is a national political activity. Many events that are civic and 'ordinary' in nature and not directly related (or not related at all) to politics with capital P—such as cultural events and festivals—are often met with strong objection by Israeli police and are regularly shut down. Most Palestinians in East Jerusalem (40% of the city's population) are residents and not citizens, and must continuously prove that Jerusalem is their "center

of life” or else, their already precarious status might be revoked. Many of them are exposed to threats of house demolitions, violence, and insecurity that stems from the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Jerusalem’s special position within it.

### *Community Councils in East Jerusalem*

Now that I have briefly presented the background let me introduce the Community Councils in Jerusalem. There are 28 councils in Jerusalem, of which only five are in East Jerusalem. The CCs all around the city are an intermediary governance structure that is supposed to represent local residents in different matters, providing various services in the areas of education, culture, sports, and physical planning (Rosen and Avni 2019; Zaban 2016). All over the city they are positioned at a very tough spot, between a rock and a hard place [in other words, between the residents and the municipality], but this is especially true in East Jerusalem.

Even though East-Jerusalemites can vote for the municipal council, they boycott the election because they do not recognize Israel’s legitimacy to govern. The municipality is perceived as part of the so-called normalization of the occupation, and therefore the CCs, as bodies that are partially supported and financed by the municipality [the other part is funded by the Israel Association of Community Centers], are not easily accepted among the Palestinian public, and are not perceived by many as part of the Palestinian national struggle. A few CCs have been victims of arson by local Palestinian residents; still others simply struggle to attract audience from the neighbourhood and build legitimacy and trust among residents. However, the CCs also provide much-needed services and a platform for community engagement in neighbourhoods that are deprived of even basic services. Furthermore, in that, they provide important social infrastructure and opportunities for community mobilization. Moreover, in some cases, they supported and were a critical part of urban struggles for infrastructure provision, housing, planning, education, and more.

During the last year, together with my research collaborator Noam Brenner from the Hebrew University, we conducted interviews with officials from the CCs in East Jerusalem as well as other local leaders and neighbourhood activists. The interviews reveal the tensions between the national scale that the CCs are associated with (the municipality, occupation, etc.) and the more everyday urban needs they try to address. We found that despite their contested status, they still serve important functions in the community, and in some cases, manage to rise above their problematic image, and build trust and legitimacy among residents. When successful, they bring tangible benefits to marginalized and deprived neighbourhoods in the form of education, culture, professional development, and leadership training.

We noticed a common thread amongst the different CCs: education (formal and informal) is the most needed and popular service that they provide. Daycares, language classes, tutoring, sports, etc. are always in demand by the community, even if it is recognized that some of these services are mediated /financed by the Israeli authorities. On the other

hand, services that are related to political representation, such as the preparation of master plans, provision of infrastructure, urban redevelopment initiatives, court appeals, etc. are a lot more controversial, even though these are the burning needs in the neighbourhood. The CCs cautiously operate under these contradictions and navigate between the national and the urban.

*Discussion: Building urban citizenship from below?*

Going back to the question that James Anderson presented earlier on—how might cities counter nationalist conflict—I suggest that it is necessary to differentiate between the “city” as a governing or political structure, and the city as a collection of people and publics that live their everyday lives. We are used to thinking about Jerusalem as embodying radical notions of nationalism and as expressive of nationalist logics, and indeed, the city of Jerusalem and the government of Israel do follow a nationalist logic that dictates development there. However, using the example of the CCs, as well as other cases from Jerusalem, I would like to suggest that perhaps there is a counter-logic to the top-down one—which attempts to consolidate urban citizenship from below. When examined from the urban, local scale, we can see that Jerusalem is not only a “mini-me” of the national scale, but it offers a different, more complex geopolitics, one that is shaped by everyday life. Indeed, East Jerusalem is under occupation, and it affects all spheres of life—my intention is not to underplay the significance of that. The urban citizenship that I am referring to here is fragile, inconsistent and fragmented (Blokland et al. 2015; Wood 2014; Millstein 2017). At the same time, the CCs example shows that despite their very delicate position, they manage to advance a notion of urban citizenship that is grounded in everyday life and local needs.

Beyond the CCs, it is important to note other arenas through which Palestinians claim their right to the city, whether through shared projects with Israelis or without. These include, but are not limited to, arts, culture, heritage (music, language, built environment), higher-education, and other forms of activism such as Mini-Active, a women’s organization that encourages women to report different hazards to the municipality. Other examples of shared everyday life and Israeli-Palestinian solidarity include language exchange classes and joint activities for kids and youths. These do not simply take place at the urban scale—they are a result of living in the same urban space and encountering one another on an ongoing basis. Jerusalem is currently a highly segregated and contested space (Greenberg Raanan and Avni 2020), but there are also opportunities—despite limited—for tolerance.

At the end of the interview, we usually ask the participants an open question- what is your vision for Jerusalem? Our initial expectation was to hear answers that are related to the position of Jerusalem as a critical religious and national center for the Palestinian people. However, in most cases, the answers we received were very different. People talk about tolerance and acceptance and living together—having “normal” lives—and they envision a borderless city with shared living.

We also suspect that there is a generational aspect to this phenomenon. Since the Oslo Agreement and the establishment of the PA, traditional leadership strongholds in Jerusalem have been oppressed, fragmented, and eroded (El Kurd 2018). Younger generation Jerusalemites grew up in a vacuum of leadership and a transition from a traditional society to a more urban and secular one. The divide and rule policy of the Israeli government that separates between East Jerusalemites from Palestinians in the West Bank as well as from Palestinians who are citizens of Israel has resulted, perhaps, in a stronger Jerusalem-based identity. This is problematic in several respects, but the positive side of it is that it may create in the future a more shared city. A sort of Metrozenship, to borrow Yiftachel's (2016) term, that would counteract radical nationalistic trends.

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## Dis/b/ordering urban space

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Panel G1: Nationalising the urban frontier? Cities and the rise of (neo)nationalism

### Abstract/Introduction

Urban spaces have been key sites within which people have come together to challenge (neo)national bordering regimes in a range of different ways. The advent of everyday bordering and internalization of bordering regimes has opened up new spaces to resist processes and practices of bordering and create alternative urban securities. Resistance has included both established existing migrant support organisations but also a range of new campaigning and advocacy groups. Some more visible and well-established initiatives have been a focus of attention for political and urban geographers, e.g. open borders and cities of sanctuary. However, research has only just begun to emerge on how these more recognised forms of resistance intersect with mundane practices of 'quiet politics'. Our view of resistance in human geography has not kept pace with the more emergent and fractured understandings of the political and power (Hughes, 2019). In this paper, I argue that we need an understanding of cities as spaces of dis/b/ordering. Whilst de- and rebordering involve shifting interpretations of what is within and beyond a border (and consequently declare persons and objects as either familiar or foreign), dis/b/ordering includes debordering, but also incorporates how ordinary residents move beyond it to challenge more broadly everyday bordering and their own involvement in it. Dis/b/ordering brings together a range of different attempts to disrupt contemporary national bordering regimes, but is particularly attendant to everyday mundane acts as well as how residents of urban spaces challenge the underlying b/orders that support the bordering of nation-states.

### Bordering and Ordering Urban Space

After decades in which the existence of borders was seen as waning, rebordering states has become a symbol of resistance to pressures emanating out of neoliberal globalization. Borderings, as the dynamic and shifting multi-scalar, multi-level spatial and virtual processes which construct, reproduce and contest borders, make a considerable contribution to a variety of local, regional and global political projects of governance and belonging. They determine individual and collective entitlements and duties as well as social cohesion and solidarity (Yuval-Davis et al, 2019).

In the UK, rebordering has seen the introduction of 'everyday bordering' policies which encourage a 'hostile environment' (Yuval-Davis et al 2018) and are shaping the governance of everyday life in urban spaces. Unlike other theorisations of the (re)making of borders in everyday life, everyday bordering refers specifically to the introduction of immigration checks into more and more routine encounters, administered not by trained, paid border

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officials, but by other residents, living and working alongside one another in urban spaces. These practices have been developing over a number of decades, but have intensified in recent years, and are paralleled in other countries in the global north, such as the USA and Denmark.

Everyday bordering in the UK has necessitated increasingly complex regulations to determine access for non-citizens to healthcare, education and state support. Decisions on eligibility are being made by other residents – citizens and non-citizens. These checks, or borderwork (Rumford, 2008), restrict access for those with uncertain immigration status, other non-citizens, as well as settled populations, who are unable to prove their status (Yuval-Davis et al, 2019).

The internal reach of the UK border has been extending since World War II through immigration policy, the privatisation and deregulation of state roles and the British welfare system. However, up until the 1990s, most of the UK's bordering regime focused on filtering people before they reached or at its borders. Since then we have seen a shift towards internal surveillance, which began with monitoring refugee communities and movements and then has been expanded in a number of ways over time. Following the enlargement of the EU, everyday bordering was also extended to migrants from within the supposedly de-bordered EU, through restricted access to social security and, after 2007, the labour market for Romanian and Bulgarian citizens. All of these changes have significantly changed a wide range of everyday encounters in the UK's cosmopolitan cities.

### **Resistance and Disorder**

People have historically come together to challenge bordering in a range of different ways (Gill et al, 2014; Askins, 2016). The advent of everyday bordering and internalization of bordering regimes has opened up new spaces to resist processes and practices of bordering and create alternative securities (Koopman, 2011). In the context of UK cities, these spaces include both established existing migrant support organisations (e.g. the Joint Council for the Welfare of Immigrants) but also a range of new campaigning and advocacy groups e.g. Docs not Cops (Potter, 2018). Some more visible and well-established initiatives have been or are the focus of ongoing research, e.g. open borders (Passi, 2018; Bauder, 2018) and cities of sanctuary (Bagelman, 2016). However, research has primarily highlighted the impacts of everyday bordering (Cassidy, 2018), with little analysis of how this is being resisted by more mundane practices of 'quiet politics' (Askins, 2014).

Many grassroots groups are not only pushing back against hegemonic policies of (in)security (anti-geopolitics), but also nurturing other types of nonviolent security in connection that they do want. (Koopman, 2011: 177).



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As Sarah Hughes has been exploring in her recent paper on ‘resistance’ – our view of resistance in human geography has not kept pace with the more emergent and fractured understandings of the political and power.

[A] framing of resistance as emergent prevents a foreclosure of emergent forces into predetermined forms (e.g. of activist, intentional subject, protest, tactic or dispute), and thereby keeps open the category of resistance to other subjects, materials, spaces and temporalities which do not always cohere to an (expected) resistant form and yet condition the possibility for future claims to be made. (Hughes, 2019; 3).

De- and rebordering involve shifting interpretations of what is within and beyond a border, and consequently declare persons and objects as either familiar or foreign. Dis/b/ordering includes debordering, but also incorporates how ordinary residents move beyond it to challenge more broadly everyday bordering and their own involvement in it. The question is not only of who should be bordered and who should not, but also where and by whom borderwork should be undertaken. Dis/b/ordering tries to capture a range of different attempts to disrupt contemporary bordering, but is particularly attendant to everyday mundane acts – the healthcare worker who treats a patient without first establishing their immigration status, the advocacy worker who helps an individual entitled to access a service to gain that access. In addition, it is concerned with how in everyday life different residents challenge the underlying b/orders that support bordering, for example through befriending schemes between local residents and newly-arrived asylum seekers and refugees (Askins, 2014; Askins, 2016).

We should look at potentiality rather than intentionality (Hughes, 2019). ‘Framed in this way, resistance is always-already present as a potentiality within the exercise of power relations’ (ibid; 11). Resistance can be a combination of incoherent and perhaps indiscernible forces. It may also be ambiguous; actions and actors can be both resistant and compliant at the same time. This also challenges the linearity of resistance, as not necessarily having a clear goal, i.e. leaving the possible outcomes open. James C Scott (1990) argued that academics have silenced political life (and with it resistance) of subordinated groups, because it takes place at a level that is rarely seen as political. Scott argued for a focus on everyday acts of resistance. However, such acts are relational to other forms of resistance.

As Anderson (2006: 742) notes, ‘it is always from the context of specific diminishments that becoming hopeful emerges’. I argue that the intensification of everyday bordering and neo-nationalist turn have impacted not only on the hopefulness and hopes of those who are bordered but also those with different visions of de-bordering the UK itself. Therefore, we need to understand attempts to dis/b/order as part of the relational spaces of

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'repossession' (Sparke, 2007), where these hopes are negotiated. In doing so, I respond to Sparke's call that 'we need to learn to learn from the dispossessed about their hope-filled struggles to create geographies of repossession' (2007: 347). Hopefulness 'exemplifies a disposition that provides a dynamic imperative *to action* in that it enables bodies to *go on*' (Anderson, 2006).

Whilst geographers have made considerable contributions to debates on borders, bordering and b/ordering, there has been less engagement with the concept of disorder. In her piece in *Progress in Human Geography* in 2010, Lynn Staeheli argued that disorder can threaten democratisation, but so can its suppression. With agonism 'the outcome of struggle is not predetermined' (Staeheli, 2010: 70). Staeheli suggests that in the context of agonism, multiple publics are formed that can sometimes be in conflict with one another. Similarly, and of interest to the disordering of bordering, Lentin (2000) has argued that anti-racism must be seen as a multi-layered conflict and separate from its anti-fascist, anticolonialist, leftist and institutionalised forms (Lentin, 2000).

However, there have been key insights into resistance and disorder from anarchist approaches. Ince (2019) in his work on anti-fascist cultures argues that they 'build connections across wider progressive and radical movements and often seek to operate prefiguratively' (Ince, 2019: 3). Ince (2019) claims prefiguration has no end goal and that autonomy isn't something we have, but rather something we do together. Prefiguration is important as it is about embedding into the present day principles of an envisaged future, which is key to anarchism. This is why, Ince argues, 'anti-fascist organising can be unpredictable, following the shifting ideologies and dynamics of its opponents' (ibid: 4). This is also evident with dis/b/ordering, through which actions emerge as responses to new and existing bordering processes and practices.

Ince and Bryant (2019) argue that there is a need to *read for mutuality*. Kropotkin identified 'everyday co-operation as a powerful counter-narrative to orthodox accounts of history that documented only the powerful and their conflicts' (ibid: 218). 'An anarchist vision of liberty is not, therefore, the capacity for an individual to act as they wish, but liberation from oppressive structures and relations – a liberation that must necessarily be collective' (ibid: 220). Kelliher (2017) argues that mutuality is a culture of solidarity, i.e. it is uneven and contested. Place-based militant cultures can be constructed relationally (Featherstone, 2005). Solidarity is a generative spatial political practice that constructs 'relations between places, activists, diverse social groups' (Featherstone, 2012: 9). Past processes remain as 'latent reserves', that feed future struggles. These ideas are crucial to my analysis of emergent resistance to everyday bordering, where we can find elements of mutuality as well as different cultures of solidarity.

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'The perpetuation of the idea that human spatiality necessitates the formation of states is writ large in a discipline that has derided the 'territorial trap' on the one hand, yet on the other hand has confoundingly refused to take the state-centricity critique in the direction of state dissolution' (Springer, 2012: 1609). According to Springer geographers have, therefore, focused on alternatives of the state rather than to it. He challenges geographers to answer the question, 'where do supposedly liberationist arguments that continue to embrace the state leave us except with the structures of hierarchy and domination firmly in place?' (ibid: 1610). Perhaps we need to take seriously Springer and other anarchists' rejection of the idea that 'a realigned state will ever lead to an emancipated condition' (ibid: 1611). In order to do this, Springer argues for a refutation of totalising theories. This helps us to rethink Hughes' conceptualisation of resistance in a different light, as being somewhat aligned to anarchist thinking. Hughes' contention that we see resistance as emergent and attune to potentiality rather than intentionality echoes the openness of anarchism, to avoid end goals and focus on the prefigurative elements of resistance. Accounts of dis/b/ordering need to be intentionally fragmented, non-totalising and illustrative.

### **Everyday bordering: slow violence and the conditioning of resistant subjects**

Everyday bordering in the UK subjects some groups and individuals to the daily violence of inequality and forms part of a structure of unequal power and life choices (Galtung, 1969). Socially produced harms, such as those experienced through everyday bordering, are naturalised discursively and materially. Slow violence 'occurs gradually and out of sight, [it is] a violence of delayed destruction that is dispersed across time and space, an attritional violence that is typically not viewed as violence at all' (Nixon, 2011: 2). As Pain (2019: 387) has argued, slow violence is also 'spatially disproportionate' and more likely to be felt by those who are already 'made vulnerable'. Although often invisible, its impacts are much greater than spectacular violence (ibid). The distinction between spectacular and slow violence emerges from the psychoanalytic literature (Herman, 1997), where a distinction is made between the trauma of one-off incidents and 'chronic trauma' of slow violence, which is most likely to be experienced by socially marginalised groups.

As Laurie and Shaw (2018) have argued, violence, therefore, is not a subjective condition but conditions subjects. Such violence, however, remains in the minds of those who have been subjected to it long after the conditions are removed (Fanon, 1963). Everyday bordering also incorporates more residents into the administering of this slow violence than ever before. It, therefore, makes visible to much wider sections of the population within urban spaces the slow violence of the state and leads them not only to question it but also to resist in various ways.

The dispossession of everyday bordering is not only felt by migrants and racialised minorities, who are subject to immigration checks in everyday life, but also by those who

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have been working in anti-racist and other struggles for decades, in order to de-border everyday life and build greater social justice for migrants and racialised minorities. Everyday bordering, therefore, has disrupted imaginations of the UK as a more welcoming, tolerant, inclusive, equal, just society.

Therefore, everyday bordering has conditioned resistant subjects not solely amongst migrant and racialised minority communities who have been most directly impacted by the legislation, but also amongst those who are expected to administer the checks; as well as having galvanised or reinvigorated those already engaged in migrants' rights' and anti-racist struggles. In the next sections of the paper, I want to look at some examples of dis/b/ordering by focusing on three key themes: solidarization, i.e. the emergent and shifting landscapes of solidarity; then I explore the emergent and differentiated foci or 'objects' of resistance; finally, I illustrate examples of everyday resistances to everyday bordering.

### **Dis/b/ordering urban space**

#### ***Solidarisation***

The landscape of migrants' rights and also trade union advocacy and activism has been disordered by responses to the introduction of the hostile environment policies. We need to analyse emergent practices and processes of solidarisation both in the context of existing, ongoing initiatives, as well as new formations. This includes the development of new, looser collectives with opaque political positionings and bases, as well as campaign groups coalescing around professional identities and single issues. Solidarisation is complex, plural and dynamic within urban space. For example, resistance has emerged within professional bodies for healthcare, such as the British Medical Association and the royal colleges of surgeons, nursing and midwives.

As a midwife I entered my profession to care for all women and their babies, with compassion. It breaks my heart that women will not get the treatment that they need, that they can no longer trust me because a booking appointment ends up as an immigration check.

Britain's leading doctors, nurses and midwives all say that this is a risk to individual and public health. And a new Maternity Action research report says that charging for maternity care goes against professional ethics of midwifery.

Midwives become midwives to care for women, not to act as border guards as part of a 'hostile environment' immigration policy. (Rigby, 2019: n.p.).

Within these statements, we see the use of professional identities and their ethics as the basis of resistance. The question is not only of who should be bordered and who should not, but also where and by whom borderwork should be undertaken. As well as the

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development of resistance through and with professional bodies, one group of doctors also established a new campaign group, Docs not Cops.

In addition to resistance emerging from professional identities, there has also been solidarization surrounding specific issues or elements of everyday bordering. One interesting example of this was a campaign that developed surrounding the Department for Education's announcement that from September 2016, it would begin to collect on country of birth and nationality. This data was then to be shared with the UK's Home Office to support intelligence gathering on illegalised migrants. The group's campaign focuses specifically on the rights of children and the targeting of them and their families as part of the hostile environment policies.

In addition to solidarisation emerging around professional identities, we have also seen looser collectives and campaign groups developing in direct response to everyday bordering. Some of this resistance has been place-based, i.e. city specific and has built on existing initiatives, such as cities of sanctuary. For example, in the North East of England, resistance to everyday bordering has involved a number of local and national actors and taken on numerous forms. The actors actively engaged in the struggle included national and local politicians, civil servants from Newcastle City Council (NCC), and the voluntary and community sector.

### ***Plural, shifting foci of resistance***

Resistance to everyday bordering has also been characterised by the plurality of *foci* or *objects* of resistance and the ways in which these have shifted over time. This is, of course, driven by how deeply embedded in everyday life bordering now is as a result of the legislation, but it also reflects the wide array of *forms* of resistance that Hughes' piece encourages us to explore, i.e. the broad definition of dis/b/ordering permits analysis of these different forms of resistance within one framework.

For example, amongst existing migrants' rights' and anti-racist organisations a range of legal challenges to the legislation emerged. In these cases, resistance focused in on different, very specific parts of the legislation. In March 2019, the Joint Committee for the Welfare of Immigrants (JCWI) brought a legal challenge against the 'right to rent' policy, which it argued was in breach of human rights. Right to rent is the strand of everyday bordering, which forces landlords to check the immigration status of their tenants. Sanctions for landlords who fail to undertake the checks correctly range from fines to a potential prison sentence.

In addition to being characterised by the plurality of foci, resistance to everyday bordering has also shifted over time. An example of this can be found in the work of the Migration and

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Asylum Justice Forum on Tyneside. Whilst the Forum started out with broader campaigns relating to everyday bordering and the hostile environment – this included protests and marches to raise public awareness and try to garner support – there was always considerable ambiguity and their foci shifted to more specific demands relating to asylum seeker accommodation and access to higher education.

### ***Everyday resistances***

Finally, I want to illustrate other examples of resistance in everyday life, which relate more closely to Scott's understanding of everyday resistances. This is the focus of a research project, in which I am currently engaged, so these findings are still very much emergent at the moment. This research will explore how those charged with undertaking everyday bordering disrupt it from within the context of the welfare state.

One example comes from a conversation observed between a JobCentre worker and a Romanian national in London. The UK labour market was bordered for Romanian and Bulgarian nationals from 2007 to 2013 as part of the transitional controls. In the quote we can see the state employee helping the applicant to understand his rights and the process of obtaining the number. Had he not done so, the applicant would have had a 'failed attempt' in applying for the number on their internal record with the Department for Work and Pensions and this often made it difficult to obtain a number later on. The number was vital for accessing employment and without it, workers would be turned away by employers.

Let me give you some advice, OK? You have the right to work, so you should just go out and start working and then come back here when you have some evidence, you know? Invoices, etc. I'm not going to mark this as a visit today, OK? So when you come back next time they won't know that you have already been. Because it would be harder for you if you have already had a visit and been refused. (Ian, JobCentre Plus worker, July 2010).

### **Conclusions**

In this paper, I have been arguing that we need to balance accounts of intensified and increasing bordering practices and processes within urban spaces with attunement to efforts to resist and disorder. In doing so, I suggest that we bring bordering work into dialogue with research on resistance, solidarity and specifically anarchist geographies. As Hughes has argued, our accounts of resistance in human geography have not kept pace with more fractured and de-centred understandings of the political; this trend is mirrored in bordering studies at a time when, at least in the UK, we are seeing more and more people mobilised and resistant to bordering.

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Focussing on everyday bordering, I have argued that the hostile environment policies have made visible the slow violence of bordering by incorporating more and more residents into borderwork, but have also served to reinvigorate anti-racist agonism, which for some time had been quieted by the seeming incremental gains being made within policy-making.

I argue for the emergence of multiple processes and practices of solidarisation which have been embedded in these resistances. In addition, I have suggested that dis/b/ordering has also been characterised by plural and shifting foci or objects of resistance. Finally, I argued that there is still very little research on the everyday resistances to formal, state borderwork.

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At the frontiers of the urban: thinking concepts and practices globally  
Urban Laboratory, University College London, 10 – 12 November 2019

*G1: Nationalising the Urban Frontier? Cities and the Rise of (Neo)Nationalism*

### **Bridging the Urban and (Neo)National Divide: Bringing Geopolitics and Nationalism into the Mainstream of Comparative Urban Studies**

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#### **Abstract**

This paper's objectives are twofold: firstly, from a theoretical perspective, to advance the cross-disciplinary field of urban geopolitics, bringing geopolitics and nationalism into the mainstream of urban studies. And, secondly, to construct a research agenda to re-frame urban contestation in public space as a dynamic and mobile process. I explore the relational and contrastive value of comparisons across protests in 'ordinary contested cities', pointing at the significance of learning from non-conventional cases normally excluded from academic debates, moving beyond the so-called global urban theory producing usual suspects. In so doing, I argue that it is timely to start learning from, and compare across, different urban geopolitical settings, offering instead multiple access points from which to explore the ever-expanding range of (neo)nationalist conflicts, contestations and ethno-cultural formations shaping the future world of cities.

#### **Bringing geopolitics and nationalism into the mainstream of urban studies**

Spatial justice and protest have represented an enduring object of enquiry in urban studies from local riots to national uprisings (Lefebvre 1974/1991; Harvey 2012; Allegra et al 2013). This analysis, has engaged in part, with the role of public space in providing opportunities for both positive and negative interaction in cities (Phillips 2007; Legeby 2010). At the same time, two interconnected and overlapping sub-disciplinary strands have advanced, engaging with more intense political geography of violence and conflict at the urban scale: 'ethno-national divided cities' (Anderson 2008; Bollens 2012) and 'urban geopolitics' (Graham 2004; 2010, Rokem et al., 2017). The contested cities literature main differentiating characteristic is its focus on places with an ongoing ethno-national conflict and a questioning of legitimacy of the nation state (Anderson 2010). Urban geopolitics, on the other hand, has kept a more flexible outlook and engages more extensively with

violence and protest in a wider span of 'ordinary contested cities' (Rokem & Boano 2018) and also with more extreme cases of 'urbicide' and the complete annihilation of urban systems (Graham 2010). What both strands have in common is a focus on cities as geopolitical victims of larger regional conflicts. They both engage with the nation states continuous need to assert its control and its failure to achieve its collective national goals, "turning inward towards a parochial nationalism at best and a virulent rejection of foreigners and immigrants at worst" (Harvey 2012:108). Violent oppressive policies directed towards marginalised and excluded urban populations are becoming part of the norm rather than an exception. In turn, this mounts to politically charged resistance against national governments from ethnic minorities and migrants finding refuge in more ethnically diverse cities.

### **Tracing the missing links**

The ethos of civic nationalism has its historical roots in Europe from the eighteenth century, and has been a major force in the establishment of the modern nation state (Anderson 1983). Most of the influential nationalism literature stems from disciplines, such as; political science, anthropology, political geography and sociology, and, has seldom placed any substantial weight on the urban scale as a significant object of inquiry. Correspondingly, in the urban studies literature, both 'ethno-national divided cities' and 'urban geopolitics' have not yet engaged in any significant detail with the impact of right-wing (neo)nationalism which is closely associated with populism and the rise of Trump and Brexit (Agnew & Shin 2019) on a growing number of cities worldwide. Particularly with local urban residents increasing opposition towards oppressive and militant populist national regimes. In other words, the two main sub-strands in urban studies, which engage more directly with questions of violence and conflict, have not yet considered the growing tide of (new)nationalism and populism and its relationship to cities in any significant detail.

This paper joins some recent interventions which trace some of these missing links (Antonsich 2018; Yuval-Davis et al., 2018; Calzada 2018). On the one hand, mapping the impact of (neo)nationalism and populism on the shifting political geographies of cities, and, on the other, the importance of cities in opposing (neo)nationalism and in challenging the state as the central site of a transformative politics (Nyers 2011: 138). The objective is to

facilitate further discussion in connecting urban studies and nationalism, moving beyond the nation as a category of exclusion, and the urban as an object of inclusion and diversity (Antonsich 2018: 3). Adopting a more nuanced and critical approach, Calzada (2018) based on three small stateless nations, Catalonia, the Basque Country and Scotland: frames nationalism and its territorial manifestations, as either 'ethnically exclusive' or 'civically inclusive'. Even though it suffers from some of the binary 'urban inclusive' / 'national exclusive' dynamics, it holds some useful analytic relevance. In 'ethnic nationalism' the nation-state holds a populist political vision of ethnic dominance, historically constructed as the only legitimate past. Whilst the softer more inclusive nature of 'civic nationalism' creates a new set of values founded on metropolitan diversity more akin to the urban and local scales (Calzada 2018: 350).

The hostile national environment endorsed by the UK and other European governments promoting an aggressive pursuit of irregular migrants, is part of what Yuval-Davis et al., (2018: 239) frame as 'everyday/everywhere bordering' by the state apparatus and its institutional infrastructures towards migrants and ethnic minorities. This is shifting, more inclusive city administrations with an open approach towards ethnic diversity, to form local flexible migration policies at the city scale, and engage more directly in different forms of "municipal foreign policy" (Hobbs, 1994: 18) and in the protection of migrant and minority human rights.

### **Shifting global geopolitics: from a 'state-centric' to a 'city-centric' approach**

Cities contain a maze of parallel structural forces and discourses shaping development over time and space, with the tensions between religious, cultural, political and economic powers (Yiftachel 2016). Comparison in urban studies seeks to locate and map such structural commonalities across contrasting patterns in cities (Robinson 2006, 2016), but also heeds caution about imputing generality and thus remain open to understanding formative relational connections among cases with apparent likenesses (Hart 2018). The aim of comparative work is to be able to address the inherent complexity of the urban environment both theoretically and methodologically (Ward 2010) and to allow less focus on the city as a bond formation and more as a multiple space of many urban worlds (McFarlane et al 2016: 2). Over the last decade we are witnessing a growing global

mobilisation of citi(zens) from diverse corners of the earth, expressing their dissent against (neo)national governments with their increasing confinement of ethnic minorities and imprisonment of opposition leaders. One such recent prominent example is so-called 'Arab Spring' and its series of anti-government protests, uprisings, and armed rebellions which started in the early 2010s in Tunisia, and, rapidly spread across the Middle East and North Africa. From, Tripoli, Cairo, and Damascus to Manama and Baghdad. These uprisings led by a young and oppressed urban generation, gave a new meaning to the use of social media and mass mobilisation in overthrowing oppressive national regimes. In most cases (apart from Syria) the protests succeeded in overturning the countries autocratic leadership, however, not always leading to a more orderly or well-functioning society.

As these words are written, a growing anti-nationalist wave of protests is spreading across the globe. From Barcelona, Beirut, and London to Hong Kong and Santiago, to name some of the active epicentres of defiant civic protest. The protests in Hong Kong, against imposing Chinese rule of law moving the persecution of Hong Kong residents to mainland China, has been ongoing for several months with no end in sight. In Beirut the so called "WhatsApp" protests against the Lebanese governments attempt to impose a new "social media tax" has led to growing unrest and occupation of buildings in the city centre contesting the national political elite. In Santiago a new proposed increase in public transportation costs has sparked outrage with violent protests setting several metro stations ablaze in light of the national government's policies.

In the European context the manipulation of the migration crisis in the UK turned a referendum vote to leave the EU. Brexit delays and the current UK Boris Johnson governments nationalist agenda to leave the EU at all costs, has sparked a mass mobilisation to hold a second referendum to stay in the single market. The Mayor of London taking a public stand against the national government and calling to stay in the EU is part of this growing civic protest. The pro EU movement in the UK has never been stronger, with over a hundred thousand demonstrators marching on parliament square in the 19 October 2019 pro EU demonstration. Meanwhile, in Barcelona the Spanish central government has sentenced the leaders of the Catalan independence movement to lengthy imprisonments charging them, with what they deem as the 2017 illegal elections. Catalan residents have

taken to streets in violent protests raging through central parts of the city. What unites all these separate expressions of mass dissent is a growing rage against oppressive national governments forcing nationalist neo-liberal agendas leading to mass protest and violence which is predominately urban. It is yet too early to determine the outcome of these uprisings. What is certain is the pivotal role of larger dominant cities mobilizing against the nation state.

### **Re-framing urban contestation as a dynamic and mobile process**

The rise of (neo)nationalism has led to growing ethnic political divisions ranging from the effects of neo-liberal globalisation on social inequalities (Marcuse & van Kempen 2002), the injustices of state-led spatial planning and housing policies (Sandercock 2003) and the effect of ethnicity and race on the long term formation of spatial and social segregation (Musterd & Ostendorf 2013). Most of these approaches have focused on territorial re-distributions and policy patterns of the nation state at an urban scale. However, the impact of (neo)nationalism on urban ethnic contestations in ordinary cities, demands a shift bringing geopolitics into the mainstream agenda of urban studies.

The most significant site for the expression of dissent and protest is the streets and central squares of larger cities. As such, public space without public presence, is unarguably dysfunctional and becomes most meaningful when it encourages the encounter of difference (Sennett 1990). When society is particularly divided as in the contrasting cases of Jerusalem (Rokem & Vaughan 2018) and Stockholm (Rokem & Vaughan 2019), the importance of shared space becomes even greater.

Verifying the important role of public space in providing opportunities for social interaction and protest, there is evidence to show that powerful determinants of identity, such as religion, intersect with race and ethnicity to produce distinctive geographies in cities, which become obvious when studying patterns of encounter in public space (Phillips 2007: 1138). While in small towns and villages the public square will reflect the composition of its surrounding streets, in complex societies containing many and varied communities, public space has a different role to play, whereby different social groups with their diverse principles of solidarity, will be encoded into different daily routines and practices that, in turn, lead to different modes of spatial encounter (Valentine 2018). In contrast, in some

cities the spatial segregation of ethnic minorities has contributed to their social isolation (Legeby 2010; Rokem and Vaughan 2019). Public space thus plays an important role in bringing people – especially disparate groups – together. The degree of mixing and heterogeneity corresponds to the spatial organisation of inequality in the public realm and whether or not the urban setting gives rise to “the serendipity of casual encounter and mixture, and public awareness” (Amin 2002: 267). This can be seen in the current political transformation mobilizing citi(zens) opposing the growing nation state politics of ethnic separatism and (neo)nationalism. In Beirut and other Lebanese cities for example, this is presently shaped by the congregation of urban residents from conflicting ethno-national and religious groups, protesting in central public squares and streets demanding a revolution against one common cause: the nation state and its history of ethnic division and ongoing manipulation of sectarian politics.

## Conclusions

This brief paper has initiated the exploration of some of the tensions and missing links between (neo)nationalism and urban studies, mapping the impact of (neo)nationalism and populism on the shifting urban geopolitics of cities. Re-examining urban studies and nationalism across a spectrum of contrasting cases, it is possible to start seeing beyond the ethnic and racial urban frontier making of the populist nation state and its erasure of local ethnic identities. Pointing to the complexity and messiness of ‘seeing nationalism like a city’. In order to excavate the relational and contrastive value of comparisons across protests in different ‘ordinary contested cities’, there is a significance to learn from non-conventional cases normally excluded from academic debates, moving beyond the global urban theory producing usual suspects.

The empirical experiences from local urban protests and riots reviewed above, reveal new dimensions of citi(zen) politics of opposition against a growing wave of (neo)nationalism and populism and may provide an important insight to the weakening of the nation state and modern democracy more generally. As such, it is timely to start learning from, and compare across, different urban geopolitical settings, offering instead multiple access points from which to explore the ever-expanding range of (neo)nationalist conflicts, contestations and ethno-cultural formations shaping the future world of ‘ordinary contested cities’.

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## 3A-1.1: Land and Property

**Chair/discussant:** Dr Colin Marx, Senior Lecturer, The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL

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**Unpacking tenure security in Yogyakarta: a community-led approach to reframing concepts and practices**

Katrin Hofer, Research Fellow, The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL

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**Governance at the frontiers of urbanisation: exploring the role of Syndicates in territorialising power in the periphery of Kolkata**

Dr Ratoola Kundu, Lecturer, Center for Urban Policy and Governance, School of Habitat Studies, Tata Institute of Social Sciences Mumbai

Manuscript not available

**The push and 'pool' of the land: reflections on speculations in the Global South-East**

Dr Nathan Marom, Senior Lecturer, IDC Herzliya, Israel

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**The making of Reclaimed Island: towards speculative strategies of development and governance**

Ng Keng-Khoo, Lecturer, UCSI University Kuala Lumpur/  
National University of Singapore

## Unpacking Tenure Security in Yogyakarta: a Community-led Approach to Reframing Concepts and Practices

### 1 Introduction

Lack of access to formal land and affordable housing have contributed to the development of squatter settlements and slums in Yogyakarta (Iqbal, 2018). Land and housing occupation in such areas cover a broad range of tenure types – some arrangements are recognised by Indonesian law, whilst others are informal, or illegal (Raharjo, 2010). Despite these various forms, dwellers of informal settlements experience extremely weak de jure and/or de facto tenure security (Hellman, 2018). These low levels of formal security of tenure not only render residents at risk of eviction, but also ineligible for government programmes for housing and settlement upgrading.

In recent decades, Yogyakarta has experienced an increase in tourism and private sector development, the consequences of which have further contributed to the precarity of the urban poor. In these marginalised spaces – in the Indonesian context referred to as ‘Kampung’ – residents “have devised a vast range of informal strategies to facilitate survival, including informal trading and production, informal housing solutions and informal governance” (Guinness, 2016: 206). Kampung provide a home for residents with different socio-economic backgrounds and are often constituted by strong communities. Even though negative stereotypes prevail, Kampung are increasingly recognised as vital parts of the city – due in part to collective action at the grassroots which actively contributes to the making of the city (ibid; Astuti, 2017).

This paper unpacks the attempt of one grassroots organisation in the Yogyakarta, called Kalijawi, to tackle tenure insecurity. As a reflective piece, it provides an alternative perspective to mainstream conceptualisations and interventions regarding land and housing tenure, and advocates for more flexible and sensible programmes addressing the precarity of the urban poor.

### 2 Framework

Before moving to the case study, the following section looks at the concept of tenure security and elaborates on the notion of community-led action.

#### 2.1 Tenure security

Tenure security generally refers to people’s ability to occupy land and housing and to be protected against forced evictions without due process and compensation (Benschop, 2003). It is linked to land rights, which generally refer to the privilege of accessing, managing and transferring land, and for appropriate legal proceedings when land is expropriated (Robinson et al., 2018). The concept of tenure security is thus mostly understood in legal terms, with formal land titles on the one end and illegal land occupation on the other.

Meanwhile customary and western statutory land systems are often overlapping in post-colonial countries like Indonesia. This creates contentious spaces somewhere between legality and illegality. Realities often prove to be more complex, and experiences of tenure security are thus better understood as a continuum from precarity to security, which is informed by historical and cultural factors (Kirk et al., 2015; Payne & Durand-Lasserve, 2012). De jure tenure security might differ from de facto tenure security and people’s perceptions of the legitimacy of their tenure arrangement.

Moreover, tenure security is also influenced by risks beyond the perception of residents, including urban planning, structural economic drivers and local power structures (Daryono, 2010). Whereas secured land tenure is important as a means to inhabit a certain space, it also encourages dwellers to invest in improved homes and livelihoods, thus acting as a catalyst for social inclusion and the reduction of poverty (Kirk et al., 2015).

## 2.2 Community-led action at the grassroots

Community-led actions are activities that are driven by the community itself. They emerge at the grassroots and are constituted by a collective intention to bring about change; the community decides what issue to address and how this should be done. The term 'community' is general and is used for a variety of collectives; some of them share a common history and future, whereas others find themselves linked through a particular, time-bound struggle (Cabannes et al., 2018). They nevertheless all build on some shared values, concerns and goals and shape local realities (ibid).

Recent years have shown the emergence of collective action in cities across the globe, with communities building on their "power from within" (Roitman, 2019a). Communities have taken an active role in the shaping of urban areas, like the Kampung in Yogyakarta. Where planning systems fail to address challenges like poverty or informality, urban dwellers develop everyday practices to compensate for the absence of state welfare (Beard, 2018). Kampung are thus largely developed by community-driven processes (Raharjo, 2010).

## 3 Case Study

### 3.1 Kalijawi

Kalijawi is a network of mainly women who live in informal settlements along the Gajah Wong and Winongo rivers in Yogyakarta<sup>1</sup>. The group formed in 2012 and today includes 300 members from 33 Kampung. The Kalijawi network is based on collective action and is rather homogenous, with members from low-income households, who lack adequate housing, infrastructure and basic services and have weak tenure security. The main goal of the group on the one hand is to address daily needs to achieve better living conditions. On the other hand, the group wants to challenge their position on the margins of society and fight for recognition of their rights.

With the help of ArkomJogja, a local NGO of community architects, Kalijawi set up savings groups in each Kampung and an overarching community development fund to generate their own financial resources. The organisational structure of the network is horizontal, and decisions are made collectively at the Kampung level.

### 3.2 Urban realities in Yogyakarta

One of the factors constituting the weak tenure security of the urban poor in Yogyakarta is linked to the highly complex land tenure system. Alongside the customary (*adat*) land system, the Dutch introduced property laws which focused on private land ownership (Obeng-Odoom & McDermott, 2018). Till today, different systems of land certification exist in parallel and the land registration

<sup>1</sup> The name Kalijawi come from the words "kali", which means river in Javanese, "Ja" referring to the Gajah Wong River and "Wi" referring to Winongo River.

process is complicated and lacks transparency (Reerink, 2011). Being a Special region adds another layer of complexity in Yogyakarta. The Privileges of Yogyakarta (Law No. 13/2012) not only acknowledge the Sultanate as the governing institution in the province but also enables it to own land. Land registered in the Sultanate's name is called Sultan's Ground. In Yogyakarta, land can thus be classified into four categories: private, Sultan's Ground, state and unregistered. These different types of land are occupied and used through different modes according to the statutory or customary law, or through squatting. Despite the right to adequate housing being guaranteed in the Indonesian Constitution, many households live in poor conditions, often in self-built housing (Kementerian PPN/Bappenas, 2015).

The Indonesian state links tenure security to the land rights set out in the Basic Agrarian Law (BAL, Law No. 5/1960). These are formal primary (ownership) and secondary (right to build, use or rent) titles that are registered at the National Land Agency. In 2010, only 30% of all land in Indonesia (other than forests and mining areas) were formally registered (Daryono, 2010). The remaining parcels of land are either occupied with traditional land rights or without any form of certificate.

Even though Indonesia has a long history of national programmes for slum upgrading, they have not proven to be effective. One of the reasons for these shortcomings is that formal land tenure is a prerequisite for accessing such programmes. As a result, they often did not target the most vulnerable populations (Roitman, 2019a). The shortcomings of past and current state-led approaches to urban development, growing competition and increasing land prices create a challenge for urban poor to access new land in strategic locations, generate a threat for those 'informally' inhabiting the city and further entrench their precarity.

### 3.3 Kalijawi's experiences of land and housing tenure

Kalijawi members have various tenure arrangements. The most common scenarios include occupation of Sultan's Ground along the rivers, land belonging to the railway company or contested private land (with unclear or disputed ownership), traditional *Ngindung*<sup>2</sup> agreements on private land or short-term leases on land owned by the administrative village. Most of them do not have written agreements or certificates for the land they are occupying. Nevertheless, they have often been living in their houses and settlements for years, sometimes generations. This shows that they somehow managed to secure these forms of tenure without having legal titles and permits. They often own the houses they are living in, pay rent for the land they have settled on, and some pay land and property taxes to local governments. Also, informal settlements are mostly recognised by and administered through the lowest level of the governance structure (Raharjo, 2010). Kalijawi members thus manoeuvre in spaces between recognition and neglect. Their realities are shaped by their de facto tenure security and their perceived legitimacy of inhabiting spaces.

Another disconnect emerges from the state's approach to land rights and tenure security as an individual good, whereas Kalijawi stresses communal forms and the social function of land. Tenure security is a goal for the whole community. It is thus not merely about the protection of a single household, but about the legitimisation and safety of the whole settlement (Roitman, 2019b).

<sup>2</sup> Customary right to build houses on privately-owned land or to inhabit a part of an existing building for a symbolic rent, relying on communal relationships. The house cannot be of permanent construction.

### 3.4 Kalijawi's strategy and tactics to address their tenure insecurity

Kalijawi uses different tactics to highlight the gap between the state's approach to tenure security and their own experiences, needs and aspirations. These can be categorised into three: (1) bottom-up knowledge generation; (2) the creation of small-scale pilot models; and (3) building partnerships and advocacy. The ultimate goal is to reshape the government's approach to be sensitive to the complex lived realities of the urban poor and to push for diversification in the means of accessing government support - moving beyond statutory land title as a precondition.

#### 3.4.1 Bottom-up knowledge generation

The first tactic to address their tenure insecurity lies in the empowerment of communities by engaging them in research. Generally, there is a lack of information on informal settlements and the needs and realities of Kampung dwellers. Building on Kalijawi's previous experiences of collecting their own data in settlements, the network sees the creation of bottom-up knowledge about tenure security as an essential step towards finding appropriate solutions to their problems. With bottom-up research on tenure security, Kalijawi attempts to achieve four objectives:

1. Creating a realistic image of people's realities in Kampung in Yogyakarta.
2. Finding patterns in the diverse experiences to help identify settlements types.
3. Mobilising communities and raising awareness among Kampung dwellers about issues of tenure (in)security.
4. Using the knowledge acquired to strategically engage government.

Kalijawi facilitated the bottom-up knowledge generation process through a series of community workshops in which criteria for tenure security were identified and cross-referenced with existing indicators of tenure security and adequate housing defined by UN-Habitat and the Indonesian government. The identified criteria were: housing, land rights, social and institutional networks, access to services, conditions of the settlement and environment, infrastructure and location. These then formed the basis for the participatory development of a research tool. In additional workshops, Kalijawi members learnt about the tool and how it would be used. Such internal capacity building is a key activity within the Kalijawi network. Community research is thus a source of power for Kalijawi in two ways: as a strategy for mobilising and raising awareness within the network and as bargaining power and means to exercise pressure when engaging with the government (Roitman, 2019a).

#### 3.4.2 Creation of small-scale pilot models

Building on the community-led research, Kalijawi intends to build small-scale pilot projects. These are linked to physical settlements where context-sensitive solutions to tenure insecurity can be tested. Moreover, the pilot projects are linked to processes that help the urban poor overcome obstacles that are the result of their tenure insecurity. This second type of pilot project is mainly linked to the exploration of alternative funding streams that move control over capital into the hands of the people. In both cases, the long-term idea is to mainstream alternative approaches through the replication of successful cases.

Kalijawi, together with ArkomJogja and the Housing Resource Centre (HRC), is currently working on developing these models. For the on-site projects, they have identified two settlements, where ideas of (partial) relocation and on-site upgrading for improved tenure security can be tested. The concepts and strategies for these pilot sites are developed in collaboration with the local residents,

other NGOs, universities and representatives from the local government. In workshops, they co-design solutions for how to best deal with issues of land and housing and about ways of how their plan can be linked to existing government programmes. In terms of the finance model, Kalijawi builds on its experiences from the local savings groups. As a next step, Kalijawi has registered as a cooperative to formalise the savings groups and gain recognition. In the long term, Kalijawi, with the support of ArkomJogja and HRC is planning to set up a multi-stakeholder primary cooperative that allows the distribution and lending of funds to communities, organised as secondary cooperatives. The primary cooperative will act as a trusted legal entity that carries risks and offers reassurance and potentially facilitates access to larger funds for infrastructure and upgrading projects.

### **3.4.3 Building partnerships and advocacy**

In order to bridge scales, Kalijawi builds on a third tactic: building partnerships and advocacy. The focus not only lies on vertical but also on horizontal partnerships at the local, national and international scale.

At the local level, Kalijawi sees importance in establishing a closer relationship with the local and provincial government. This is done by encouraging government stakeholders to participate in their activities, thus exposing them to the informal settlement dwellers' viewpoints. The local leaders at the neighbourhood level, who have access to the higher levels of local government, are key stakeholders. By establishing a good dialogue, needs and requirements can not only be channelled to higher governments levels, but also information on planned developments in the Kampung can be accessed (Roitman, 2019a). Kalijawi furthermore reaches out to other community groups in informal settlements and collaborates with a local university. They have a plan to reach out to the private sector, however this engagement has been limited so far. Kalijawi does not only reach out to potential partners individually, but also invests into creating platforms for multi-stakeholder collaboration. In regard to the work on tenure security, together with ArkomJogja, HRC and Kotaku<sup>3</sup>, they organised a four-day public event to celebrate World Habitat Day 2019 and to collectively think about tenure security and the state of informal settlements in Yogyakarta.

At the national and international level, Kalijawi participates in events and contributes to exchange of experiences with similar organisations (Roitman, 2019a). Recently, Kalijawi was part of a learning visit to Thailand to study CODI, a government agency which coordinates the development of community organizations and facilitates a collective housing programme.

## **4 Conclusion**

Linking different tactics, Kalijawi strategically advocates for more flexible and sensible programmes addressing the precarity of the urban poor.

The case study shows that:

- The legal-illegal dichotomy of tenure security applied by the state does not reflect people's diverse experiences in the Kampung, which are constituted by their perceived legitimisation of inhabiting a certain space.

<sup>3</sup> National program 'Cities without slums' (Kota Tanpa Kumuh, Kotaku).

- Communities think tenure security more holistically and communal. The traditional relationship to land is characterised by communal forms, celebrating the social function of land. Policies for the formalisation of land should take that into account.
- Communities see tenure security as an important catalyst for poverty reduction. It is, however, not the only catalyst. Increasing security for many households may be to increase other rights, such as improved access to credit or services.
- Kalijawi's work shows that there is a need for more innovative approaches to tenure insecurity rather than replicating previous programmes for slum upgrading, which have not been effective. Through a multi-stakeholder collaboration, such pilot models can be tested and then potentially be scaled up.
- Bridging scales is important.

Moving away from operating as a federation of savings groups concerned with their own immediate upgrading needs, Kalijawi is currently in the process of gradually expanding their focus to the city-scale, aiming to influence broader urban planning processes. As a result, they are not only strengthening their power from within but also gain recognition from external stakeholders. The case study thus presents an interesting and promising example of bottom-up, community-led efforts at reframing tenure security and shifting to more sustainable and inclusive urban practices.

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**UCL Conference: At the frontiers of the Urban: thinking concepts and practices globally**

**10<sup>th</sup> Nov to 12<sup>th</sup> Nov**

**Session 3A. 1.1: Land and Property**

**12<sup>th</sup> Nov, 11:30 am**

**Governance at the frontiers of urbanisation: exploring the role of Syndicates in territorialising power in the periphery of Kolkata**

Peri-urban spaces in the Global South are regarded as sites of radical and often violent transformation of social and spatial structures, of brutal disposessions of lives and livelihoods to make way for speculative real estate development and the accumulation of capital through the expropriation and commodification of land. Scholars have pointed out to the governance experiments, the entrepreneurship of the state and the speculative urbanism that characterises such transformations (Kennedy and Sood 2018, Gururani and Kose 2015). New forms of precarity, impoverishment, and socio-economic insecurities have emerged through the series of exclusions and erasures that a state-market driven urbanisation entails. This paper argues that new hybrid, formal-informal imbrications, forged through complex political configurations of state-nonstate actors and their and spatial practices, emerging from the interstices of existing governing arrangements (Bulkeley 2012) - animates the territorial expansion of urbanisation, rebuilding associational life (Simone 2004).

Comprising actors seeking to stake claim to the urban frontier, informal sovereigns (Lund 2006) reconfigure the urban periphery through their control over networks that buy and sell land, exert considerable control over labour and construction contracts, act as intermediaries between the state and the political party, the local population and the private developers. This paper examines the territorial practices of the increasingly powerful, (in equal parts benevolent and violent) 'Syndicates' - heterogeneous, informalised, localised, contingent alliances. These Syndicates are shown to have significant decision making powers in the everyday governance of the highly uneven and heterogeneous frontier areas. Drawing from ethnographic fieldwork conducted in the newly carved out Bidhannagar Municipal Corporation in West Bengal, this paper seeks to contribute to the research on everyday urban governance that asserts that much of urban life is governed not by the state but by locally contingent political assemblages of actors and institutions who assert territorial and social power and claim public authority while asserting their allegedly non-political nature of engagement in governing land, labour and infrastructures (Lund, 2006; Cornea 2019).

**Bio:**

Dr. Ratoola Kundu (PhD Urban Planning and Policy, UIC 2010 and Masters in Urban Planning 2003), Assistant Professor at the Centre for Urban Policy and Governance, TISS Mumbai. Her research examines the imbrication of formal-informal modes of urbanisation across diverse and contested settings - neglected urban cores, new towns and urban peripheries. She is particularly interested in engaging with marginalised urban groups - informal street vendors, informal waste workers, informal service providers and the ways in which they assert agency to collectively mobilise and challenge multiple forces of socio-spatial transformations. Her recent work engages with the changing political dynamics of hawkers' movement in Kolkata, particularly the contradictions within leadership and movement, between a rights versus "worlding" approach, and between judicialisation and protest as forms of articulating their struggles over urban space.

### The Unsettled Urban Periphery of Kolkata and the rise of the Syndicate Raj:

- The unsettled and dynamic eastern peripheries of Kolkata have been witness to several waves of state led urban territorial restructuring - the creation of the planned satellite township of Salt Lake (1960s), acquisition of 24 villages and wetlands to build the mega city of Rajarhat New Town (1996), Electronic city SEZ demarcation and Special Industrial Township status (1990s), and recent administrative merging of Salt Lake municipality with nearby town and villages to create a Municipal Corporation (2015).
- The constant making and unmaking of these peripheral areas has been accompanied by large scale dispossession of livelihoods, erasure of agrarian ways of life, destabilizing customary institutions of governance in the villages, the irreversible transformation of agrarian land and the social relations embedded in them to urban land with exchange values, and new hybrid parastatal governance arrangements. These processes are propped up by regulatory changes to land - moving towards the creation of tradeable property rights.
- This is a deeply political process - as people in West Bengal, particularly the rural agrarian groups depend upon land for livelihood, for belongingness and identity formation. But the disconnect with land to create new towns challenges the existing political economy of land - perceived as expropriation
- The new spaces comprises diverse territories (planned urban, unplanned urban, unplanned villages, informal urban settlements, special economic zones) and shifting governance arrangements - leading to an incongruent and volatile socio-spatial landscape
- Who governs this frontier zone and how, especially given the flux in terms of territories and complexity of legal and institutional frameworks? The rise of the "Syndicate Raj" - groups of unemployed men, local youth, lower level political leaders, informal strong men, party leaders, petty entrepreneurs - stretching across formal and informal institutions. They do not belong to the party, nor the state, but are positioned in between in the interstices. Syndicates exert control over land assembly and building construction activities.
- how do they govern a restless, contested, urban frontier - what are the webs of relations and power within which they draw their legitimacy from and at the same time are constrained by?

### The contested making and unmaking of frontier zones:

- Peri-urban spaces in the Global South are regarded as sites of radical and often violent socio-spatial transformations. Often driven by the changing state-market axis, the making of the urban frontier happens through the brutal displacement and dispossessions of lives and livelihoods, to enable the accumulation of capital through the expropriation and commodification of agrarian land, and its rapid conversion to urban real estate (Datta and Shaban).
- The state is at the forefront of these planned and large scale transformations - often through processes that involve informality - territorial flexibility, strategic unmapping, and the creation of spaces of exceptions (Roy, Gururani). The myth of

a “tabula rasa” (Kennedy and Sood) and the possibility of making urban fantasies (Watson) is what propels these transformations at the periphery.

- These processes of socio-spatial transformation is catalysed by processes of “worlding” ( Ong and Roy) - inter-referencing other Asian cities urban development models, aspiration of new middle classes wanting to live in gated enclaves - bypassing the squalor of existing core cities ( Bhattacharya and Roy).
- Given the “newness” of these spaces, the lack of a proper governance structure, the lack of a place identity, the constant jostling between traditional residents and new inhabitants, incomplete networks of infrastructure - these areas are places in the making - or frontier lands posing challenges to settling down - these are fluid zones both spatially and temporally
- Caldiera proposes that peripheral urbanisation is largely driven by the urban poor through processes of auto-construction. Refers to “modes of the production of urban space that (a) operate with a specific form of agency and temporality, (b) engage transversally with official logics, (c) generate new modes of politics through practices that produce new kinds of citizens, claims, circuits, and contestations, and (d) create highly unequal and heterogeneous cities”.
- Therefore, it is not a marginal space, but a process of urbanisation specific to cities in global south but can take on heterogeneous forms, context specific
- Peripheralisation processes are often incomplete and irregular - perforations in the master plans (Kundu) - mediation/ modification/ resistance of global and regional flows by constantly changing constellations of locally embedded actors and institutions

Actually existing governance arrangements at urban frontier zones:

- Frictions emerging between the erstwhile rural and urban jurisdictions, emergence of new informal modes of governance (Kadfad).
- Much of urban life is governed not by the state but by complex configurations of actors and institutions who assert considerable power and public authority while claiming to be non-political (Lund, 2006; Cornea 2019).
- Frontiers - the making and unmaking of these zones allows for situating the examination of : ways in which different sets of actors struggle to a) reassert, or consolidate their power, authority, collectively mobilise access and claims to the emerging urban periphery through different and perhaps new regimes of territorial governance arrangements and b) assert their agency in reclaiming and remaking one’s identity and making sense of the changed reality through varied, incremental, contested strategies of place-making.
- How is the relationship between land and labour reconstituted through new circuits of capital accumulation and regimes of governance? How is the shifting terrain of the periphery mediated, structured and governed?
- characterized by fragmented and overlapping governance arrangements
- new actors (beyond the state)emerge in the interstices of service provisions, trying to bridge the gap in terms of service provisioning (Simone) and also staking out an opportunity to control new territories (Lund, Hansen and Seputtat).

- In return of these services/infrastructure/resources, intermediaries extend their control over the locality, or command votes and allegiance
- Intermediaries perform boundary making and unmaking practices – these are territorial practices forged through the threat of violence and acts of benevolence. Intermediaries between various stakeholders – with conflicting interests and stakes

The Informal Syndicates Regime in action in the frontier zone of Kolkata :

- Powerful Informal Syndicates which have emerged in the area who control the pattern of urbanisation in the area, and the local economy by exerting their considerable influence over labour, construction material supply and the negotiated arrangements they carve out with the new and powerful urban institutions that dot the landscape – from parastatals and development agencies, to newly elected ward councillors in the newly formed corporation
- small town political fixer (Manor), land /housing intermediary, water mafia (Ranganathan), not just individuals but related to the work of associations ( De Sarda)
- “as the provision of public services remains lacking, intermediaries have been widely adopted by formal institutions, e.g. allowing intermediaries to intervene and in turn gain political authority – reputation and skills – constant negotiation and blurring of boundaries between formal and informal institutions”(Kadfak)
- In Rajarhat, Syndicates have a history that is related to the particular mode of urbanisation - expropriation of land from small farmers – during a Communist party led government ( 1970 to 2011) – co-opted farmers( rural political voter base) into forming land losers cooperatives – to supply construction materials in the New Town construction projects – these groups have over time, in the absence of formal contracts or skilling, been gathered together to form Syndicates – work for particular local leaders - politically astute strong men with linkages to the political class and the business elites. 3 particular aspects in which Syndicates have been consolidating their regime and operations in the New town and rapidly urbanising fringes of the newly formed Corporation
- Syndicates act as informal structures that not only provide muscle and money power to elected representatives but they also help to marshal political forces in support of local political leaders and to protect their political and economic turf. It is a complex assemblage of hydra-headed organisations – blurring significantly with land losers collectives, local “para” clubs, and lower level of party workers. In exchange of their ability to collect money, the labor and the materials supply syndicates get privileged access to construction projects, contracts, etc.
- (1) Land and property: Syndicates are known to use brute force to get farmers to accept deals by the private developers who want their land – scare tactics, threat of violence, disconnecting fields from water supply or electric supply. Take a cut for the sanction of development plans for any house extension or redevelopment. Papers will not move otherwise – control over bureaucracy. Also play a role in adjudicating conflicts at the local level around property – similar to the functions of the cadre based Neighborhood committees set up during the Left Front rule in

West Bengal. Gathering knowledge on property, helping with land surveys and mapping, etc. Layered hierarchical structure with top political bosses at the head – but invisible and untraceable due to the shifty nature of the work – illegality of bribes and the violence involved

- (2) Labour and material supply: controlling the supply of materials, their prices, quantities as well as that of labour – keeps unemployment at bay – therefore gets political patronage – syndicates gets wages, works through family and kin relations and an element of trust – extremely territorial – frequent fights between different Syndicates across the frontier zone to extend territory of operations – recruitment in para clubs – para clubs receive donations, infrastructures of development at the para level – related to some development works and institution building in these fragmented areas in the periphery
- (3) Adjudicating, conflict resolution: traditional/customary village leaders perform important roles in resolving conflicts involving new inhabitants, older residents, para statals and others in the absence of elected leadership in New Town area or in the interstitial urban areas – e.g. of Zilla Parishad member who settled the case of street vendors in New Town and Kolkata at the behest of the planning and development parastatal agency.

#### Limits to the Informal Syndicate Regime at the Frontiers?

- With strong infighting and territorial clashes erupting regularly between Syndicates operating in the New Town areas, the gradual institutionalization of Syndicates raises the question whether this will ultimately challenge the authority of established leader, or will their continued presence consolidate TMC's presence in a fractured, volatile, and highly differentiated urban periphery
- These multiple sovereigns thus point to the constant blurring between the business of politics and the politics of doing business in a regime of rule onto themselves and evokes close connections to the state to gain legitimacy in the eyes of other stakeholders.
- Frontiers are being shaped in particular ways by the Syndicates – individual and collective efforts – leading to new political modes of urbanisation

## **The Making of Island-Cities: Towards Speculative Strategies of development and Governance**

### **Introduction**

Modern state has a long history of gaining territory from the water. Land reclamation was undertaken for many political-economic reasons. Ironically however, many contemporary land-making projects were neither building for an increasing urban population, nor tackling scarcity of land for food production. I argue, instead, making land into the sea is bound up with new intentions of speculating urban growth.

In Malaysia and Southeast Asia at large, there is growing trend of developing large-scale land reclamation projects that built in a specific form of reclaimed island. For example, the New Manila Bay ‘City of Pearl’ in the Philippines; the proposal of Jakarta’s great sea wall (Great Garuda - bird-like creature/national emblem of Indonesia); Sri Lanka’s Colombo Port City, ties up with Chinese capital. The Melaka Gateway, an integrated deep-sea-port, named as the largest and most ambitious of China’s Belt and Road initiatives in Malaysia; the Penang South Reclamation Project – to build three artificial islands; Johor’s Forest City, with close proximity to Singapore, offering new second-home investment enclave primarily for middle-class Chinese. Let me quickly sum up some of the similarities among these projects, and most importantly, I’m interested to learn about their ambiguous characteristics.

- Inexactness of long-term planning – a stage of ‘reclaim first and develop later’.
- All planning ideas and development programs are subject to change.
- They are planned with new boundaries of development which are distanced or disconnected from their adjacent mainland – therefore to allow a greater level of flexibility in terms of city planning and governance.
- These projects were set to avoid retrofitting the existing city or built fabric, but demanded instead to give an entire fresh start. Presumably, this development tactic is believed to be less controversial, partly due to weak civil society in some of these cities.
- These projects often bound up with the rhetoric of ‘future city’ / ‘smart city’ with speculation of foreign investments and high-growth economy.

This paper is my on-going research project focusing on the emerging forms and rhetorical practices of land reclamation in the global south. This paper offers critical understandings into problematic, ambiguous land-making projects in which local governments

become more actively and powerfully engaged in speculative developments with a greatly expanded territory of governance at sub-national level. A majority of the literature on land reclamation is premised along political ecology or land conflict framework. However, it is not my intention to talk about environmental implications or conflicts. My approach is to explore the new and problematic dimensions of land-making projects as both tangible assets and symbolic resources for the local government to restructure city and land-development related policy. I argue that land-making projects should be seen as a new governing tool in which it upholds economic growth and the illusive promise of smart urbanism/future city, while on the role of governments and developers, it make land management more flexible and institutionally unfixed. This paper aims to develop a framework of analysis which can help us give substance to understand contemporary land-making projects. I foreground on two cases studies – Penang South Reclamation Project and Johor’s Forest City to understand various state initiatives in restructuring urban spaces and re-imagining urban futures.

### **Rethinking the making of reclaimed island projects : Towards a new trend of speculative development/government?**

Land is a traditional form of asset that crucial for the state to regulate law and socio-economic development. While generating profits from land through farming and mining activities, land also plays an important agential role in speculating urban growth. Joining the theoretical explorations on ‘speculative urbanism’ (Goldman, 2010), land-making projects should be understood as a development strategy that is bound up with new forms of “‘speculative’ government, economy, urbanism and citizenship. I contend that the critical analysis of land, beyond its conventional debates over land rights and dispossession, should engage with more dynamic forces to which land-making is understood as a powerful reworking of how the city are imagined and governed. The non-human agency of land, through its flexible characteristic in terms of buildability and adaptability, also allows the state to shape urban form with new interventions of smart-city design.

This paper is foregrounded on the case of Malaysia for theoretical construct. Malaysia’s legal frameworks on land have been influenced by its colonial past. After independence in 1954, land reform played an important part in nation-building, characterised by race-based distribution policy (for example the formation of Malay-reserved land). Due to Malaysia’s strong federal governing system, it has granted authority for the central governments to reform land policies and administration services, despite issues of land rights and social inequality remain largely unresolved. While land remains as premium asset for post-colonial Malaysia,

the process of developing land has become a contested sphere of governance between the federal and state governments on the one hand, state and non-state actors on the other.

Today, large-scale land-making projects have become the centre of Malaysia's urban politics. Since 2012, many Malaysian local states, for example Penang, Johor, and Melaka, have been looking into proposals of island-based development. **Johor's Forest City** is a large-scale reclamation project with four reclaimed islands, spanning an area of 1,370 acres, which will accommodate a total of 700,000 residents upon completion. The project's tagline of "duty-free island-based living next to Singapore" has been used by the developers to attract Chinese buyers to invest in Johor as their second-home or touted as a prime model of future city and tax-free enclave. These illustrations are created to promote imagination of urban futures – green transportation / romantic island-based living (but Singapore Jurong port). Forest City is not a government investment project of neither Beijing nor Putrajaya. Forest City relieves its dependence on capital from Country Garden, and administrative support from the Johor government, together with the purview of the Johor Sultan (Sultan Ibrahim holds a 21.9% effective stake in GCPV). Quoting the sultan's own word, This project will increase Johor land size and sovereignty. Disguised under the name of public-private partnership, such a tie-up essentially makes Forest City a strong patronage system forged between Chinese capital and Johor's administration. This project will be granted the Johor government to make long-term revenue by collecting annual land and property taxes. Nearly 80% of the total development is designated for high-priced residences. All properties in Forest City are under international lots with strata title. This serves the developers' interest to make Forest City a privatized entity with full control of operating the city.

**Penang South Reclamation Project (PSR)** involves reclamation work to create three new islands, measuring 1,800 ha in total. The reclaimed land will belong to the Penang government but will be auctioned off to the highest bidders to finance the RM46 billion Penang Transport Master Plan (PTMP). The Penang state government has proposed to implement the project to raise funds for PTMP. The PTMP will be pursued by SRS Consortium Sdn Bhd, a joint venture between Gamuda Bhd (60%) and Penang real estate development firms Loh Phoy Yen Holdings Sdn Bhd (20%) and Ideal Property Development Sdn Bhd (20%). Again, the formation of such partnership has not done through open tendering process, but rather by closed invitation. It was reported that the project would take up to 20 to 30 years to complete, where a series of highways, light rail transit lines and other modes of transport to be built over the years. PTMP project may have a long gestation period, as part of the payment could be in the form of land swaps or land reclamation rights. PSR should be understood as the political



mission of the Penang Chief Minister Chow Kon Yeow, in defending Penang's autonomy in city development. However, the project received strong objections from the fishermen community and civil groups, which made the final decision and execution on hold. Unlike Johor's Forest City that backed up by the Johor Sultan, PSR is likely to face severe questionings posted by much stronger civil society in Penang.

	Johor's Forest City	Penang South Reclamation Project
Reclaimed area	1,370 acres (408ha)	4,500 acres (1,821ha)
Population	700,000 residents	367,300 residents
Estimated completion	20 - 30 years	20 - 30 years
Vision	'Eco-smart cities of the future'	Penang's 'Vision For The Future' (SRS Smart City)
Island numbers	4 islands	3 islands
Partnerships	Country Garden Pacificview	SRS Consortium Sdn Bhd
EIA approval	EIA report was requested by the Singaporean government. The project obtained greenlit after agreed on reducing the size of reclamation.	Fishermen, civil society and NGO organisations unsatisfied with the outcomes of EIA.

### Theorizing land-making projects

Taking these two case studies as empirical evidence and reflection, I suggest a framework of analysis which it consists of three important dimensions. Firstly, land-making projects are bound up with the notion of 'progress without crisis'. Land reclamation is undertaken to avoid conflicts over land acquisition, while staying away from the controversies of land-grab politics. Despite environmentalists and local communities have been holding in strikes in protest against land reclamation, the governments are backing land-making projects for the sake of urban growth/futures. To substitute the crisis, promotions and experiments of smart-and-green city design are put forward to calm down people with a grand vision of future city. Smart urbanism becomes a new 'knowledge regime' for the governments to convince or negotiate with opponents. The governments tend to by-pass the struggle between use value and exchange value in these projects by substituting with the 'value of urban imagination'.

Secondly, we must recognise the constitutive and speculative functions of reclaimed land/island. The case studies point us to interesting observation about the land strategy regarded as 'reclaimed first and built later', whereby the 20-30years development plan allows the

government to impose flexible governance of space and progress. Unlike some typical types of land such as cast crop land, rural land, and nature reserved land, the status of reclaimed-land is not legally bonded but negotiable for future alterations to suit different political-economic agendas. Due to an ambiguity in long-term development plan of land-making projects, the state can deploy the symbolic 'island status' to create many 'themed' spaces of innovative leisure, commercial, or new enclave for second-home investment.

Thirdly, land as a reconfiguring agency in urban development and governance. The rise of sub-national and local government in Malaysia, (i.e., Johor-Johor Sultan, Penang city government) has made progressive steps to obtain more autonomous spaces for self-governance and profit-making. Land reclamation has emerged as a new source for the sub-national state to seek for autonomy with ties to land taxes and investment opportunities, by turning land into a mechanism of rent-seeking. Further, land-making projects involve a wide spectrum of state and non-state actors, for example: state-linked investment agencies, real estate developers, sand-miners, infrastructure companies, architects and planner. I contend that such complex coalitions can no longer be understood as public-private partnerships. Rather, the business-politics nexus is rooted in much complex patronage relationships to which local traditional authority, government agencies, bureaucrats, and business partners have sought to intervene land development and governance. To this end, the tightening of local state power over land reclamation and smart urbanism would allow new configurations of authority – in opposition to the highly centralised control of fiscal distribution by the federal government.

## **Conclusion**

Contemporary land-making projects are planetarily ambitious and architecturally appealing, yet economically unjustified and socially unsustainable. Shifting from the debates of land administration to land speculation, I suggest that more attention should be focused on both the constitutive and speculative functions of reclaimed land, with the entanglements of particular modes of flexible governance or patronage system initiated by local governments. Lastly, based on the Malaysian experience of land-making projects, I suggest that the scoping of where 'urban' might be found and figured – is largely lied upon the (problematic) process of land-making, situating in the intersection of power relations and urban imagination.

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## 3A-1.2: (II)legality and Urban Development

**Chair/discussant:** Dr Balakrishnan Rajagopal, Associate Professor of Law and Development, Massachusetts Institute of Technology

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**Disaster victims as urban producers: space, justice and heritage in post-disaster Concepción, Chile**

Dr Ricardo Fuentealba, PhD candidate, University of Amsterdam

Manuscript not available

**Defending the public interest: exploring the judicial processes of contested urban planning practices in London and in Istanbul**

Ayşe Gümeç Karamuk, PhD candidate, Department of Geography, UCL

Manuscript not available

**Conjuring property through the agrarian state**

Dr Thomas Cowan, Researcher, Department of Social Anthropology, University of Bergen

Manuscript not available

**Land traffickers and the fertile spaces of legality in Lima**

Dr Rita Lambert, Teaching Fellow, The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL

## Disaster victims as urban producers: space, justice and heritage in post-disaster Concepcion, Chile

Ricardo Fuentealba<sup>1</sup>

### Abstract

In this paper I show how particular forms of disaster justice, resistance, and social mobilisation are giving groups of disaster victims the power to reshape urban spaces in Chile, following the collapse of a building after an earthquake in southern Chile.

The 8.8 earthquake that occurred on the 27<sup>th</sup> of February 2010 in Chile (the '27F') represented a disruptive moment in the country's urbanisation process. A critical image from the 27F was the crumbling of the Alto Rio, a 15-storey privately developed building in the city of Concepcion. In the aftermath of what they experienced, the surviving victims spent years in a judicial trial to find those responsible for the collapsed construction. The trial found that the real estate and construction companies were to blame for what occurred, mandating a CLP\$1800 million compensation for the victims. Declaring bankruptcy, the guilty party developed a compensation consisting of the urban plots where the Alto Rio building was situated. While these plots are still being transferred, some debates are emerging over how to develop them. More than eight years later, the victims of one of the most tragic stories of this disaster see an opportunity to give something back to the city and reshape its future.

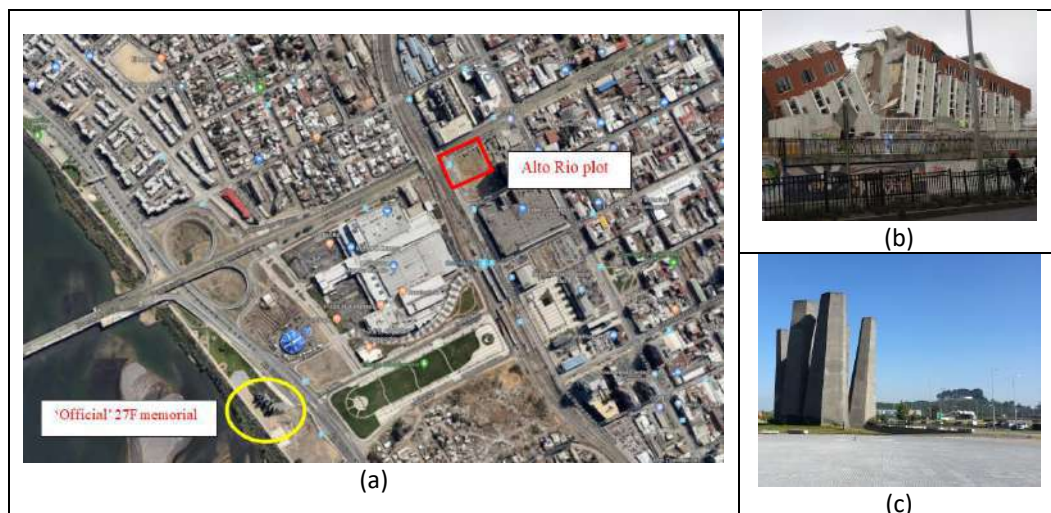
Based on interviews and participant observation, in this paper I explore some disaster victims' practices and discourses, particularly developed around the Alto Rio plot as a symbolic space in relation to post-disaster urban development. Through their work, they reflect critical risk-reduction issues about structural measures and urban risks education. These discourses not only disrupt 'official accounts' of the 27F event in particular, but also involve a reflection about the historical heritage of the city and its experience of seismic events. Therefore, I argue that the role of victims in disaster justice procedures and their associated spatial practices can advance towards more inclusive processes of urbanisation.

**Keywords:** *urban disasters; disaster justice; spatial practices; urban heritage*

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## 1 Introduction

Nine years have passed since the earthquake of the 27 of February 2010 (the '27F'). People aiming to commemorate that day gather in the empty space where the Alto Rio building used to be, in the centre of Concepcion (roughly 100 kilometres away from the 27F's epicentre, but the most impacted metropolitan area). During the 27F, this plot was known as the 'zero zone' of the earthquake, as the crumbling of the 15-storey private developed Alto Rio building was recognised as one of the most tragic images from that disaster. Unlike the "State-sanctioned memorial" of the 27F located less than one kilometre away, this plot was never meant to be used for remembering, but there it was: people awaiting for the commemoration to start, sitting in silence, paying their respects. Residents of Alto Rio, survivors of the crumbling, start to arrive and occupy the front chairs.



**FIGURE 1: The location of the Alto Rio Plot and the State-led 27F Memorial along the Northern Fringe of the Biobio River, in Concepcion (Source: Google Maps (a); La Tercera (b); author (c))**

This commemorative event was co-organized by the NGO of victims from the building – the *Fundacion Alto Rio* (FAR). Along with speeches from the authorities and some members of the FAR, the event also gives voice to some survivors to share their experience. Topics such as the importance of memory, of learning lessons, of self-organisation, are frequently mentioned by these victims. They persistently refer to their long-term struggles for finding justice. A crowd of people sits by and listens. They applaud but overall maintain silence and pay respect. The commemoration ends with two final activities: attendees

draw co-centric circles on the floor, symbolising the ‘memory hypocentre’ of the 27F; and the display of a light towards the sky (figure 2).



**FIGURE 2: Images from the 27F commemoration in 2019. Victims and friends painting the “Memory Hypocentre” (a); the light projected to the sky (b) (Source: author).**

Post-disaster urban spaces, such as this plot, offer a lens into different dimensions of the politics of urban development and the complex causation of risk (Oliver-Smith *et al.*, 2017; Rumbach, 2017). In cities, disasters involve questioning spatial governance structures influencing wider socio-spatial inequalities and segregation, as well as the adoption and enforcement of norms and policies related to land uses or constructive design, thus reflecting back on certain trends of urbanisation (Pelling, 2003; Gotham and Greenberg, 2014). The occurrence of disasters can be triggers for describing particular malfunctions in urban systems, such as the bad quality of constructions; but they can also be tipping points for change towards progressive or regressive development (Pelling and Dill, 2010).

In unpacking disasters and development, vulnerability remains one of the main concepts for denaturalising disasters (Pelling, 2003; Wisner *et al.*, 2004; Adger, 2006). Vulnerability helps to focus less on the natural side and more on the social one of disasters; less on the unexpected nature and eventfulness of a hazard such as an earthquake, and more about the social processes that rendered some people more susceptible to their impacts (UNISDR, 2009). More recent and critical approaches

have focused on the actual processes through which vulnerability is enacted and performed: being vulnerable is not a latent condition, but an “emergent effect” of an assemblage and therefore “discursively and materially *produced*” (Webber 2013, p.2722, emphasis in original). Understanding both the experience of the negative impacts of a disaster, as well as the associated post-disaster recovery, is a contextualised question into the practices and discourses mobilised by different actors. Particularly for the role of disaster victims in reshaping urban space, a more progressive view of disasters should move away from fixed conceptions of vulnerable subjects and, on the contrary, focus on how these communities can pursue justice through their own agency (Douglass and Miller, 2018).

In this short paper I show how a group of disaster victims are using their disaster experience to inform ways of managing risks and developing urban space. I focus on describing previous and current practices and initiatives, as well as prospective ones. This is nonetheless their story and I do not intend to tell it as an insider. I am equipped with ethnographic tools, particularly in-depth interviews, participant and non-participant observation, and some secondary documentation analysis. I centre my focus on the initiatives that emerged in parallel and in the aftermath of their engagement with justice. As mentioned, the uses related to the Alto Rio plot, such as the 27F commemoration, are particularly important for their post-disaster urban development. I unpack this further through three vignettes of this case: the judicial case involving the residents of Alto Rio, their work as a disaster-related NGO, and their projects with the plot.

## 2 The 27F and the long-term struggle for justice

The 27<sup>th</sup> of February of 2010, an mw 8.8 earthquake occurring at 3:34 am was felt by millions of people. Accompanied by a tsunami hitting the coast of Chile, the impacts of this event in the country were unprecedented: by the end of March 2010, the government counted 370,051 housing units that were damaged, 81.440 of which were destroyed and 108.914 had severe damages. Officially, there were 521 deaths and 56 people disappeared. In Concepcion, the bulk of the buildings were able to stand the earthquake but eight had important damages that led to their later demolition. The Alto Rio, inaugurated only in 2009, was one of these eight.

Many of the Alto Rio residents, from lower-middle and middle class background, decided to live there because of its location. Situated in an area of long-term desire for real estate development, the building was one of many other high-density projects constructed there in the last 15 years. The crumbling of a building in a country with good normative codes and decent enforcement was rare, so a number of assessments appeared (e.g. Alimoradi and Naeim, 2010; Rojas *et al.*, 2011; Song, Pujol and Lepage, 2012). The survivors remember that its crumbling occurred seconds after the earthquake. While being trapped inside, they imagined that the whole Concepcion was on the ground. As they were rescued during the night, they realised that it was the only building that crumbled that night in Concepcion. From that moment, a perception of being conned by the firms involved in its construction led them to self-organisation and to participate in a very long process to achieve justice.

The idea of suing those responsible for the crumbling of the Alto Rio was immediate. The death of eight people as well as the long-term injuries of seven, was the basis of the accusation. Based on the action from the victims and the public, the accused were seven representatives and professionals from the real estate and construction companies. Particularly, they were accused of failing their responsibility in some key construction issues such as the soil studies developed, the overseeing of the construction, and their technical expertise for this type of construction (Ossa 2016; Tribunal Concepcion 2012). This process was very long. A first trial started in June 2012 and found one guilty for his responsibility in the structural design. Then, a second trial took place in 2013 where other three were declared guilty. The trial eventually got to the Chilean Supreme Court of justice, where decision to hold responsible four out of the seven charged, was maintained (Radio Biobio 17.03.2014). The Court settled a compensation of CLP\$ 1,800 Million (roughly \$USD 2.5 Million) to be pay to the plaintiffs<sup>2</sup>.

With the declaration of bankruptcy from the real estate and construction companies (Radio Biobio 17.03.2014), the compensation shifted from a direct transfer of funds towards one where they could transfer goods – and as real estate developers, they possessed land plots. That is how the victims of the Alto Rio are becoming the owners of the plot where the building used to be. But the importance of this

<sup>2</sup> The case of Alto Rio was very complex and the people that took part of this specific trial was the majority but not the total of people affected. There was a number of people that settled beforehand, while others followed their own parallel judicial processes. Here I refer to this trial because it is the main group.



result is that it gave the Alto Rio community more reasons to work towards disaster memory and resilience in Concepcion: “it meant that we were right”.

### 3 Networks and the performance of risks

The process of demolition of the Alto Rio ruin led to constructing a network of residents from the other aforementioned collapsed buildings. Together, they were involved in a process that lasted up to 2013, when the last building was demolished (Forttes, 2014). From this long recovery process that involved struggling with bureaucracy for issues such as housing and health provision, managing their insurances and suspending their mortgages with banks, and the actual demolition of the rubble, the community of Alto Rio established a permanent organisation, the aforementioned *Fundación* (FAR). Their aim was working towards risk reduction based on memory and education, always framing themselves as the Alto Rio survivors. According to one informant, their role as a victims-led NGO, relates to “improving the capacities of families to react in the face of an emergency; but also that citizens should engage directly with the authorities and demand more structural changes”. In the core of their project was to reflect their own experience and developing memory initiatives, but always working with the future management of more profound disaster causes.

One of the first public engagements of the FAR was the staging of a piece of debris from the Alto Rio building, in the centre of Concepcion, in partnership with another NGO working on disaster memory. This “symbolic rubble”, currently exhibited in the Museum of Natural History of the city, was put in one of the main public spaces of Concepcion during three months (Figure 3). Then, many people approached the rubble and interacted with it and with the residents of the former building. Thought to be a testimony of the 27F from their own perspective, the rubble includes a plaque that states: *“From the Fundación Alto Rio to the city of Concepcion. To the memory of the victims and survivors. May the pain of the Alto Rio community reminds us that there are mistakes that cannot be repeated and that even in the midst of pain it is possible to reconstruct a better future”*. The engagement of the people was surely ambivalent – such as those described by Roca and Caceres (2014). But their goal of engaging the people of Concepcion with the material consequences of the 27F, remained therein.



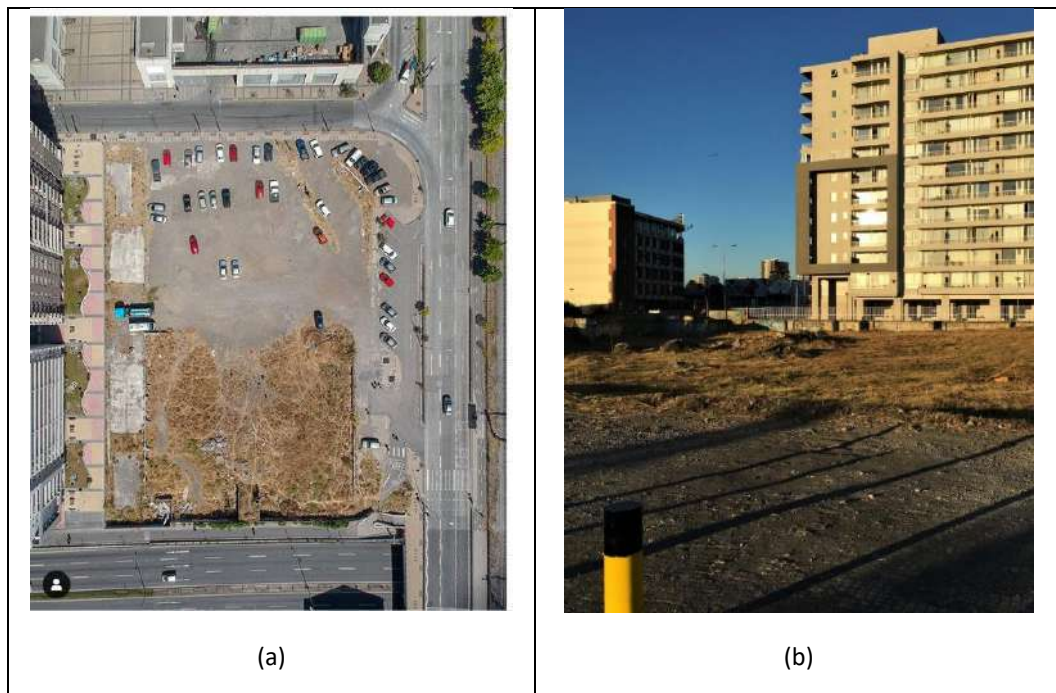
**FIGURE 3: Two settings of the 'symbolic rubble': in the centre of Concepcion in 2013 (a) and in the backyard of the Natural History Museum in 2019 (b) (source: proyecta memoria??? (a); author (b))**

Another important and critical practice is the 27F commemoration, as the one mentioned in the introduction. There, the survivors are actively shifting the meanings of the Alto Rio plot and providing a context for the victims to meet and memorialise their common tragedy. But through these practices, they are also contesting some narratives of the 27F, as the “official” memorial is virtually an abandoned space. This memorial resulted from an architecture competition sponsored by the National Government. Consisting of eight towers erected for remembering the victims of the earthquake and tsunami in an area of Concepcion aimed to attract tourists, the “official” memorial has been an object of criticism from a number of victims and residents of the city.

As one informant describes, “[the official memorial] was a rapidly constructed oeuvre, within the timeframes of a government (...), but none of the communities of [27F] victims feel represented by the design of that memorial”. On the contrary, their commemoration in the Alto Rio plot arises from their own practices and experiences as disaster victims. It involves some spatial experimentation, such as the project of displaying a light to the sky. But through these initiatives, they invite a number of people to participate in their own practices of remembering while at the same time questioning wider processes of urbanisation and disaster preparation in Concepcion. Given the importance of the plot itself for prefiguring these, I now turn to this site.

## 4 The Alto Rio Plot: from Disaster Compensation to the future of Concepcion

Before the 27F, the real estate and construction companies projected another residential construction besides the Alto Rio. This land of approx. 3,000 square metres however, nowadays remains open but rarely used (Figure 4), except for the 27F commemorations. But what started as the container of a residential building in a location that attracted potential residents, turned into an active object of judicial compensation after the results of the trial. From then, the Alto Rio land plot has become an active resource for developing an alternative future for Concepcion.



**FIGURE 4: two views from the plot in 2019 (Source: Instagram user concepcionadicto (a); author (b))**

These ideas go back many years. After being cleared and emptied, the victims started to plan ahead and think ways to develop the plot, but only as a project. For example, news stories covered the current state of the plot around 2014-15 and included some of the “dreams” of the FAR members and partners. In the main local newspaper of Concepcion, an architect and director of an NGO associated to the FAR wished for constructing a “building that promotes the culture of natural disasters” (Diario El Sur Oct. 5 2014). Such project was thought to have three functions: preserving memory, promoting technical

education, and healing. “Not only is a memorial, a museum, a library, or a learning centre – but all of that combined”, explained a director of the FAR (Diario El Sur March 1 2015).

It was only after the ongoing transference of the plot to the plaintiffs of the trial that these projects started to become real plans. Up until today and through a number of difficulties, the land plot is still in process to be transferred to the part of the victims that won the trial. A logical action would be to complete the transference and sell the plot to another real estate firm, an option that some victims prefer given that they would easily distribute the amount of the selling and be compensated quickly. However, the Alto Rio community is starting to give form and developed a project consisting of not only a new residential building, but also a space for disaster memory. Thus, these victims are determined to use this plot to develop a project that includes a reflection on their experience with the 27F.

Given the aforementioned good location of the plot, a number of real estate companies were interested in the development of this site. They have settled to work with one particular firm and are developing a co-partnership with them. This firm real estate firm, according to one informant, always “tries to recover the idiosyncrasy of the neighbours”, intending to “preserve local culture and co-construct the space with the communities”. Aware of the pressure from other neighbours of Alto Rio that want to be compensated rapidly, they are establishing a particular arrangement with the firm. There, they would resell the plot to the real estate company and become co-partners or co-owners of the construction of the project. In this arrangement, if former residents that participated in the trial and own a share of the plot but do not want to be involved in this project, the real estate company could buyout their part and not become investors.

Using the plot for disaster memory and DRR education is centre-stage in this development. They realise that they could use their experience with the Alto Rio as a resource for improving the resilience of the city. Based in on-going discussions, two features of this project refer critically to predominant ways of planning in Concepcion: its potential for inclusion and the contents related to disaster risks.

First, regarding the inclusive process, the usual counterpoint is the 27F reconstruction of the government, as for them not only was rushed but also solely centred on the material recovery: the

number of houses, buildings, and streets reconstructed. On the contrary, their project might show a more “human side” of the 27F:

*“I have told the families and neighbours that we have a unique opportunity to collaborate with the architects for transferring our experience and what it meant to us [the 27F], and to be reflected in architectural concepts, so that it remains (...). That [the urban residents] see not only a piece of architectural design, but also realise that there is pain, there is suffering, but also resignification, there is strength”.*

This also mobilises a critique against the ‘official 27F memorial’, as the victims refer to their project as an “inclusion milestone” in disaster risk-related initiatives, particularly because the project “needs the verbalisation of the experience of the Alto Rio victims for creating the concepts, so that [the architects] can reflect that experience”.

And second, content-wise there is a frequent reference to the improvement of disaster preparedness, particularly for the case of earthquakes in Concepcion given its historical heritage with them. “We live in a city that has been reconstructed three times after earthquakes”, says a neighbour during a community meeting, referring to the 1835, the 1960, and the 2010 events. In that regard, they set the importance of this building for “settling the base of seismic memory” in Chile, a country that lacks such spaces.

*“We need to learn and raise a culture of memory that we do not have. And the first steps are being done by memories or landmarks related to [the violation of] Human Rights (...). And as we know we will always have emergency situations, it is necessary to create such spaces. (...) Our society needs to make some symbolic changes and to create some spaces for conversation, for dialogue... so that the next generations have another way of making city, a safest city”.*

Ultimately, the plot is thought as a heritage and landmark of the 27F. From here, they frame its potential development as a gift to the future of Concepcion, so that “the city learns that there was a building there; that there were some remorseless businessmen that built this project, an inefficient municipality that did not oversee [its construction], and that the whole city was unprepared [for the 27F]”. And finally, based on their personal stories, they mention that in the case of an emergency, “this

project would show that it is possible to cope and continue... it is not easy and we had a hard time, but we could do it”.

## 5 Conclusion

Urbanisation takes place in contexts that are material and immaterial, and in their entanglement, a number of unequally distributed risks and uncertainties emerge. How cities are transformed after a disruption mirroring such unequal patterns, is contested and not necessarily just. The history of failures of the State and the inability of victims to cope and recover from the disaster through their own networks are examples of this. The case of the Alto Rio community in many ways describes this trajectory and has similarities with other disaster victims. But their case also involves a different way of looking to the future. As argued, the based here is their struggle for finding reparatory justice and its associated spatial question: how they can use it so that city dwellers learn from their urban disaster experience.

The critical feature of the case of the former residents of Alto Rio is that their work arises from their collective engagement with governance processes towards justice. Their practices emerge from experiencing an unjust situation: the Alto Rio crumbled as a consequence of bad practices from the real estate and construction companies. Hence, they developed claims for disaster justice, particularly reparation for what they experienced. But their work also mobilises ideas towards more inclusive ways of dealing with risks for their urban collective. The role of the plot here particularly important, shifting from an object of justice retribution into a resource for rethinking a more resilient urban future. In that sense, this community's agency shows the entanglement between disaster justice and alternative urban development paths, as they delineate the production of urban space in different ways for reshaping the future of Concepcion.

Their projects are not necessarily counter-hegemonic plans in the sense of intending to disrupt the flow of capital; but some of the current and potential practices could shift urbanisation processes. The ability of victims to put disaster risk management centre-stage in their initiatives and plans, involve a reflection

on different forms of city-making – either through educating residents, improving regulations, increasing the quality of norm enforcement, and so on. But beyond these structural changes, there is the issue a reparation and solidarity narrative, which ultimately refer to changes in urban culture. Whereas before the 27F the Alto Rio residents hardly knew each other, disaster recovery turned them into a community. Their projects associated to the plot are persistently thought as a gift to the city, as a way of giving something back: “this should not be repeated again”, and “no one has to go through this again” are frequent discourses; in the event of something happening, “we want you to know how to react”; and if you are negatively impacted, “our testimony shows that you can stand up again”. Given the impacts of the 27F, this is truly an alternative development for Concepcion.

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## 3A-1.3: The Politics of Urban Development

**Chair:** Dr Barbara Lipietz, Associate Professor, The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL

Manuscript not available

**Comparing London: what is 'normal' about developer interactions?**

Dr Frances Brill, Research Fellow, The Bartlett School of Planning, UCL

Manuscript not available

**An urbanized state in waiting: discourse, practice and territory in times of crisis**

Dr Diego Garcia-Mejuto, Lecturer, Newcastle University

Manuscript not available

**Unpacking the politics of city making in post-revolution Iran—the case of Tehran**

Azadeh Mashayekhi, Teaching Fellow, The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL

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**From Tahrir Square to New Cairo: The American University in Cairo's drawn out dreams of a suburban desert campus**

Danya Al-Saleh, PhD candidate, University of Wisconsin-Madison

**Title:** From Tahrir to New Cairo: The American University in Cairo's Geographical Imagination of a Suburban Desert Campus

**Authors:** Danya Al-Saleh and Mohammed Rafi Arefin

**Presenter:** Danya Al-Saleh

## INTRODUCTION

The American University in Cairo (AUC) became one of the largest landowners in New Cairo when it moved from its downtown Tahrir campus in 2008. At the time, New Cairo was a yet-to-be completed satellite city, advertised as a future location for luxury housing, golf clubs, and malls. New Cairo is yet another addition to the many developments that have emerged on the outskirts of Cairo over the course of twentieth century. While each new project comes with similar promises of alleviating issues of density, traffic, and pollution, they often produce elite enclaves which further entrench patterns of urban inequality. Critical urban planners and scholars have primarily located blame for this pattern of urban development on the government, real estate developers, and the military within the broader context of 1990s neoliberal land reform. In this paper, we argue that private universities, particularly AUC, have played a prominent role in shaping Cairo's urban development.

When AUC moved to the center of New Cairo, the university branded its campus "a city for learning." AUC's plans to "influence the nature of the surrounding community"<sup>1</sup> spanned from architectural design to the production of environmentally-conscious Egyptian citizens. In fact, the logistics that enabled much of New Cairo's development were first implemented at AUC.

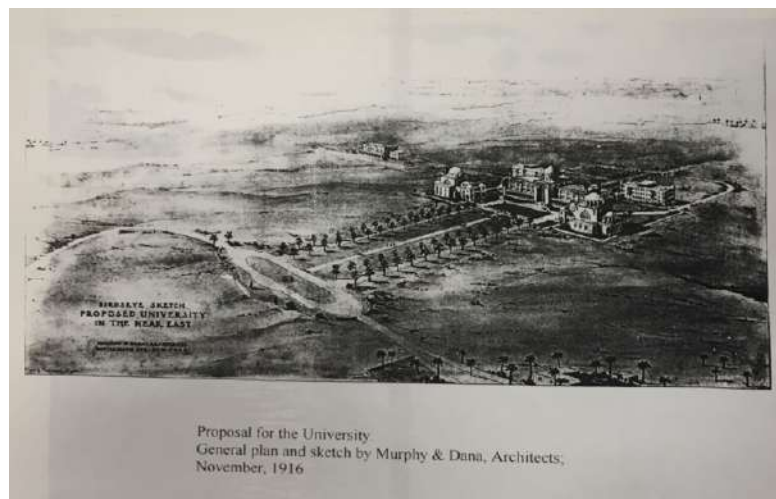
The possibility for AUC to purchase 260-acres of land was unprecedented in the university's history, contingent upon a concurrent set of neoliberal reforms of Egypt's public desert lands and higher education that began during the 1990s. While these reforms made it possible for AUC to create

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<sup>1</sup> "Preliminary and partial list of planning assumptions of the new campus," Box 1, The American University in Cairo Rare Books and Special Collections Library, University Archives, Campus and Buildings.

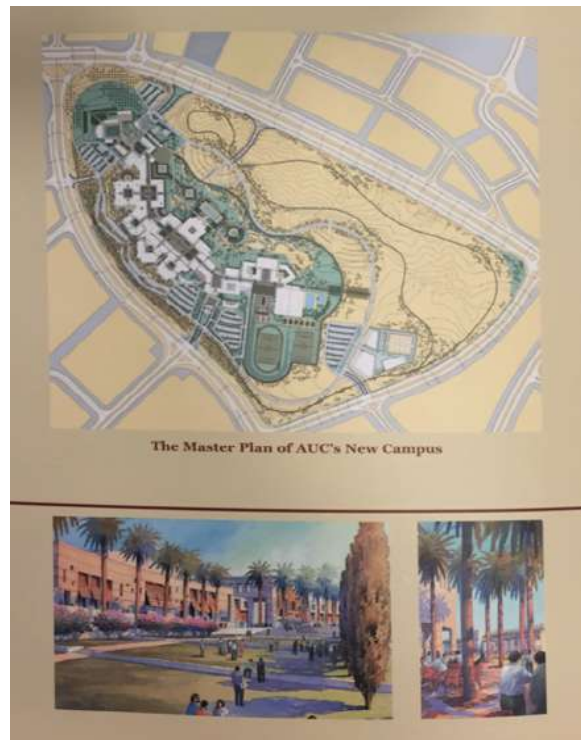
a new role for itself in Cairo's development, we argue that these relatively recent events are expressions of long-standing aspirations regarding AUC's relationship to land. Prior to becoming the largest landowner in New Cairo, AUC was a prominent landholder in downtown Cairo, Giza, and Gezira Island, provoking a board member in 1956 to warn: "our staff in Cairo is employed to conduct an educational undertaking, not to open a real estate business."<sup>2</sup> Since AUC was established, accumulating land as a storage of wealth has been central to the university's strategy. This strategy was intertwined with AUC board members' founding vision of an isolated suburban campus. In fact, the history of AUC is marked with failed attempts to expand into Cairo's outskirts.

Below are three proposed designs, produced in 1916, 1944, and 2005, for an AUC campus. Although the first two plans never materialized, they share much in common with AUC's New Cairo campus. In 1916, 1944, and 2005, the AUC board of trustees emphasized similar benefits of a suburban location for the university: the ability to more easily control the campus' student population and model how Egypt's desert land should be developed.



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<sup>2</sup> Box 2, AUC University Archive.



In this paper, we argue that AUC's historic relationship to land is critical to understanding the university's more recent role as a 'city for learning' in Cairo's neoliberal urbanization. Beginning in 1916, we uncover two dynamics underpinning AUC's relationship to urban and suburban land in Cairo. First, AUC approached the acquisition of large tracts of suburban land for a desert campus as

central to achieving its educational mission to shape the development of desert land in Egypt. Second, AUC approached the accumulation of both urban and suburban land as an investment strategy to ensure its long-term presence as the only private, foreign university in Egypt until 2002. In this talk, I will focus on the first dynamic—the historic relationship between suburban desert land and AUC’s educational mission. Our historical tracing reveals that AUC’s ambition to marshal its land holdings for the production of knowledge about desert land precedes, and more importantly prefigures, neoliberal urban development in New Cairo. By focusing on these continuities in AUC’s historical relationship to land in Cairo, we make broader contributions to theorizing the role of universities in neoliberal urban development in the global South.

### **The 1916 Plan**

From the beginning, AUC envisioned itself as a suburban educational institution—a geographical imagination which would shape the university’s mission far into the future. This geographical imagination positioned the acquisition of suburban land as a critical mechanism for AUC to control its educational environment and influence land-use.

Although AUC was founded in 1919, planning began in 1914, when the idea was first proposed among a group of American Protestant missionaries in NYC. At this meeting, a suburban campus site was declared integral: “it is pointed out that the university is conceived as a boarding institution, hence better isolated; also large enough to command its own water, light, drainage, and transportation.”<sup>3</sup> This geographical imaginary, visualized in the 1916 sketch, linked the educational mission of the university to its location and command over land—the campus, the students, and its surrounding community.

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<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

The board attempted to secure property on the edges of the city. However, limited by funds and restricted by land prices, AUC's initially grandiose vision of a suburban desert campus for their "University in the Near East"<sup>4</sup> was deferred. In 1919, AUC was finally able to realize a land deal in downtown Cairo. Instead of constructing its own campus, AUC established itself in downtown Cairo.

### The 1944 Plan

Yet, the imagination of a suburban campus persisted. The board continued to search for a suburban site. For them, a suburban campus was necessary for controlling "the spirit and atmosphere of the college,"<sup>5</sup> ensuring physical space for future expansion, and establishing an extension school for agriculture. For nearly three decades, starting in 1925, AUC trustees worked to purchase land near the pyramids. With growing prestige as a university for Egypt's elite, AUC would once again, in 1944, produce a plan for a suburban campus—a geographical imagination which intimately entwined AUC's educational mission, land, and Cairo's urban politic.

In a memorandum about the development of the university's Pyramid Road site, AUC's founder, W. Wendell Cleland, wrote specifically about building community around a future campus:

we have an opportunity to build not only a college and secondary school, but also to be the center of a complete community of high quality which will be so associated with the University so as to give us the opportunity to influence lives all the way from Kindergarten age to adulthood. Such a system could well have its own food production and distribution system, its own medical services, educational institutions, recreational, social, and religious functions....and would be an outstanding demonstration throughout the Near East of a happy and efficient living-together. *And it would grow a community which might imitate it in other ways, and so create a sphere of influence much wider in extent than the area owned by it.*<sup>6</sup>

In his formulation of community building, Cleland envisioned a "sphere of influence" dependent on AUC's land holdings. Through control over land, AUC would be able become an educational project that extended beyond the time-span of a university education.

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<sup>4</sup> This is the title of the 1916 plan.

<sup>5</sup> "Arguments for College Buildings on Suburban Site of The American University in Cairo," AUC University Archives.

<sup>6</sup> "Memorandum on the Development of the Giza Site, Jan 12 1945," AUC University Archives.

In addition to linking a suburban site to the shaping of community, AUC understood desert land to be uniquely tied to the production of specific forms of knowledge. One of the major justifications for developing the 1944 campus was the idea of an agricultural extension school. In a memorandum about the future campus, the first item in the report was “the conservation of the land.” Explaining that although the “chief resource in Egypt is arable land,” Egyptians, particularly the upper class, “are very wasteful of it,” Cleland wrote:

90% of Egypt’s production comes from agriculture, but the number of people to be fed and supported by the agricultural products increases much more rapidly than the productive land. ...no one seems to show the remotest concern over this development, and while some other countries are appointing commissions on the utilization of their lands, Egypt blandly ignores the question.<sup>7</sup>

Arguing that the Egyptian ruling class were not managing this problem properly, Cleland proposed that campus land be used for cultivation, both to feed the AUC community and provide an example to students, residents, and wider Egyptian society. By 1949, the Pyramid Road campus—deemed impractical due to an annual deficit that amounted to nearly half the university’s total budget—was abandoned completely.

### **The 2005 Plan**

The New Cairo campus, while certainly impossible without Egypt’s neoliberal land reform, was built in such a way to realize the university’s long-standing mission to serve as a model for desert land use in Egypt. We explore this through AUC’s Desert Development Center (DDC), an institution that was originally founded in 1979 to influence agricultural practices in Egypt. With AUC’s move to New Cairo, the DDC transformed in line with the university’s long-standing geographical imagination to shape the community living around the campus.

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<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

In AUC's plans for the New Cairo campus, the university was described as laboratory for the study of desert development. After AUC acquired its New Cairo land, university leadership declared that "the new campus should also provide a model for Egypt of the best practices in energy management, waste management, and environmentally-friendly architectural design" (ibid). Once AUC moved to New Cairo, the university's curricular focus and research agendas shifted to support urban desert development. The knowledge produced by the campus about urban desert development has been shared with private developers and public authorities.

While the AUC's contemporary vision of community is different from the 1916 and 1944 plans, the institution maintained its interest in marshaling land to influence its surroundings. One of the primary links between 1916, 1944, and 2005 is the idea that a suburban campus, perceived to be "empty" of community, would offer the university an opportunity to build a community from scratch. A model community—whether it was an agriculturally efficient community in 1944 or a green sustainable community in New Cairo—would serve as key site for the production of knowledge about how Egypt's lands should be used. With AUC's long-anticipated move to an undeveloped suburban site, the university was suddenly able to undertake the forms of knowledge production about land that university leadership had envisioned for itself since the idea of a suburban campus was first proposed.

While AUC had not been able to influence desert land use through its Tahrir campus, the institution began to officially work on desert development with the establishment of the Desert Development Center (DDC) in 1979. Due to the government's strategic interest in desert development under Sadat, the Ministry of Land Reclamation donated land in Sadat City and later leased land in South Tahrir for what became the DDC's two working farm sites.<sup>8</sup> During its first two decades, the DDC was focused on various environmental, social, and economic dimensions of desert

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<sup>8</sup> "Transcript of oral history interview conducted with Adli Bishay on December 19, 2005," AUC University Archives.



development, with a primary focus on desert agriculture and architecture for rural desert farms and communities.<sup>9</sup>

With the construction of the New Cairo campus, the DDC became involved in AUC's project of building "a city for learning." Up until the move, the DDC was self-funded through the sale of produce from its experimental farm in Sadat City. However, when Sadat City lease expired in 2009, the DDC lost the land.<sup>10</sup> The loss of the Sadat City farm coincided with the DDC's strategic renaming to RISE—The Research Institute for a Sustainable Environment. While the shift from DDC to RISE reflects the loss of its farm-site, DDC's transformation must also be understood in relation to shifts in the meanings of desert development in Cairo, and Egypt more broadly. A member of DDC, now called RISE, explained: "And of course, you know, 'Desert Development Center', we had to work in the desert...I think the [AUC] President said that the name was too limited. So RISE gives us the opportunity to work anywhere in Egypt, or even beyond. It doesn't have to be in the desert anymore."

<sup>11</sup> While this allowed the DDC to take up the general cause of 'sustainable desert environments' in urban contexts, this also enabled the center to turn to AUC's campus development as a source of funding. For instance, the DDC was involved, in the new campus construction by growing the campus' shade—a total of 6,970 trees that require individual irrigation.<sup>12</sup>

The DDC's new engagement with AUC and the New Cairo community quickly extended beyond this. The center, previously uninvolved in campus life, began to utilize its research as tools to teach students about "sustainability" in their New Cairo campus. A member of DDC explained the strategy behind the institute's involvement in AUC curriculum:

In South Tahrir you would be training farmers. Here you are training...AUC students... But we have to market it in a completely different way. We have added a whole series of new sources, like solar energy, how to run a sustainable office, hydroponics is new, you know some

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<sup>9</sup> "Desert Development Center," AUC University Archives

<sup>10</sup> Interview, April 2016.

<sup>11</sup> Interview April 2016.

<sup>12</sup> Interview April 2016.

kind of topics that would interest an urban audience too...so we had to change... I mean we were going to die otherwise.<sup>13</sup>

However, the role of DDC/RISE in promoting this particular discourse of desert development was not merely limited to the campus community. The interactions between the campus and the city was institutionalized in urban governance. With AUC employees sitting on the city board,<sup>14</sup> the university had direct influence over the construction of the city. In fact, developers from other New Cairo projects visited the AUC campus in order to learn about sustainability (Al-Saleh and Arefin 2011). Furthermore, AUC representatives have called its landscaping technologies an intervention in ‘Egyptian culture,’ representing a radical shift in how Egyptians interact with their physical environment. While RISE does not necessarily envision their campus-focused projects, such as recycling initiatives, to entail radical interventions in ‘Egyptian culture,’ the center has, over the past decade, strategically integrated itself into the university’s self-promotion as a force of environmentally sustainable practices in Egypt.

### **Conclusion:**

AUC’s New Cairo campus was an accomplishment one-hundred years in the making. AUC has maintained a distinct orientation to land as a commodity closely linked to the university’s realization of its educational mission, originating in 1916 with the first plan for an isolated suburban, desert campus. This educational mission aimed to use a large isolated suburban campus to control the education of AUC’s elite student body, shape an embryonic community surrounding the campus, and model how desert land should be developed. Attempts to achieve this educational mission, in turn, structured the university’s approach to land in Egypt as a distinct investment strategy. Land has been central to AUC’s educational mission to cultivate community culture neighboring the university.

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<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> The city council is made up of forty members, representing both private and public interests.

## 3A-2.1: Designing Urbanisms

**Chair:** Prof. Peg Rawes, Professor of Architecture and Philosophy, The Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL

**Discussant:** Dr Clare Melhuish, Director, UCL Urban Laboratory

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**Negotiating development in the fragmented metropolis: Architecture as territorial choreography in the Paris periphery**

Lara Belkind, Lecturer at Columbia University GSAPP, Paris

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**Geography and Identity—Designing for emerging cities**

Nicholas Choy, Associate, Allies and Morrison

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**Language as a construction site. Fictional geographies and urban typologies of real estate advertising**

Marija Maric, PhD candidate, Institute for the History and Theory of Architecture, ETH Zürich

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**Socio-environmental indicators and the role of the University as an anchor in the process of urban regeneration: the case of the Federal University of Southern Bahia's (Brazil) rural campus**

Prof. Joel Pereira Felipe, Visiting Research Fellow, UCL Urban Laboratory

## AT THE FRONTIERS OF THE URBAN, UCL 2019

### Session 3A-2.1 Designing Urbanisms

#### **Negotiating development in the fragmented metropolis: Architecture as territorial choreography in the Paris periphery**

Lara Belkind, Harvard University

This research explores urban innovation in moments of institutional transition – focusing on migrant neighborhoods on the metropolitan periphery of Paris. As postwar technocratic regional planning institutions have been dismantled and slowly replaced with institutions promoting a neoliberal approach, this cycle of “creative destruction” has opened possibilities for experimentation in the interim. Here, architectural practice in particular, engaged with implementing new transport infrastructure, has emerged as a form of negotiated governance and planning.

Architecture can be a potent strategy to negotiate development in a complex global city-region. While on one hand, design may be used as a political tool to promote a state-driven global city economic development agenda, on the other, architects can help leverage this agenda to coordinate bottom-up regional planning processes, foregrounding local development priorities and coaxing collective action from conflicting urban actors.

The Grand Paris Express rapid regional rail project, which followed the 2007 Grand Paris international design consultation, reveals new tactics required in a fractured metropolis whose functions and governance have been dispersed (ceded to private capital and local authorities), whose boundaries are in flux, and which the state neither has the resources nor authority to control. Rather than prescriptive visions, consulting teams of designers and social scientists formulated systems-based strategies to confront metropolitan complexity. Such approaches are now being tested locally as architects engage territorial plans anticipating 68 new stations of the Grand Paris Express.

One illustration is the Est Seine-Saint-Denis (territorial development planning) process, coordinated by LIN architects, which included Clichy-sous-Bois, an epicenter of 2005 social unrest in the Paris *banlieues*. It also included neighboring Montfermeil, whose conservative mayor was elected on an anti-immigration platform. Here, architects mediated consensus and grafted a local enterprise and landscape framework onto a state-proposed rail link to Charles de Gaulle international airport.

#### ***The Negotiated Urbanism of Grand Paris Express***

In the fragmented context of Paris’s metropolitan and regional politics, the Grand Pari(s) design consultation and territorial planning around the Grand Paris Express, a major new orbital line, demonstrate that architecture and infrastructure have become forms of emergent governance and negotiated urbanism.

Although the Grand Pari(s) design consultation can be interpreted as a strategy through which the state regained control of the metropolitan narrative, this does not signal a return to the centralized planning of the 1960s. Instead, it makes apparent new political strategies required to operate in the fragmented, pluralist context of a complex metropolis.

The evolution of the Grand Paris Express proposal for a rapid regional rail network has revealed several aspects of the shifting politics of infrastructure. First, the initial conflict between the state and the region's visions for the project highlighted contrasting narratives of spatial mobility – social equity versus economic growth – underlying this conflict.

Second, in the midst of this debate, the state instrumentalised architects to more effectively promote its economic development agenda for Grand Paris Express. France's mayors and presidents have long employed architecture as a tool of urban politics, but the political role for architecture is changing as Paris is reframed as a networked, polycentric metropolis. This reframing is in part aspirational – the multipolar city has become an economic development paradigm for achieving global competitiveness. Under globalization pressures, decentralization policies and the reorientation of national planning towards competitiveness rather than spatial fairness, the governance of greater Paris has become fragmented and exceedingly complex. Meanwhile, the infrastructure that enables this complex metropolis is increasingly a focal point of its conflicts. In this particularly challenging metropolitan context, the media role played by architecture is key to shaping public opinion and directing urban development.

### ***The Global City versus the Just City***

Paris has faced a conundrum. In the abstract, the city is confronting discourses of decline and fears it may be losing rank in a global hierarchy of cities. It also faces more concrete signs of trouble: the slowing of economic growth compared to other French regions, a housing shortage, a strained transport system, high unemployment and growing social inequality (Chemetov and Gilli 2006; Gilli and Offner 2009). Ostensibly to address these concerns about Paris's future, former President Sarkozy initiated the sweeping Grand Pari(s) design and planning consultation in 2007, of which the results were exhibited to the public for seven months in 2009.

Coming somewhat as a surprise at his inauguration of this exhibition, Sarkozy announced a plan for a regional rail network and multipolar development scheme that had quietly been formulated under the direction of his *secrétaire d'État* (junior minister) for the development of the capital region, Christian Blanc, while the design consultation was in progress. This scheme, dubbed "Le Grand Huit", was in stark contrast to the existing Arc Express rail proposal being advanced by the regional council and STIF, the metropolitan transportation authority.

Whereas the state's proposal aimed to enhance Paris's position as a global economic center and to catalyze new real-estate development, the region's scheme was committed to connecting communities isolated by inadequate public transport. This included areas of the north-east, where geographic stigmatization emerged as a central theme in 2005. Physical mobility and the right to equal transportation access were central to this discussion. They are essential to reaching employment, training and other opportunities in an increasingly fluid metropolis. Indeed, physical mobility is directly linked to social mobility, particularly in a context where jobs have become transitory and regionally dispersed. Eric Le Breton, for example, has documented the "dual fragmentation of work and territory" in the Paris region (Le Breton 2005).

### ***Design as Politics: from Grands Projets to Grand Pari(s)***

The fundamental transformation of the city into a fluid and decentralized territory is not only shaping urbanization patterns and mobility conflicts but also radically altering how design is instrumentalised in metropolitan politics. It is changing the way that politicians and other urban actors deploy architects in political maneuvers, and also how architects themselves approach metropolitan projects.

Within the fragmented political context of the Paris agglomeration, architecture is playing a strategic role in helping politicians and other stakeholders (such as the region's transit authorities) create media interest and build public support for their proposed approach, even without control of institutional mechanisms necessary to implement it. For example, the Grand Pari(s) design consultation and exhibition allowed the state to gain control of the narrative about greater Paris's future, despite the fact that real institutional power had largely been transferred to regional and local authorities under decentralization policies first initiated in 1982. This strategic role of architecture marks a shift away from its more symbolic function in politics – for example, during the era of President François Mitterrand's *Grands Projets*, when both Mitterrand and Jacques Chirac, then Mayor of Paris, deployed architectural symbols in the struggle between socialists and neo-Gaullists to control national politics.

### ***From Architecture to Infrastructure***

Also of interest is how the networked complexity of Greater Paris has influenced the work of the Grand Pari(s) architecture teams themselves. Architect Lars Lerup, for one, believes that, in addressing a metropolitan context, “architecture as a static enterprise has been displaced by architecture as a form of software” – where systems thinking has taken primacy over the urban object (Lerup 2000). Stephen Graham surveys the work and writings of contemporary architectural theorists and concludes that, in the contemporary city, flows, infrastructure, architecture, and landscape are now considered together by designers as a single complex or field in which to intervene (Graham and Marvin 2001).

Most of the Grand Pari(s) architects did indeed opt to study urban systems and infrastructure rather than buildings, but approached these systems very differently. First, the team led by British architect Richard Rogers offered a techno-utopian vision of Paris's green future with the transformation of the city's major rail corridors into a self-contained armature of the sustainable city. Antoine Grumbach was also interested in territorial-scale armature, reading the existing landscape of the Seine River Basin as an infrastructural system jointly engineered by man and nature. Other architectural teams similarly read the city as a complex system. Their objective was to study the internal rules of this system in order to appropriate them and intervene. The Nouvel–Duthilleul partnership, for instance, devised an elegant solution of extreme pragmatism: a micro-weaving of the region's existing rail lines and a unified ticket for a merged metro, commuter rail and TGV system that could reduce all trips across Paris to a half-hour or less.

Closely related was a parallel interest in the emergent metropolis – the city as a set of fragments and situations, unique or typological, with the seeds of a larger metropolitan order contained within them – a sort of metropolitan “DNA” that directs a self-organizing larger whole. The AUC team, for example, refused what Michel de Certeau would term a “strategic” representation of Greater Paris in its entirety, but depicted it rather as a matrix – an accumulated series of “tactics” and micro-situations. Similarly, viewing the metropolis as a vast aggregate of local negotiations between specific conditions were Studio LIN, as well as Secchi and Vigano.

### ***The Negotiated Network***

From its inception, Grand Paris Express embodied a very different approach to regional planning from the RER and the *villes nouvelles*, realized during France's most technocratic era. First, the outlines of the early Grand Huit traced a set of political deals struck by the *secrétaire d'État* and regional mayors – a map of politics more than of engineering. Its next phase incorporated the vast Débat Public, which coaxed a negotiation between the state and the region. Feeling pressure from

the debate's exposure of a political impasse between the *secrétaire d'État* and the regional council, they arrived at a compromise and issued a new plan.

Perhaps the most significant innovation in the process was the creation of the *contrat de développement territorial* (CDT) mechanism which, in effect, locally distributed development responsibility. The CDTs invited local authorities and private-sector partners to self-organize and collectively propose urban development plans along the proposed Grand Paris Express route. A younger generation of architects shepherding these contractual territorial plans has had to invent new modes in which to operate and to cultivate consensus. Storytelling and narratives, humour, mediation, network analysis, and open-ended "choreography" are some of these approaches.

Although in an experimental stage, the CDTs also created an opening for what Science Technology and Society (STS) scholars Olivier Coutard and Simon Guy describe as a "politics of hope" – or the possibility that new infrastructure networks may incorporate micro-struggles into urban planning processes, helping to combat systemic inequalities (Coutard and Guy 2007). Other theorists, including Dominique Lorrain and Paul Kantor, assert that infrastructure projects engender indirect forms of governance in large, highly fragmented urban agglomerations both by shaping space and by offering an opportunity easily recognized as extraordinary (Kanton *et al.* 2012; Lorrain 2011; Le Galès and Lorrain 2003). Finally, Bruno Latour deploys actor-network theory to describe how objects themselves – such as infrastructure proposals and new technologies – become powerful actors in processes of metropolitan democracy, yet must respond to local political cultures to be successful (Latour 1996, 2005).

In the context of greater Paris, the Grand Paris Express proposal is indeed an actor – an agent that is inducing negotiation between disparate parties in a complex and multilayered metropolis. A proposed new network, a "super metro" recognized as a singular opportunity, is coaxing an incremental plan for the metropolis that is developing piece by piece, negotiation by negotiation.

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UCL Urban Laboratory

*At the frontiers of the urban: Thinking concepts and practices globally*

## **Geography and identity: Designing for and learning from emerging cities**

Nicholas Choy, Associate, Allies and Morrison

M.Arch, PhD

### **1. Introduction**

The design and development of cities is a peculiar business in contemporary times, involving complex interactions between professions, government agencies, and private interests, often drawing upon people and resources from around the world. At the international level, urban masterplanning and design commissions come along with new problematizations of geography and identity, where work is secured through international design competitions or contracted across numerous political, economic and cultural boundaries.

Whereas urban settlements of the past were more tightly wedded to their geographic circumstances (for instance the availability of a water supply, access to trade routes or the defensibility of a site), the flows of resources and capital today have loosened that relationship. Cities are built with experts and labourers recruited from home and abroad, intermingling their professional protocols, construction techniques, personal experiences, and social cultures resulting in newly hybrid conditions. Moreover, the timescale of urban development has been compressed, now expressed in project schedules and strategic plans measured in years and months, rather than the slower pace of natural growth measured in generations. The temporal contraction has resulted in the phenomenon of instant cities (or at least images of them) produced and consumed at the speed of fashion.

These contemporary conditions can lead to a crisis of identity in new cities, a sense of placelessness that can disorient and alienate those who live within them. Newly built environments can be technically competent, meeting the material needs of its inhabitants, whilst failing to deliver social and symbolic values that normally come from the history or the geography of a place. Contemporary mechanisms of urban development contain discontinuities of time, space and social agency that perpetuate the symptoms of placelessness.

This paper explores the challenges to “placemaking” – the creation of meaningful, vibrant and successful places – as experienced by Allies and Morrison in three projects situated in and near the Arabian peninsula, during the period of 2006 - 2016. As practice-based research, the empirical materials underlying this paper have been gathered in a commercial context, and as such do not benefit from the critical distance that purely academic studies might enjoy. But what value that is missing from curatorial control will hopefully be compensated for by insight and access to the coal-face of production, as well as the inductive process of arriving at theoretical ideas from live projects.

### **2. Case studies**

The three case study projects examined in this paper are **District //S** in Beirut, Lebanon, **Msheireb** in Doha, Qatar, and **Madinat Al Irfan** near Muscat, Oman (see Figure 1- map of cases). Though they are broadly located in the same region of the world, explore common themes of urban development, and are part of the recent works of Allies and Morrison, closer inspection reveals significant differences.



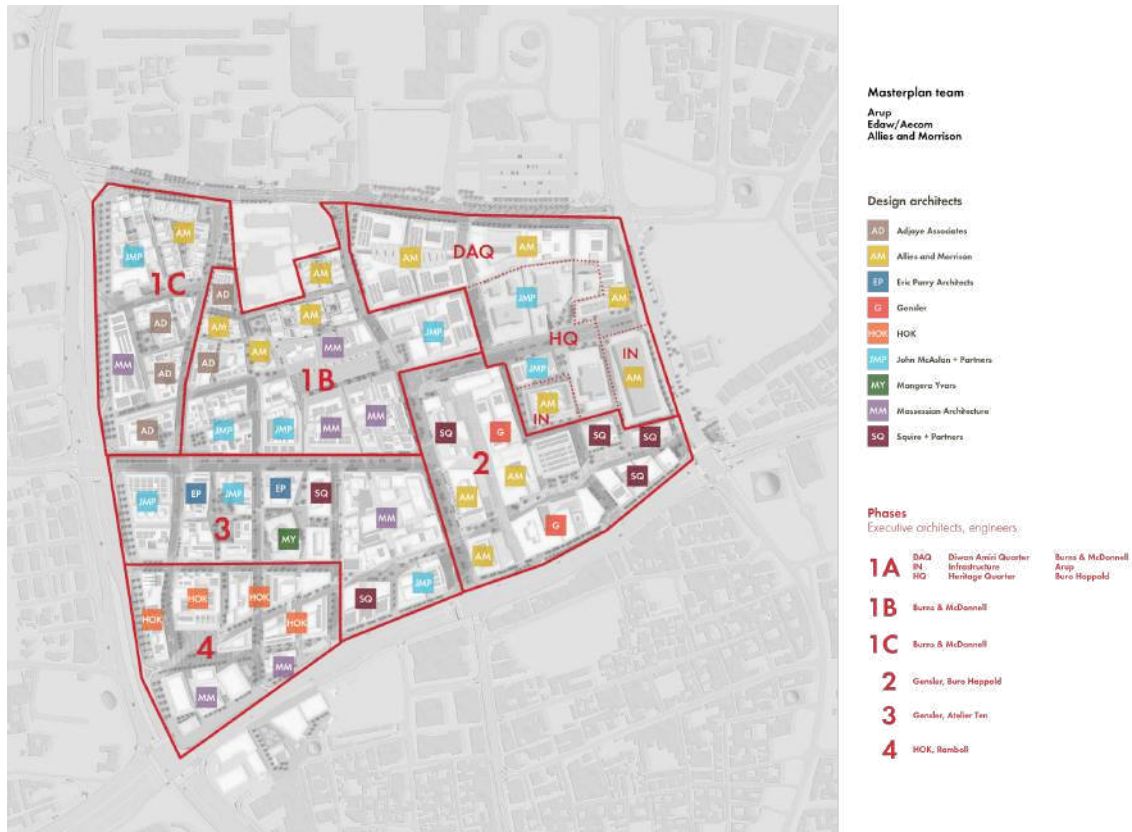
**Figure 1. Project locations. Image: Google Earth**

Most prominent is the diversity of scale between the projects, each which differ by an order of magnitude. At 4.2 ha of land, the smallest is District //S, comprised of 22 buildings designed by Allies and Morrison and currently under construction. It is made up of 109 residential apartments ranging from 150 sqm to 600 sqm, with a mix of retail uses at the ground level (see Figure 2- image of District //S). Msheireb is a development of 35 ha covering the historical commercial centre of Doha, Qatar, containing 103 buildings, collaboratively masterplanned by 3 firms and designed by 9 architecture practices. Comprised of commercial, residential, religious and government buildings including the national archives, the construction of this district is largely complete (see Figure 2- image of Msheireb). Madinat Al Irfan is a masterplan vision for an area of 624 ha in Oman, comprised of over 2000 buildings to serve a future population of 280,000. Various phases of this development are in early gestation and coming forward as joint ventures between Omran and private developers (see Figure 3- image of Irfan).



**Figure 2. District //S, Beirut, Lebanon**

Although all three projects are located within the 'Middle East,' the marked differences in their social, political, and economic contexts<sup>1</sup> should preclude us from lumping them into a single mental category. In the heart of the Levant, Beirut, Lebanon faces the Mediterranean and is home to a nearly equal split of Muslims and Christians. Of the three case studies, the label "emerging city" describes Beirut least accurately, as human settlement has been present on site for more than five millennia. Rather, the 'emergence' of development at District //S has been instigated by the aftermath of the Lebanese Civil War that ended in 1990.



**Figure 3. Msheireb Downtown Doha, Qatar**

The other two case studies are situated along the eastern edge of the Arabian Peninsula, Doha in the Persian Gulf and Madinat Al Irfan in the Gulf of Oman. Despite their proximity, the two countries differ in the schools of Islam that dominate, Qatar being predominantly Sunni Muslim and Oman is home to the smaller but older Ibadi denomination. Such alignments position them differently within the religious landscape of the Gulf States, and must be considered by foreign consultants whenever making propositions on sensitive matters such as identity or placemaking.

Having covered the general characteristics of the case studies, we now address the placemaking themes explored within them.

<sup>1</sup> The statistics presented in this section are taken from the CIA World Factbook. (accessed 12 Nov 2019)



**Figure 4. Madinat Al Irfan, Muscat, Oman**

### 3. Iconic architecture / the space in-between

A common characteristic of cities is the use of iconic architecture to create an identity or a symbolic representation for a place. Landmarks such as the Sydney Opera House, the Eiffel Tower, or the Palace of Westminster become synonymous for the cities which they inhabit, their image serving as a shorthand for the identity of those places. When sited judiciously, iconic buildings help establish the civic hierarchy of buildings, signalling the location of important places of assembly, exchange, and power. Where such a logic goes awry is when the city becomes an open competition, when skylines are crowded with multiple contenders for the title. Such can be the case in many emerging cities, when the flood of investment capital and compressed development timeframes create a scramble for the pinnacle.

Moreover, iconic buildings demand being in the foreground; they are designed to protrude from the field, and conceive of the surroundings negatively as margins for the feature building. This negative conception of space results in the impoverishment of the public realm, as buildings become the repository of substance and meaning, and the spaces in-between relegated to a the status of leftover artefacts. Further confusion is created when multiple icons contest for the same strip of marginal space.

The three case studies tackle the issue of iconic architecture by shifting the focus back on the public realm, the definition of the space in-between buildings. All three cases had an advantage over conventional architectural commissions by beginning as masterplanning exercises, with the opportunity to define right-of-way widths, the character of both sides of streets, and all building facades enclosing public squares. In each case means were sought to foreground space as the 'object' of design. Through the conceptualization of buildings as spatial frames ahead of their

existence as objects, and prioritising the public function of building facades, the spaces in-between buildings were materialized into a formal component of the masterplans.

#### 4. Diagrammatic urbanism / perspectival masterplanning

Another potential barrier to good placemaking is the relationship between masterplans and the conceptual diagrams that are often used to describe their organisational or functional logic. Diagrams are graphical representations of particular relationships set within an abstract field: spatial or temporal programs that can be categorised, quantified, and restructured, usually towards the objective of greater efficiency or output. Where the translation between logic and spatial design is carefully interpreted and tested, diagrams can be of great benefit to the development of masterplans. But where diagrams attain a totemic value and are directly transferred into spatial form, as if the two forms of expression are equivalent, the end results can be reductive and impoverished.

Underlying the seductive power of diagrams is the uniformity of the planar projection: there are no vanishing points in a diagram and the value of any point on a grid is equivalent to that of any other. Diagrams impart god-like capabilities to the viewer, with a theoretical focal point set at an infinite distance from the data-plane, enabling them to visually grasp a logical expression in an instant. It is similar to computer graphic images rendering masterplans from privileged helicopter viewpoints that one often finds on developer websites, hovering above the ground and viewing a scheme in its entirety.

As a counterpoint to diagrammatic urbanism, a design method used often at Allies and Morrison is what could be termed “perspectival masterplanning,” the use of physical models and digital walk-through animations to test spatial proportions, façade rhythms, townscape composition and narrative sequence in the design. In Madinat Al Irfan, every phase, settlement area and significant building site was tested through such means, and formed the basis for adjustments to development density, building heights, and open space proportions. The significant contribution of “perspectival masterplanning” is the reinstatement of human scale and time: the digital walk through as a proxy for the bodily experience of a place, and the breakdown of cities into temporal sequences, gradually revealing and concealing various townscape elements in an intuitive and comprehensible manner.

#### 5. Design monologues / design in conversation

“Can a haphazard assemblage of buildings, each conceived in isolation, and expressing nothing but its own immediate purpose, really be described as a city?” With this rhetorical question the town planner Trystan Edwards introduced his 1924 treatise *Good and Bad Manners in Architecture*. In it he diagnosed the ills of the modern city as stemming from buildings drowning each other out in a stylistic shouting match, new buildings ignoring old, and a missing sense of civic duty and decorum in architecture. Within it he also championed the average person’s experience of architecture from the street, and the importance of a building’s contribution to the public realm.

The case studies seek to take up this challenge, of creating a conversant, sociable urbanism, through a variety of means. In all three cases, history and vernacular architecture form an important dialogue partner, feeding in the material and tectonic wisdom of regional built heritage into the conversation. Embedded within this vernacular are deep understandings of

climate, culture and geography, expressed in urban massing, spatial hierarchies, construction methods, and decorative symbolism, all which can enrich contemporary developments.

A civilized development should also diversify the voices in conversation, while building up the common narrative. At Msheireb a panel of nine studios distributed their work throughout the district to avoid a design monopoly choking out any one area in uniformity, whilst collaborating on collective elements of public realm (see *Figure 5 Msheireb*). And in Madinat Al Irfan, basic elements of a common architectural language were laid out through design codes and parameter plans to support a coherent conversation well into the future.



**Figure 5. Msheireb, Doha, Qatar**

## **6. Conclusions**

Certain contemporary patterns of urban development can pose substantial barriers to good placemaking: the blinkered view of architecture as isolated objects, the self-assured clarity of diagrammatic urbanism, and the monologue of stylistically branded architecture all detract from a more holistic creation of places. In its stead, the projects presented here have reasserted the primacy of public space, a civic architectural dialogue, and the qualities of cities at the level of embodied human experience.

Though the pressures of commercial practice can challenge some of these ambitions, through concepts and methods described above we hope to deliver a more urbane built environment, one that is attendant to local history and geography, providing variety and delight.

*Nicholas joined Allies and Morrison in 2015 following the completion of his PhD at King's College London, where his research focused on urban design codes. He was instrumental in delivering the first phase of the Irfan masterplan in Oman, using his research to optimise the effectiveness of the design codes being applied there.*

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UCL Urban Laboratory

*At the Frontiers of the Urban: Thinking Concepts and Practices Globally*

**Language as a Construction Site. Fictional Geographies and Urban Typologies of Real Estate Advertising**  
(Draft)

Marija Marić

While researching on Belgrade Waterfront, a large-scale real estate development initiated in 2014 by the Serbian Government and the Abu Dhabi-based private company Eagle Hills,<sup>1</sup> a controversial project that managed to split the public and trigger wider political struggle at home, at the same time remaining completely obliterated by the global media, a question came to mind—how can a project be so loud and so silent at the same time? In order to understand better this paradox, I decided to access Belgrade Waterfront, not just from the perspective of activist groups that framed the development as a spatial and economic destruction and erasure, which it certainly was; nor only from the perspective of politicians whose populist rhetorics positioned it as a selling story of a city in the Balkans becoming part of the World; but also from the perspective often obliterated in this type of research—the distant view of Abu Dhabi developers and their real estate branding teams for whom Belgrade Waterfront was *just one* of the many similar projects they were running around the developing world.

Following from here, this paper will not examine Belgrade Waterfront as a unique case, but rather frame the mechanisms that create “Belgrade Waterfronts” of the world. Drawing from the interviews conducted with global agencies who claim their specialisation in real estate branding, as well as from the analysis of advertising materials for various large-scale real estate developments globally, this paper will focus on the role of language and branding narratives in the making of real estate projects. Is it the brand, created from a distance



and through standardised methods of real estate branding expertise, that has rendered these projects always too similar to each other, perpetuating, to a certain extent, globalisation of the built environment?

### **(Real Estate) Storytelling as Planning**

Following the 1970s and 1980s corporate restructuring and proliferation of multinational businesses, tangible assets including land, buildings and workforce gave way to the intangible assets such as company's reputation, image and role in the society. Broadly, this shift marked the emergence of brand as a new financial value, thus also paving the way to a class of new professionals claiming the skills to manage these assets—branding experts. Going beyond traditional marketing, branding grew into an industry of its own, particularising, over time, into separate, specialised branding niches, such as city, place and later, real estate branding as well. At the same time, globalisation of real estate markets and a growing pressure on urban governments worldwide to attract private investment, in what is widely known as a “neoliberal turn,” led to the creation of a competitive environment in which a well-curated brand appeared as an obligatory feature of any nation, region or city, to “go global.” With an emphasis on renewal schemes and individual real estate projects as bearers of urban development (instead of a systematic, territorial urban strategy), real estate branding evolved into an even more specific expertise within a broader scope of the place branding industry. In summary, branding agencies managed to brand themselves as a necessary component of any large-scale real estate development or developer aiming to address global audiences.

Discussing the scopes and methods of their practices, all of the interviewed branding experts emphasised “storytelling” as a central technique of real estate branding. In fact, some of them designated the 2008 economic crisis as a historical context for the proliferation of real estate storytelling, arguing that the previous industry's emphasis on the technical

aspects of properties for sale, gave way to the narrative forms and fiction. Here, a question emerged—how does this shift, from architectural objects as central features of the real estate development, towards subjects or protagonists, help in making, branding and selling real estate? As conversations further revealed, the constructed subject does not always refer to the fictional person, created for a prospective buyer to identify with, but instead, the constructed subject can also be the home for sale or the neighbourhood itself.<sup>2</sup>

Arguing that planning should be seen as a form of storytelling, James Throgmorton proposed “thinking of planners as authors who write texts (plans, analyses, articles) that may be read (conducted and interpreted) in diverse and often conflicting ways,” showing how “planners-authors have to build conflict, crisis, and resolution into their narratives, such that key antagonists are somehow changed or moved significantly.”<sup>3</sup> However, as interviews with branding experts indicated, it could be argued that the opposite also might be true: from their perspective, storytelling did not only serve to mediate what was already there—the existing architectural plans and designs, but rather appeared as a form of planning and design in its own right; construction of the project by means of language, narration, and above all, fiction.

### **Urban Imaginaries as Branded Products**

In his book *City Branding: The Ghostly Politics of Representation in Globalising Cities*, Alberto Vanolo showed how, with the crisis of the imaginary of the “industrial city” and proliferation of the technopoles and science cities during 1980s and 1990s, branding experts recognised these urban imaginaries as potential marketable products. After the decline of the technologically-inspired urban visions during the 1990s, as Vanolo suggested, “many city managers tried to get “something more” from branding.”<sup>4</sup> Soon after, “the creative city,” “the resilient city,” “the sustainable city,” and during the last decade also “the smart city,” entered urban

branding as products to be disseminated and applied to the cities across the world.

With storytelling and language becoming communication and marketing domains running in parallel with that of planning, the importance of a curated and total brand concept, followed by self-referentiality of branding industries, gradually led to the creation of not only new urban imaginaries, but of whole new fictional architectural and urban typologies. Next to the “creative,” “resilient” or “smart city,” individual urban or architectural typologies such as “waterfront regenerations” or “Live, Work and Play (LWP)” projects emerged as concepts, clearly defined in the domain of marketing, existing, however, solely at the level of branding language, detached from the actual product on the ground.

An important aspect of these “linguistic objects” is their global circulation, both as urban development models and narratives. This condition could be attributed, on one side, to the transformations of the very industries that produce those narratives. Driven by the constant pressure to establish themselves as experts and legitimise corporate spendings on marketing—branding strategists have gradually standardised their professional knowledge, eventually leading to the creation of equally standardised branding narratives for the architectural and urban projects across the world. In parallel, the 1980s transnationalisation of service-sector industries, including advertising, did not only reorganise corporate structures of marketing industry, but it also promoted “globalism” through the industry’s content production. Working across distance, real estate branding agencies have thus helped perpetuate globalisation of the collective urban imaginaries, reproducing “Belgrade Waterfronts” across the world.

On the other side, the global reach of these real estate fictions should be seen as a part of the modes of their distribution and circulation as narratives. In her essay “Print is Flat, Code is Deep,” Katherine Hayles pointed out that “literary analysis should awaken to the importance of media-specific analysis,

a mode of critical attention which recognizes that all the texts are instantiated and that the nature of the medium in which they are instantiated matters.”<sup>5</sup> Ephemeral, authorless textual objects, written in English and distributed online, the “media condition” of these real estate fictions cannot be seen in isolation from the actual real estate developments they describe. In other words, it could be argued that the “media genre” of real estate branding describes both its own content—architectural and urban projects that it sells, but also its own apparatus—the whole “mediascape”<sup>6</sup> of real estate branding. This raises a question—are the “Belgrade Waterfronts” of the world, made similar, among other reasons, also because of the standards of the genre through which they are communicated to the global audience. Or, to quote Shalini Shankar and Jullian R. Cavanaugh in their essay “Language and Materiality in Global Capitalism,”—“do aspects of language circulate in the same way that other commodities do?”<sup>7</sup> And finally, *how* do we learn about the projects that are communicated through these real estate narratives—by reading the content of their ads or by understanding the relationship between the industries that produce and distribute those narratives and the content they circulate?

With media technology rendering all of its contents, but also its own language into commodities, one could trace “the emergence of a new realm of image reality that is both fictional (narrative) and factual, and which now—like the former classical “sphere of culture”—becomes semiautonomous and floats above reality.”<sup>8</sup> Advertising narratives blur with the “spatial products” being advertised, creating spatial imaginaries of a global world with reorganised geographies, new territorial alignments, fictional cities and buildings, directly altering material reality. Discussing the phenomenon of “waterfront regeneration” as a global urban development “model,” Sue Brownill showed how “the development and mobility of “models” is therefore part of the de-territorialization and reterritorialization of “the waterfront” as a worldwide project.”<sup>9</sup> As a consequence, it is not only that the “waterfront regeneration” has become a global “model” or

urban development, but rather the global and the model-like character of this urban intervention also affected the ways waterfront regenerations are being conducted—depoliticized, they are usually designed as “elite playgrounds”<sup>10</sup> copy-pasted from city to city.

## Conclusion

Refusing the simplified “global-local” dichotomy and arguing that “global connection” and universal dreams always depend on practical, material encounters, anthropologist Anna Tsing asked—“where would one locate the global in order to study it?”<sup>11</sup> In contrast to (other) commodities, architecture (treated) as a commodity is not mobile, but rather fixed and place-bounded. Perhaps for these reasons, architecture, more than any other commodity, needs its mobile “Doppelgänger”—real estate branding narratives as a “mediascape” that circulates global urban imaginaries. Looking from this perspective, we could ask—is it possible to talk about architecture in a global context, without taking its media and industries that produce and distribute it, into consideration? And finally, could real estate advertisements be seen as unexpected history textbooks for studying globalisation of our built environment?

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<sup>1</sup> Mohamed Alabbar, the CEO of Eagle Hills is also the founder and chairman of Dubai-based Emaar Properties, one of the largest real estate developers in the world, known for their work on Burj Khalifa and Dubai Mall.

<sup>2</sup> Interview with Dianna Carr, Vice President and Storytelling at *Resonance* (Vancouver and New York), January 15, 2019.

<sup>3</sup> James A. Throgmorton, “Planning as Persuasive Storytelling in the Context of ‘the Network Society,’” *Planning Theory* 2, no. 2 (July 2003): 125–51: 2.

<sup>4</sup> Alberto Vanolo, *City Branding: The Ghostly Politics of Representation in Globalising Cities* (New York and London: Routledge, 2017): 119.

<sup>5</sup> Katherine E. Hayles, “Print Is Flat, Code Is Deep: The Importance of Media-Specific Analysis,” *Poetics Today* 25, no. 1 (2004): 67–90: 67.

<sup>6</sup> Arjun Appadurai introduced the term “mediascapes” next to “ethnoscapes,” “technoscapes,” “finanscapes,” and “ideoscapes,” to point out to the fluid landscapes of global cultural flows. See in Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” *Public Culture* 2, no. 2 (1990): 1–24: 6–7.

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<sup>7</sup> Shalini Shankar and Jillian R. Cavanaugh, "Language and Materiality in Global Capitalism," *Annual Review of Anthropology*, no. 41 (2012): 355–69: 362.

<sup>8</sup> Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London and New York: Verso, 1991): 277.

<sup>9</sup> Sue Brownill, "Just Add Water: Waterfront Regeneration as a Global Phenomenon," in *The Routledge Companion to Urban Regeneration*, ed. Michael Leary E. and John McCarthy (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 45–56: 51.

<sup>10</sup> Sue Brownill, "Just Add Water: Waterfront Regeneration as a Global Phenomenon," in *The Routledge Companion to Urban Regeneration*, ed. Michael Leary E. and John McCarthy (London and New York: Routledge, 2013), 45–56: 48.

<sup>11</sup> Anna Tsing L., *Friction. An Ethnography of Global Connection* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005).

## **Socio-environmental indicators and the role of the University as an anchor in the process of urban regeneration: the case of the Federal University of Southern Bahia's (Brazil) rural campus**

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### **Introduction**

Brazil has been experiencing a significant expansion in higher education from 2003 to 2013. The creation and extension of many universities has seen an intense growth in the interior of the country. Building work has increased from 45 federal universities in 2003 to 63 in 2010. These 18 new universities have been installed in more than 100 new campuses. (CALDERARI 2017, p. 32).

The environmental sustainability of university campuses mobilized, since the 1970s, has activated a significant number of actors who combined the issue of global warming have put pressure on universities to take responsibility to implement examples of good practice in sustainable operation. The term “Green campus” came to characterize those cases that present a set of practices aligned with sustainable development, resulting from research on the proper functioning of university spaces (inserted in cities or in isolated university cities), and created methodology for the diagnostics, proposals, management pacts, implementation of corrective or mitigating measures and monitoring the application through plans and environmental management systems.

This research analyzes the choices of the Federal University of Southern Bahia (UFSB) created in 2013. The university decided to install its campus outside the city, with an urban model based on the international style primer of the first half of the twentieth century. This analysis should help the establishment of these new universities created in Brazil in the context of higher education growth that will have repercussions in the coming decades.

### **1. Creation of UFSB (Bahia, Brazil) and sustainability.**

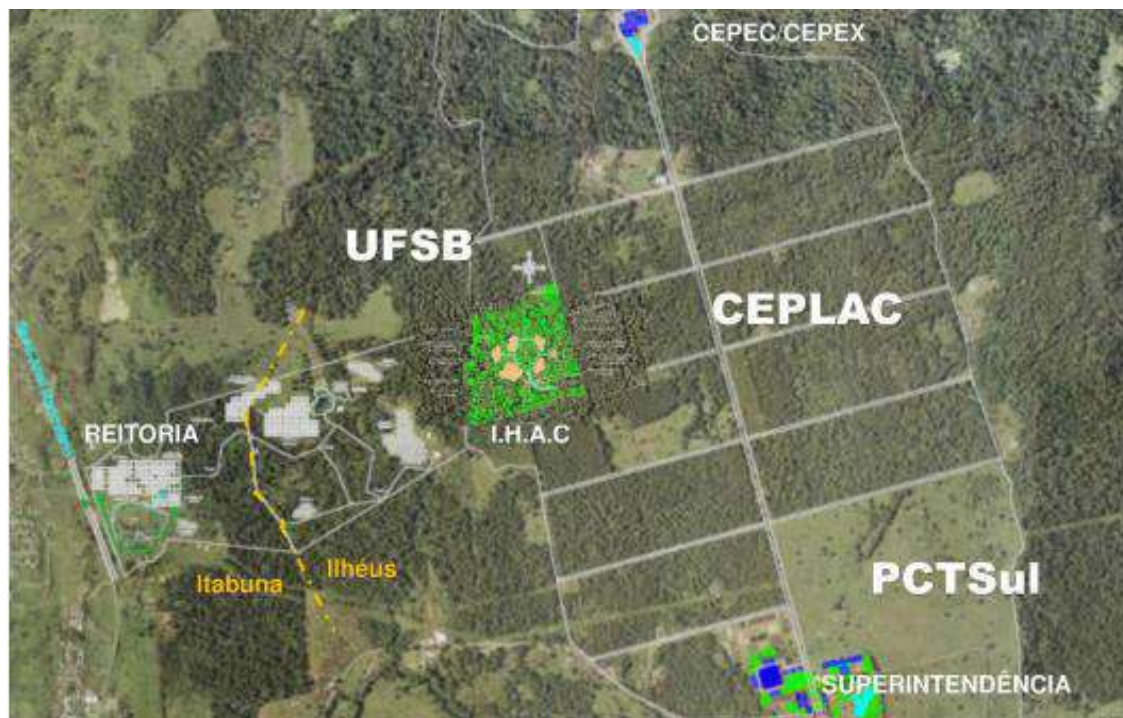
UFSB is located in northeastern Brazil characterized as one of the poorest and least developed in the country. The rectory is located in the city of Itabuna and there are two other campuses in the cities of Porto Seguro and Teixeira de Freitas. The definitive Itabuna campus is located about 2 km from the BR-415 Highway on federally owned land on the border of Itabuna and Ilhéus. The total campus area is 43.22 hectares.

Figure 1: Location of UFSB in Bahia and Brazil



Fonte: [https://www.ufsb.edu.br/images/Documentos/Relat%C3%B3rios\\_de\\_Gest%C3%A3o/Relatorio\\_Gest%C3%A3o\\_2017\\_6.pdf](https://www.ufsb.edu.br/images/Documentos/Relat%C3%B3rios_de_Gest%C3%A3o/Relatorio_Gest%C3%A3o_2017_6.pdf); [https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lista\\_de\\_mesorregi%C3%B5es\\_da\\_Bahia](https://pt.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lista_de_mesorregi%C3%B5es_da_Bahia).

Figure 2: UFSB master plan on land on the border of the cities of Itabuna and Ilhéus



Source: author's file.

UFSB has been concerned about aligning with contemporary discussions related to universities' responsibility for sustainable development in their region, as described in its Guiding Plan (UFSB, 2014) which deals with a sustainability model that criticizes the format in which universities and Brazilian companies dealing with the environmental issue. It argues that the facilities, both temporary and definitive, occupy existing buildings in already anthropized areas.

However, UFSB could not refuse to do it because it must comply with Law 7,746/2012, which requires federal government agencies to draw up Sustainable Logistics Management Plans and their implementation. As a result, this university has come up with an advanced vision for its contribution to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG

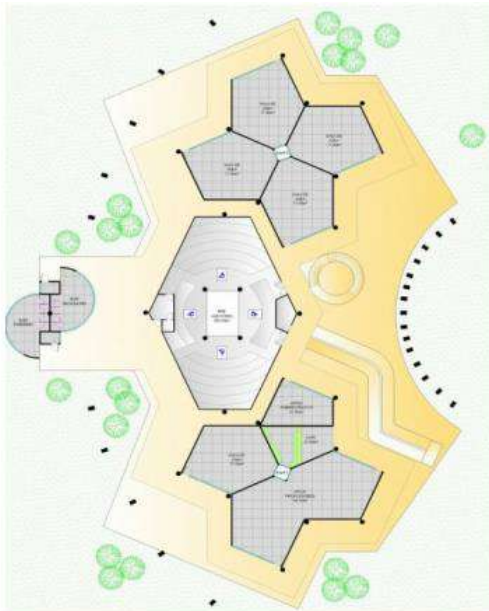


4 - Ensuring quality and equitable inclusive education, and promoting lifelong learning opportunities for all) of the Agenda 2030 in articulating education with sustainable development, has a fundamental role of Higher Education Institutions.

## 2. UFSB's architectural design and urban decisions.

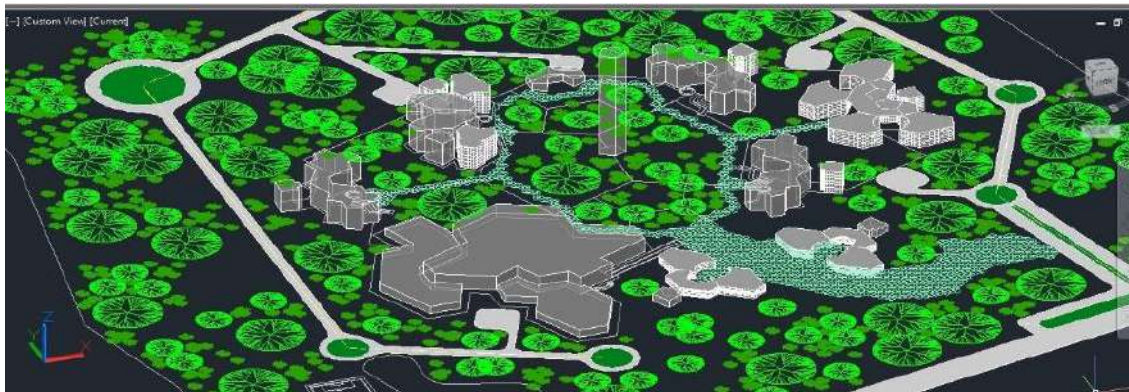
The architectural project of UFSB was defined by some symbolism and idealism: a) break with the Panopticon exemplified by Michel Foucault as the architecture “of prisons, psychiatric asylum, penitentiary, the house of correction, the establishment of guarded education, hospitals”; b) the inspiration of Waldorf educational institutions, created by Rudolf Steiner, which “is based on familiarization with nature, cultural history and activities that encourage creativity” (KOWALTOWSKI, 2011, apud KIMO, 2015, p. 4-7); and c) the Cairo Pentagon geometry used in math classes as a modulation solution, as well as the UFSB logo inspired by the flowers of Cocoa and Pau Brasil, symbolic for the region. This is present in the pentagonal modular structures according to the floor plan of the Pedagogical Block (Figures 4 to 7).

Figure 3: Floor plan of the Pedagogical Block



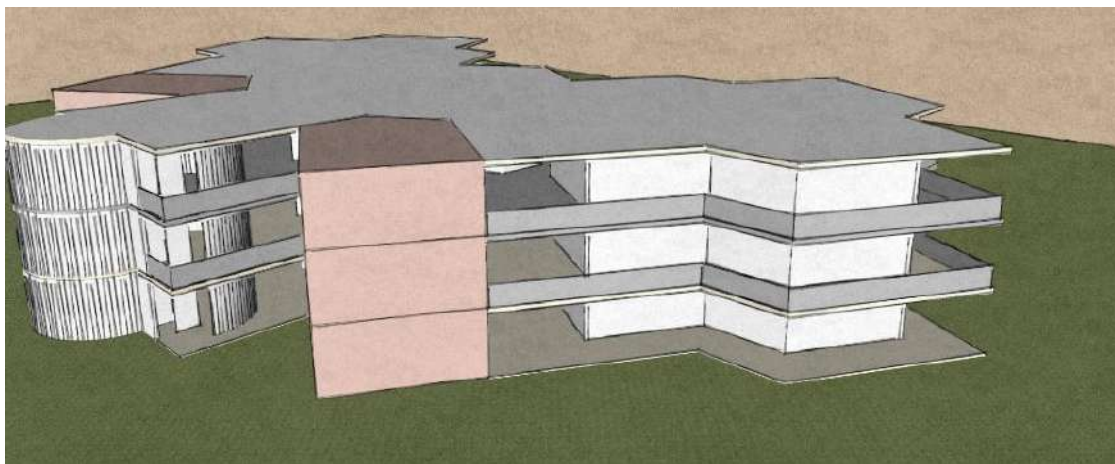
From an urbanistic point of view, Brazilian history of establishing university spaces has an immense relationship with modern architecture and urbanismo. It has had a great influence since the first half of the twentieth century, and intensified in the 2nd post-war, because the “great university cities of the twentieth century were established by bringing together isolated units into the heart of cities to a single place away from the traditional urban core, in a process of grouping schools, services and housing”, according to SEGAWA (1999, p. 39).

**Figure 4: The model of the Jorge Amado Campus in Ilhéus.**



Source: author's file.

**Figure 5: The Pedagogical Block model**



Source: author's file.

**Figure 6: The pedagogical block under construction in the Atlantic Forest (jun/16)**



Source: <http://www.blogdothame.blog.br/v1/2018/06/27/novo-campus-da-ufsb-em-itabuna-tem-73-das-obras-concluidas/>, 30 jan. 2019

### 3. Influences on the design of the new UFSB Campus in Itabuna/Ilhéus: modernism and imperialism. What to learn from this lesson?

The UFSB's decision followed current thought present in Latin America since the first half of the twentieth century, influenced by the International Congresses of Modern Architecture (CIAM), with reserved educational zone in the cities. From the 1950s onwards these ideas began to add the influence of North American consultant Rudolph Atcon (1940-1995) on the design of campuses which he will later consolidate through the 1970 “Campus Integral Planning Manual”. His professional activity in Brazil has been registered in several public agencies. (OLIVEIRA, 2019 and CALDERARI, 2018).

These conceptions are part of the military dictatorship's policy for higher education, established by Decree 63,341/1968 and Law 5540/1968, known as the University Reform, which “sets standards for the organization and functioning of higher education and its articulation with middle school”. and resulted in guidelines adopted in several Brazilian universities. This Reform defined “within each university, preference will be given to building the units of the basic system and organizing a plan to dispose of the remaining properties as long as they are vacated by the transfer of the units to campus” (MACEDO *apud* SEGAWA, 1999), therefore, units located in urban areas should be moved to campuses outside of the cities. However, the goal was also political: the convenience of moving the student movement away from cities and confining them to distant spaces meant they had less influence over the urban population, making it difficult to protest against the arbitrariness of the government.

Figure 7: The UFSB's new campus in September / 2018



Source: Image taken from Google Earth and Photo by Eng. Claudio Silva (UFSB)

Two reasons would justify centralizing courses on a single campus: economics motivation and academic integration. The first, to improve management conditions, should collect resources to finance the construction of new campuses; the second, should

enable the integration of knowledge areas, bringing together the academic community in the same place.

However, the economic motivation is weakened as the costs of building construction are not restricted to construction. Relocation to land outside the city adds infrastructure and maintenance costs in these areas over time that are higher than the costs of single units. An example of an additional cost is providing transportation to students, staff and teachers for access to new campuses. As for academic integration, it would only be effective in an academic model that would break with the disciplinary fractioning of the courses and could group and share classroom, laboratory, restaurant and meeting area structures. In the conventional model students, faculty and staff spend all their time at university without relating to their peers in other courses.

There is an ironic view that it does not matter where the university is located because one day the city will grow into a campus. This is in line with an option to isolate campuses instead of integrating them into the city while ignoring sustainability issues. The model creates an environment of excellence for the academic community and turns its back on the population, sacrificing the environment with long-lasting interventions. In the meantime, the real city lives with problems of congestion, public transportation, pollution, and the centres remain empty and unsafe.

Campuses are empty during vacation and the geographical distance from the population hinders the sharing of libraries, theaters, sports centres, restaurants and parks. The location makes it difficult to carry out research and extension activities that bring the university and the community closer. These isolated campuses cause similar oscillations to those of the peripheral housing developments: people moving during peak transport periods - in the morning to the centres and in the afternoon back home. In addition, privately owned land stocks appreciate and await the university's presence to increase land profits.

#### **4. Regeneration and studentification, what has yet to be studied.**

The research identified two themes that it intends to explore: a) in depth discussion about the implantation processes of the new Brazilian universities and their potential for urban regeneration processes; b) alert to the studentification resulting from the implementation of these new campuses.

When considering urban regeneration process it is necessary to look at alternatives such as the multipolarity of campuses, keeping them in the central areas in order to turn them into inducers of regeneration of underused and degraded historic buildings and spaces, improving urban mobility, reducing carbon footprint, contributing to improving the quality of life, generating jobs and income and reducing inequalities.

In any case, does a university campus, with everything it represents in relation to buildings, services, the population movement it causes, really have a power to transform the urban environment with quality? Can this be true and replicable in different contexts? And yet, if the university campus has this capacity for positive transformation, what are the criteria and guidelines for this to happen?

The term 'studentification' was coined to designate an excessive and seasonal occupation of areas of some British cities by university student housing, with the consequent replacement of native residents. It has been studied in Europe since the early 21st century

in connection with policies for expansion and internationalization in higher education through the Erasmus Program for European Student Exchange and other national government initiatives.

SMITH (2002) describes problems such as converting pubs into summer-themed bars, selling ready-to-eat food and freeing up cheap alcohol, emptying schools after relocating families with local children and increasing rent and house prices which in turn prevents others from becoming interested in living in the neighborhood.

This issue has gained resonance in the British press because of the social impacts. Carol Midgley wrote the article "Hell of residence" in *The Times* in December 2002, in which she denounced the situation that some university cities were experiencing because of the expansion in British higher education that grew in the 1970s to 2000 from 12 % to 41% among inhabitants under 30 years. The article reported that "the government intends to increase it further to 50% by 2010, a strategy that will bring many obvious benefits to the country," but with the dire consequences. She cited the overcrowding of every home with more students, the noise of the parties, the garbage accumulated or deposited on the wrong days, and the lack of maintenance of the gardens.

The incidence of burglary is increased because burglars "know that due to multiple occupancy, most homes contain multiple TVs, computers and stereos." The author reports that academics "invented a name for the syndrome – 'studentification' - which was compared to the 'gentrification' of the sixties, when the middle class forced the working classes to abandon popular housing in poor urban areas" (MIDGLEY, 2002).

This is a phenomenon found in cities with universities that attract students from other cities, including other countries and continents, and therefore need to offer a large amount of student housing to be attractive to the "best" students and to stay in the rankings. international.

SMITH (2002) will call student ghettos these enclaves in university cities. There is a conceptual association between 'studentification' and 'gentrification' as a higher-income type of student seeks to approach his peers ("people like them") by settling in already gentrified neighborhoods (SAGE, SMITH and HUBBARD, 2012)

One factor in mitigating the emptying of neighborhoods caused by academic vacations in the UK, in some cities housing is rented in summer to students of other nationalities (Latin American, European, Asian), usually for teaching English as a Second Language. But this does not seem to have attenuated the fact that these new and temporary residents neither establish a social or affective relationship with the place and the population permanently resident there.

So far, in these studies on constitutive aspects of British universities it has been possible to approximate the methodology developed at the University College of London Urban Laboratory (MELHUISSH, 2015), in order to think about the theoretical-conceptual approach to the anchor role that universities can play in cities contributing to their regeneration and study the ways of replicability of this methodology in the new Brazilian universities.

The analysis of the expansion of higher education in the United Kingdom in recent decades has helped us to understand the similarities and asymmetries about this theme that is and will be emerging in Brazilian society after this acute process of expansion that the country has gone through.

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**Suturing Luanda after the boom: recomposing associational life in a city on hold**

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## **Necrosettlements: Urban Poor's Rehousing and Death-Worlds in Mumbai**

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### **Necrosettlements: Urban Poor's Rehousing and Death-Worlds in Mumbai**

In an infinitely exclusionary megacity-Mumbai, the developmental turn of the postcolonial state has been widely welcomed by the academia. A spectacle of inclusive urban development, towards a just future, through institutional reworking, state-market-civil society synergy and participatory resettlement and offered formal housing, and ensuing possibilities of civic, economic and political rights against brutal slum clearance and uncompensated eviction have engendered much celebrated academic theorizations on 'invisible' urban's poor's rights, entitlements and citizenship through phenomenal 'deepening of democracy', 'civic governmentality' and 'graduated urban citizenship'. These narratives, however, conceal the unintended, yet inherent, inter-institutional tacit agreements, official manipulation, engrained violence in the institutionalization processes, unleashed marginalities and resulted substandard living circumstances for the urban poor. Could an inquiry into inherent logics and processes guide us towards a new framework arising from the postcolonial urban?

The case in focus is Main pipeline in Mumbai which is one of the biggest, also contested, urban infrastructure securitization project. For the security and safety of pipeline, more than 15,000 urban poor have been evicted and resettled following a public interest litigation by a civil society organization, intervention by the High Court and administered by the municipal authority. The paper tends to enquire: Firstly, what kinds of juridical-administrative logics and institutional narratives fostered by the urban institutions essentialize clearance of legal settlement branded as illegal and dangerous encroachers? Secondly, how does the exceptional redevelopment regime, through its planning, policies and politics conceptualize and legitimize the creation of life-threatening (re)housing situations as a technique of management of displaced urban population? Thirdly, in what ways the architectural, spatial, environmental components of resettlement manifest and engender everyday subjectivities of survival (and death)? And finally, what is the scope for mobilization and utilization of the political, civic, juridico-legal institutions in resisting or negotiating an(y) alternative.

This paper is based on a six-month ethnographic engagement with affected urban poor of Mumbai's pipeline project displaced from seven administrative wards and twenty locations and rehoused in a resettlement township, located in peripheral industrial zone unfit for human inhabitation. It also includes an analysis of more than 500 pages of institutional documents and reports from courts and other law enforcing agencies and parastatal organizations. The study aims to argue that the redevelopment regime acts as an exceptional site of the postcolonial state's sovereign power and the resettlement process exposes the resettled urban poor to violence, marginalities, vulnerabilities and death. In doing so, it would offer a re-reading of the State of Exception, Necropolitics and Necrocapitalism in its material ramification as housing – *as necrosettlements* – for the poor in the urban spaces.

**Keywords:** Necrosettlement, Necroeconomics, Necropolitics, State of Exception, Slum Resettlement in Mumbai.

## River and the Riverfront: Towards anthropological inquiry of an urban infrastructure project

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River Yamuna is known to be one of the lungs of Delhi after the ridge forest in the northern part. It enters Delhi from *Palla* in the north side and leaves *Jaitpur Village* in the southern side after traversing the length of almost 50 km. The stretch of river that flows through Delhi is nearly in dying state owing to excessive pollution. The extent of pollution is so much that the river ceases to exist after Wazirabad and almost becomes sewerage. The 22 km stretch between two barrages, Wazirabad and Okhla barrages, is known to the highest in the entire trajectory of the river.

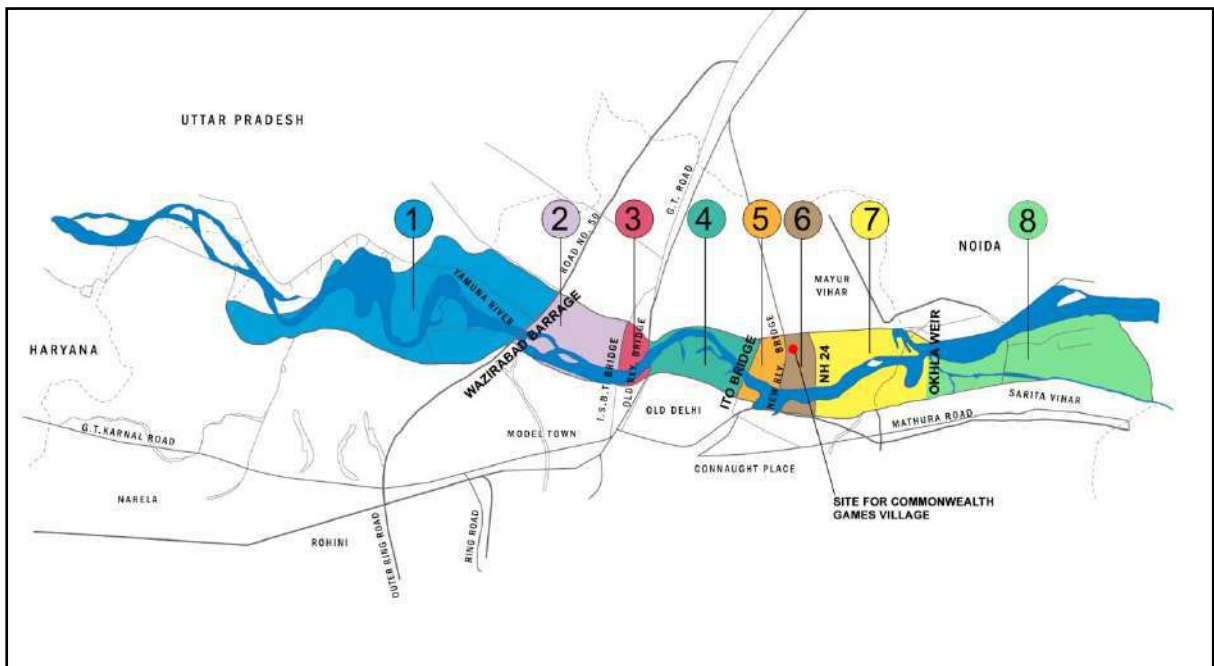


Figure 1 Stretch of River Yamuna, Source: Official Zonal Development Plan by DDA

Multiple agencies and public bodies are involved in the management of the River Yamuna, its water quality and the development of the area around it. For instance, Centre for Pollution Control Board (CPCB) maintains the water quality and controls pollution, *Delhi Jal Board* (DJB) is accountable for the water supply emanating from the Yamuna and also take care of the water pollution to maintain the quality of drinking water, Irrigation and Flood Control (I&FC) department regulates the water flow and controls flood, Delhi Development Authority (DDA) regulates the land use around the river and plans for the riverfront. The plan of Yamuna riverfront is primarily anchored by DDA that aims to provide world-class aesthetics to the inhabitants of the city along the river Yamuna.

Yamuna riverfront project, which is still a work in progress, is embedded in the narrative of transforming Delhi into the world-class city which got its major push when the city prepared itself to host commonwealth games 2010. The course of preparations resulted in massive infrastructural changes in Delhi and a series of evictions of urban poor for enhancing the city aesthetics. A riverside promenade along river Yamuna was also planned as one of the major tourist attraction. However, soon the project went into dispute owing to objections raised by social and environmental activists for evicting thousands of families living along the banks of the river and for laying its foundations on the sensitive floodplains of the river. The whole promenade, hence, did not become a reality before the games.

Recently, the project has been revived, drawing the inspirations from the global experiences of developing waterfronts. The project has been accorded the status of ‘special project’ and aims to develop parks, walkways, cycle tracks, parking lots and wetlands along the riverfront.

This paper is a part of my doctoral research work, where I analyse the practices of spatial planning with an anthropological perspective. I draw my findings from yearlong ethnography conducted in one of the planning units of DDA that is responsible for planning, designing and execution of the Yamuna riverfront project. This research work aims to uncover the micro-political world of the spatial planning by capturing the conflicts, exceptions and negotiations taking place amongst the people as they come together to create the plan. In this paper, I will discuss some of the field insights to reflect on the practices of spatial planning associated with the riverfront project. I divide the paper broadly into two sections namely, ‘people’ where I focus on the varied perspectives and imaginations of the people involved in creating the plan and ‘practices’ where I show the way these multiple perspectives are negotiated through everyday practices of bureaucracy.

## People

*“There had been so much pressure to plan Yamuna riverfront on the lines of international waterfronts. But you know it is not possible to replicate designs just like that. The geographical and topographical characteristics of Yamuna are different from any other river. It took me so many discussions and deliberations to finally convince that political leader to drop this idea. These people want grand and aesthetically appealing structures on the riverfront. They feel if they can get something like this done during their tenure, people will think they have got some work done around the river. It’s all for votes. I instead suggested for ecologically sound structures that are feasible considering the sensitive floodplains of Yamuna. These structures might not be grand but provide unique visibility to the space of riverfront and will also not do much harm to it. They finally agreed. I think it’s challenging to deal with these people. I consider this as one of my biggest achievement during this tenure.”*

*—A landscape architect and a senior official*

The above excerpt indicates the complex nature of the practices of urban planning that involves multiple actors, multiple perspectives and imaginations and a continuous process of creating a balance between them. The process of creating an urban plan consists of coming together of various individuals such as architects, planners, designers, experts and policy-makers. These individuals can collectively be termed as ‘technocrats’ clearly bring their technical know-how, expertise and experience of designing the space while creating an urban plan. In the case of planning of Yamuna riverfront, while the groups of technocrats form the core organisational group involved in the process of planning, there are many people outside this group who influence the plan significantly. It includes bureaucrats, political leaders representing the government parties, and civil society activists. In addition to their technical knowledge of designing spaces, all these individuals bring their imaginations and aspirations for the city spaces as they create the plan.

Interactions with the various individuals associated with the planning of the riverfront reveal that there exist multiple imaginations for the river Yamuna. A dominant perspective in the discourse of planning the Yamuna riverfront views the *river as a commodity*. With this view, the space and surroundings of the river offer aesthetic quality to the city. The development of these spaces, through the construction of grand structures, results in heightening the visibility of the river and serves an essential role in fulfilling the agenda of the world-class city. Political leaders and sometimes practitioners too follow this view and exhibit an extremely functional relationship with the river and the riverfront that serves a

commercial and political purpose. Such perspective draws its inspirations from global narratives of beautification and aestheticisation of city spaces.

The second view imagines the *river as a natural resource* and an essential part of the human ecosystem. It establishes that there exists a mutual relationship between the river and the city and its inhabitants. The riverfront is a critical step towards creating a healthy interaction between city inhabitants and nature. The practitioners who resort to this standpoint believe that riverfront can serve as an essential ecological and recreational space for the people of the city. However, at the same time, many of them are also consciously aware that riverfront can exist only when the river exists in a healthy state. They accept that the objective of designing the riverfront can become redundant in the lack of concentrated efforts to revive the river itself. In case of Yamuna riverfront project, the planners and designers who articulate this view also share their helplessness since river management is not their domain. Though they are entrusted with the daunting task of planning and designing for the riverfront, they have limited say in the management of the river and its water quality which is the functional area of other organisations.

The third perspective views the *river as a living organism* that stretches, constricts, and expands from time to time. Floodplains, according to this perspective, belong purely to the river and must not be mutated in any form. This view calls for respecting the boundaries of the river and keeping it protected from all human intervention, mostly the one that causes harm to it. Many practitioners, civil society activists and environmental activists who observe this view reject the idea of riverfront entirely and oppose any construction activity at the floodplains of Yamuna.

The three perspectives mentioned above have profoundly influenced the plan of the Yamuna riverfront. The existence of many imaginations has resulted in continuous re-shaping and modification of the project over a few years. The final plan has emerged out of a series of confrontations and negotiations between the conflicting imaginations and viewpoints.

The negotiations occur at two levels. Firstly, at the level of the members of the team of planners and architects (technocrats) who are part of the planning unit. Secondly, between technocrats and other individuals outside the domain of the practice of planning unit such as bureaucrats, politicians and activists. Negotiations amongst the team of technocrats occur within the physical space of planning authority and are mediated through various bureaucratic practices. All other kinds of negotiations often take place in the physical domains that may not be regarded as the official spaces for the practice of planning. It includes civil society platforms, courtrooms or political arenas. These negotiations are often mediated through judicial and political interventions. However, in this paper, I will only discuss the confrontations that occur within the bureaucratic space of the planning authority. These bureaucratic practices, I argue, represents a normative site of the practice of spatial planning.

## Practices

*“When the riverfront project came to me, I started working on it with my usual process through proper reading and research and all. Once I got into it, I understood that it was designed in a flawed way. And then I did not want to do it. My seniors gave it to me because they thought I came here to work on riverfront because of past experience of working on similar projects. I was also waiting for a court ban to be upheld, but when I saw the plan; I had no intention to work on it. I disagreed with the plan completely. There was no need to build lawns or pathways also. If people want to experience the Yamuna, let them do it in its natural form. Let them go in real nature, but then they should know that they might find wild animals there and fragile pathways, so they should be ready to face it. That is the way it*

*should be. I believe Delhi could have set an example by saying no to the riverfront and maintaining the river's ecology most naturally. I politely denied working on it. I already had a lot of other projects to work on."*

*-A landscape architect and consultant in the planning unit*

Above narrative points to the dilemmas and conflicts faced by practitioners face during the process of planning the city spaces. Planning of the Yamuna riverfront primarily takes place in a bureaucratic environment characterised by hierarchical roles and clear division of work between these roles. The role hierarchy determines the distribution of power and the ability to make decisions amongst the team members. The bureaucratic set up also ensures that everyone has a strictly defined responsibility that should be fulfilled by the individual as part of one's job. The ability to communicate, negotiate and bring any changes to the plan depends much upon one's role in the overall bureaucratic hierarchy and the responsibility that one performs. The team of practitioners at the planning unit comprises of the permanent officials of the authority and some early-career young consultant architects and landscape planners working on contractual basis in authority.

The negotiating ability of the consultants is way lesser than that of the senior and permanent officials of the authority. It is mainly due to the temporary nature of the jobs of young consultants. Also, the consultants are taken on board to support the riverfront project and other similar projects. Their performance, hence, is directly assessed by the way they complete the assigned responsibilities, which further determines the continuity of their employment.

There are several incidents, such as the one appears in the above narrative, when there is a clearly a conflict of opinion amongst the members of the team. However whose opinion gets counted within the final plans is determined largely by one's position within the bureaucratic hierarchy. In the case of Yamuna riverfront, the young architects and consultants are the ones who bring the fresh perspectives and ideas grounded in the theory to the design of the project. It is often manifested as innovative design friendly towards citizens with special needs, women and pedestrians in general. However, their position within the structural hierarchy of the planning unit is quite unstable and the scope of their responsibility is extremely limited. So while, they are actively involved in creating a plan, they are disassociated with the further bureaucratic processes and negotiations through which a plan goes to obtain a final approval. The plan gets repeatedly modified as it leaves the desks of these consultants to meet the demands of several other powerful actors. The final plan is often quite alienating for the consultants who were once part of the process of developing it. Yet, the fear of losing one's contract restricts them to voice their disagreements.

The conflicts are not merely limited to the aspect of the design but also to the strategies employed to realise the plan. Forceful evictions, compensatory plantation, demolition of agricultural fields are some of the practices that result in sense of anxiety and moral dilemmas for the young as well as the senior planners. However, the need to achieve the targets of the plan forces the practitioners to keep their moral claims aside. The practice of planning, hence, once again becomes an alienating one. There is clearly an emotional disconnect on the part of the practitioners existing in the process of creating a plan. The practice of creating a plan, as it emerges in the everyday bureaucratic context is a disengaged one where there are limited avenues for the expression of the multiple perspectives and thought-processes.

## **Conclusion**

In this paper, I have tried to explore the everyday context of the practices of the spatial planning. The idea of creating an urban plan rests upon the philosophy of bringing an order to the space which is otherwise chaotic. It is expected to follow a set of codes, rules and procedures to arrive at a clear representation of the space. However, everyday practices associated with the process of spatial planning shows that the process itself is highly chaotic and messy that rest upon several conflicting imaginations and perceptions for planning the city spaces. While it follows the prescribed rules and standards, it is also significantly determined by the way power is divided across the actors who are involved in making a plan. The distribution of power across the hierarchy of actors determines the visions and imagination that are bound to dominate the plan. The resultant plan as well as the whole process of creating it therefore becomes highly alienating for many of its own members. This alienating process breeds equally alienating city spaces. The everyday context of spatial planning, hence, explains to a great extent why plan such as that of a riverfront development holds little significance for the people of city and why it continues to remain in the plan documents for majority of its time.

## Small city and big task: (re)worked lakeshore in Dali, southwest China

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Critical urban scholars at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century called for decentralization from a narrow focus on Western cities of the highest global reach and influence to a cosmopolitan approach that includes all cities. Research on Southern cities has since abounded, identifying and acknowledging their distinctiveness and creativeness. These accounts, however, always neglect small cities and imagine something big such as Beijing, Shanghai, and Mumbai for their eye-catching population size and/or impressive economic prosperity. This paper attempts to fill this gap by providing empirical stories of Dali, a small city in China, in terms of its contested waterfront landscape.

“Small city” is a contested term, whose definition varies across researchers, organizations, and countries. Smallness is about population size, density, and growth, as well as network and interconnectedness in the face of globalization (Bell & Jayne, 2006). In China, cities are grouped into three administrative levels – provincial, prefectural, and county, and Dali is a county-level city (the lowest level). Chinese cities are also categorized based on the number of urban residents into megacities (over 10 million), super large cities (5 million to 10 million), large cities (1 million to 5 million), medium-sized cities (0.5 million to 1 million), and small cities (below 0.5 million) (Qi et al., 2016). Dali is a small city under this division for having an urban population of around 0.3 million. There are other approaches to dividing and ranking Chinese cities, such as the four-tier system (see South China Morning Post, 2016) that is based on GDP, politics, and population, and identifies Dali as one of the tier-four (lowest tier) cities.

Tourism has been prioritized on Dali’s economic agenda since early 1985 when the Tourism Bureau was established to work specifically on tourism management. The city draws on its natural resources (e.g., Lake Erhai and Mountain Cangshan), cultural resources (e.g., ethnic minority Bai culture), and historical resources (e.g., heritages recognized by national, provincial, or prefectural list) for tourism growth. Dali is a ‘National Scenic Area’, ‘National Nature Reserve’, and ‘China’s Excellent Touristic City’. It also wins the title ‘China’s Ten Most Attractive Cities’ after competing with nearly 100 Chinese cities (Dali Municipal Government, 2011; Yang, 2014). From 2008 to 2017, Dali’s annual tourist arrival has risen from 5.2 million to 16.74 million and tourism revenue increased from 3.74 billion yuan to 29.26 billion yuan. The municipal government has dedicated much effort to attracting tourism investors and entrepreneurs.

In my research, a key informant recalled that Dali had around 800 hotels, hostels, and guesthouses in 2012, and 1300 one year later. In 2014, Dali Old Town (one of the major tourist attractions in Dali) and its adjacent rural areas had over 2000 guesthouses. This is a stark change from the mid-1980s, when the Old Town had no private but five state-owned

guesthouses, only one of which welcomed foreign tourists (Ateljevic and Doorne, 2005; Notar, 2006). Following economic reforms in the 1990s that encouraged privatization and a market economy, the once state-owned guesthouses became private companies (Notar, 2006). The guesthouse becomes a common form of tourist accommodation in Dali, which developed in the Old Town first and then expanded to the countryside.

Since 2010, local villages along the shore of Erhai have seen a guesthouse boom. Erhai is the second largest highland lake in China. It covers a surface area of over 250 square kilometers (nearly 14 percent of Dali's land area), stores around 2.8 billion cubic meters of water, and serves for fresh water supply, agricultural irrigation, fishery, and tourism (Guo et al., 2001). Newly arrived entrepreneurs from larger cities brought about business investment in rural homes at the lakeside. They rented houses or empty housing land from local villagers, proceeded to renovation or reconstruction at their own cost, and transformed rural homes into guesthouses with lake-view guestrooms. This trend of commercializing rural residential properties contradicts with China's law-stipulated land system. Rural China comprises many rural collectives, and each collective owns some housing land that is allocated to its members free of charge as a membership entitlement. Villagers have use rights to their housing land; they can pass it to the younger generation, but are not legally allowed to sell or rent it out to a third person. The building(s) on the land, however, can be transferred to anyone as long as one is a member of the same rural collective (Ho, 2017). In Dali, both local villagers and newcomer entrepreneurs disregarded this stipulation in the commercialization and touristification process of waterfront areas.

Lakefront guesthouses were highly popular among Chinese tourists, many of who were willing to pay over 2000 *yuan* per night for a guestroom with an excellent view of Erhai. These guestrooms were always fully booked. More nonlocal entrepreneurs were lured into this lucrative business. Some of them resigned, sold out their properties elsewhere, moved to Dali from big cities, and became guesthouse owners. Local people often use the term "blowout" to describe the remarkably rapid expansion of guesthouses in Dali. In the summer of 2016, I saw in multiple villages that more than one-third of their lakefront buildings were guesthouses. The changing lakeside space involves informalities and complex power dynamics, which is beyond the capture of rural gentrification (Zhao, 2019).

Local authorities had not interfered until 2017 when stringent environmental controls were practiced to clear up the water of Erhai. In January 2015, President Xi Jinping visited a village near the lake during his inspection tour of Yunnan Province. He called on local villagers and government to protect the lake, warning that he would hold local officials accountable if the water quality declines. After Xi's visit, Dali became under close supervision of the central government, which sent money to fund related projects as well as inspection teams to check progress. The central government also pressed the provincial government to work closely with the prefectural government and municipal government on Erhai restoration. A local official disclosed that the municipal government was under high pressure in identifying polluters, proposing solutions, and enforcing decisions, as every step was very contentious. Since 2017, Dali, with its lake protection stories, has received unprecedented attention from Chinese and foreign news outlets. This city was previously known as a tourist destination, and now becomes famous for its environmental projects.

The lake clear-up process aroused discontent among residents in Dali, as their lives and livelihoods were severely affected. Peasants who were banned from cultivating garlic were not convinced by the municipal government that the fertilizers used in garlic fields poisoned Erhai, whereas hotel, guesthouse, and restaurant owners whose business was suspended did not believe that their sewage was the major source of pollution. Dali people disagreed upon polluters and restoration measures, and what they shared in common was their distrust in local government. They cited different evidences to argue against government decisions, mostly in private without confronting the government. In 2018, the municipal government announced that all buildings within 15 meters of the lake's boundary, which was delimited in 2014, must be demolished by the end of the year. This so-called "blue-line area" was identified as critical for restoring the ecosystem of Erhai and improving its water quality. The government promised to offer generous compensations for local villagers, but received much resistance at the persuasion stage. As an official stated, "money is not the problem. The problem is how to tear all buildings down by the deadline." He estimated that the central government granted over 10 billion yuan for demolition and associated compensations, around one third of Dali's GDP in 2018.

Local villagers who lived in lakeside buildings were concerned about displacement and relocation associated with demolition, and those who rented their land out were more worried about the ensuing disputes between them and their tenants arising from demolition. Tourism entrepreneurs affected by this decision criticized the municipal government for inconsistent policies; they were ordered to spend thousands of yuan installing sewage treatment systems in their buildings and then informed of demolition. Some latecomers blamed the municipal government for not interfering earlier with informal transformation in rural Dali and misleading them into guesthouse business there. There was disagreement among local officials too, who had different views, feelings, and opinions about this plan. For instance, many officials were sympathetic toward their relatives, friends, and colleagues whose buildings were within the "blue-line area"; some did not think properly treated sewage from lakeside buildings would pollute Erhai. However, they all had to work towards demolition, which was part of their task assigned by higher levels of government. At the end of 2018, all lakeside buildings (more than 1800) were demolished.

Several officials lamented about the affected local economy. Erhai restoration projects carried out around Dali scared tourists away and devastated the tourism industry, which was the prime contributor of Dali's economy. These officials thought that the municipal government was forced to sacrifice the economy for environmental protection; thus they hoped that the central government would take economic impacts into consideration when making next environmental commands.

It is in this process of (re)working lakeside of Erhai that state-market relations characterizing urban development have been reformulated and the role of central and local states differentiated. Unlike larger cities or city-regions where state power appears decentralized and dissolved, the central state remains powerful and influential in this small city. Informal market forces that produced lakeside space were overridden by the central state, giving way to lake restoration or, more broadly, "ecological civilization" stressed by President Xi, while the local state was awkwardly positioned in-between forming a market-local state-central state complex.



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## **Urban Enclaving: Conceptualising private urban development in Africa.**

### **Introduction**

With more than half of the world's population living in cities, the UN estimates that the urban population in developing countries will grow by about 2.3% per annum between 2007 and 2025. Globally, cities have become centres of culture and business but also areas of extreme poverty and increasing inequality—as also exemplified in Ghana (Ablo and Yekple 2018) — as well as sites for capitalisation and financialisation (see e.g. Stein 2019) and domains for the reformatting of the political (Swyngedouw 2018). These global trends have a particular form in urban Africa where there is an ongoing large-scale transformation driven by a combination of multinational developers, businessmen, urban citizens and political stakeholders (see van Noorloos and Kloosterboer 2018)—a composite transformational force of multiple actors that are also tangibly present in Ghana (Fält 2019).

Despite these transformations and the many proclamations that we can see African cities as laboratories of the future (Comaroff and Comaroff 2015) or as sites of futurity more generally (Achille 2016), the rapid expansion of African cities has nevertheless created housing deficits and produced a pluralisation of forms of the urban, including the emergence and growth of slums or informal settlements. The immediate global needs for affordable housing stand at 400 million units. In Africa, the rate of urbanisation far outstrips the ability of development to keep pace exacerbating the housing needs across rapidly growing cities in the region (Ablo and Yekple 2018, van Noorloos and Kloosterboer 2018, Dekolo, Oduwaye, and Nwokoro 2015).

Ghana's current housing deficit of about 2 million and an estimated annual housing need of about 133,000 (Awuvafoge 2013) has aggravated this tendency. Current estimates are that the country's housing deficit will exceed 4.2 million by 2030 (Awuvafoge 2013). The rapid urbanisation in Ghana is, amongst other things, the outcomes of the deregulation of the Ghanaian economy in the 1980s when the IMF/World Bank-led Structural Adjustment Program (SAP) and Economic Recovery Program (ERP), resulted in the liberalisation of the Ghanaian economy (Yeboah 2000). The country has since the implementation of SAP experienced an increased rural-urban migration with a growing urban informal economy (Meagher 2003, Oteng-Ababio and Grant 2019). A significant characteristic of the rapid urbanisation in Ghana and several African cities is the growing number of urban poor (Ablo and Yekple 2018, Bolay 2006). A significant proportion of the urban population cannot afford decent accommodation with basic facilities such as toilet and in-house water supply (Chalfin 2014). Various government strategies to provide affordable housing over the years

have failed in addressing the housing challenges in the cities because most of the houses are priced above the urban poor.

The liberalisation of several African economies also saw governments' deregulation of the housing sector to attract foreign and domestic investments. In Ghana, this has seen the emergence and growth of various forms of urban development reflecting both an ever more numerous middle class (Owusu-Manu et al. 2015, Fält 2019) and a high rate of economic growth in recent years. The inability of African governments to plan and manage the rapidly growing cities and the increasing lack of housing for the urban population has seen the emergence and growth of what Fält (2019) describes as 'privatised urbanism'. These private cities are envisaged as a solution to the mismatch between rapid urbanisation and planning where planning chases development (Owusu 2013). As Fält (2019) contends, these privatised cities are considered a 'quick fix' to the sprawling of African cities characterised by poverty, housing deficits and inadequate infrastructure and services. The development of these privatised cities entails large scale land acquisition that produces several tensions and complex processes in peri-urban and hitherto rural communities. The mushrooming of private cities in the sub-Saharan African region is underpinned by social divisions, political fissures and deeper socio-cultural and economic divisions. It is imperative to rethink the conceptualization of private urban development in sub-Saharan Africa that highlights the complexities relating to the region's urban futures. James Ferguson's use of enclaves that describes the delinking of resource extraction from the rest of society provides a useful conceptual tool for analysing private urban development in Africa. Focusing on the case of the Appolonia City of Light, a 941-hectare private city located north of Accra Ghana, I analyse the generative, utopian/dystopian, enacted and lived (attachment/detachment) experience of urban enclaving in sub-Saharan Africa.

### **Urban Enclaving**

In a series of work, Ferguson described the concentration of economic investments in resource extraction across the African continent in secured enclaves, which moves capital along across national borders without encompassing actual geographical spaces (Ferguson 2005). According to Ferguson, 'Usable Africa gets secured enclaves—noncontiguous "useful" bits that are secured, policed, and, in a minimal sense, governed through private or semiprivate means. These enclaves are increasingly linked up, not in a continuous, territorial national grid, but in transnational networks that link dispersed spaces in a selective, point-to-point fashion' (Ferguson 2005, 380).

With limited benefits to the wider society, financial investments in the extractive industry are concentrated in secured enclaves that are ‘ringfenced’ against the real or imagined disorganisation of local economies. Ferguson’s view of the enclave emphasises a bifurcated model which ‘hollows out’ the state (Clapham 1996), with the enclave increasingly operating as a private mercantilist entrepôt that has liberated itself from the restrictions of geographical attachment. Ferguson thus contends that ‘Capital “hops” over “unusable Africa,” alighting only in mineral-rich enclaves that are starkly disconnected from their national societies. The result is not the formation of standardized national grids, but the emergence of huge areas of the continent that are effectively “off the grid” (Ferguson 2005, 380).

In this regard, it is the place rather than the people that is useful and so a process of dispossession, say, in the form of land grabs or extensive export of hardwood, might occur without any significant involvement of local populations (Li 2010). Capital is territorialized, to be sure, but within economic zones, which are organised in order to strategically reduce the possibility for mutually beneficial engagements with the local ‘outside’ to an absolute minimum.

The urban landscapes in sub-Saharan Africa actualize lines of separation, which stretch out into a wider multi-layered meshwork of political divisions, economic fissures and social detachments. The urban enclaves through a wide and ill-coordinated array of spatial technologies, investment strategies, governmental regulations and intensified movements of persons, things and ideas, asserts certain kinds of divisions with acute determination and force. With the notion of ‘enclaving’, then, we must trace the meshwork of separations, fissures and detachments of which the sub-Saharan African urban enclave is an optimal physical manifestation. Considered as an aesthetics of imagination, enclaving is an orientation to urban spaces based on separation, which stretches from subjective and collective forms of social differentiation to overt material manifestations. Crucially, enclaving is both the enactment of a desire for privilege, the physical or ideational representation of the privilege itself and the tension that exists between the two. It can therefore be expected that the physical manifestation of a separation (say, a wall) will activate different registers of detachment than those that initially prompted the building project itself.

Rather than stemming from specific and clearly defined socio-economic divides, enclaving can be considered as a fluid and transformative form of detachment and separation that generates new forms of urban positions, strategies and ideals. In many instances, enclaving offers itself as guarantor of both spatial and temporal security by physically or

imaginatively stabilising the relationship of person and space in the form of a predictable future. As such, enclaving implies not just the spatial representation of an explicit ideal, a status or a sense of belonging but also an active intervention in the ambiguous space between the known and the unknown, the certain and the uncertain.

The dynamics, pace and tension of rapid urbanisation in sub-Saharan Africa is a gradual recalibration in relation to an aesthetics of imagination, which we define as enclaving. It finds its most overt physical configuration in the segregated urban enclave, such as the gated community, but, also, it might be that enclaving finds its optimal manifestation as a repository of urban imageries, which – by themselves – are detached from their own realisation. Thus, emphasis on private city development as urban enclaves provides the prism for explaining the generative, utopian/dystopian, enacted and lived (attachment/detachment) experience of urban expansion in sub-Saharan Africa.

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## **The Infrastructure of Submarine Urbanism: Zanzibar in a Black and Blue World**

**Garth Myers**

This essay examines the ‘infrastructural turn’ in urban studies, building on fieldwork in Zanzibar on Chinese infrastructure projects. Infrastructure projects comprise the overwhelming majority of investments from China in Africa. Analyses that take these flows and networks as abstractions miss essential human dynamics. Books and articles about infrastructure in the global South for a decade or more have argued for seeing infrastructure as vital, lively, or alive. Yet African urban scholarship on infrastructure is confronted with the reality of many failures alongside invisibilities – as in social or political infrastructure that one must train one’s eyes to see, in a metaphorical sense, in a city. There is much to the story that is subterranean or submarine, and bruised: hence I place Zanzibar in a black-and-blue world with multiple double-meanings.

In most of Africa, colonialism’s urban investments in infrastructure were sparse. Where infrastructure was developed at all in colonial urban Africa, it served the interests of a small population of colonial administrators, white settlers, or elites. Urban infrastructure investments in the postcolonial era became ‘key sites of performative government practice as well as claim making by elite and disenfranchised citizens alike’ (Fredericks 2018: 14) as contestation developed over how and where to expend infrastructures. For ordinary residents of Africa’s cities, the only options for securing infrastructure often reside in everyday ‘relational infrastructures’ or ‘infrastructures of relationality’ (Simone 2015: 18). Simone (2015: 18) contends that relations are ‘the tools through which political imaginations and claims are exerted’, as urban residents work toward the ‘incremental accretion of capacity and possibility’ in ‘unscripted’ reformulations of infrastructure (Simone 2015: 28). People engage with



fragmenting infrastructural systems as a constantly changing ‘bricolage’ in a ‘landscape of disrepair and pollution’ to ‘salvage’ alternative infrastructures that are ‘vitaly alive with bodies, communities, materials, and ritual practices’ (Fredericks 2018: 18, 149).

This context of disinvestment in infrastructures after independence alongside inventive alternative strategies places China’s rise on the continent in an essential position. China’s rising significance is indeed the dominant theme of the 21<sup>st</sup> century in Africa. By 2014, seven African countries exported more than 25% of their exports to China, and 11 African countries received more than US\$ 100 million each in Foreign Direct Investment from China (Johnston 2018). But first impressions can be misleading. While outward foreign direct investment flows from China into the African continent grew to more than 32 billion by 2014, only 6.2 percent of China’s global FDI flows are to Africa (He and Zhu 2018: 110). Most investments are in a few sectors of a few economies. Almost 80% of China’s imports from Africa were mineral products, while heavy machinery mainly for those industries made up 29% of China’s exports to Africa.

Moreover, China’s urban projects are often ‘ill-conceived’ (He and Zhu 2018: 126), disconnected from local ideas for urban planning and development. And Africa’s infrastructure shortfalls are so substantial that even massive Chinese investments in filling gaps would not suffice (Kararach 2017). Given centuries in which infrastructure development financed and driven by outside interests was shaped for extraction and ‘transmission to the master nations’, where roads, railroads, ports and airports were designed without regard to internal connectivity or backward linkages, it is unsurprising to see the suspicions which greet 21<sup>st</sup> century Chinese

infrastructure projects around Africa reliant on Chinese financing, firms, and laborers, to build infrastructure to facilitate exports to China (Ncube, Lufumpa and Kararach 2017: 648).

China's long-term investments in Tanzania are wide-ranging and significant, but it is Zanzibar where the Chinese socio-technical infrastructural presence has been and remains the most proportionally substantial among Tanzania's urban areas. Urban development relationships with China have been strong since Zanzibar's 1964 Revolution. The Chinese produced the city's 1982 Master Plan, with layouts for more than fifty urban areas, a new map for governmental operations, a new radio and telecommunications center, improved electricity, road, transport, water and drainage networks, and renewed efforts to manage land. The plan contained extensive maps and diagrams for all proposed infrastructure. The Chinese implemented the plan into the 1990s, and returned with vigor to the city in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Chinese contractors rebuilt the two sports stadiums, including Mao Zedong Stadium. Other contracts followed.

The World Bank provided funding for two different infrastructure initiatives that might seem at first outside the sweep of Chinese influence. The first is a massive program to build and rehabilitate the city's stormwater drainage, Zanzibar Urban Support Program (ZUSP). The main project entailed constructing 20.3 kilometers of a drainage network, including a 10-kilometer long underground drainage channel to carry water from several lakes and ponds around which dozens of homes have been inundated each year in the rainy season. The second (partially) World Bank-funded scheme involves initiatives run through a partnership of the revolutionary government's Department of Urban and Rural Planning (DoURP) with the Netherlands government, and Netherlands-based African Architecture Matters (AAM), to create a Green

Corridor through the center of the historic working-class ‘Other Side’ of Zanzibar, Ng’ambo, as part of producing *Ng’ambo Tuitakayo* [The Other Side That We Want]. This would mean a new city center built through interlocking small-scale, incremental and ideally participatory local area planning initiatives. The Green Corridor project was awarded to a South Korean firm. Yet these schemes identified as ‘new’ or residing seemingly outside of Chinese influence are thoroughly in keeping with the PRC’s 1982 Master Plan: completely re-engineered and comprehensive drainage, the provision of green space, and the relocation of the city center activities to Raha Leo/Michenzani. And the largest program is the World Bank’s ZUSP drainage scheme – the contract for which belongs to China Railway Construction Engineering Company (CRJE).

None of these projects entered the urban landscape without controversy. One of ZUSP’s technical consultants suggested in 2019 that the three main problems of implementing their drainage scheme were: (1) socio-political issues of compensation for houses demolished in the drainage network’s construction; (2) ‘cultural intransigence’, where, it was argued, people continued to throw trash into open drains or moved back into areas that had been drained; and (3) ‘poverty, because, let’s face it, this is a poor country.’ Some 40 homes had to be demolished by early 2019, and people were paid compensation, but ‘to do the project properly, we might have demolished 300’. ZUSP’s engineers and CRJE’s managers instead remapped the drainage systems to minimize demolitions by burrowing the drains under roads as much as possible – and only one lane of road, to minimize road reconstruction costs. Otherwise, as one engineer said in 2019, ‘the road building costs will be larger than the drainage system costs’. However, as another engineer said, ‘this was supposed to be a one and a half-year project; they now say it is to be three, but it won’t be done in four.’

The Ng'ambo *Tuitakayo* plan was developed as part of DoURP's National Spatial Development Strategy, to 'harness the positive transformative power of urbanisation in Zanzibar' (DoURP 2016: 6). This is the most comprehensive, careful and engaged plan ever for this part of Ng'ambo. Were it to be developed and implemented with popular participation along the lines the plan's authors envisioned, it would mark a substantial improvement to the infrastructure of everyday life in Ng'ambo. It is the first plan in the city's history to see Ng'ambo's 'existing morphology of the urban fabric' as 'representing an important part of the largest Swahili City in the world in the late 19th and early 20th century' (DoURP 2016: 96; Myers 1993). It was created with the histories and impacts of the 57,000 residents of the 15 urban locations [*shehia*] in the plan area in mind. Yet every individual proposal within the plan is just that – a proposal. Each proposal segment within the plan ends with a list of possible stakeholders, and each of those lists includes unnamed 'private investors'.

The clash of the plan's ambitions with the realities of implementation is evident in several key zones. The plan sensitively reminded readers that Ng'ambo's Raha Leo Civic Centre was 'a public space in the first place' and proposed to 'return it to the citizen'. The idea was to re-make the area as a cultural zone based on history, radio, theatre and cinema. It would be adjacent to a new Zanzibar CBD Metro Central Station and a shopping mall. Five years in, the only element being implemented is the shopping mall, with a Chinese contractor, and it is not being built where the plan envisioned, but in the planned public greenery and public market area.

Many other Chinese remakings of Zanzibar were also far from complete as of 2019. Others may never be complete. The city's physical infrastructure would be remade in many respects once these projects would reach completion. The 'fabric of space' (Gandy 2014), would be a Chinese fabric woven under and through the city, with a few patches of Germany, Korea, Tanzania or Oman. From port to airport, from a drainage network underground to the radio waves from the Chinese-built radio station, from the playgrounds and soccer grounds to rifles in the military parade grounds, most of Zanzibar would be 'made' in China. And yet, as has been seen for more than 170 years in Zanzibar, the real fabric of space is made by Zanzibaris, in relations with one another.

But it isn't only in contrarian, negative ways that people-as-infrastructure reorganize the infrastructure. The Ng'ambo Tuitakayo and Green Corridor projects serve as pertinent examples. The Kikwajuni 'quadrant' of the new Town Center has been utterly transformed from within in the last thirty years. Ng'ambo Tuitakayo envisions surgical removal of some of its single-story homes and their replacement with northern European-style, small-scale modular apartment buildings, and the Green Corridor envisions replanting the treescape of its edges and roadways. Ordinary residents of Kikwajuni, meanwhile, often reliant on relatives living abroad, have invested on their own in building three-, four- and five-story buildings, often apartment buildings, based on their own plans. The *Ng'ambo atlas* produced and published by DoURP and AAM (2019) documented 23 multi-story Swahili houses, 19 'Swahili 2020' (modernist and multi-story) houses, and 13 apartment buildings by 2018 in Kikwajuni, a total of 55 privately-developed or self-constructed residential buildings with greater verticality; 12 more were under construction. My 1992 dissertation fieldwork mapping of Kikwajuni found 32 buildings that

would have fit the atlas's categories, an absolute increase of 23 multi-story residential structures (with 15 under construction in December 1992). Residents have planted shrubs and trees on their own plots all over these *mitaa* (neighborhoods). What the planners produced, one Kikwajuni resident noted, was '*Ng'ambo waitakayo* [the Ng'ambo THEY want]', whereas the Ng'ambo that the residents want would be plain as day to anyone walking its alleys. It would be a neighborhood where the socio-cultural infrastructure and the physical-technical infrastructure co-produced one another in lively, vivid response to state- and outsider-driven agendas.

China's investments have been palpably impactful in urban Africa. Chinese infrastructure projects have come in the wake of rapid urbanization in much of the region over the last four or five decades amid a dire *lack* of functioning physical infrastructure. If infrastructures are what make cities, then African urbanism requires one to rethink them as more-than-material. I follow many in urban African studies in highlighting the human dimensions, and the notion of seeing both 'people-as-infrastructure' and the people who put infrastructures in place, maintain or sabotage them.

Infrastructure developments across Africa owe their physical being to other countries alongside China. Chinese firms, whether state-owned enterprises or other entities, often enter into complex partnerships with some of these other players. China's infrastructure investments in Zanzibar show this. One sees a deeper history and breadth of concerns in Zanzibar, in comparison to many cities in Africa, but also complicated partnering. In Zanzibar, it seems that the city is made, though, as it has been for several centuries, more by the everyday place-making of ordinary

residents, on top of or countering a 'fabric' intended to be shaped by Chinese designs and engineering.

## Is there a “world-class city” method?

Alessandra Radicati

[EARLY DRAFT]

### Introduction

The study of world-class cities (Ghertner 2015) has gained traction not only in urban geography but increasingly in anthropology. My main argument in this paper is that there has not been enough discussion of how world-class cities as ethnographic objects might have particular implications for ethnographic methods.

This paper is based on a mix of auto-ethnography and a close reading of recent texts on “world-class cities.” Auto-ethnography involves describing my experiences on fieldwork in Colombo and drawing on both my own impressions of carrying out that work as well as some of the ethnographic insights that have made it into my academic writing. But crucially, it also involves reflecting on the systems of knowledge production of which I am part – in this case, universities located in the Global North (US and UK), which are separate from my field site of Colombo. In this paper, I draw not only on my own experiences conducting fieldwork, but also on comments from anonymous reviewers and previous course instructors of mine to help lay out some of the resistance I have encountered in developing my approach to urban ethnography. I suggest that moments of incomprehension and clashing expectations are just as productive and revealing between the researcher and her academic colleagues as they are between the ethnographer and her informants in the field.

In addition, I also draw heavily on other writings about world-class cities. Rather than acting as a comprehensive literature review of books or articles that happen to be situated in so-called “world-class cities,” I look instead to specific moments within texts in which author-ethnographers consider their circumstances and/or offer methodological reflections about working in these spaces. My ultimate goal is to suggest that between “academic ethnography” and moments of explicit reflection, if we as researchers keep open lines of communication and commit to thinking and talking about what urban ethnographies of world-class cities are like to produce, we can come to understand important aspects of what this work truly is.

### Whole and Parts

#### Moment 1: New York, 2012

*“It will not be feasible to carry out an ethnography of an entire city, however”\**

Thus wrote the professor in my first year of PhD studies. He was commenting on a seminar paper I had written, in which I mused that I would like to “do an ethnography of Colombo.” My professor was reacting to what he clearly perceived to be some naivete on my part. I had written a seminar paper – having done no fieldwork, and having only a limited understanding of

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\* some of the statements made to me by academic colleagues and reviewers are paraphrased and some have been altered to protect individual anonymity and privacy.



what my future project would be about – in which I spoke in only the vaguest terms about what an “ethnography of Colombo” would look like. My professor, a scholar I admire to this day, was giving a helpful corrective to my overly general discussion. He was nudging me to think about what in particular I wanted to look at – which neighborhoods, perhaps, or which places within those neighborhoods – where I could situate myself in order to really “do” ethnography. The thrust of the professor’s comments was that I needed to think smaller; the city could only be approached in parts and I needed to pick one (or some).

But wholeness is important, as I came to discover. While the professor was doing what a good senior scholar does – encouraging a student to narrow down her topic, and be specific – I have had occasion over the years to think back to this comment. I have started to believe that perhaps my younger self was not as misguided as she may have initially seemed. For scholars of world-class cities, it is difficult to escape the fact that the places we study are often being marketed, celebrated and written about *as cities* not as neighborhoods or streets. There is some untangling that needs to be done between ethnographic object and ethnographic concept (Thorkelson 2016). On the one hand, we study the appeal and mythology of aspirational rhetoric about living in a “world-class city”; on the other hand, we tend to agree that world-class cities do not exist only in the symbolic realm, but that ethnography is best placed to help us understand their material effects as well. Part of ethnography’s attention to the material means that we need to anchor ourselves in specific places *within* cities in order to understand them. But what might be missing when we think in such terms?

In his work on motorcycle taxi drivers in Bangkok, Claudio Sopranzetti reflects on the limits of earlier forms of urban anthropology, which, he points out, typically focused on neighborhoods, streets, markets – the typical locations of “urban ethnography.” He notes:

...in order to describe urban life most of these works adopted one of the oldest tricks in the anthropological book: they assumed a metonymical relation between the scale of local fieldworks and that of the city as a whole. By studying the first, they made claims about the second. In doing so, they implicitly postulated that dynamics visible at one scale must be present and parallel at the other, without questioning how these scales are produced, connected and reworked in everyday life. (Sopranzetti 2018, 6).

What Sopranzetti terms “disciplinary orthodoxy and methodological conservatism in anthropology” (2018, 9) meets a considerable obstacle when we use anthropological theory and methods to investigate life in emerging metropolises. Sopranzetti is making a large claim here – that most anthropological work done in cities has been overly focused on “smaller” scales, which has caused anthropologists to misunderstand the relationship between “neighborhood” and city, assuming the former to stand in metonymically for the latter.

## **Deep Hanging Out**

### **Moment 2: Colombo, 2015**

*Still in the beginning stages of my fieldwork. Sri Lanka is a different country from the place I had come for my preliminary fieldwork last year: the old government has been voted out. Suddenly so much more is possible. There is a palpable excitement among scholars of Sri Lanka. I go to the American Institute for Sri Lankan Studies one very hot afternoon to look at some books. There, I meet with an eminent older scholar of the country, a white man who is deeply knowledgeable, adventurous and known for his skillful fieldwork in rural areas. We chat about my project. He doesn't seem to get why I am based in Colombo, instead of some place outside. There's a disconnect. I get the feeling he doesn't think what I'm doing is "real" anthropology. Towards the end of our conversation, he tells me I look very young and that will be a hindrance for me doing this work. He also tells me that the only way to really do fieldwork is to stand outside and talk to people. I should just "hang out" in some neighborhood, look around, see what goes on, and talk to people on the street. My heart sinks. I can't do what he's suggesting, and I already know it.*

I found the comments and suggestions made by my older male interlocutor dispiriting for a number of reasons. The biggest one was that my own positionality – as a young (and apparently young-looking), white, foreign female researcher rendered the act of “hanging out” on Colombo streets next to impossible. At every turn, I found that my presence on streets, on public transport, in shopping malls, etc. resulted in unwanted attention. Sexual harassment is a major problem for women in Sri Lanka, and though my whiteness gave me enormous privileges, my gender presentation and age meant that I was also subject to cat-calling, stares, following, stalking and threats of sexual assault while I was on fieldwork.

But “hanging out” on the street was impractical advice for another reason. To simply hang out, stationary in a single neighborhood, would have meant doing something very strange in Colombo terms. I noticed very quickly on my fieldwork that the street life of Colombo was generally much more muted in tone than the images of Global South cities which tend to dominate, of vibrant marketplaces and families spilling out onto streets. While some neighborhoods of Colombo do possess this kind of “outdoor” urban space, many others are extremely quiet – the high temperatures and lack of sidewalks mean that standing or sitting outside for long periods of time is not an appealing option. In class terms, “hanging out” outside would have relegated my study to only engaging with men and perhaps a few women classed as the “urban poor” or small-time vendors; it would not have in any way prepared me for talking to elites or white-collar professionals, most of whom were accessible only in air-conditioned hotel lobbies, offices or were in their private vehicles insulated from the buses, tuk-tuks and motorcycles that clog Colombo streets.

Scholars of the urban Global South are increasingly interested in exploring more mobile modes of relating to the cities they study, and I suggest this has real implications for the way we understand cities. Recent interest in the anthropology of infrastructure has made circulation and mobility more prominent in urban ethnographies.

Again, I turn to Claudio Sopranzetti:

“If I did not want to reproduce the disjuncture between traditional urban anthropology and urban theory, I had to adopt a flexible and mobile methodology, one that actively strove to ‘move along with people, images or objects that are moving and being studied.’...circulation not only became the object of my analysis, it also structured my methodology.” (Sopranzetti 2018, 9).

Caroline Melly, writing on Dakar, also points to the importance of movement and circulation in city-space. In her piece “Ethnography on the Road,” Melly describes moments of encounter with Dakarois complaining about and challenging neoliberal visions for the city’s future – while also being reluctant to frame these as anything more than highly individualized complaints, rather than the basis for any form of collective struggle. Crucially, Melly uses these encounters to thinkthrough the material and symbolic effects of the city’s new forms of infrastructure: “as large-scale projects were launched in quick succession around the city, traffic bottlenecks and detours multiplied, straining daily circulations, routines and livelihoods” (2013, 386). Her own encounters with the informants she introduces took place on the very roads choked by traffic and slowed by construction: her most memorable ethnographic moments are with her own taxi drivers, who comment on the endless problems wrought by traffic as they pilot her from one part of Dakar to the next.

Researchers’ mobility can be one of the main ways that we differ from our informants. While I do not wish to reproduce the trope of the “foreign” (read: white) researcher assumed to study a Global South context (this would erase all the researchers who are from the countries they study), I do want to point out that many researchers, including those from Global South cities, are often at an advantage vis-à-vis their working class and urban poor informants when it comes to being able to move across and between spaces in the city. As Gregory Beckett puts it in his work on Port au Prince, Haiti: “I was able to move across borders, both literal and figurative, in ways that few others could. I traversed social divisions and national borders as well as the subtler demarcations of neighborhoods, social relationships, and political affiliations.” (Beckett 2019, 15). Beckett acknowledges that any claim to totality in his work or portrayal of a “larger whole” is “inherently incomplete” (2019, 15), but nonetheless his point about moving across borders is valuable.

My suggestion is that this act of moving is not necessarily about conducting “multi-sited ethnography” (though it can be about that, too) but rather helps paint a broader picture of a given field site. In cities, this movement is absolutely necessary for any story we seek to tell about inequality of any kind, or any differential experience of living in the city.

## **Conclusion**

This paper is a starting point for more discussion on the methods we use to study “world-class cities” as ethnographers. In opening this discussion, I also call for more self-awareness among researchers about how our own positionality operates, and for greater awareness of the links between different fields. Anthropologists have much to learn from urban geographers in thinking through questions of scale and circulation in cities, but anthropology also has much to

teach in terms of the attention the discipline has paid to questions of ethnographic method. Talking more explicitly about what methods we use to study world-class cities is a starting point for greater interdisciplinary engagement. It is also, hopefully, a starting point for more consideration of gender, race and class and researcher positionality and the specifics of how these things play out in urban studies.

The issue of mobility is linked to that of scale, or the relationship between “parts” of a city and the city as a whole: the clear shift in ethnographic studies of the city towards more mobile research practices suggests that neighborhood level or “street corner” ethnography is no longer the norm, nor is it necessarily desirable. Instead, it is clear that cities are being grasped in different ways, usually through ethnographies that involve moving around and following different stories, to arrive at a larger-scale understanding of how the city itself functions as a “main character” in the narratives we tell. Without making claims to wholeness or to full, impartial understandings of how specific cities work, urban anthropologists are nonetheless growing bolder in terms of the scale at which they theorize. It’s time for anthropological theorizing and discussions of method to follow suit.

# Transfer Mechanisms of Strategic Spatial Planning to Post-Soviet Cities: The Case of Integrated Urban Development Project in Ukraine

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## 1. Introduction

Ukraine is currently in the process of complex implementation of the reforms, based on decentralisation of power and empowering communities, which triggers the transformation of spatial planning mechanisms on both national and municipal levels (Udovychenko et al, 2017). In this context, over the last decade, the country has seen rising interest in the use of strategic (spatial) planning, conceptualised and broadly applied in Western European context and transferred to Ukraine (Thomann, 2015).

According to Watson (2009), however, “approaches to planning which have originated in the global North are frequently based on assumptions regarding urban contexts which do not hold elsewhere in the world [...]” (Watson, 2009, p. 2272). Hence, it might be stated that ‘policy transfers’ are considerably affected by specific local contexts with their actors, institutional settings, and broader governance arrangements, as well as by external intervening factors, including policy circulation networks, geopolitical agendas, and “transnational and translocal constitution of institutional relations” (Healey, 2013; Neugebauer and Tyminskyi, 2019; Peck, 2003, p. 229, as cited in McCann and Ward, 2011).

Against this background, the paper intends to critically reflect upon the complexity and to conceptualise the mechanisms of transferring strategic spatial planning model to (post-Soviet) Ukraine. A specific focus is put on the project ‘Integrated Urban Development (IUD)’ (GIZ, 2019; MinRegion, 2016) introduced in six municipalities after the Revolution of Dignity of 2013-2014.

With the aim to examine the transfer process as multilateral, socio-spatial, and those in which “policies are subject to change and struggle as they move” (McCann and Ward, 2011, p. 24), the paper does not present the final outcomes, but rather outlines the focal points and key questions of the ongoing research and summarise the first reflections on potentials and challenges of the transfer of strategic spatial planning and its localisation in the context of Ukraine within the wider theoretical discourse on urban policy transfer (see McCann, 2008, 2011a, 2011b; McCann and Ward, 2011; Peck and Theodore, 2010).

## 2. Strategic Spatial Planning in the Context of Global Urban Policy Circulation

At the end of the last century, the ‘rational and technical’ land-use planning model inherited from the modernism times has been widely criticised by professional communities, decision-makers, and civil society representatives for its claim to be universally valid rather than sensitive to a local

context; having a sectoral instead of integrated perspective on complex urban issues; for a lack of collaborative and participative practices, as well as for its rigid and restrictive rather than empowering and visionary approach (Albrechts, 2004; 2015; Healey, 2011; Neugebauer and Tyminskyi, 2019; Watson, 2016).

As a result, in the 1980s–1990s strategic spatial planning, as “a socio-spatial [...] process through which a vision, actions, and means for implementation are produced that shape and frame what a place is and may become” (Albrechts, 2004, p. 747) was perceived as a ‘new hope’ in many countries of the global North aiming to improve and guide territorial development processes in a more sustainable and integrated way<sup>1</sup> (Albrechts, 2004; Albrechts and Balducci, 2013; Albrechts et al, 2003; Healey, 2011; Healey et al, 1997).

Being particular type of ‘global urban policy’ (Robinson, 2011, pp. 20–21) and circulating in the ‘space of flows’<sup>2</sup> (Castells, 2010; Harvey, 1989; Stalder, 2002), in the 1990s–2000s, city strategies and strategic spatial planning (as a specific policy model) have been actively promoted in and undertaken by developing countries (including the post-Soviet space)<sup>3</sup>.

In this context, the phenomena of urban policy transfer and ‘mobility’ of planning ideas and models have become a focal point for many social science scholars, including those from the planning discipline (Healey, 2011; Healey, 2013; Robinson, 2011). Herewith, the existing literature on policy transfer has been largely criticised for (a) being predominantly focused on national territories and their elites without appreciating the global – intercity – dimension of the transfer process and the role of other agents involved, and for (b) tending to ignore the socio-spatial and global-relational nature of the policy transfer as well as the fact that “policies are changed as they travel” (McCann 2008, 2011b; Peck and Theodore, 2001, as cited in McCann and Ward, 2011, p. 22).

As a response, it was suggested to shift intellectual efforts towards understanding (a) particular type(s) of urban policy transfer; (b) specific infrastructures (channels) and landscapes (topological spatialities) that facilitate or hinder the ‘traveling’ process; (c) the ways in which mobilities and flows are produced and enabled in a certain place; and (d) the power relationships between transnational and local agents of policy circulation as both-sided, those within which “the global

<sup>1</sup> It is worthwhile to mention here that in the Western European context, enthusiasm for strategic planning approaches has been lasting for more than two decades already – broadly applied, tested, and discussed at the cross-national, state, regional, and municipal levels (see Albrechts, 2004; Albrechts and Balducci, 2013; Albrechts et al, 2003; Healey, 2011; Healey et al, 1997; Neugebauer and Tyminskyi, 2019; Salet and Faludi, 2000; Sartorio, 2005; Van den Broeck, 2008).

<sup>2</sup> In his book *The Rise of the Network Society*, Manuel Castells (2010) defines the ‘space of flows’ as “the material organisation of time-sharing social practices that work through flows”, understanding by flows “purposeful, repetitive, programmable sequences of exchange and interaction between physically disjointed positions held by social actors in the economic, political, and symbolic structures of society” (Castells, 2010, p. 441).

<sup>3</sup> According to Robinson (2011), this often happens in the moments of transition or local crisis by means of various international technical assistance and capacity building projects implemented by transnational institutions and agencies (e.g. World Bank, UN, GIZ, USAID, etc.), private sector consultants, and planning companies (Harvey, 2005; 2006; Larner, 2000; McCann, 2011a; McCann and Ward 2012; Peck, 2004; Robinson, 2011 p. 17).

production of the local, and the local production of the global” happen (Massey, 2011, p. 9; McCann and Ward, 2011; Tsing, 2000 as cited in Robinson, 2011)<sup>4</sup>.

Drawing upon the above-mentioned arguments, the following sub-chapters aim to expand the empirical knowledge on the post-Soviet context and its ‘place’ on the global map of urban policy circuits by examining the specifics of transferring strategic spatial planning model to Ukraine in the framework of the post-Soviet transition and recent socio-political transformations in the country caused by the Revolution of Dignity of 2013-2014.

### **3. Transfer of Strategic Spatial Planning into Ukraine in the Framework of the Post-Soviet Transition of the 1990s**

While Western European countries have experienced significant changes in urban development patterns and approaches in the past several decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the transformations on the post-Soviet space after the collapse of the USSR were particularly drastic within a shorter time span (Starodubtseva, 2012)<sup>5</sup>.

In order to overcome the negative consequences of the post-Soviet transition and to increase the efficiency of the implementation of neoliberal reforms, governments of newly formed independent republics started building connections with transnational players, actively inviting foreign consultancy agencies and experts that were seen as a ‘potentially quick solution’ to the complex challenges (Appenzeller, 2017; Robinson, 2011; Starodubtseva, 2012; Yerofalov-Pylypchak, 2002).

However, the attempts to fast and often superficially replicate ‘western’ urban development policies and ‘best practices’ in the post-Soviet realities evidently showed the weakness of such a promise (Yerofalov-Pylypchak, 2002; Tymynskyi, 2013). According to Nikitin and Nikitina (2000, p. 33), the dissolution of the USSR has made post-Soviet cities ‘deficient’ due to the absence of politically active territorial communities which would be able to play the main role in creating a foundation for the local self-government and in defining a strategic development direction. In addition, during the Soviet times, the cities of the former USSR had been largely excluded from the globalisation processes and decentralisation efforts taking place in other parts of the world and, hence, had limited capacities to act as equal counterparts for transnational actors that started playing a crucial role in socio-political, economic, and spatial transformations in the newly formed independent republics in the 1990s (Nikitin and Nikitina, 2000).

<sup>4</sup> It is also important to mention, that the discourse on global urban policy circulation has stimulated scholars paying more careful attention to those parts of the world which lay beyond the global North and “Western intellectual and policymaking circles” (Healey, 2013, p. 1521; Watson, 2016) and which are being frequently perceived as constant ‘recipients’ (Szulanski, 2000; Reagans and McEvily, 2003) or ‘importers’ (Stone, 2004) of certain planning ideas or practices.

<sup>5</sup> In particular, the abrupt turn from the planned and centralised economic system into a market-oriented development model brought dramatic changes to all spheres of life and introduced “new actors and new rules of the game” (Brade 2017; Molodikova and Makhrova, 2007). As a result, from the early to the mid-1990s an overwhelming majority of the former Soviet states experienced a deep economic crisis which entailed unfavorable socio-political and economic situation in the cities and urban regions (Brade 2017; Meerovich, 2006; Tymynskyi, 2013).

In the case of Ukraine, the above-mentioned challenges were complemented by the process of an 'informal regionalisation' of the country into semi-autonomous fiefdoms held by rapacious political-economic entrepreneurs and their mafia-like structures, that often controlled (fully or partially) official governmental, non-governmental, and commercial organisations that prevented efficient implementation of economic and political reforms including strategic territorial development of Ukrainian cities and regions (Umland, 2019).

Hence, despite practicing strategic planning approaches in the 1990s-2000s, both tangible and intangible outcomes of such exercise turned out rather weak, formal, and with low transformative impacts for the local communities in a long-term perspective<sup>6</sup>.

#### **4. Integrated Urban Development Project in Ukraine in the Context of Decentralization Reform and the Revolution of Dignity**

The above-described development patterns have significantly changed after the Ukrainian Revolution of Dignity of 2013-2014<sup>7</sup>. The immense internal demand of the civil society on the systemic changes in the power structures and its territorial basis "on the way to the European model of governance" (Udovychenko et al, 2017, p. 25) together with the external political, economic, and expert support of the post-Maidan Ukrainian government created a foundation for a large-scale and multi-level reformation of the country, including the adoption of decentralisation policy in 2014 (Dudley, 2019; OECD, 2018).

Along with the mission to smooth regional divisions and strengthen the self-government capacity of local communities, the Reform of Decentralisation has been aimed at a substantial reshaping of the post-Soviet spatial planning system in Ukraine based on the principles of integrated territorial development (Dudley, 2019; GIZ, 2019; MinRegion, 2016; Shapovalova, 2014).

To fulfill this goal, a multilateral German-Swiss-Ukrainian cooperation project 'Integrated Urban Development (IUD) in Ukraine' is being implemented by the German Corporation for International Cooperation (GIZ) in six chosen cities all over the country since 2015<sup>8</sup>.

<sup>6</sup> One of the examples is a failure of the municipal movement in Ukrainian cities in the mid-1990s–early 2000s that had been largely conditioned by the lack of efficient mechanisms and appropriate tools for implementing urban development strategies on the local level and the unpreparedness of citizens to become an active actor and driving force of this movement. The latter has become even more decisive factor in the reform's collapse despite an extensive financial and expert support by the U.S. and EU agencies for international development (Yerofalov-Pylypchak, 2002; Glazychev, 2008).

<sup>7</sup> Starting in November 2013 on the Independence Square in Kyiv as public protests in reaction to the government's decision to withhold from association with the European Union, the Revolution of Dignity or 'Euromaidan' has turned into a nationwide civic movement against "widespread government corruption, abuse of power, and violation of human rights in Ukraine" (Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, 2014). As a result, the emerging civil society manifested its pro-European and a pro-democratic self-designation on the main squares and streets all over the country (Minakov 2018, par. 7).

<sup>8</sup> The IUD project was commissioned by the German Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ) and the Swiss State Secretariat for Economic Affairs (SECO) in cooperation with the Ministry for Communities and Territories Development of Ukraine (former MinRegion). Initially, the cities of Vinnytsia, Chernivtsi, Poltava, and Zhytomyr were selected as project partners. Since 2017, they have been joined by Lviv and in Podil, a district of Kyiv. The implementation of the IUD, has been assigned to Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (German Corporation for International Cooperation) (GIZ) – Germany's state-funded company with about 90 offices



Among the project's objectives are (a) to enable local communities of the chosen municipalities to shape and manage their development processes independently, "following the example of Western European cities" and in line with the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities of 2007<sup>9</sup>, as well as (b) to develop long-term strategic development plans, with a strong focus on the needs and involvement of citizens (GIZ, 2019; MinRegion, 2016).

Due to the complexity of the project, the IUD covers several components (see Table 1).

Component	Description
#1. Elaboration of 'Integrated Urban Development Concepts'	Local representatives of the six municipalities, organised as interdisciplinary working groups, have been supported by German and Swiss mentors in the elaboration of integrated urban development concepts – strategic documents that should define an ambitious yet feasible long-term vision and goals of each community (GIZ, 2019).
#2. Capacity building programs and trainings	The employees from the project partner cities have participated in various training programs in order to increase their awareness of the principles of IUD management, "strengthen cooperation, communication, and coordination within city administrations", and learn relevant mechanisms and tools for engaging citizens in the city development processes (Brandt, 2017; GIZ, 2019).
#3. Providing new educational opportunities to local urban planning professionals	The IUD project supported educational programs, such as 'Advanced Studies in Integrated Urban Development' designed by Ukrainian non-formal educational institution CANactions School and launched an international exchange semester for urban development students at German universities (Brandt, 2017; GIZ, 2019; Thomann and Tyminskyi, 2017).
#4. Cooperation and exchange between the municipal and central governments	In the frame of the project organised regular meetings, working sessions, and conferences facilitated by GIZ experts, with the partner cities representatives, and the officials of MinRegion, aimed at exchanging 'bottom-up' and 'top-down' perspectives on the ongoing decentralisation reform, sharing the experience of applying integrated approach to urban development with other cities, and establishing a holistic basis for a new legislation on spatial planning on the national level (GIZ, 2019; MinRegion, 2016).

Table 1. The key components of the IUD project. Source: author, based on Brandt, 2017; GIZ, 2019; MinRegion, 2016; Thomann and Tyminskyi, 2017.

around the globe, aimed to provide other countries with technical aid based on inter-governmental agreements on cooperation in certain fields (GIZ, 2019; Shulzhenko, 2019).

<sup>9</sup> Elaborated in the context of the presidency of Germany of the European Union, the Charter reflects the key results of the conducted background research on the potentials of integrated approaches to urban development policy, envisioned as a tool and "a prerequisite for urban sustainability in Europe" (Lütke Daldrup, 2007). Further, the concept of integrated urban development has been promoted transnationally by means of German-funded technical assistance and capacity building projects in the field of territorial planning in the third world countries (including the GIZ project 'Integrated Urban Development in Ukraine').

Based on the outlined project structure, it might be argued that the comprehensiveness of the IUD – including the diversity of actors involved and the formats of their interaction with each other and with international experts; the complexity of implementation mechanisms and channels; and the variety of expected outcomes – has made it more flexible for the adaptation in the local context and, thus, potentially more sustainable in a mid- and long-term perspective for carrying out the local transformative processes.

## **5. Localisation of Strategic Spatial Planning in Post-Maidan Ukraine: The First Reflections and Further Questions**

Reflecting on the case of the IUD project, it is possible to consider it as an example of transferring strategic spatial planning model into post-Maidan Ukraine.

At first glance, it might be perceived as a typical “one-way and outside-in” process (Massey, 2011, p. 8), due to a decisive role of transnational agents in ‘pushing’ the Ukrainian government towards implementing the decentralisation reform in order to strengthen ‘pro-western’ geopolitical development vector (Umland, 2019).

However, in contrast to the decades of “hybrid post-Soviet existence” (Minakov 2018, par. 6), after the Revolution of Dignity, the rise of a ‘mobilised’ and pro-active civil society and local initiatives, as well as the increasing integration of Ukrainian cities and their communities into the global-local circulation of knowledge, policies, and ‘best practices’, have shaped favourable conditions for the localisation and contextualisation of global urban policies and policy models, such as integrated urban development and strategic spatial planning.

Besides, the awareness of the implementing agency and experts, engaged in the IUD, about the necessity and value of adjusting the ‘original’ approach to the specific local needs of each municipality, revealed during the project’s implementation phase, created potentials for making the transfer a more complex, multilateral, and creative process.

At the same time, more detailed conclusions and assessments demand further empirical research. Among the questions to be answered, a particular attention should be paid on studying the specific type of the ongoing transfer, as well as motivations and roles of internal and external, formal and informal agents that facilitate or hinder the mobilisation, translation, and adaptation of integrated urban development approach – a constituting element of strategic spatial planning model. Secondly, both physical and non-physical transfer infrastructures and channels should be identified and examined. Thirdly, it is needed to research the local effects of adopting and practicing strategic spatial planning in the various Ukrainian municipalities in relation to the experience on the national level.

Despite the evident complexity of the ongoing transfer of strategic spatial planning, a more thorough and critical understanding of its mechanisms, actors, and intervening factors that influence on the process could open the opportunity for the Ukrainian state, its cities, and urban regions to reconstitute the existing architecture of governance and territorial development towards the one that reflects strategic visions, expectations, and needs of the politically active local communities and their right to generate locally relevant development strategies.

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## 3A-2.4: Finance, Financialisation

**Chair:** Dr Aris Komporozos-Athanasίου, Lecturer in Social Theory and Social Policy, UCL

Manuscript not available

**The financialised representation of space**

Fernando Toro Cano, PhD candidate, The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL

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**Pious developers: actually existing financialization of land in a neighborhood of Beirut**

Abir Zaatari, Researcher, Beirut Urban Lab, American University of Beirut

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**Notes about the distribution of pension funds in the Brazilian territory: the prominence and influence in São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Brasilia**

Caio Zarino Jorge Alves, PhD candidate, University of São Paulo/Vrije Universiteit Brussel



**UCL Conference:** At the Frontiers of The Urban: Thinking Concepts and Practices Globally

**Title:** Pious Developers: Actually-Existing Financialization of Housing Production in a Beirut Neighborhood

**Paper By:** Abir Zaatari, Mona Fawaz

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## A. Introduction

A lot has been written about what Neil Brenner has termed the utopia of unlimited exploitation and its ensuing imagination of open, competitive and unregulated markets (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). The consequence of these utopias on urban housing in the form of financialization trends have attracted a growing literature that traced patterns of transnational circulation of capital in global cities such as New York and London (Harvey, 2007; Fernandez, Hofman, & Aalbers, 2016) as well as cities from the Global South such as Cairo, Beirut, and Istanbul (Marot, 2018; Erol, 2019; Adham, 2005). Ultimately, these studies have adopted the classical explanations related to capital switching into real estate markets, inflation of housing prices, and the increased involvement of financial markets in the housing sector as the main indicators of financialization in cities across the Global North and South (Aalbers, 2010; Marot, 2018; Krijnen, 2016). Nonetheless, other forces such as market segmentation, conflict legacies, and path dependent processes that shape the realities of cities from the Global South in particular, constitute central ingredients through which financialization penetrates. This moves beyond these classical explanations and look more into the role of social agents such as real estate developers in housing production dynamics.

This study is part of a larger work conducted in the Beirut Urban Lab which aims to unravel the actually-existing financialization of housing production by taking Beirut – a city notoriously known for civil war (1975-1990) inflicted sectarian divide, as a case study. The study departs from the assumption that financialization has seamlessly penetrated Beirut’s market across contexts (Krijnen, 2016; Tierney, 2017; Marot, 2018), or the replicability of unedited versions of the same

housing scenarios by arguing that **it (financialization)** is rather filtered by the existing divisions and realities in the city. By looking at Aicha Bakkar, a low-middle income neighborhood of Beirut that was historically organized around the highest Sunni Religious Authority-*Dar el Fatwa*, this paper shows that the neighborhood's eminent religious-institutional in the city has allowed a web of Sunni Islamic organizations to serve as a platform for developers to control the housing market. This study therefore relocates financialization within a thick web of social forces (e.g. religious, sectarian, associational, kin) governing the development market in other neighborhoods. More generally, this study argues for the necessity to inscribe market dynamics within the specific forces organizing cities and their neighborhoods, consequently unravelling the "actually-existing" patterns of financialization (Fawaz, forthcoming).

This study approaches housing production through a detailed period study by mapping building activity, the developers involved, and the impact of path dependent processes on current housing production dynamics. It relies on (GIS) framework for gathering and analyzing data, quantitative empirical data collection of buildings developed in the neighborhood (1996-2018), and in-depth qualitative interviews with 20 real estate developers who have operated in the neighborhood during the post war period.

## B. The Direct Penetration of Financialization of Housing

The ways through which urban transformation is happening in post war Beirut (1990-2018) have been widely researched and debated. Krijnen (2016) argues that housing production in Beirut is linked to capital accumulation processes, through the rechanneling of capital from primary circuits to the urban landscape. She further argues that a number of state policies such as (Building Law 646/2004, Law 360/2001, Liberation of Rent control, etc.) generated variable degrees of rent gap across the city, consequently channeling real estate agents to neighborhoods with higher rent gaps.

Tierney (2017) links housing production in Beirut to the transnational financial circulations from Arab Gulf investors and Lebanese diaspora “*swayed by the fortunes of the war*”. She further argues that the banking sector- managed by the Central Bank and financed by sovereign debt, had a major role in vitalizing the real estate sector in spite of instability and empty apartments under the constructed discourse of resiliency and state policies of the banking and real estate sector. Finally, Marot (2018) argues that the property market operates as an institution of regulation governed by a network of elite city builders. The financing and the functioning of the system rests on the objectives of stimulating growth and securing short term monetary and financial stability through greater involvement of the Central Bank in attracting foreign capital and channeling them into the built environment.

Although such studies shed a wealth of insight on the role of financial tools in contemporary urban change in Beirut, they fail, however, to fully integrate the importance of local processes. They offer an all-encompassing abstract explanation on how housing is produced in Beirut, while marginalizing the role of locally constructed (sectarian, class-based) networks as important forces of housing production and urban change.

### C. A Sneak Peek into a Neighborhood of Beirut: Aicha Bakkar

Aicha Bakkar is a residential neighborhood that emerged during the early 1920s as a natural extension of the urbanization process extending from Beirut’s historic core. Though the neighborhood was originally religiously heterogenous, the decision to locate Dar el Fatwa, the highest Sunni Religious Authority, in Aicha Bakkar in the early 1940s created a sense of Muslim territorial visibility in the city transforming the neighborhood into an increasingly attractive

residential destination for Muslims. This was further exacerbated by the 1958 conflict<sup>1</sup> and later during the civil war period<sup>2</sup>.

Today, Dar El Fatwa's presence in Aicha Bakkar has galvanized Sunni residents around it, leading to the proliferation of several religious organizations and political alliances. The neighborhood contains more than 7 adjacent mosques. Health care, education, and other basic services in the neighborhood are heavily mediated by these religious organizations and a number of Sunni political parties. This is also reflected in the active role these organizations have in the production of space in the neighborhood.

#### D. Realities of Housing Production in an Increasingly Financialized City: Real Estate Developers in Aicha Bakkar

Two categories of developers who operated in the neighborhood of Aicha Bakkar during the post-civil war era were identified based on a recurring pattern in their personal social background, their entry to the market, and the market strategies they adopt. This study shows that real estate developers are managing housing production in Aicha Bakkar through a dual-track activity: A steady-going activity operated by a small number of professionals "*Neighborhood Developers*", and a disorganized, irregular activity operated by a larger number of "*Amateur developers*".

*Neighborhood developers'* profile and social networks have determined to a large extent their ability to penetrate Aicha Bakkar's housing market. They are predominantly Sunni middle-aged men, coming from modest families born and raised in either the neighborhoods of Aicha Bakkar

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<sup>1</sup> A rising tension between pan-Arab opposition (pre-dominantly Muslims) and the pro-western Lebanese president (pre-dominantly backed by Christians) leading to the eruption of the first civil conflict in 1958.

<sup>2</sup> The *Lebanese Civil War* was a multifaceted *civil war* in Lebanon that mainly aggregated Christians in Eastern Beirut, and Muslims in Wester Beirut.

or Tarik Jdidi (another Sunni-dominated neighborhood in Beirut). Neighborhood developers graduated with a degree in Civil Engineering or Architecture from Beirut Arab University (a private university founded by one of the Sunni Charitable Organizations<sup>3</sup>) by the time the civil war has ended.

Social networks and social standing are crucial for neighborhood developers' activity in terms of accessing investors, land, and securing clients. Consequently, *neighborhood developers* capitalized on the affiliations they had within the neighborhood to accumulate social capital and gain recognition in the local – mainly Sunni, community.

First, *neighborhood developers* developed affiliations to Sunni philanthropic/religious organizations<sup>4</sup> from which they can gain respectability, access clients, and land in the neighborhood. They were able to secure positions in (land-owning) religious organizations that are spread in the neighborhood of Aicha Bakkar, through which they were awarded the development of any potential project for these organizations including headquarters, religious complexes, and for-profit residential buildings. In such projects, the developer acts as the client representative to develop and sell the shares on behalf of the organization based on a 50%-50% agreement. This has allowed these developers to secure clients, access investors for finance, and land in the neighborhood.

*Neighborhood developers* capitalized on their Sunni identity to cater for the local demand in the neighborhood through refraining from selling to Shi'ite customers and refraining from resorting to construction loans to finance their projects. They appealed to “culture”, habits, and the

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<sup>3</sup> Beirut Arab University was founded by the Lebanese Al Bir wal Ihsan in 1960

<sup>4</sup> The Sunni community has a number of religious organizations “جمعيات” that are widely endorsed in the Sunni Muslim community. The organizations range from small to medium to large scale depending on the popularity of the dissipated principles, the organization's capital/funding schemes, etc. The members of these organizations vary in social and financial standing, yet the management of these organizations are usually bourgeoisie notables, etc.

allegiance to certain political choices and/or religious or sectarian views through reinforcing an identity as Shi'ite free customers. This strategy appeals to the residents of Sunni dominated neighborhoods such as Aicha Bakkar<sup>5</sup> and has given them recognition, respectability, and trustworthiness among neighborhood residents and landowners in the area. Unlike other developers in the city, neighborhood developers also refrain from taking banking loans to finance their projects. Their reservations are mainly based on religious purposes, in addition to the understanding of the instability of the market. Again this has given them trustworthiness and financial credibility in the neighborhood, due to them resorting to more stable and secure sources of financing.

On the other hand, *Amateur developers* are non-professional real estate developers, who were lured by the *get-quick-rich* appeal of the lucrative business of housing development during the post war period and followed last during the exuberance stage of the market boom (mainly after 2004). They had a sense of entitlement that they also deserve a piece of the pie, so they gave up their old professions and ventured into development. *Amateur developers* are also Sunni middle aged men coming from low income families from the neighborhood of Tarik El Jdidi. They come from very different educational and professional backgrounds ranging from secondary degree holders, electricians, jewelry makers, to PhD degree holders.

Although *Amateurs* categorize themselves along with *neighborhood developers*, they are usually not recognized by the residents of the neighborhood nor by *neighborhood developers*.

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<sup>5</sup> After the events of May 2008, the residents of Aicha Bakkar have developed resentment and distrust towards Shi'ites affiliated to Hizbollah or Harakat Amal. They believed that the Shi'ite residents in the neighborhood lead to the infiltration of Hizbollah fighters during the 2008 events. Residents, landowners, and potential buyers have a strong preference to Shi'a free neighbors to reduce probability of political tension in the buildings they live in.

Amateurs developers were not able to build trust and expand their social networks in the neighborhood due to their limited number of projects, their late entry into the market, and their divergence from the sectarian ground rules in the neighborhood. They have prioritized selling over any sectarian or religious considerations, often selling to Shi'ites, Durzis, Sunnis, etc. This has often put them in dire situations with the neighborhood residents and other clients, and blacklisted them by landowners in the neighborhood. Consequently, their activity in the neighborhood was limited to one or two projects due to the financial and legal issues they often faced throughout the execution of their projects.

#### E. Conclusion

Financialization has penetrated small sections in the city of Beirut through the attraction of foreign investment, the increased involvement of the banking sector, and the channeling of capital into the built environment. The lucrative lure of investment in the housing sector has incentivized actors in other segments in the city to heavily invest in housing production and the real estate market. This capital penetration was filtered and mediated by much more complex realities such as religious, sectarian and political divisions in the city of Beirut. For example, housing production in Aicha Bakkar is mediated through religious and political institutions thus making access to housing production in Aicha Bakkar exclusive to those who have religious affiliations, and identify with a given political sectarian group, thus reproducing class and sectarian lines in the city.

Notes about the distribution of pension funds in the Brazilian territory: the prominence and influence of São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro and Brasília

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*Pension funds and the “finance-led capitalism”*

Since the economic crisis of the 1970s, the capitalist mode of production has developed new characteristics. This conjuncture is characterized as a turning point in the Fordist regime of accumulation, because it indicates the end of the “thirty glorious years” of global economic growth based on “reciprocal relations that bound big labour, big capital, and big government” (Harvey, 1989, p. 142). Due to this crisis of overaccumulation, “registered as surpluses of capital (in commodity, money, or productive capacity forms) and surpluses of labour power side by side, without there apparently being any means to bring them together profitably” (Harvey, 2003, p. 88), the contemporary capitalist mode of production had to assume new attributes.

Quite synthetically, Guttman (2008) identifies the “triple push” composed by “deregulation, globalization and computerization” as transformation process of the capitalist mode of production. As a prominent and inherent part of this restructuring process, the growing relevance of capital markets throughout the leading role of financial institutions in domestic and international economies has justified the designation of the current period as “finance-led capitalism”.

Thanks to the acceleration of cross-border informational flows, huge amounts of capital can be channelled to new financial products, instruments and mechanisms operated by the global action strategy of the financial institutions. Within the scope of socio-spatial transformations, two main concomitant and complementary processes arise: on the one hand, the dispersion of standardized and routine economic activities and, on the other hand, the development of advanced producer services complexes as a condition to the decision-making process on financial investments. Therefore, the advanced producer services complexes operate as the global economy’s command and control points, centralizing decisions about a fragmentary and hierarchical production structured throughout the international division of labour.



It is important to highlight that “these practices related to command and control have been subsumed in a logic of financialization” (Bassens; van Meeteren, 2015, p. 754), increasingly operated by institutional investors. These agents represent both a large increase in the “supply of capital in search for liquid investments” (Farnetti, 1998, p. 188), as well as “the growing demand for investments in financial assets” (Sauviat, 1998, p. 188).

Amongst institutional investors, pension funds are characterized as “retirement funds separate from employer accounts in which financial reserves of either employer or salary origin (or both) are accumulated and valued in the financial markets” (Sauviat, 2005, p. 111). In this regard, pension funds are “consumers of sophisticated financial products” (Clark, 2000b, p. 62) and, therefore, they propelled the “massive increase in trading capital in the Anglo-American securities markets” ( Clark, 2000b, p. 62) since the last two decades of the twentieth century. Through this form of action, pension funds have been presented as agents capable of tackling both the widely publicized unsustainability of public sector pay-as-you-go schemes due to the ageing population process, and the impossibility of state investments in, for example, infrastructure and urban development according to fiscal austerity.

Hence, the rise of pension funds as a part of the “retreat of the state” represents the transfer to the market sectors of responsibilities previously linked to nation-state, leading Clark (2000a, p. 37) to entitle this process (more intense and advanced in Anglo-American economies) as “pension fund capitalism”. Although “pension fund capitalism” refers more closely to the significant process of assets concentration in Anglo-Saxon pension funds, such phenomenon may gain structural contours concerned to the contemporary mode of production.

This means that the repercussions of “pension fund capitalism” go beyond their home countries in at least two respects: a) by reproducing the format and institutional structure of pension systems adopted in Anglo-Saxon countries as a pattern for other countries (effect-demonstration); b) by the foreign direct investments managed by Anglo-Saxon pension funds as cross-border flows around the world.

*The particularities of “pension fund developmentalism” in the Brazilian urban network*

Notwithstanding the potential for “pension fund capitalism” expansion, we understand that the analysis of this financial sector in the Brazilian territory must consider

the particularities of the typology and topology expressed by the pension funds in the country. In order to do so, we assume that the vectors of the contemporary capitalist mode of production are mediated by the normative contents and the pre-existing material basis of each territory (Santos, [1977] 2008).

Considering this assumption, a first particularity of pension funds in the Brazilian territory is related to the fact that the private pension has a complementary character in relation to the still active public retirement scheme – represented by the pay-as-you-go (PAYG) regime. It means that until now the social security reforms have not fostered a direct and complete privatization of the public pension scheme. Nonetheless, the reforms have indeed approved restrictive measures to the pay-as-you-go regime (public pillar) at the same time that they have strengthened the complementary pension system (private pillar), “composed of both a closed system of pensions managed by corporate pension funds [...] and an open system managed by banks and insurance companies” (Datz, 2014, p. 497). This trend of private pension rise can be measured, among other things, by the 1192% growth of the consolidated pension fund portfolio between 1995 and 2015 (corresponding to an increase of R\$ 57,5 billion to almost R\$ 684,9 billion).

A second specificity of the sector in the Brazilian territory may be related to the prominence of the pension funds linked to state-owned enterprises. In spite of accounting for about 27,9% (86 institutions) of the total number of 308 operating pension funds in the country in 2015, pension funds “owned by the employees of companies controlled by the government” (Datz, 2014, p. 498) managed 60,7% of the sector's assets. In other words, such data indicate that the pension fund sector is structured not only by a wide capital concentration, but also by a noticeably primacy of the pension funds sponsored by public companies. The concentration of capital that characterizes the sector can also be recognized by the share of the ten largest pension funds relative to the whole sector: considering the total number of 258 pension funds that disclosed the total value of assets under their control (totalling R\$ 670,7 billion), only the top ten control approximately 58% of the entire sector.

Furthermore, the three major pension funds are linked to state-owned enterprises and, combined, they account for approximately 41,1% of total sector's investments. First is *Previ*, the pension fund owned by *Banco do Brasil* employees, headquartered in the city of Rio de Janeiro and controlling 22,9% of the sector's assets. Second is *Petros*, the pension fund of *Petrobras* (the Brazilian oil company) employees, headquartered in the

city of Rio de Janeiro as well and responsible for 9,6% of the sector's assets. Third is *Funcef*, the pension fund of *Caixa Econômica Federal* (the national deposit bank) employees, which manages the equivalent to 8,2% of the total assets of pension funds in the country from its headquarter in Brasília.

Deemed as a particularity of the Brazilian pension funds typology, the prominence of pension funds related to state-owned companies is also revealed by the topology of these financial institutions in the Brazilian territory. Despite the fact that São Paulo city concentrates in its urban structure the largest number of pension fund headquarters (73 entities, which corresponds to 28,3% of the total of 258 identified), it is the city of Rio de Janeiro that has the major control over assets pooled by pension funds (approximately R\$ 311 billion, which corresponds to 46,4% of total assets in the sector).

Even with a reduced quantity of pension funds in its urban fabric (only 39, which means 34 less institutions in comparison to Sao Paulo), the city of Rio de Janeiro far exceeds the value of assets managed by Sao Paulo city (which is approximately R\$ 135 billion) due to the relevant concentration of capital in a few pension funds linked to state-owned enterprises. For instance, *Previ* and *Petros* together - both headquartered in the city of Rio de Janeiro - represent 32,5% of the total value of the sector's assets in the country. As another expression of the prominence of pension funds sponsored by public companies, Brasilia is the third most important city regarding the topology of pension funds in the Brazilian territory: it agglomerates 21 headquarters (equivalent to 8,1% of the sector) from which it manages 13,8% (equivalent to R\$ 92,5 billion) of the total assets of the sector.

As stated above, in 2015 Sao Paulo was pointed out as the second most important city on controlling the pension fund assets in the Brazilian territory. It seems to indicate that the topology of these agents reaffirms the peculiarity of the sector; distinguishing it from the “capitalism of pension funds” based, among other things, on the retreat of the state, short-term investments and the leading role of predominantly private and foreign financial institutions and interests. As the “informational” and “omnipresent” metropolis (Santos, [1993] 2009, p. 103; p. 59) in the Brazilian territory, Sao Paulo in effect “has consolidated its dominance as Brazil's primary financial centre” (Contel; Wójcik, 2019,

p. 9-10), “leading in private domestic and foreign (both universal and investment<sup>1</sup>) banking” (Contel; Wójcik, 2019, p. 6). Nevertheless, the pension funds seem to not thoroughly fit into this kind of financial institutions.

At the same time, the emphasis on the city of Rio de Janeiro regarding asset control seems to indicate the nuances that characterize the “pension fund developmentalism”; in other words, pension funds as “state allies, helping to finance domestic investments that are not only economically relevant but politically significant to governments in power” (Datz, 2014, p. 490). Rio de Janeiro's position as the second Brazilian financial centre derives from the importance of the headquarters of public companies based in the city since when it was the capital of the country<sup>2</sup>; hence, its position in the urban network is explained by its specialization “in public development banking” (Contel; Wójcik, p. 6). Brasilia’s prominent role as the third most important city related to the distribution of pension funds also reinforces the state-finance alliance in opposition to the state-finance dichotomy, because, as the country’s capital, this city is the third largest financial centre due to its specialization “in government-owned universal banking” and “capital of the regulatory agencies, with headquarters of the Central Bank of Brazil, National Council for Private Insurance, National Council for Complementary Pension, and National Complementary Pension Superintendence” (Contel; Wójcik, p. 5-6).

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<sup>1</sup> The distribution of investment banks in the urban structure of the metropolis of Sao Paulo since the 1960s reveals the conformation of three different centralities of advanced producer services. Each centrality represents different contents of the command and control role that this metropolis has over the Brazilian territory in different periods: a) Formed initially by services linked to the production of coffee for export, the “Main/Historical Centre” stood out until the 1970s; b) From then on, the “Paulista Centre” was formed by the displacement of the headquarters of the most dynamic companies, mainly related to the industrial activity; c) since the 1990s, the “Southwest Centre/Sector” has been the command of the territory in a more internationalized and financialized stage of the economy. In 2013, 10 of the 14 investment banks operating in the country were headquartered in Sao Paulo and all foreign controlled investment banks (seven institutions) were headquartered in the “Southwest Centre/Sector” (Alves, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Even if we consider the Sao Paulo Metropolitan Region, which involves 39 contiguous municipalities in almost 150 thousand square meters, the total assets controlled by the cities of São Paulo, Sao Bernardo do Campo, Barueri, Sao Caetano do Sul, Guarulhos and Mauá aggregated corresponds to 22.5 % of total (less than half of Rio de Janeiro's share).

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## 3A-2.5: High-Rise Lives

**Chair:** Dr Andrew Harris, Associate Professor, Department of Geography, UCL

**Discussant:** Dr Michał Murawski, Lecturer in Critical Area Studies, School of Slavonic and East European Studies, UCL

Manuscript not available

**Urban verticality inside out: exploring the view in new vertical urban spaces in London**

Sidra Ahmed, PhD candidate, Department of Geography, UCL

Manuscript not available

**‘Accommodation city’: new urban developers and low-income housing construction in Mumbai and Dhaka**

Shreyashi Dasgupta, PhD candidate, Centre of Development Studies, University of Cambridge

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**The making of [the new] resident: intersecting vertical living, affects and technology**

Dr Mor Shilon, Postdoctoral Fellow, Technion—Israel Institute of Technology

Prof. Efrat Eizenberg, Associate Professor, Technion—Israel Institute of Technology

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**Understanding and assessing social capital in a restructured Chinese neighbourhood**

Xin Li, PhD candidate, University of Cambridge

A version of this paper was published in *Planning Theory*. See: Shilon, M., & Eizenberg, E. (2021). Experiencing vertical living: Affects, atmospheres, and technology. *Planning Theory*, 20(2), 121-142.

## The Making of [the New] Resident: Intersecting Vertical Living, Affects and Technology

Mor Shilon & Efrat Eizenberg – Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning, The Technion

### Scientific Background:

This paper argues that a twofold process of verticalization and technologization of cities produces a new urban experience for city dwellers. More specifically, it suggests that in the vertical technological city, large urban developments, and particularly high-rise residential projects are playing a pivotal role in generating this new urban experience.

Contemporary cities are intertwined with technologies for their form, function and management (e.g. the smart city) that in turn produce “new forms of urban space” (Rose, 2017, p. 2) or hybrid space. Alongside the technologization of cities, a *vertical turn* in urbanism suggests that the scale of cities is vertically growing, and the new volumetric cities include more large-scale urban developments (Drozd et al., 2017), many of which are of high-rise residential projects (Harris, 2015; Nethercote, 2018). Such a vertical urbanism that is founded on pertinent technologies also offers a new residential experience. High-rise building technologies vary from lifts and stairs, balconies and windows, to ventilation, water supply and sanitation, to storage, fire escapes, and low energy technologies (Arrigoitia, 2014; Baxter, 2017; Graham and Hewit, 2012; Harris, 2015; Jacobs et al., 2007; Jenkins, 2002; Lovell, 2005).

Probing into the new urban experience in the vertical technological city requires a nuanced construction of the delicate interplay between form and its associated technologies, and the experiences of people. Rather than providing a more instrumental or topographical analysis of the vertical technological city, we draw on relational approaches that advance more topological on top of topographical accounts of verticality (Harker, 2014), and enable to unpack the ways in which people experience spaces as additional and significant layer to the geometric understanding of the attributes of space (Nethercote and Horne, 2016).

Particularly, this study pushes forward efforts for understanding contemporary urban experience by adopting an affect-based approach to analyze the interplay between technology and people in high-rise residential projects. That is, we draw on nonrepresentational theories and on the concept of *affect*: a pre-cognitive capacity to act as the background of our perceptions and thoughts,

and of any articulation or cognitive interpretation of experience and acts. That is, the visceral response of the body rather than the logical one.

While studies of the nonrepresentational, affect and affective atmospheres have become prevalent in the discipline of human geography (Rose, 2017), and although genuinely related to socio-spatial relations, affect-based studies are scarce in the field of urban planning (Buser, 2014). This study attempts to overcome this void by drawing on nonrepresentational approaches and affect-based research to study contemporary urban transformations and socio-spatial associations in the planning and experience of high-rise residential buildings. With affect-based researches, planners can derive insights to better understand contemporary urban formations and socio-spatial relations in cities, and from there to rethink more positive planning solutions for future urban developments.

### **Methodology & Case Studies:**

New high-rise residential projects are a growing trend in Israel in the last 20 years. 63% of new housing units in Israel are built as large urban developments, usually at the edges of cities.<sup>1</sup> We draw on two case studies that have been thought provoking in terms of understanding the becoming and function of new high-rise residential projects and their relations with the people who inhabit them. The case studies are of high-rise residential projects built from 1998 to 2016 in two medium-size cities of about 250,000 inhabitants in central Israel: Petach Tikva and Natania. Through walking-interviews (Evans and Jones, 2011) with inhabitants conducted between 2017 and 2018, residents shared social, spatial, and cultural interpretations of their neighborhoods, while intentionally or not, implicitly and explicitly, also sharing the sensory and somatic experiences of their vertical living environments. Drawing on these experiences the following analyzes three moments of new affective residential experience: 1. The gaze; 2. The becoming of bodies a body; 4. Bodies and sound.

### **The New Residential Experience:**

#### 1. Watching, Looking, Seeing, Viewing: The Gaze

Looking at something is a practice that not only involves brain-eye coordination, but also different bodily practices, perspectives, points of view, past experience, and bodily memory. When residents were asked about the way they feel in their apartments and buildings as – inter alia – a parameter of height, many would express varying descriptions of a multisensory experience of their

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<sup>1</sup> Source: Israel Statistical Borough 1995-2015.



living environment: *“When you stand in my rooftop balcony, you cannot see the 8<sup>th</sup> floor underneath you, [if you fall] you fall right to the 7<sup>th</sup> floor balcony... So, I have privacy and quietness, it’s fun. Real fun”* (O., 9<sup>th</sup> floor). The view from the 9<sup>th</sup> floor is addressed as what makes O’s apartment a place of fun, while at the same time this vertical experience of privacy and open landscape incorporates a possible fall to an underneath balcony. To O., the view is something more complex than a visual landscape: while the sense of privacy is often associated with being unexposed to others, to O., the sense of privacy is elevated by what she cannot see, what is concealed from *her* view, that is, the 8<sup>th</sup> floor.

The view and the practice of gazing invite different experiences and different perspectives to vertical lives. Seeing (or not seeing) makes residents in high-rise projects experience different sensations that can invite positive perceptions of their living environments such as a feeling of privacy. These feelings often describe a desired anonymity, privacy, and even isolation that might be related to the common density in high-rise buildings and projects. The following section examines different experiences that are shared by some, if not all, residents in a high-rise building creating an affective atmosphere that makes many bodies become one.

## 2. The Becoming of Bodies a Body:

The great number of residents, facilities, amenities, and shared spaces vertically assembled in one high-rise building requires complex and innovative practices in order to manage, organize, maintain, and operate the building on a daily basis. In many cases, these practices are outsourced to a management company that execute the decisions of the residents’ board (Garfunkel, 2017; Yip et al., 2007).

Residents of high-rise projects often rely on digital technologies for these practices. For example, local knowledge produced in and on the building and its surroundings in WhatsApp groups is transmitted and reappears digitally, and is readily available to all the building’s group members, literally at the palm of their hand, and perceptions of space are being produced by the flow of information as received on their smartphones: *“Having WhatsApp groups everyone likes to complain: ‘the cleaner didn’t clean the 8<sup>th</sup> floor’ and then others will reply ‘yeah, and also the 7<sup>th</sup>, 6<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> floors’ even if it’s incorrect, it becomes the truth and then it makes a lot of chaos”* (R., 3<sup>rd</sup> Floor).

Experiencing space as clean or dirty does not require walking through, consuming or actually seeing it but the affective relations between sound waves of incoming text message and resident’s ear drum, then the gentle swipe of a figure on the smartphone screen, and finally the practice of reading a digital message that says the building is dirty. This new sets of practices, capacities, and attention to

space and its aesthetics are now highly incorporated into the vertical lives of residents in the high-rise building. Text messages shape how residents experience the space they inhabit as good or bad, satisfying or not, clean or dirty, used or neglected, all without stepping out of their apartments or being in their building at all. And yet they all share the *same* experience. This experience is reflected in a shared atmosphere of residents feeling dissatisfaction with the building's cleanliness condition, like in this case.

Socially interacting by digital technology, high-rise building residents have the power to shape and design the shared spaces in their building: *“Everything started when the developer gave us a hard time before the building was even occupied. I managed to pick up the names of the future residents and established a WhatsApp group. The hard time he gave us made us unite, and we got to know each other long before we moved in. One could share all the anger and resentment she has with people who feel exactly like her on this WhatsApp group”* (S., 4th floor). The practice of establishing and operating a WhatsApp group to unite against a developer fosters an experience of control over one's future living environment. The designated digital space for sharing negative feelings and emotions, enables a sense of solidarity and communality, and a space for generating collaborative actions. Moreover, this shared capacity produces a sense of a communal effort, an affective atmosphere of shared ownership, and more equal opportunities for residents who nowadays have relative power to transform their living environments.

### 3. Bodies and Sound

Living in a high-rise entails close engagements with different sounds. Technologies for garbage disposal, lifts, security coding systems in building entrances, information transmission, and water pressure pumps are an integral part of high-rise residential projects operation systems. These technologies and the sounds they make. Affective relations between bodies and sound can transform how people engage, experience, and act within the urban environments they inhabit (Shilon, 2019). A common sound characterizing vertical life is the sound of a whistling wind, particularly in the higher floors of high-rise buildings. Interviewers denoted the sound of wind as disturbing them to transcribe the interviews: in many recordings, the transcription was disturbed by wind sounds that defeated informants' voice.

The technologies of high-rise buildings produce certain sounds on a regular basis as a part of the building performance: *“Throwing waste to the shaft makes noise in the lower floors of the building. To be considerate towards all tenants we stated that waste can be thrown to the garbage shaft only between 07am and 10pm.”* (R., 18<sup>th</sup> floor). In turn, these vertical sounds entail new regulations and restrictions: in order to avoid

a sense of disturbance and nuisance as well as a feeling of inconsiderateness, the rudimentary daily practice of waste disposal must be regulated in the high-rise building according to how different residents experience it.

Affective relations of bodies and sounds in the high-rise building do not only produce disturbances and nuisance. Sound is an important tool for sharing information with a group of people: “...it is very common to get an informative *WhatsApp* message like “My son [a child from the building] is going down to play in the playground”, and then the rest of the kids in the building can join” (L., 5th floor). While in the past whistling was widely used as an informative and communicative action (Busnel and Classe, 2013), nowadays it is the sound of an incoming *WhatsApp* message that communicates a group of people. Instead of having ones’ body attuned to the sound of children playing downstairs as a sign for other children to join or to the whistle from downstairs marking one where everyone is, the sound of a *WhatsApp* message that can be even heard from the highest floor signals that there is something going on in the playground.

Sounds in the high-rise produces multiple experiences varying from pleasure and satisfaction to annoyance and disturbance that in turn produce certain feelings and emotions, and accordingly social acts and habits. They can reflect upon feelings of denseness and lack of privacy or sense of belonging and communality, through which residents constitute place-making in the high-rise building.

### **Conclusion:**

Large urban developments in general, and residential high-rise projects in particular, have become dominant forms of urban developments in many cities in Israel and around the world. This paper suggests a conceptual shift towards a relational nonrepresentational perspective to study the urban experience of verticality utilizing an affect-based research approach that traces the experience of vertical urban life as it tied to the different technologies that produce it.

Drawing on an affect-based analysis we trace the different ways for people to engage with the spaces they inhabit. Vertical practices of viewing (from high-above, from the balcony), digitally managing and maintaining a building or being attuned to the sounds of a high-rise intervene and transform how people experience and value their daily urban life.

The associations between verticality and technology as offered here refine a new framework for understanding not only new urban experiences but also their relation to the form and function of the built environment. We exemplify that a sense of privacy is enhanced not only by the number of

apartment units in a building but also in respect to what residents can or cannot see from their balconies. While the literature often characterizes high-rise living as producing alienation and a declined sense of communality, we demonstrate how vertical living generates affect-based relations between bodies and technology suggesting somewhat different picture in which people have a shared experience of space through which they gain a sense of solidarity and shared ownership, but not necessarily by being present in that space together.

The growing use of technology in cities and urban life, and the relations and associations between humans and more-than-humans being generated from this use are part and parcel of what shapes contemporary urban experience. Probing into these relations generates an in-depth understanding of how people experience, understand, perceive and act in the urban environments they inhabit. Affect-based research thus, produces valuable knowledge and offers new conceptualizations and vocabularies for urban planning that may help better evaluate planning and meet the challenges contemporary urbanisms invite.

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## **Understanding and Assessing Social Capital in a Restructured Chinese Neighbourhood: A Case Study in Jinan, Shandong**

*A paper prepared for the UCL Urban Laboratory Conference "At the Frontiers of The Urban: Thinking Concepts and Practices Globally" to be held at University College London, United Kingdom.*

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### **Abstract**

The study explores changes of residents' daily practices moving from the courtyard houses to high-rise apartments for understanding social capital in restructured Chinese neighbourhoods, which is essential for urban social sustainability but has been overlooked in the rapid economic development processes. The study takes a recently restructured Chinese neighbourhood in Jinan, Shandong as a case study and identifies various nexuses of practice-spatial arrangements of neighbourhood housing before and after restructuring, resulting in differences of social capital between stayers and newcomers. Theoretical approaches in the work of Bourdieu and Schatzki's social capital concepts are used to formulate the interview outlines. Analysis reveals three key themes. Firstly, a transformation from outdoor to indoor activities such as cooking, eating and hygiene among stayers and part of the newcomers after moving from the courtyard houses to high-rise apartments was found and the spatial dispersion of practices in a household scale has increased privacy and reduced the neighbourhood tension. Secondly, the shifts in housing tenure due to restructuring process intensifies the social distrust between stayers and tenants. Strong social networks and an age-related inegalitarian distribution of power were found among stayers. These networks could be so robust that they exclude 'outsiders' such as the tenants – an outcome regarded as the "dark side" of social capital. Thirdly, the social impacts of implementing the MOHURD policy of opening the "gates" should not be overlooked. Sufficient school and education resources are essential to enhance the social interactions between stayers and newcomers as they generate common interest for the two groups of people as incentives.

## I. Introduction

Housing demolition and redevelopment are a significant part of Chinese urban renewal processes in the past few decades. In 2000, there were 156 million of residential units in urban and rural China, 21.19% of which were demolished in the following years. Compared to 0.16% as the average demolition rate of residential housing in the US between 2010 and 2014 and 0.21% in Japan in 2013 (Huang and Wu 2016, 32), the percentage in China was one order of magnitude higher.

Accordingly, social aspects of such demolition and restructuring are likewise deemed integral in the urban redevelopment projects. Social capital has a positive effect on connecting and involving local communities in urban development processes, promoting multi-participatory and community-based regeneration practices (Forrest and Kearns 2001; Kearns 2003; Kleinhans et al. 2007; Middleton et al., 2005).

In this short essay, the author focuses on such emerged phenomenon and explores social capital of stayers and newcomers in the vertical gated community typology in China, taking Weijiazhuang (WJZ) in Jinan as a case study.

The main research questions are:

1. How can the practice-based approaches help to understand residents' social capital in restructured Chinese neighbourhoods?
2. How daily practices and social networks have changed after neighbourhood restructuring and to what extent are housing and neighbourhood design and restructuring processes related to it?
3. What are the implications of understanding social capital in such context for planning and policy-making?

The essay is structured as follows. In Section II, definitions of social capital in a neighbourhood context are reviewed, followed by theoretical framework and data collection methods. Section III illustrates a typical neighbourhood restructuring example in Jinan, Shandong as a case study. Key findings are summarised in Section IV.



Figure 1. Bird view of WJZ before (top) and after (down) restructuring  
Sources: Photos obtained from WJZ Street Office during fieldwork

## II. Methodology

In general, social capital refers to resources that are accessible through social contacts, social networks, reciprocity, norms and trust (Bourdieu 1986; Coleman 1988; Field 2003; Putnam 2000). The values of social capital can be relatively straightforward. By making connections, people are able to achieve things that cannot be achieved by themselves or with difficulties and at high costs (Kleinhans et al. 2007, 1074). In a neighbourhood context, social capital involves cursory social interactions, shared norms about how to treat each other and behaviour in space, trust and collective actions for shared purposes (Kleinhans et al. 2007, 1070).

Social practice theory has been widely used as an analytical framework in architecture and built environment (Hand et al., 2005; Halkier and Jensen, 2011; Judson and Maller, 2014; Walker et al., 2014). Bourdieu (1970; 1996) points out that structuration of built environment mediates social practice and dictates cultural distinctions. Taking a step further, Schatzki (2010) argues that social order can be understood as a plenum of practices and material arrangement bundles. Physical configurations of the houses, or neighbourhoods as a larger scale, present



an example of material spatial arrangements that structure and mediate various residents' practices. New bundles are shaped by material innovations. Built environment is redesigned to accommodate changing practices.

It was not until the 1990s that Chinese scholars started to study urban development policies from the perspective of social networks and social capital (Fei 1998; Bian 2006 and Zhai 2014). Bian (2006, 39) summarised that the fundamental understanding of social capital in Chinese studies are social networks and human relationships.

Using social capital as part of the concept of urban and neighbourhood restructuring has been relatively mature in Western countries, whereas it has been received little attention so far in China where there have been rapid urban and neighbourhood redevelopment projects taking place. This study aims to fill the research gaps and contribute to the previous literature by assessing social impacts in a restructured Chinese neighbourhood and to unfold how stayers and newcomers' everyday practices have been reshaped and led to changes of social capital, taking a recently restructured neighbourhood in Jinan, Shandong as a case study. The methods employed in this pilot study were semi-structured interviews ranging from 20 - 40 minutes and transect walks (see appendix).

### III. Findings

#### 3.1 Building typology: reshaping of daily practices - cooking, eating, hygiene and shopping

One of the key changes of daily practices such as cooking, eating and hygiene is the shift from outdoor to indoor activities among most of the stayers. Before demolition, the majority of the houses in WJZ area were single- or multi-storey courtyard houses shared by several households or generations. Cooking facilities were located outdoor and shared by neighbours, usually at the central courtyards. After restructuring, each unit is equipped with individual kitchen and flush toilet, replaced the old public pit latrines.

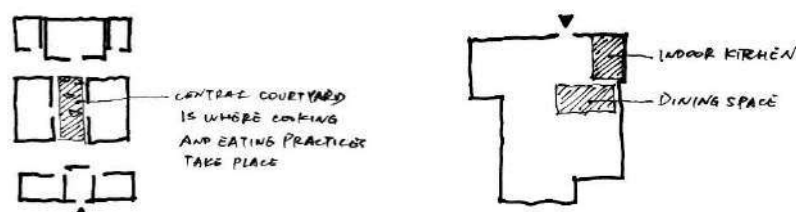


Figure 2. Change of cooking and dining practices before (left) and after (right, 2<sup>#</sup> in Dijing Garden as an example) restructuring

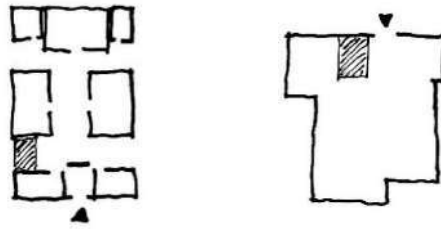


Figure 3. Change of sanitation facilities before (left) and after (right, 2<sup>#</sup> in Dijing Garden as an example) restructuring

Changes in building typology have also led to the specification of spaces for particular use, leading to a spatial dispersion of practices. Rooms were used interchangeably for a wide range of practices before. Such informal usage of space was efficient for joint or multi-generational family structures, assuring the maximum use of available space. Lightweight furniture was flexible and easy to move. In the high-rise apartments, practices are dispersed into specific function rooms.

*“I lived in a big room with my sisters and children. That was about 20 square metres. There were beds, no separate rooms at all - no living room, no kitchen, no bathroom. ...only one large box for storage, no closet. In the middle of the room, there was a table. Two beds were put against the wall... It was troublesome to go to the toilet - we had to go out and it was freezing in winter.”* (Interview S4)

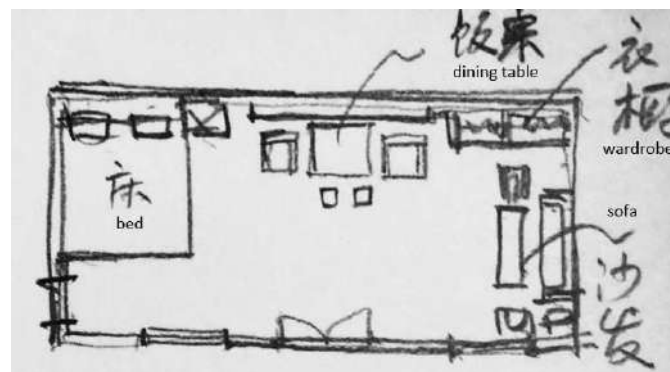


Figure 4. An interchangeable open plan for a household before restructuring  
Drawing by Li. (a local architect who lived in the courtyard house typology in the 1980s),  
notes added by author.

A key feature of living in such courtyard typology is that people maintain a close connection with neighbours, meaning that more social interactions, especially informal ones, take place in this neighbourhood. Therefore, it is easier to build up mutual trust, which is one of the major positive effects of social capital in a neighbourhood context (Woolcock 2001).

*“We wouldn’t lose things even without closing the door.”* (Interview S5)

In contrast, it was found that people talk less after moving to high-rise apartments. The lifts have become an important place where social interactions take place, which did not exist before.

*“I often talk to my friends, but not neighbours. We used to talk a lot in the courtyard house, but now we don’t talk much in this apartment. You just can’t knock their door... The building is like a cage.”* (Interview S3)

Additionally, the spatial dispersion of practices is also a result of changing culture from collective to more individualised practice performances. It seems that the political rhetoric in the 20th century highlighted the paramount national importance of the public good over individualism and private life of people, aiming to generate a “public sphere” so that the CCP could hold power (Pow 2007, 818). Changes have occurred in social and cultural realms in Chinese cities as traditional shared values such as the conventional Confucianism have lost believers and Chinese society has become tribalized (Miao 2003, 58). As one interviewee explained:

*“What privacy? It didn’t exist at all. We all ate together, slept together. Everyone knew what you were doing... Now it’s different. Everyone needs a space for the so-called privacy.”* (Interview S5)

### **3.2 Shift in tenure and education resources: the “local”, “non-local” and the “gates”**

The strength of the identity and attachment with the old neighbourhood was observed. For stayers, familiarity is the main reason why they moved back. However, strong networks formed by the “local”, particularly the elderly, tends to exclude newcomers, especially the tenants. Results show that stayers generally distrust the “outsiders” and considered them as the interruption of their private life. Such “otherness”, in this context, outsiders or tenants, are perceived by the “local” as the backwardness and cultural inferiority of the neighbourhood who are raw and unpredictable, especially under the Household Registration System (*hukou*).

*“There are too many people renting houses. It took so long until we were relocated back and many of them have already loaned to buy a new house somewhere else, so they rented their house here out... The situation is getting complicated and not easy to control... Those outsiders (tenants) moved in and we don’t know them... It’s necessary to conduct a door-to-door household survey to find out what jobs they are doing.... It’s different from the courtyard houses before - everyone knew each other.”* (Interview S8)

Co-operation of child care is a valuable source to generate social capital. For newcomers, school and education resources are one of the attractions. It is also part of the reason why some old residents stayed. Such resources generate opportunities for parents to meet and interact and act as mediator for stayers and newcomers to communicate.

*“I work here and my kid is in the kindergarten here... I don’t have many close friends here, only two or three. They are parents of the children of the same age. We knew each other by playing with our children in this neighbourhood... I seldomly talk to my neighbours except when we meet in the lift or playing with the children downstairs.”*

(Interview N4)

After restructuring, the neighbourhood typology has significantly changed. Different from the courtyard houses with immediate access to the street, new neighbourhood is formed by five groups of blocks with access control. The Ministry of Housing and Urban-Rural Development of the People’s Republic of China (MOHURD) released a directive on February 21, 2016 and proposed that the exiting gated communities would be opened up gradually and no more gated communities would be built in principle. Although the main aim of opening the gates in MOHURD policy is to increase the land use efficiency, the unintended social impacts on local residents should not be overlooked. The “gates” are still appreciated by some residents and are perceived as a symbol of secured environment. People enjoy their privacy without “prying eyes of the public (Pow 2009, 99)”. It is not the gates itself as a physical border. In this context, providing more service and resources such as school instead may be more efficient to promote social cohesion within the neighbourhoods as children have been proved to be essential to generate common interest for both groups of people.

#### **IV. Summary**

This paper used practice-based approaches to explore the changes of the residents’ daily practices for understanding social capital in restructured Chinese neighbourhoods, taking WJZ in Jinan as a case study. Three themes can be concluded. Firstly, a transformation from outdoor to indoor activities such as cooking, eating and hygiene among stayers and part of the newcomers moving from courtyard houses to high-rise apartments was found. The spatial dispersion of practices has increased privacy and reduced the neighbourhood tension.

Secondly, the restructuring processes have caused shifts in housing tenure and intensified the social distrust between stayers and tenants. Strong social networks were found among stayers

and these networks could be so robust that exclude the “outsiders” such as the tenants - an outcome regarded as the “dark side” of social capital.

Thirdly, the social impacts of implementing the MOHURD policy of opening the “gates” should not be overlooked. The gates are still appreciated by some residents for security and privacy. Whether the stayers and newcomers will interact more after opening the gates is remain unclear, but it is certain that school and education resources are essential and would draw both stayers and newcomers together and generate common interest for the two groups as incentives to enhance the social interactions.

Residents are found generally satisfied with the restructuring as demolition and new construction of the housing have led to the physical upgrading of the neighbourhood and the provision of attractive housing career opportunities. It is a typical property-led neighbourhood renewal case in Chinese cities which finally shaped gated communities packed with high-rise residential blocks. Practice-based approaches open up considerations of relations between social practices and material arrangements and illustrate the idea that social phenomena evince changing building material configurations over time.

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**Appendix: Interview labels with demographics**

<b>Label</b>	<b>Role</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Occupancy</b>	<b>Income</b>
<b>S1</b>	Stayer	Female	Hongjing	51-60	Director of the community	2000-4000
<b>S2</b>	Stayer	Female	Hongjing	> 60	Retire	2000-4000
<b>S3</b>	Stayer	Female	Hongjing	41-50	Unemployed	None
<b>S4</b>	Stayer	Female	Hongjing	51-60	Retire	2000-4000
<b>S5</b>	Stayer	Male	Hongjing	51-60	Unemployed	None
<b>S6</b>	Stayer	Female	Hongjing	51-60	Retire	2000-4000
<b>S7</b>	Stayer	Female	Hongjing	51-60	Retire	2000-4000
<b>S8</b>	Stayer	Female	Hongjing	> 60	Retire	2000-4000
<b>R</b>	Renter	Female	Shengjing	21-30	Community staff	2500 (rental)
<b>N1</b>	Newcomer	Female	Huajing	51-60	Retire	Unclear
<b>N2</b>	Newcomer	Female	Huajing	21-30	Community staff	2000-4000
<b>N3</b>	Newcomer	Female	Hongjing	41-50	Community staff	4000-6000
<b>N4</b>	Newcomer	Female	Dijing	31-40	Public institution	4000-6000
<b>T</b>	Tenant	Female	Hongjing	31-40	Self-employed	2300 (rent)
<b>G</b>	Local authority	Male	-	41-50	Deputy-Director of the Street Office Community Centre	Unclear

## 3B-1.1: Sharing Public Space

**Chair:** Dr Yasminah Beebeejaun, Associate Professor, The Bartlett School of Planning, UCL

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**Contextualising religiosity: religious parades as temporal desecularization of urban landscape. A view from Acre**  
Prof. Nimrod Luz, Associate Professor, Kinneret College on the Sea of Galilee

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**Sharing common ground: making refugee voices audible through play**  
Catalina Pollak Williamson, Lecturer, University of East London; PhD candidate, UCL

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**Policing the sidewalks: politics of street vending in Tehran**  
Dr Mojgan Taheri Tafti, Lecturer, University of Tehran

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**Virtual resistance, material consequences: countering state projects in (semi-) authoritarian Russia**  
Dr Sven Daniel Wolfe, Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Lausanne



## Contextualizing Religiosity: Religious Parades as Temporal Desecularization of Cities' Landscape.

### A View from Acre.

#### Introduction

In recent years a few conceptualizations have emerged to account for the growing recognition among scholars that urban religions merit further theorization. Al-Sayyad and Massoumi addressed the growing religious nature of cities through their idea of the Fundamentalist City (2010). Following Vatrovec's construction of cities as super-diverse (2007) Becci, Burchardt and Giorda suggest religious super-diversity as a way to account for the plethora of religious innovations in cities (2016). Although not engaged solely with cities, della Dora developed infrasecular geographies to account for the fluidity of the sacred in everyday life (2016). Qian and Kong promote religious urbanism as a category of inquiry that prioritizes inquiries into the ways in which urban space is negotiated by religious groups: 'how religious groups 'refashion and re-invent themselves by appropriating rationalities, values and logics normally defined as 'secular'' (Qian and Kong 2017: 1). To account for new developments in religious urban citizenship I offer religiosity as an analytical category. This theoretical term joins together the imaginative aspects of being religious in an urban context and the tangible aspects (materialities) of religion by privileging neither one nor the other. Religiosity fuses, then, two broadly defined bodies of scholarship; the desecularization of cities and the spatial turn in religious studies. It entails both a social and a spatial form, addressing not only the cultural and socio-political presence and impacts of religions in the urban sphere but also the modes of material practices, physical infrastructures and various materialities of belief within cities. In doing so I aim to overcome the secular-sacred binary which is often assigned to religious activities in cities (Orsi, 1985, 1999; Kong, 2005).

Following these ideas, I explore religious processions and events as public rituals and ways of being in the city and of taking temporary control of specific city space. I ask in what ways religious processions are dictated by urban infrastructures and at the same time influence the city and how they serve as forms of being in the city for participants.

The empirical context of this paper is drawn from Acre, a multi-ethnic and multi religious city in the north of Israel, a state defined by ethnocratic spatial logic and politics (Yiftachel, 2006). In Acre, as I argue, processions and religious festivities become in certain situations embodied ethno-territorial processes.

#### Claiming the Heart of the City – Jewish Processions

On March 12, 2017 the Municipality of Acre in collaboration with Ometz religious NGO initiated a public happening for Purim, a Jewish holiday during which one is expected to masquerade in a costume and parade with it in public. The happening involved marching along Ben Ami street, one the city's main avenues, and gathering at the Remembrance Garden to be found along that same street. There, in addition to costumes' parade, the relevant Torah chapters were read in public.

The location of the parade in the central part of the city where demography is swinging towards an Arab majority is not accidental. The following year (March 2, 2018) Acre municipality organized a more extravagant Purim parade. It was on a Friday morning (10am) that the parade started at the Municipality Square and moved from there along the main street, which links the modern and the historic city (aka Old City). Road blocks were set at all possible entrances to the parade route by police forces and municipal policemen. As in other Jewish processions in Acre I observed in such like manner police forces are becoming part of the ritual which transforms a potentially dangerous everyday public life into a new social reality of maximally controlled space of public interaction (Bajc, 2013). Effectively, the center of the city was temporarily converted into a pedestrian car free zone. People who wanted to enter the parade zone were subjected to a security check which was performed along gender separation. Symbolically, then, the parade transformed ordinary cityscape into a sacred temporary sacred landscape.

The following maps, based on 2015 elections' voting patterns and national-religious identity data harvested from Israel CBS, attest to the growing dominance of Palestinian citizens in the central parts

of the city where indeed most Jewish processions are located.

The various Jewish processions share a few common traits. The most important one is their route in the central parts of the city. While the Jewish population is decreasing in these parts of the city, the processions are allowing the Jewish communities time and again to set temporary ethno-territorial boundaries and to make themselves more noticeable and visible in this albeit highly heterogenic part of town. These are surely the practical and spatial aspects of urban-ethnocracy as they unfold in the city. As part of this urban logic these initiatives are acknowledged, assisted and legitimated by municipal agencies. City's main infrastructures are made available to these processions and affectively enable them.

**Clinging to Urban Heritage: Islamic processions and festivities in the Old City of Acre**

As there are only two official holidays in Islam ('Id al-Adkha and 'Id al-Fitr), Muslims in Acre, unlike their Jewish counterparts, have very limited opportunities to publicly celebrate religious festivities. Most public Muslim activities are confined to the Old City. A new form of public display of Islamic heritage was launched in Acre for the first time on May 26, 2018. On this night, the tenth of Ramadhan, the children of the Old City Community Center accompanied by their parents marched in the streets of the Old City carrying with them special Ramadhan lanterns which they prepared in the months that preceded the procession. Another procession that takes to the streets of the Old City is 'Takibrat al-'ID'. On June 14, 2018, the last day of Ramadhan following the last prayer of the day (ṣalāt al-īšā) devotees gathered to perform a procession in the Old City. Time and again Muslim processions and religious festivities are confined to the perimeters of the Old City. As simply suggested by Louai Fares the initiator and organizer of this procession: "it is home and part of our heritage". By these very processions and festivities centered around the Old City clear ethno-territorial boundaries are temporarily formed through demonstrations of ethno-religious identity. While the extramural parts of the city are heavily populated with Muslim workplaces, residence and surely daily activities as private citizens congregational activities and demonstrations of unique cultural-religious identity is confined to the Old City and its close vicinity.

**Eroding ethno-religious lines: Bahai religious events**

While both the Jewish and Muslim community(s) are engaged, time and again, in constructing and reifying ethno-national boundaries during public events and indeed religious processions the Baha'i community is following an entirely different path.

On August 21, 2018 the Baha'i international community marked 150 years since the arrival of Bahá'u'lláh in Acre. It was celebrated by a gathering at the Mansion of Bahaji and was followed by a procession. The procession followed in the footsteps of Bahá'u'lláh from his landing point in the port of Acre to the place where he was imprisoned during his first years in the city while still under Ottoman rule. This reenactment starts outside the walls where one can see the landing point in the port and ended in the hub of the Old City where Bahá'u'lláh was imprisoned for nearly 12 years. Unlike other religious groups in Acre, the Baha'i community manages to remain outside local skirmishes on space and visibility in the public sphere. This has to do with the ethno-nationalistic nature of the conflict between the two opposing groups of Jews and Muslims.

**Conclusions**

This paper set out to re-theorizes the relationships between religion and the urban by introducing the concept of religiosity to overcome the secular-sacred binary and understanding faith as part of an emerging form of urban citizenship. It does so by exploring how people write their course of use in the urban landscape by walking in the city within existing urban infrastructures and materialities. As demonstrated herewith Religiosity as a theoretical frame allows us to engage with both the materiality of religious activities (the spatialities of the processions and artifacts engaged with) and the imaginative and intangible aspects of placing faith in the urban landscape. Religious processions and events as spatialized rituals inform us about the ways their participants claim the city and take temporary control of specific locations within it.

Through these rituals individuals and communities not only claim the city but also express their urban

identity within religious formulas. These religious processions and related events transform, if only temporary, a mundane urban landscape into a religious one. In order to do so they work within and are facilitated and shaped by material infrastructural formations. The walls of the old city, the road network of central Acre serve as the material infrastructures that structure and govern the circulation of these processions and festivities. While the majority backed by municipality forces and resources take to the main parts of the city the minority confines itself within the historical walls. Indeed, as suggested by Bosco the use of public space for religious festivals, processions and devotions are often central to the politics of belonging and identity (2015). They are spatializing religion(s) as part of place-making and taking place (Knott, 2005) as well as 'keeping place' (Becci, Burchardt and Giorda, 2017) in the urban milieu. To paraphrase Goheen (1993), religious processions are spatialized forms during which individuals join together to share and publicly demonstrate their religious identity, ideology, culture, politics and the ways they aspire their lives to be. Indeed, it illustrates clearly how urban infrastructures and certain materialities are part and parcel of understanding religiosity.

Taking multi-ethnic and multi-religious Acre as our point of departure and against the ethnocentric logic of urban governance, juridical frame and urban demography, this paper demonstrated how processions are also about constructing temporary ethno-national boundaries. The Jewish community(s), which is the dominant religious group in the city and generally supported by municipal and national agencies and policies, time and again claims the central parts of the city through a wide variety of forms of religious 'walking'. The Muslim group delineates the historical Old City surrounded with its walls as its own and usually refrains from religious demonstration in the central parts of the city, although demographically it constitutes the majority there. As these two groups are trapped in this competition in Acre by constructing ethno-religious boundaries the Baha'i group, which serves here as what might be termed as a mediating community, follows a different path as it has no spatial (or other) claims to the city. Indeed, while encounters of Jews and Muslims in Acre may become violent or hostile during performances of local and entrenched religious identity, things are entirely different during Baha'i ceremonies. As such, during their public religious performances ethno-national boundaries are eroding to allow all participants of different religious persuasions to participate. Their own sense of victimhood and historical memory of the community's plights are transformed into a global sense of acceptance of others and otherness.

In closing, I want to suggest that the study of religious processions in Acre cannot be understood as remote from mundane everyday life of the city. The religious players and organizations operate within it as part of the various machinations that operate within the city. Be it during a procession to celebrate a Jewish holiday or through recreational activity during the month of Ramadhan the groups in question are part of the urban fabric and citizenship. It is only when we see them as full-fledged partners of the urban landscape that we may account for the multi-facets of religiosity in Acre and the modes of material practices, physical infrastructures and various materialities of belief within cities worldwide.

## MAKING REFUGEE 'VOICES' VISIBLE THROUGH PLAY

### An interdisciplinary approach to cultural integration in the context of forced migration: Syrian refugees in Altındağ, Ankara, Turkey

Catalina Pollak Williamson

#### Introduction

**The** influx of forced migration in a new territory puts immense strain on host and refugee communities alike. For those who arrive, usually with few possessions and social connections, the past exposure to myriad forms of trauma and the added inability to communicate in the local language, lies the huge challenge to adapt and integrate to a new culture. For the host community, lies the challenge of hospitality by sharing spaces and services while accepting those who are different. Neither of these challenges is easily met.

**The** invitation to participate of the 'Cities in Transition International Workshop' in Ankara in 2017, offered the platform to open avenues of enquiry on how to deal with processes that could help ease the social tensions and spatial frictions amongst Turkish and Syrian communities sharing an urban environment.

The workshop was the beginning of a collaboration with architects Reem Charif (UEL), Ela Alanyali Aral (METU) and Deniz Altay (KANCAYA University) to explore participatory methodologies that could enable possible spaces and processes of cultural exchange to help bridge cultural identities between host and refugees living in the contested district of Altındağ.

This paper will present the ongoing research being conducted through the 'Migrating Proverbs' project in the context of Altındağ, a low-income inner city neighbourhood in the centre of Ankara. It will discuss the conceptual approach, strategy and methodologies being explored to understand and improve the existing social tensions building up in the area. In particular, it will offer an insight into participatory methodologies and their relevance in dealing with aspects of cultural integration. Moreover, it will expand on the possibilities of participatory action research (PAR) when developed as PLAY. By play, I mean possible forms of cultural interplay – for example, playing with proverbs – that can allow for subjective modes of learning from the 'other' to take over. I will argue that by introducing play forms through the creative appropriation of social and cultural

practices within integration processes there is a stronger capacity to challenge the inherent power dynamics rooted in the construction of alterity.

### Understanding the context / conflict

**Ankara**, the capital of Turkey hosts around 90,000 refugees, most of them concentrated in low-income inner city neighbourhoods such as Önder and Ulubey in Altındağ. Historically, these neighbourhoods were formed from squatter houses build by the rural population that migrated to the city in the 1940s. Today, these traditionally conservative and nationalist areas attract the biggest refugee population due to the low rents and their proximity to industrial belts and the centre of the city.

Over the past few years, availability of affordable housing has been reduced due to an aggressive urban regeneration process happening in Altındağ as part of a government program of urban transformation that started in 2015. Community resentment within these neighbourhoods is particularly high, especially where there is a strong competition for affordable housing, low paid jobs and public services.

**Anti-Syrian** narratives frame refugees in security terms. Syrians have increasingly been associated, in the public discourse, with crime, socioeconomic problems, 'cultural deprivation', and internal security (Togral Koca Burcu, 2016). Both discursive and non-discursive practices show that Syrians are seen and treated as a 'threat', as 'risky' outsiders (Özden 2013).

**This** stigmatisation of refugees can often be reinforced by how cultural differences are perceived: latest research shows that 63 per cent of Turkish citizens either feel 'far' or 'very far' from Syrians, while 72 per cent of Syrians feel 'close' or 'very close' to Turkish society (Erdogan, 2018). The perception of such a cultural distance reflects how the characteristics or behaviours of refugees are perceived as very different from, or inferior to societal norms (Dudley, 2000).

**Challenging** cultural stereotypes in how the host community perceives the refugee is a necessary step towards bringing down the hierarchical categories of the host against the 'other' so accommodation from both sides of the conflict can happen. Challenging internalised notions of stigma so that the refugee community feels a right to inscribe its identity in the new territory brings also important questions in terms of how those forms of appearance are negotiated.

### Bridging identities through spaces of appearance

**While** interaction has been commonly stated as a key element to improve integration, it also calls for processes that can bridge differences between communities (Ager and Strang, 2008) by creating a shared sense of belonging (Phillimore, 2012). Of course, structural factors such as granting civil and political rights through forms of citizenship (Bosniak 2000) are essential in developing a sense of belonging, but the creation of **social capital** (Ager and Strang, 2008) is also important in building connections to place. Bringing communities closer would, therefore, imply necessarily the presence of both cultural discourses and practices to participate from a 'space of appearance' by 'making them visible as a social sign of exitance and interaction' (Arendt, 1998).

**In** the context of Altındağ, Syrian refugees account for more than 20% of the population, but the presence of Syrian culture in the public realm is barely noticeable. Arabic is rarely encountered in the streets and there are no major recognisable signs of cultural and social practices elsewhere. In fact, there is a tangible sense of withdrawal evident in how Syrian refugees reinforce the visual and material boundaries of their houses to secure further privacy. It is also relevant to notice that the aggressive regeneration strategy and the practice of a 'politics of rubble' – by leaving the debris of demolished buildings on site – has obliterated public life erasing possible spaces where cultural exchange can happen.

**So** how can cultural integration towards building a common sense of belonging be captured when social conflict reinforces aspects of marginalization and its forms of disappearance? What kind of practices can bring forward forms of appearance in the absence of a physical public space where such interactions can take place?

Judith Butler's concept of embodied performativity as a way for claiming a 'right of appearance' offers an interesting approach to how the insistence of appearing acts as a form of resistance towards social categorizations:

*'For those effaced or demeaned through the norm they are expected to embody, the struggle becomes an embodied one for recognisability, a public insistence on existing and mattering. Thus, only through a critical approach to the norms of recognition can we begin to dismantle those more vicious forms of logic that uphold forms of racism and anthropocentrism. And only through an insistent form*

*of appearing precisely when and where we are effaced does the sphere of appearance break and open in new ways' (Judith Butler, 2015).*

'Migrating Proverbs' builds on Butler's concept as a form of dealing with the existing appearance/disappearance dichotomy through the creation of spaces where to make refugee voices -literally- visible. The notion of a 'performativity of appearance' is read as an embodied action capable of driving agency to negotiate ways to appear in the public realm. It drives from insisting on the right to be visible; and in the process of doing so, not only to validate a form of resistance towards social categorizations and stigma, but to invite ways in which refugees can negotiate their identity in a new context.

While this argument was relevant back in 2017 when there was still an open door policy to receive those fleeing Syria as 'guests'<sup>1</sup>, the latest government crackdown to control the numbers of refugees through a stop and search policy (BBC News 30Oct) might invite further reflection on what forms of appearance can still operate, when – as one might imagine – invisibility is the best shield from the risk of deportation.

## MIGRATING PROVERBS

### **'A nightingale in a golden cage still craves for its homeland'<sup>2</sup>**

*This proverb was shared by Waffa as part of the Migrating Proverbs action research project to describe her current condition in Turkey. It was then translated into its homologous version in Turkish and English. It was later transcribed and stamped into a paper napkin and stencilled into a cotton cloth tote bag by her. It was finally disseminated and shared in its napkin format in a tea-house in Ulubey packed with Turkish men drinking tea and playing cards, and walked through the streets of Altındağ by Waffa who would carry her stencilled scripted bag with pride. Migrating Proverbs 2018.*

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<sup>1</sup> Syrian refugees are not considered refugees but 'guests' having been granted a special temporary protection status due to the *geographical limitation principle* of the Geneva Convention. As 'guests' Syrians have limited rights, but they do enjoy an open door policy and they are ensured they won't be forced back to return, giving them unlimited stay.

<sup>2</sup> Proverb commonly used in Syria and Turkey.

### Playing with Proverbs

“**Migrating proverbs**” is conceived as a participatory action research project that looks into social and cultural practices as spaces for engagement, cultural exchange, and development of socio-cultural integration between refugees and host communities.

In particular it explores language as a vehicle for revealing the refugee’s experience of place and negotiating his or her identity in a new context. Language as a social practice shapes the way one thinks, understands the world and communicates. For those displaced, it is language that enables both the continuity of the journey and allows the sustainability of the stay: it is a connection to the past, as well as being fundamental to the challenge of claiming a future.

**More** specifically, the research makes use of proverbs as a device that can enable potential commonalities between both cultures. Proverbs can be read as carriers of a culture’s voice, robust cultural artefacts that encrypt a culture’s identity through the playful power of semantics. Though particular to each culture’s ‘habitus’ (Bourdieu, 1977), they are constantly borrowed and appropriated, transcending specific territories and cultural boundaries. Proverbs are therefore understood as objects of dense cultural meaning that can be exchanged, translated, represented and put into circulation, thereby offering not only a versatile tool to unlock new readings of a culture’s identity, but also a tool to negotiate and find cultural similarities between host and refugee communities.

Using proverbs both in spoken and written form, the research explores forms of play to: i) improve the understanding of the refugee’s condition of place; ii) generate spaces of exchange in order to build community capacity; and, iii) bring representation and visibility of Syrian cultural practices in the public realm as a way to challenge cultural stereotypes and facilitate integration between local and refugee communities.

The use of play as a methodology allows to reconceptualise Participatory Action Research (PAR) through the creation of spaces that operate outside the hegemonic forms of power representation, or where power is altogether rendered useless, as happens in certain forms or states of Play. This, I believe, is particularly crucial to the much debated limitations of PAR practices, which in the aim to drive change by



challenging the prevailing power dynamics, end up reproducing the existing inequalities that they aim to challenge (Hickey and Mohan 2005).

**PLAY** as described by cultural theorist Johan Huizinga is a free activity standing quite consciously outside 'ordinary' life, but at the same time absorbing the player intensely and utterly, creating a process/space to which he refers as the Magic Circle (Huizinga, 1949). Rancièrè would identify that in this space *play* **suspends the relations of power** and domination that organize the policed world of the practico-inert (Rancièrè 2004).

Play has the capacity of subverting the rules of the everyday – Huizinga's Magical Circle. To be in a state of play refers to be in a moment where non-hierarchical relational structures have the chance to develop, and where the usual relations of power are de facto suspended. Participatory processes that bring forward performative strategies based on play are a useful methodology to counteract the existing power dynamics so entrenched in the conflicts amongst host and refugee communities. Reconceptualising PAR through PLAY implies the articulation of processes that are not only participatory but also performative, critical, socially engaged and situated.

### Methodology

**Three** different implementation stages were conceived in the development of the project, all of them using PROVERBS as object-catalyst of an action, and play as process-method.

i) **Collection and Recollection:** an initial stage was designed in the form of interplay between refugees and researchers that was open-ended, performative and non-hierarchical. The premise was to use the exchange of proverbs as a form to unlock narratives of the past – opening a space where trauma could be addressed collectively – of the present condition in Turkey, and the perception of the future.

ii) **Translation and Transcription:** a second stage looked into forms in which the use of proverbs could help bring representation of the refugee identity in the public realm. It was designed as a skills exchange workshop to produce proverb-scripted objects to communicate and inscribe the perception of the refugees about their current condition in Turkey. In doing so, it tested the different degrees of agency in how participants chose to make their voices visible. Play here is invested in the

creation of objects that belongs to a different realm of experience. Play operating as a space of illusion – a mundane object becomes a form of self-expression – offering a space of freedom, disclosure and visibility.

iii) **Circulation and Dissemination** aimed at breaking down alterity and the stigmatised perception of refugees by making their voices appear in the public realm through the circulation and dissemination of the proverb-scripted objects. Depending on the nature of each object, its form of disclosure and degree of private/publicness, different forms of circulation were conceived. For each one, a different scale of action vs impact was assumed: from the one to one of wearable objects that would be disclosed by participants carrying them in their everyday commute through the city, to the distribution of objects through formal or informal systems of circulation that could operate in a more widespread manner. This stage was tested through the distribution of objects in a tea-house in Altındağ.

**A new iteration** of the project is planned for 2020 to explore how proverb-scripted artefacts can facilitate subversive forms of appearance by inserting the refugees' 'voices' into the public realm. To do so, the chosen scenario is to run the project in the market square of Besikkaya in Altındağ, an open public space (privately managed) where multiple communities overlap and come together in their daily use of city space. A market, by definition, is a space of exchange and circulation of goods and services, its existing systems of circulation therefore offer the perfect setup to disseminate the proverb-scripted objects. The social-spatial intervention will consist in deploying both the proverb exchange and production of proverb-scripted objects processes at once, to then infiltrate the existing systems of distribution and exchange that normally happen within the market trade to make the proverb-scripted object circulate and disseminate within and beyond the market place.

### Conclusion

**Migrating Proverbs** connects the concept of a 'performativity of appearance' with the critical potential of play. Although being a small scale prototype, the project offers an example of the kind of tactics PLAY can bring to PAR. Rather than reproducing reality, it operates through methods that can imagine and orchestrate alternative realities by articulating forms of engagement that value subjectivity over objective forms of knowledge production. I hope that, by harnessing the subversive potential of play to make refugees' voices visible through radical forms of appearance, hostility might give way to hospitality.

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## Ordering the uses and users in the sidewalk: policing street vending in Tehran

Mojgan Taheri Tafti

In his seminal book, “Street politics: poor people's movements in Iran”, Bayat (1997) carefully examined the politics of street vending in Tehran after the 1976 revolution up to the early 1990s. He famously characterised the presence of street vendors in Tehran’s public spaces as ‘the quiet encroachment of the ordinary and their advancement on the propertied and powerful’ (p. 7). In his account, this advancement, led many shopkeepers, whose favourable business environment had been adversely affected by street vendors, to ally with state authorities in a ‘war against vendors’. This alliance, he then argued, represented a class dimension to the conflict over urban public space (ibid, p.15). Twenty years after this work, I revisit street vending in Tehran with a view to unpacking how relations, in addition to this antagonistic alliance, between various actors shape and mediate the politics and policing of street vending in Tehran.

Current scholarship on street vending has mainly focused on the vendors’ struggles against the state’s revanchist and exclusionary policies. While the intentional or incidental collective acts of vendors are mostly considered as the manifestations of ‘politics of resistance’, at the individual level of street vendors’ activities, there is less agreement over using this umbrella term. On one hand, a number of studies (e.g. Milgram, 2014; Turner & Schoenberger, 2012; Kamete, 2010) consider escaping, bribing, negotiating and mobility as means of ‘covert resistance’. On the other hand, others (e.g. Huang et al., 2014) consider these actions as forms of coping strategies aimed at survival, rather than deliberate political acts aimed at effecting change. In particular, recent studies are increasingly highlighting the competition between street vendors themselves over busy public spaces. Unequal power relations between vendors, for example between migrant versus local vendors (Boonjubun, 2017; Martínez et al., 2018); traditional versus new generation of vendors (Maneepong and Walsh, 2013); and male versus female vendors (Amankwaa, 2017), question the relevance of this term.

In this paper, my aim is to examine how multi-actor dynamisms of policing sidewalks have shaped and mediated the geographically uneven and spatially differentiated forms, intensity and distribution of street vending in three different busy commercial strips in Tehran. In doing so, I apply Rancière’s conceptualisation of politics and police. ‘Police’, in his work, constitutes ‘the allocation of ways of doing and ways of being [...] an order that sees a particular activity is visible and another is not’ (1999, 29). Politics involves changing and disrupting this order by the ‘institution of a part of those who have no part’ (ibid, 29). These concepts relate to our analysis, as many cities of the global south have attempted to naturalise particular forms of order in public spaces in pursuing the visions of cities with clean, orderly public open spaces, appropriate for collective consumption and attractive for investment (Cossa, 2009; Swanson, 2007). Street vending, as practices and functions incompatible with this vision, therefore, are being policed, criminalised or restricted from public spaces. Furthermore, Rancière’s work conceptualises policing as processual and not institutional, which implies that it is not solely the domain of the state apparatus and includes wider social mechanisms and actors in arranging the tangible realities in contemporary cities.

### Research methods

This paper presents the findings of an ongoing research (Tafti, 2019a, 2019b), which started from April 2017. In the first six months of the fieldwork, data collected from semi-structured interviews with 34 street vendors, 11 shopkeepers, four municipal staff and six people who were involved in some arrangements with vendors; participatory and non-participatory observation, and mapping

street vendors' presence and practices in three busy commercial strips in Tehran: North and South Valiasr Street and 15-khordad Street (Tehran Bazaar). For participatory observation, I spent hours sitting with two female street vendors to observe their interactions with other vendors, shopkeepers and municipality staff.

### **The regulatory and discursive sites of policing street vending**

Despite ambitions for making Tehran a world-class city (Fadaee & Schindler, 2017), the state's regulatory and discursive engagements regarding street vendors has rarely been framed by images of 'modern' and orderly cities. Instead, the state frames its exclusionary policies on street vending by an Islamic rhetoric. The concept of *sadd-e-mabar* (obstruction of thoroughfares), which according to Islamic sources is not permitted, has been extensively used for describing street vending activities. For instance, in a city council meeting, held to decide about street vendors, the head of the city council said 'sadd-e-mabar is a sin. We cannot organise sins' (Tehran City Council, 2019). Despite the delegitimising and criminalising discourses and regulatory pressures, the number of street vendors in Tehran has been increasing due to the economic slowdown in the country since 2008. According to a research conducted in 2015 (Saghafi, 2015), 58 per cent of street vendors in Tehran turned to this work after being laid off or losing their jobs.

### **Policing the sidewalk**

The discontent of shopkeepers about sharing the trading opportunities in commercial strips with street vendors has been the dominant force that drives policing the sidewalks and harassing vendors in Tehran. The role of the state entities in mediating this contestation has been dynamic, cyclical and conditioned by the relative standing of local shopkeepers. This was most radically manifested in the Bazaar case (15-Khordad St), where in 2016 main Bazaar traders closed down their shops to express their dismay with the presence of street vendors. In the political history of the country the act of closing down shops is considered a political act of protest. Given the political importance of the Bazaar traders to authorities, the city authorities' reaction was rapid and fierce. Within three days, the riot police forces 'recovered' the street. The heavy policing of the street has continued ever since to prevent street vendors from returning to the site. In other areas of the city, however, the presence of police forces has been cyclical, because of its high financial cost. Therefore, in our other two sites, policing the sidewalks has been exercised in the absence of the state's full-scale confrontation. I will explain that in such cases, the socio-spatial practices of street vendors, are shaped and mediated through distinctive, yet dynamic forms of day-to-day policing of the sidewalks by a variety of actors, including street vendors themselves.

#### *Policing the sidewalk through contestation*

In our three sites, the role of shopkeepers in policing the sidewalks has been mediated by local authorities. This mediation varied in different sites, depending on the shopkeepers' economic and political capacity and leverage to influence local authorities. In the more prestigious Valiasr North St, for instance, shopkeepers constantly put pressure on, and negotiated with, the local municipality, checked and reported the activities of street-level municipal staff regarding vendors to their supervisors. The job of the municipal staff in their daily short visits to the site, was to ask vendors to pack up and leave every now and then, even if it was obvious that they would return soon. Street vendors kept their activities less provocative, by having small stalls that could be easily packed up. At the busy Valiasr South St, however, the attempts of less economically powerful shopkeepers including meeting with city authorities, letter writing campaigns and calling the police were largely futile. Therefore, the socio-material formation of street vending was characterized by conspicuously

high number of vendors and big stalls and tables. The differentiated relations between lower levels of the 'state' and shopkeepers were linked to the wider processes of urban transformation in Tehran and the intensified capital accumulation in northern wealthier parts of the city, which resulted in loosening the connections between city authorities and shopkeepers in southern areas.

#### *Policing the sidewalk through collaboration*

Policing the sidewalk has been also mediated and shaped by the collaboration between street vendors and lower-income shopkeepers. This collaboration involved the vendor renting a part of the interface between the shop and the sidewalk (that could be an external wall, a setback or even a part of the front steps) or the open public space in front of the shop to put his stall. The vendor in these cases is predominantly male because of the shopkeepers' fear of peer disapproval of an informal business with an unrelated woman. Through this collaboration, and paying a monthly 'rent', these vendors guaranteed their protection from police harassment. The municipal staff had an implicit – but rarely negotiated – agreement with the collaborative activities of shopkeepers and street vendors. State entities and shopkeepers avoided any direct interference with each other's operations. This pattern was observed in South Valiasr St and even in the Bazaar cases. At the Valiasr North St, however, the concern of shopkeepers about the prestige and aesthetics of the shopping strip implied the importance of keeping sidewalks free of unwanted activities. As a result, none of the above mentioned methods of collaboration were observed in this site.

#### *Policing the sidewalk through competition*

Street vendors themselves involved in policing the sidewalks. This factor was also mediated by their relationships with the municipal staff as well as shopkeepers. In the Valiasr South St, for instance, where shopkeepers could not exert an influence on the local authorities to contain street vending, self-organized vendors controlled trading activities on the pavement, in particular near the metro station exits. They shaped a network that included surrounding buildings (e.g. for the storage of goods and stalls overnight) and maintained a good relationship with municipal staff because of their ability to make regular unofficial payments. Once or twice a year, the riot police raid this site to signify the capacity of the state to maintain order over the city. However, 'the day that the police are supposed to come and evacuate them, they [organised street vendors] do not show up at all. It is clear that somebody [municipal staff] gives them this sort of news' (Shopkeeper – 02-07). Self-organized groups could be formed either by some individuals coming from similar town to Tehran or by one person hiring individuals to trade certain goods for him/her on the street, or just street vendors paying a group of strongmen to look after them and their trading spot in prime locations. In Valiasr North St, the existing vendors prevented their peers to join them through informing the municipal staff (who were always engaged in some sort of financial transaction with vendors) about the new comer to force him/her out.

Therefore, a fierce, but mostly quiet, competition between street vendors over the sidewalk in prime locations determined who, where and how could trade. In this fierce, often physical tension and competition, there was little place for individual vendors and in particular female vendors. The higher the level of competition for space, the less women were observed in our sites. While in Tehran, female vendors outnumber the male ones, the significantly lower presence of female vendors in the selected sidewalks (16 out of 197 vendors), implies the influence of other layers of policing and the physically demanding environment of competition and contestation for urban space in busy commercial streets.

## Conclusion

In this paper, by moving beyond equating police with state institutions or politics with everyday contestations of the subaltern, I attempted to show that the contestation over public space had more than two sides (state and vendors). In policing the sidewalks many elements came together to create and maintain a socio-spatial regime, including the state at different levels, shopkeepers, street vendors as a heterogeneous group and the general public.

In our cases, the absence of the state's full-scale confrontation, was accompanied by a disruption of what was legally and discursively constituted as the order of 'proper' uses and users in commercial strips. But then this disruption constituted a new 'order' and hence created new sets of 'people who have no part'. The incorporation of a group of street vendors into this new order transformed them into the agents of policing the sidewalks. The case of female street vendors illustrated that while they were rarely targeted by municipal staff, they were pushed out of busy sidewalks mainly by other vendors involved in policing these areas. In the light of deep inequalities between vendors, this paper argues, the literature on 'politics of resistance' needs to address more explicitly the differentiated opportunities, practices and experiences of street vendors.

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## **Virtual Resistance, Material Consequences: Countering State Projects in (Semi-) Authoritarian Russia**

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*Introduction: protest and opposition cultures in contemporary Russia*

Despite the context of growing authoritarianism and diminishing political freedoms in Russia (Gel'man 2015), there is a vibrant oppositional and protest culture. Beyond the issues of electoral politics, most visible outside Russia in the marches involving the anti-corruption activist Alexey Navalny (see for example BBC 2019; Roth 2019), protests often materialize in opposition to controversial urban development agendas at local scales (66.ru 2017; Bakin 2019). Yet street protest in Russia remains challenging and often dangerous. Though protesting is technically protected by law, mass gatherings must be given official permission – which is not always forthcoming. Legally, individuals are permitted to protest without permission so long as they are separated from others by at least 50 meters (Meduza 2014), but even so, authorities often arrest individual protestors. Partly because of this environment, protest cultures have taken shape in the worlds of art and music (Jonson 2015), though there are debates about the distinctions between counterculture and protest, just as there are about the differences between protest and opposition (Gabowitsch 2017). Beyond culture, oppositional and protest activity flourishes in digital spaces. Though online, and therefore inherently virtual, these activities can have material effects and consequences.

Building on research that identifies the digital as a political space that creates a new type of public square for activism (Arora 2015), this article aims to trace links between the virtual and the material in Russian protest. Rather than exploring the connections between online activity and mass actions, however (see Radchenko, Pisarevskaya, and Ksenofontova 2012), I focus on the micro scale to examine individuals who – in the context of increasing political closure – have taken oppositional positions in this virtual public square. For this analysis, it is less important whether these actions have led to physical protest; instead, I valorize virtual opposition itself, and then trace the effects on the activists. Further, I work with the concept of tactics, that is, the actions of people in situations of relative powerlessness (de Certeau 2011, 36–38). I identify two tactics engaged by Russian online opposition figures in order to avoid punishment by the authorities, which in these cases led to four divergent trajectories. To begin the analysis, I turn towards the urban, as Russia's generally poor level of infrastructure provides a source of almost universal complaint, particularly in the peripheries. The urban thus serves as an entry to broader political discussion, complaint, engagement, and oppositional activity.

*Four activists and the Russian internet*

Colloquially known as the RuNet, the Russian-language portion of the internet has long been considered an outlet of free expression and a relatively safe environment for quasi-legal or even outright illegal activities, such as content piracy. The RuNet has also drawn academic attention as a means for grasping Russian political developments (Shatina 2011), which lends an ironic significance to the increasing levels of state monitoring, intervention, and control over these digital spaces (Bobrova 2010; Novie Izvestiya 2017; Stadnik 2019). Nevertheless, online spaces blogging and vlogging remain viable outlets for political opinion, dissent, and even news broadcasts (often limited to a local or regional focus) that might otherwise be overlooked or censored by official media.

The four individuals featured here have all engaged in online activism, from blogging to broadcasting news and leveraging their audiences towards political problems, petitions, or protests. To varying degrees they have taken up urban issues, but they are not necessarily limited to the urban. Finally, they each have managed with differing levels of success to manage the dynamic spaces and increasing political closures of Russia's semi-authoritarianism. There is no totalitarian control of Russian society, after all, but it is crucial to know how to navigate the diminishing room for political engagement.

In exploring the online activities of these four individuals, this article is based on internet research from 2011-2019. Covering these eight years, I explored each person's online presence across a variety of popular platforms, collecting a massive social media archive. I then coded this archive in order to determine the political nature of their engagements. Further, as they have received a certain amount of media attention, I also followed them through more established media channels. In this way, I built a profile over time of each individual's online activities, while monitoring what happened to them as they came into contact with agents of the state.

The first activist to consider is Dmitry Ivanov, a YouTuber better known by the name *kamikadzedead*. Ivanov participates in many leading Russian and international social networks, but YouTube is the centerpiece of his online ecosystem, and the purpose of his activities on other sites is to drive traffic to his hugely popular YouTube channel. Ivanov is relentlessly political and a vociferous critic of the Kremlin, often combining analysis of national politics with reports on local corruption, and then mixing in homemade videos from his viewers in the peripheries who film the

lamentable condition of their regional infrastructures. In this way, he complains about inequality while demonstrating the effects of political corruption at multiple scales (for typical examples of this style, see Kamikadzedead 2018; 2019).

With increasing virtual popularity, however, came material problems. As his impact grew, Ivanov noted a coordinated campaign of pro-Kremlin commentators would descend on every video, spamming the comments with pro-government messages. Ivanov calls this an attack of the “Kremlibots” and accuses YouTube of working with the authorities to delete his likes and views – the currency of the platform and the lifeblood of a YouTuber (Nemtsova 2018). More dramatically, after Ivanov’s channel passed one million subscribers in 2017, federal authorities attempted to open a case against him for violation of article 110 of the Russian Criminal Code, which outlaws driving another person to suicide. In April of 2017, Ivanov fled Russia and now lives abroad (TV Rain 2017).

Unlike Ivanov, Mariya Motuznaya was neither an activist nor a public figure before her run-in with the authorities. Motuznaya shot to national and international recognition in July 2018 when she posted a Twitter thread detailing her arrest and questioning by police in her hometown of Barnaul. In a series of tweets that garnered mainstream media attention worldwide, Motuznaya explained how she was awoken by the authorities, questioned for hours at the police station, and forced to sign a confession, all of which landed her on the Russian government’s terrorist watch list, even before a court case (Motuznaya 2018a). Her crime was violating articles 148 and 282 of the Russian Criminal Code, which forbid the incitement of hatred and insulting the feelings of religious believers. She had done this by saving to her VK account a large number of Russian memes that made fun of the profligate wealth and corruption of the Russian Orthodox Church (Motuznaya 2018b). Facing up to five years in prison, Motuznaya fled to Ukraine and planned to ask for asylum in the European Union (Meduza 2018; Zatory 2018).

Motuznaya’s Twitter thread made her something of a public figure and also heralded a sort of political awakening. Though she already had active Twitter and Instagram accounts, these grew dramatically in popularity with her newfound notoriety. To this she added a Telegram channel, and it is this last outlet which is most consistently political. Though she tweets regularly, on Twitter her political output is sporadic, with merely 19.2% of her post-thread tweets containing political content. In contrast to Ivanov, who has made a living out of being a political blogger and thus maintains a consistent and legible presence across all platforms, Motuznaya lacks such a coherent

online identity. Instead, Motuznaya's political activity centers on criticism of certain state decisions, while periodically directing her audience's attention to support certain causes, particularly those involving people persecuted for their political activity. After President Vladimir Putin relaxed – but did not abolish – the two articles of the Russian Criminal Code under which she had been investigated (Polovinko 2018), pressure on Motuznaya began to lessen, and the case against her was dropped in January 2019. She returned to Russia in July 2019 and was awarded a settlement of 100,000 rubles (approximately US\$1500) for persecution by the authorities (Novaya Gazeta 2019).

Matters did not end so well for Alexander Valov, the activist behind BlogSochi.ru. This blog was focused exclusively on local issues in Sochi and the surrounding region, with an emphasis on protecting the natural environment. Valov's popularity increased in the context of the 2014 Olympics, and his blog served as an alternative news source to the heavily controlled state media surrounding the mega-event. Using photographs and videos, he documented crimes against nature ranging from littering to widespread violations of Russia's environmental protections during Olympic construction. Over time he began to investigate local corruption, and his exposé of a Sochi politician using embezzled funds to build a villa brought him to the attention of authorities. In one of his final videos, he filmed in the dark as police cut electricity to his apartment, and then cut open his iron security door with a power saw to arrest him (Caucasian Knot 2018). Unfortunately, despite small protests on his behalf, his local audience was unable to secure his release and Valov is now serving a six-year sentence for allegedly soliciting bribes. Meanwhile, BlogSochi has been wiped from the internet.

Finally, Ilya Varlamov is an enormously successful blogger who jets to various Russian and international cities to document their mistakes and (less often) successes in urban planning. He is at the heart of a bespoke new media empire that produces prodigious amounts of content across all leading platforms, and is credited by Forbes as being a dollar multimillionaire (Zhitkova 2019). While exploring urban preparations in the host cities for the 2018 World Cup in Russia, Varlamov ran afoul of the FSB in Volgograd; prevented from filming the beautifully renovated train station, he pointedly filmed the city's broken roads and crumbling buildings instead (Varlamov 2018b). In a separate incident, he was interrupted while filming an interview with Russian television in Moscow and taken in for questioning by agents from the federal security services. He was detained for several hours but eventually released without charges or explanation. Varlamov credits his

release to the fact that since he is a public figure, prominent Moscow media personalities raised an immediate outcry following his detention (Varlamov 2018a).

#### *Four trajectories and the Navalny Zone*

These four cases illustrate the challenges faced by online activists and opposition figures. They demonstrate two tactics for navigating the dynamic spaces of Russian semi-authoritarianism: escape (Ivanov and Motuznaya) and visibility (Valov and Varlamov). From abroad, Ivanov continues his “propaganda campaign to open the minds of Russians” (Nemtsova 2018), protected by the safety of distance. Motuznaya employed a similar tactic, though she returned to Russia once the immediate threat to her safety was diminished. On the other end, both Valov and Varlamov attempted to leverage their audiences to protect them from state dangers. This strength-in-numbers strategy has been put to effective use by Alexey Navalny, whose popularity and prominence have so far managed to keep him both alive and in the country, despite countless attacks and arrests. Only Varlamov was able to enter the Navalny Zone of public protection, however; Valov’s sphere of influence remained limited to the local level, and as such he was unable to muster sufficient audience numbers or public attention to prevent his imprisonment.

All four activists engage with urban issues, with the exception of Motuznaya, for whom the urban tends to resemble more of a background container than a deliberate focus. Despite their differing trajectories, what they share is a common need to maintain physical safety in the ambiguous spaces available for protest in Russia. The tactics they employed – escape or visibility – were contingent on positionality and time, which accounts for the varied consequences they endured. For Ivanov and Varlamov, exile and publicity allow them to maintain their vocal activism, while Motuznaya seems content to practice a more modest oppositional stance, and Valov has been removed entirely – a reminder of the dangers that everyone faces for their actions online.

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## 3B-1.2: Juxtaposition, Conflict and Segregation in Cities

**Chair/discussant:** Prof. Mona Harb, Professor of Urban Studies and Politics, American University of Beirut

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**Breaking down the nation-state: retreat and belonging in upper class gated communities in Johannesburg**

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**Juxtacities: urban divides, authority and citizenship in the global south**

Dr Amanda Hammar, Associate Professor, Centre of African Studies, University of Copenhagen

Dr Marianne Millstein, Senior Researcher, Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research, Oslo Metropolitan University

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**Designing care via sharing: theorizing South-South urban practices**

Dr Elahe Karimnia, Researcher, Theatrum Mundi

Manuscript not available

**Making space between confinement and contention: Afro-Colombians at the pluri-ethnic interface**

Giulia Torino, PhD candidate, University of Cambridge



Federica Duca. Draft paper for UCL conference: "At the frontiers of the urban", 10-12 November 2019. Not for circulation.

## **Breaking down the nation –state: retreat and belonging in upper class gated communities in Johannesburg.**

### Introduction<sup>1</sup>

Despite the formal and institutional spread of democracy, the steady growth of inequality is one of the main hindrances to the accomplishment of democratic societies. Cities are spaces in which inequality is visible, especially when looking at its spatial outlook. The stark difference, yet physical proximity, between wealthy suburbs and informal settlements is one of the most staggering images of cities of the Global South. In this context, the increasing presence of wealthy enclaves are analysed as the epitome of the retreat of the successful and as spaces that represent the demise of the nation-state. Contributing to the existing literature on citizenship, nation-state and gated enclaves in cities of the Global South, this paper argues that in South Africa we are witnessing a moment in which the nation and the state take two different directions, thus, instead of a weakening of the nation-state as a one concept, we see the detachment of the nation from the state. In this context, the wealthy see and experience the state as the main facilitator of citizenship and belonging for the poor, why citizenship for the rich is mediated mostly by the concept of the nation. The institutional, spatial and social makeup of gated communities facilitate this idea of belonging to the nation, and a very pragmatic association to the state, thus challenge the accomplishment of an equal, democratic society. Based on thick and extensive ethnographic work in Johannesburg, the paper details the articulation of the relationship between the nation and the state via the space of the urban gated community and the notions of nationalism and patriotism. It thus offer a way of positioning the urban space between state institutions and belonging to the nation.

#### 1. The nation, the state and wealthy urban spaces: a conceptual approach

This intervention locates itself in the context of a growing interest in urban studies that calls for a more analytical and critical study of the relationship between the city, the nation and the state (Jonas and Wilson, 2018). In so doing, it attempts to bridge current debates regarding the form of the city (Sennet, 2018) and its connection to (urban) belonging (Giband, 2013; Danzelot, 2009) and the nation-state.

In the last twenty years, literature on urban studies has been preoccupied with the increasing segregation, fragmentation and splintering of contemporary cities and metropolis (Graham,

<sup>1</sup> Please note that this is the first draft for book proposal on gated communities, retreat and belonging.

2001) and in this context Gated Communities (GC) have been studied as spaces that hinder the democratic accomplishment of society and an inclusive citizenship<sup>2</sup>(Sennett, 2017) and following the neoliberal turn, as spaces that speak to forms of retreat of and from the state and to the growing need of private provision of club goods (Webster, 2002). The most luxurious ones are described as spaces that indicate a “new way of life”; of self-segregation of the rich and of aspiration and class formation. The debate on GC globally emerged in the nineties in concomitance with the idea of the “global city” (1991, Sassen) and interpretations of the demise of the nation-state as a consequence of processes of globalization, migration and the implementation of neoliberal policies (Castells, 1996; Mann, 1997, Negri and Hardt, 2000). This period also coincides with the third wave of democratization (Huntginton, 1991), characterized by processes of state formation and nation building and at with the restructuring of the cities into city regions at the urban level. The growth of GC, especially in the Global South coincides with the establishment of new formal democratic dispensations (Caldeira, 2001)<sup>3</sup>, thus the important question to ask is: what kind of citizenship is experienced and claimed by the wealthy classes that inhabit these spaces and how does this undermine the creation of a shared polity?

### *1.1 Nationalism and belonging*

The physical separation manifested by high walls and security features is often associated with a form of political disengagement and retreat from the public sphere in fragmented societies<sup>4</sup>. They also speak to global processes of elite formation, globalization and homogenization of a wealthy transnational class whose visibility is increasingly severe as the gap between the rich and the poor widens. Yet, research in GC in Johannesburg (Duca, 2015) suggests that they are not necessarily to be understood in terms of retreat, indeed they are also spaces the mediate belonging. The space of the GC represents a privileged space for an inquiry<sup>5</sup> of the relationship between the city, the nation and the state beyond the concept of the nation-state (be it in terms of its demise or its strengthening) <sup>6</sup> and it invites a study of the terms of attachment and belonging for the wealthy. .

Recently the concept of urban citizenship has been mobilized to describe a drift from national citizenship, due to the lack of connection between the citizens and the nation state. Urban citizenship has been studied vastly in relation to the poor and to those that make claims to the

<sup>2</sup> The literature on gated communities produced a wide range of case studies. For the purpose of this paper this literature is not addressed.

<sup>3</sup> An interesting body of literature associates GC to moments of transition (political, economic, social), not only in the Global South.

<sup>4</sup> An important element is the relationship between political regimes and the presence or absence of gated communities.

<sup>5</sup> Putting in relation the history and the nature of the state with the city, I also overcome the obsession with the paradigm of dual city analysis (Fouchard, 2012, p. 230).

<sup>6</sup> The growing anti-democratic sentiments in many countries see a rise of nationalism in the cities, often citizens claim from the state in the name of the nation.

local government and urban institutions. Do the wealthy connect with the idea of urban citizenship, do they connect to local institutions?

I frame urban gated communities within the process of democratization, state formation and nation building and I set out to explore their forms of belonging (to what) and retreat (from what) in order to position this urban form in a broader context.

I set out to answer this question by exploring the self-understanding of elites and the wealthy in urban South Africa, with specific focus to how they position themselves in the broader polity (at the local, national and international spheres) and in turn, how they make claims and what kind of impact they have on the broader polity<sup>7</sup>.

## 2. Gated communities in the new South African context

South Africa transitioned to democracy with the first elections in 1994 when it also embarked on a process of nation-building. The first GC of South Africa was established in Johannesburg in the early nineties, launching a trend that now sets the industry at 3000 Homeowners Associations and more than 5 million people residing in residential communities, making up for up of 27% of total residential property (source, Association for Residential Communities). In Johannesburg alone there are up to 90 estates, and 18% of the local administrative budget comes from property rates. These gated spaces range from exclusive estates to middle class townhouse complexes and they all represent what many residents describe as “the new way of living” and “the new South Africa”<sup>8</sup>. Exclusive high-end gated estates are visible in the city for their ostentatious display of walls and electric fences and for their lack of accessibility. They are managed by a Homeowners Association (HOA) and its residents pay a levy to the management of the estate for security, entertainment and maintenance services (the HOA mediates the communication and the relationship between the city and the residents), while they receive their basic services (water, electricity, refuse collection) from the municipality.

GC in South Africa have been studied extensively as urban forms that reproduce the apartheid geography, or as spaces of contestation of the elite. In what follows I outline how wealthy GC are urban phenomena that instantiate a political community. I will use a case study from the city of Johannesburg built in 2014 and inhabited by the upper class.

### *2.1. Problematizing the space of retreat...*

<sup>7</sup> I follow the approach suggested by Lamont et al. (2014.)

<sup>8</sup> For an evaluation of gated communities in South Africa, see Ballard et al. (2019)

Firstly, I will outline how moving into a GC is a form of retreat from the local sphere in terms of engagement with the city. Residents of the estate<sup>9</sup> retreat from urban politics, while the estate and its management are in charge of exercising any political influence at the local level.

In 2011 a real estate agent from Johannesburg, South Africa, advertises a newly built “golf estate” by announcing that “migrating into the estate” offers a valid alternative to migrating overseas. What do individuals that “migrate into the estate” think and how do they relate themselves to the broader polity. What is the essence and the nature of this “migration”?

A resident of the estate explained: “we moved here, otherwise we would have had to move out of the country”. The move into the estate is conceived by the residents as a step into a system that is different from the one offered by the state.

The residents of the estate<sup>10</sup> retreat from the use of most of the services of the state (at the local and national level), but they maintain the right to vote and they secure the payment of taxes to be able to preserve their space in the country. Parallel to the restructuring of the city, and in the aftermath of apartheid, the estate configures itself as the space in which residents can experience an efficient and secure life.

However, it is claimed that: “The estate and its management is successful when it cooperates fully with the local administration in order to be able to gain as much independence as possible” (President of the Association of Residential Communities). In this case, the estate aspires to be independent from the rest of the city to maintain its efficiency but at the same time, wants to be acknowledged as an integral part of the city and the nation. Its management is excellent and efficient and this is possible thanks to a high level of compliance to rules and regulations by the residents.

The upper classes that move into the estate find in its administration a way to live in South Africa. The relationship to the state is mediated by the formal exercise of rights and duties, but it is not mediated by the “request of services”, such as provision of health and education, which is associated with a form of welfare directed only to the poor<sup>11</sup>. At the local level, the residents do not engage with the administration, as the estate mediates any form of relationship with the local administration.

## *2.2 ...and of belonging*

Moving into the estate does not only constitute a move away from the state or the city. This section claims that the residents of the estate move out of the city and thanks to the estate re-

<sup>9</sup> Here I refer to a specific golf estate in the Northern Western part of Johannesburg.

<sup>10</sup> In my research, I have conducted fieldwork in various wealthy areas, differently organized and not necessarily gated. The comparison is useful for detailing the extent and nature of retreat and how this is determined by the spatial and institutional organization of the different spaces.

<sup>11</sup> Importantly, this does not mean that residents of the estate might not be part of the state apparatus, some of them might work in government, yet this does not exclude that they see the state as the service provider for the poor.

enter the nation and express their “love for the country”, the estate then allows a form of escalation in belonging to the national sphere.

One of the residents explain: “We did not emigrate as we love this country”. Indeed, deciding to remain in South Africa instead of moving abroad<sup>12</sup> is seen by the residents as a form of commitment to the country and as assertion of belonging. This love is expressed with the notion of the worthy community (for being part of the new South Africa and living in a space that represents such novelty), but it is also determined by the natural beauty of the landscape of the country, the nice weather and finally by the less explicitly mentioned possibility of exploitation of cheap labour.

Another resident claims: “The estate is a substitute for ubuntu, it gives us the opportunity to live safely in Johannesburg”<sup>13</sup>. In this case, for the black family who was confined to a space that was not considered South Africa during the Apartheid regime, the estate represents a medium to enter the new South Africa.

In this regard, the estate is a medium to re-enter South Africa in different ways and it offers the opportunity to assert a form of “right to the nation”<sup>14</sup>. The urban gated estate constitute the space in which the “new South Africa” is instantiated, the space in which the residents are able to experience the new country<sup>15</sup>. Even if the gated community reproduces patterns of inequality and segregation, especially with regards to informal settlements, its residents see the estate as facilitating their integration into the post-apartheid nation.

### 3. Conclusion: urban Gated Communities and “love of country”

Urban gated estates in countries that are undergoing a process of state and nation building such as South Africa are important spaces from which to analyse the nature and the form of the nation-state. In the South African case gated estates are spaces that express “love for country”. This is strictly entrenched with those of management and administration of spaces.

The nation and the state take two different directions, but they are not weakened. The implications of this bifurcation are relevant to understanding ways in which societies constitute themselves. Studying urban gated communities only with the lens of retreat undermines an important element, the ways in which residents interact with the state and how they envision their space in the broader polity. The wealthy think of the state as an institution that should

<sup>12</sup> Starting from the nineties emigration out of South Africa has been a concern of the white population. Statistics on how many people left however are not available.

<sup>13</sup> This presentation does not address adequately the “racial question” in South Africa. I develop this aspect in the fuller version of this paper.

<sup>14</sup> Among others, these include security, efficient maintenance, and high property value.

<sup>15</sup> The work of Hart (2014) on re-nationalisation is very useful to make this point, as well as the work of Freund (2004) on the globalisation and the South African nation-state.

provide for the poor<sup>16</sup>, and at the same time should grant freedoms to the wealthy. Not expecting services from the state, the wealthy exert their “right to the nation” thanks to their “love for country”.

Structurally the gated estate mediates the relationship between the residents, the city and the state. The retreat and autonomy from the city does not mean that they effectively do not influence it. It means that they have no direct claims to urban institutions. In this regard, the city stops to be in the imaginary of the residents of the urban gated estate, opening the space to a form of national belonging. This is not necessarily a form of nationalistic sentiment, it is rather a form of patriotism that serves the purpose of maintaining the status quo for the wealthy.

<sup>16</sup> In South Africa the post-apartheid state took a developmentalist approach (the budget has become more welfare orientated).

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## JUXTACITIES: URBAN DIVIDES, AUTHORITY AND CITIZENSHIP IN THE GLOBAL SOUTH<sup>1</sup>

Amanda Hammar<sup>2</sup> and Marianne Millstein<sup>3</sup>

### Introduction

An important and varied scholarship exists on divided, dual, polarised, segregated or fragmented cities, usefully summarized by Gaffikin and Morrissey (2011). The literature points to an intensification of a range of social and spatial divides in cities of the global South or Southeast (Roy 2011, Yiftachel 2009, Watson 2013), although there is always slippage and interaction across such divides. We might think here of cities like Lagos (Gandy 2006), Jakarta (Simone, 2014), Kinshasa (De Boeck, 2011) or Manila (Tadiar 2007); or less-large yet profoundly divided cities such as Cape Town (Lemanski and Oldfield 2009) or Lod (Yiftachel and Jacobi 2003). Divisions and tensions over various forms of space, authority and citizenship are also evident in smaller urban areas, not least those emerging on rural/urban frontiers: literally on borders (Vlassenroot and Büscher 2009), on natural resource-related frontiers (Bryceson and MacKinnon 2012), or in peri-urban areas (Trefon 2009). Related to old and new dynamics of differentiation, narrow forms of wealth and property accumulation are on the rise, alongside growing competition and often-violent forms of exclusion (Rodgers and O'Neill 2012, Hammar 2014, Collins 2016). Yet there is also evidence of inclusive forms of governance in some urban spaces, double-edged as they are (Beall 2001, Jensen 2004, Millstein 2011, Patel 2016). There is also creative social, cultural, political and economic agency and activism among citizens in resisting, contesting and reshaping such divides, disparities and practices of exclusion (Appadurai 2002, Das 2011, Holston 2011), albeit often with ambiguous outcomes (Caldeira 2014, Hammar 2017).

Juxtacities is an approach that takes *the production of and within* urban divides in themselves as a core focus of investigation; that is, their productive qualities and effects, as well as the ways these divides are produced. More specifically in the present discussion, juxtacities provides a relational lens with which to examine *the dynamic articulation* between forms, processes and practices of urban division on the one hand, and the production of and contestations over urban authority and citizenship on the other. This paper unfolds the conceptual logic and dimensions of the juxtacities approach, as well as explaining the particular focus on the relationship between urban divides, authority and

<sup>1</sup> This paper condenses the arguments and framing for the Introduction to a forthcoming special issue of Urban Forum, focused on Juxtacities.

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citizenship. It then provides selected examples of how the approach is both grounded in and responsive to observed empirical urban realities in situated Southern/Southeastern contexts, and, as we argue, evocative for critical urban research more broadly.

### **Unfolding juxtacities as an approach to urban divides**

In working with the notion of *juxtacities*, to begin with we critically re-visit the (over)emphasis on porosity, fluidity and flow across boundaries, strongly present in recent urban studies literature. Even if that has evolved as an understandable reaction to the analytical limitations of binary thinking more generally, we echo Angelo's (2016) view that rather than dismissing binaries, we ought to turn these into – or at least include them as part of – our object of research. Consequently, we adopt a conscious analytical (re)engagement with those very dimensions of difference that have informed binary readings of urban space and that have defined and often reified divides. Our own focus is not on dichotomy per se, but rather on urban divides as active, situated domains in themselves that provide key opportunities for further understanding and theorizing complex urban dynamics. We thus think of urban divides in their varied and inter-related spatial, temporal, social, political, economic, material and symbolic senses. Additionally, we conceive of such divides as particularly generative 'intermediate' and 'kinetic' arenas (Lutzoni 2016) within and through which a range of urban visions, relations, structures and practices articulate with each other and so get reshaped and/or reinforced in more or less overt, and more or less stable, ways. In turn, such dynamics affect and possibly alter the very nature of existing urban divides, or precipitate the formation of others, even while the conceptual language that defines these divides struggles to keep up with them. In such contexts, we ask how and why differently situated urban actors – through their mix of positionalities, practices and interactions – produce, reinforce or contest particular urban divides. Within the *juxtacities* approach *divide* is understood in terms of the juxtaposition of contrasting forms, spaces, temporalities, things, bodies, practices, ideas. In this, we emphatically focus on *relationality, articulation, and productive co-constitution*.

The notion of *juxtacities* offers us a way to recognize, investigate and theorize the dynamic qualities of multiple urban divides in their specific contexts; that is, to focus on the productive juxtaposition of difference in urban spaces: both difference-as-distinction, and difference-as-bridge. We think of juxtaposition in terms of the location of *two (or more) relatively distinct or contrasting phenomena (objects, actors, spatial forms, events, visions, temporalities, and so on) in close relational proximity to one another, and in some way interacting and co-producing one another*. In the initial imagining of

the term ‘juxtacity’<sup>4</sup> – pluralised here as *juxtacities* – it was conceived as the side-by-sidedness of, and productive articulation between, differences within the urban (see for example De Boeck and Plissart 2004, Nuttall and Mbembe 2008, Simone 2014). Here, articulation implies interaction or imbrication as well as ‘friction’, generating change of some kind. Contra Gaffikin and Morrissey (2011), we do not view such divides as necessarily framed in terms of direct conflict or contestation but, as already noted, as characterized by dynamics of interaction within and across a wide range of distinctions. Instead of focusing on difference mostly in terms of separation or antagonism, we explore urban divides more openly and dynamically, as generative objects of analysis in themselves. This resonates closely with Simone and Pieterse’s (2017) call to explore urban change through the frictions and ‘reciprocal complicities, divergences and interdependencies’ at the boundaries where differentiated urban forms ‘meet’ (ibid: 12).

Examples of such proximate contrasts include material-physical-spatial juxtapositions such as slum areas or squatters set right next to middle class neighbourhoods and property owners; temporary shelter next to formal housing; or informal street vendors beside corporate enterprises. It also includes social-political-symbolic juxtapositions such as the co-presence of different kinds of citizens or authorities within particular spatial or sectoral domains; the disruption and trauma of dislocation and resettlement, set against nostalgia by the displaced or resettled for the imagined ‘ordered’ city; or the aspirations for ‘middle classness’ and inclusion alongside the everyday reality of being poor, working class or migrant. It can also include planners’ fantasies of well-ordered, ‘world-class’ cities alongside the perpetuation or expansion of lived spaces of marginality, vulnerability, violence and apparent disorder. In other words, there are various kinds of divides that do different kinds of political, economic, social and spatial work. It is this work, these effects, that we are interested in examining, and especially in relation to aspects of authority and citizenship

However, our interest is not simply in pairing or placing things, actors or structures beside each other in order to view them in contrast, or conflict. We are convinced that there are important dynamics – *transformative frictions* one might say – occurring at, in, or through these divides themselves (see also Simone and Pieterse 2017). Some of the more familiar *analytical* divisions rest on rather classic binary distinctions between formal/informal, legal/illegal, rural/urban, state/citizen, insider/outsider, traditional/modern, fixed/mobile, past/future. Others are defined by intersectional material and

<sup>4</sup> This was initially very briefly conceived in the Concept Note for a collaborative conference on ‘*Urban Property, Governance and Citizenship in the Global South*’ in Copenhagen in June 2015. It was developed further during a small, focused Writeshop in Copenhagen in May 2016. The authors of the present paper were key co-conveners of both events.

social identities such as class, gender, race, ethnicity, sexuality, generation, nationality. We might add yet other forms of distinction such as: spectral/real, surface/underground, ordered/disordered. Rather than being concerned with refusing or countering such distinctions, we suggest there is something to be gained by examining the actual form of these apparent opposites and the effects of their empirical as well as conceptual juxtaposition and dynamic articulation with one another. Such *moments and arenas of articulation* – as we conceive divides – can be thought of as interstitial spaces and temporalities in which certain things change, stabilize, de-stabilize. Although these can be difficult to ‘see’ in practice, this is part of the methodological and analytical challenge that a *juxtacities* approach takes on.

The intention, then, is not primarily to explain what divides ‘the city’ or what causes such divides *per se*, although this is clearly important. Nor is there an aim to prescribe ‘solutions’ to urban divides as ‘problems’, even while recognizing deep historical-structural inequalities embedded in them. Rather, the main ambition is to examine what such divides *produce*. As already implied, potentially this covers the full spectrum of urban spaces, systems, structures, relations and dynamics. However, we are especially interested in how authority and citizenship are constituted through urban divides, and how, in dynamic reciprocation (Bendiner-Viana 2013), such transformative processes reproduce, interrupt or reshape such divides. Attention to this particular relationship is uncommon in the literature.

### **Linking Urban Divides, Authority and Citizenship**

Having noted a gap in the urban literature on the relationship between urban divides, authority and citizenship, this has become a core focus for the *juxtacities* framework (although it can be adapted and applied to other arenas). Within the multiple, overlapping domains and dynamics of urban division, a combination of formal and informal authorities and differentiated citizens grapple with a range of needs and challenges. In this, we see a myriad of productive exchanges between diverse authorities and citizens within the varied spaces of cities of the global South/Southeast that both draw upon and resist the borders between them. The aim here is to undertake a double reading of these relational dynamics. On the one hand, the intention is to examine *how different actors produce, reinforce, contest or use urban divides*. On the other hand, it is to reveal *how authorities and citizens of different kinds get ‘made’ or re-made through the production of or resistance to critical urban divides*. This raises questions about the ways in which authority and citizenship themselves are conceptualized.

We view authority as inclusive of but also beyond any particular, fixed institutional actor or governing structure such as ‘government’ or ‘the state’ or ‘municipality’. *Authority* can be understood in its most mundane sense as simultaneously a form of expression and a recognition of legitimate power, wherein legitimacy can be either formal or informal, licit or illicit, permanent or temporary. It may derive as much from traditional, familial or gendered hierarchies, or from moral-political grounding or charismatic appeal, as from legal or official sanction. It might be expressed through overt or passive, violent or pastoral, means, and be performed through particular technologies and practices. Notably, authority is viewed as neither singular nor static; and never entirely comprehensive or complete in its coverage. There are always multiple domains of authority; and always multiple, shifting authorities within situated spatio-social domains (Alexander 2006; Hammar 2007; Lund 2002; Moore 2005; Roitman 2005; Stacey and Lund 2016). This necessarily gives rise to either competition or negotiation between different authorities, for example in relation to public services and infrastructure, to labour and livelihoods, to rights and security, or to identity and belonging. In each sphere, citizens themselves are engaged in complex ways, wherein they are shaped by, and in turn shape, authority. Legitimate authority, and those diverse actors in whom it is vested, are ‘authorised’ in different ways to make determining decisions over the actions of others, and to define, categorise, regulate or control people, things and spaces. But even if authority is recognised or has some degree of legitimacy, it doesn’t mean it is always ‘successful’, nor that it isn’t or won’t be contested. The effects of ‘failed’ authority are as significant as its ‘successes’, while resistance to authority is as much constitutive of it as overt recognition (Tsing 1993). Limited attention has been paid to this multiplicity of authorities specifically within urban contexts (exceptions include Stacey and Lund 2016, Collins 2016). The Juxtacities special issue (in progress) brings such mixed realities and their effects to the fore.

With respect to citizenship, and urban citizenship in particular, this too is viewed in a dynamic, non-singular and multi-spatialised way, and as a ‘contested terrain’ (Hammett 2017). Citizenship is acknowledged in both its legal-statutory versions associated with formal rights and obligations, and in its substantive forms, variously conceptualized as ‘active’, ‘insurgent’, ‘residential’ and so on (see for example Neveu et al 2014, Holston 2011). As an analytical concept and lens, urban citizenship implies both the structuring and enabling of residents’ political agency. The co-existing forms of citizenship manifest unevenly across space and time as well as between and within particular political or social communities, reflected in notions such as differentiated or graduated citizenship (Bezabeh 2011, Doshi 2013, Holston 2011). This can be informed by such social distinctions as class, race, gender, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, ability, political affiliation, alone or in combination. These distinctions in

themselves constitute certain kinds of symbolic-material divides, which overlay and co-produce the kinds of urban divides discussed earlier.

While some of the scholarship to be included in the Juxtacities special issue explicitly addresses differentiations of citizenship rights and/or rights-based claims to citizenship, others explore citizen-making practices that may not necessarily be articulated as rights-based claims but which are, nevertheless, expressions of citizen-making of some kind. No matter what, the agency of citizens is recognised, if also understood as wavering between highly active and passive, depending on context and circumstances. Such agency may be directed towards claiming official rights or be expressed in struggles for a range of self-defined claims aimed at either formal or informal authorities, et it may not necessarily be intended to disrupt entirely the hegemonic social and political order. A politics of rights-claims may also articulate with localised struggles over identities and belonging, through which differentiated citizenship may also be reproduced rather than challenged and contested (Hammett 2017; 2010). This raises questions as to whether or when urban residents are acting as clients, subjects, or citizens. Either way, as emerging research illustrates, land, property, infrastructure, public services and markets are core arenas of struggle within urban settings, as are identities, status, and claims of belonging – even more so in contexts of urban division. Importantly, we do not see these as linear processes towards the ideal ‘liberal’ citizen-subject, but as a complex politics of claims, being and belonging that shape multiple forms and practices of agency. Thus, urban divides and their multifaceted articulations and frictions may (re)produce or contest such differentiations and inform what it means to be seen, and to act, as citizens in rapidly changing urban worlds.

### **Selective cases using a Juxtacities approach<sup>5</sup>**

#### *Making and Re-Making Citizenship in Cape Town*

In her work on ‘the making and re-making of citizenship’ in the divided city of Cape Town, Marianne Millstein examines the interplay of spatially and temporally juxtaposed differences related to one kind of urban infrastructure, namely housing. This is examined through a case study in Delft, a poor urban community on the periphery of Cape Town. The analysis combines the notion of juxtacities with work on infrastructural citizenship that emphasizes the deeply political and social nature of physical material (Lemanski 2019, Graham and McFarlane 2015). While citizenship is about more than housing rights, the centrality of state-delivered housing development to South Africa’s project of

<sup>5</sup> These cases are drawn from contributions to the forthcoming Juxtacities special issue for *Urban Forum*.

transformation, alongside the social and spatial unevenness of such delivery – makes it particularly important to the politics of citizenship (Lemanski 2017).

Focusing on housing, three forms of urban divide are explored in Delft: firstly, the juxtaposition of material divides that manifest spatially across the landscape in terms of different typologies and materials of state-delivered housing in different neighborhoods, which also manifest as pockets of informality within and surrounding formal housing areas. Built through state housing provision since 1994, Delft is a microcosm of the effects of thirty years of shifting housing policies and politics in South Africa. Secondly, with the more recent construction of Temporary Relocation Areas (TRAs) in Delft, material differences and divides intersect with co-existing temporalities that relate to the divide between permanent and temporary forms of residency. The TRAs are themselves a product of, and response to, historically produced insecure tenure and informality in Cape Town. They have been used by the municipality as an emergency measure to house informal dwellers, backyarders and evicted tenants alike, who share histories of precarious residential situations and dreams of becoming homeowners through state delivered housing. Thirdly, the above divides intersect with historically constructed race- and class-based divides that mark South Africa's urban landscapes more generally. The construction of TRAs since 2005 added to an already complex politics of housing rights in Delft, where shifting subject positions linked to apartheid-era racial identities and/or residential categories such as being informal settlement dwellers or backyarders – reinforced by apartheid's urban policy and planning – were already in play, although not always in conflict (see Millstein 2017).

Examining these intersecting divides as active and productive spaces, as prompted by the juxtacities approach, provides insights into how residents are defined as citizens, but also how they contest and claim citizenship in ways that can both contest and re-produce existing divides. In a sense, the TRAs are themselves spaces in which divides such as formality and informality, legality and illegality, and temporariness and permanence exist side by side. Physical structures in the TRAs seem more informal than formal, and are perceived by residents and officials alike to be temporary, yet often turn permanent for those living there. Tensions emerge within the TRAs and between the TRAs and neighbouring state housing development areas, over who belongs and who has the right to access state-delivered housing opportunities. Exploring the TRA through a juxtacities lens thus means paying attention to articulations of divides *within* as well as in *relation* to the surrounding communities and the city. For TRA residents, the precariousness and uncertainty that comes with waiting indefinitely for permanent housing is set against those whose right to housing is realized materially, in turn giving the latter recognition and permanence as 'proper(tied)' citizens (Hammar 2017).

A different kind of tension emerges from the fact that there are different TRAs in Delft, linked to different authority levels of the state (central/local government) and used for different purposes. For example, tensions arose between two adjacent TRAs partially because those settled in the one TRA, originally constructed by the state to house informal settlement dwellers from *outside* Delft, were thus perceived as newcomers/outside. Despite occupants in each TRA sharing experiences of displacement and uncertainty, the right of so-called ‘outsiders’ to housing opportunities *in* Delft was questioned by self-defined autochthons in the city-governed TRA (occupied by influential residents groups who were originally backyarders from Delft and the surrounding areas), as well as by permanent residents in Delft. Here a range of historically constructed racial divides and differentiated residential categories which inform local perceptions of and experiences with what it means to be a citizen, have articulated with both apartheid-era and post-apartheid planning and housing policies, to generate new kinds of urban politics over citizenship.

Examining Delft’s urban divides as active and productive spaces, according to the juxtacities approach, provides insights into how residents are defined as citizens in legal and policy terms ‘from above’, but also how they contest and claim citizenship from below. In the everyday, residents perceive, interpret and negotiate multiple, overlapping divides associated with diverse housing rights and opportunities, differentiated materialities of housing, ownership status, permanence and temporariness, and distinctions between informality and formality. In short, a focus on what happens ‘at the divides’ and their ‘relations, articulations and co-constitutions’, provides a useful lens for viewing the complexities of urban citizenship. Among other things, it reveals how such divides are simultaneously structuring and enabling, how urban subjectivities are (re)constituted through juxtaposed differences, and how residents and groups of residents may mobilize multiple subject positions within such divides – sometimes overlapping, sometimes in tension – for individual or collective purposes

### *Markers of Spatial and Social Differentiation in Maputo*

In her work on juxtaposed difference and urban divides in Mozambique’s capital city Maputo, Sandra Roque explores the presence of a popular local market, Barracas do Museu, alongside the high-end residential and commercial properties of Bairro Polana. This reflects juxtapositions of both materially distinct infrastructures and class-based forms of life and livelihoods. As part of a larger municipal agenda of reforming Maputo’s popular markets, the Municipality of Maputo has put forward a project to ‘upgrade and modernize’ Barracas do Museu. (It has already relocated Maputo’s Fish Market and other plans exist to upgrade Mercado Janet and Mercado do Povo.)

The Maputo Structure Plan was approved in 2010 and since then major infrastructure and real estate development projects have been underway, some headed by the Mozambican state and financed by China backed loans, others driven by the municipality and other private investors. The increasing intervention by the Mozambican authorities on Maputo's urban form reveals a desire to exert greater control over the city's space following several decades of 'laissez-faire'. The form this takes is moulded by modernist planning ideals that are at the foundation of Mozambique's master planning tradition, a legacy from its Portuguese colonial past, largely left uninterrupted (Eskemose Andersen et al. 2015). Such ideals strongly shape the way in which the municipality sees the city and, in particular, how it deals with its spaces of informality – be those popular markets or the areas of the city known as *canico*, *suburbios* or *bairros* where the majority of Maputo's urban dwellers live. Those areas of the city tend to be perceived and portrayed by government authorities as sites of disorder and anarchy; as forms that disfigure urban space. Indeed, both their material forms and the livelihood practices and everyday ways of living within such spaces are not in themselves considered fully urban, needing instead to be ordered and given 'proper' urban form. By association, some of the arguments put forward by the municipality for the modernisation of Mercado do Museu relate to the fact that the market is informal and unable to fulfil official requirements in terms of urban sanitation and hygiene.

Changes in Maputo's urban form, however, are not only the result of the government's urban planning efforts. Other economic forces are also at play in reshaping Maputo's landscape, with strong impacts on the city's socio-spatial structure. At least in the period between 2006 and 2016 (prior to a major national debt scandal, with far-reaching effects on its credibility), Mozambique experienced a period of robust economic growth. This attracted significant private real estate investment, with significantly expanding real estate development especially in the most expensive parts of the city centre such as close to Bairro Polana, boosted by the arrival of expatriate staff and other foreigners drawn to the emerging economic opportunities. The city centre itself – known as *cidade de cimento* (city of cement) – had itself transformed soon after Mozambique's independence in 1975. Like many other cities in Africa, Maputo had inherited a socially and racially marked dual urban spatial structure: on the one hand, the *cidade de cimento*, the former colonial town, with its high-rise buildings and neat residential neighbourhoods; and, on the other, the *cidade de caniço* (city of reeds), denoting the informal settlements where most of the city's black population used to live (Mendes de Araújo 1999; Mendes 1989; Frates 2002).<sup>6</sup> However, socio-spatial differentiation had decreased after independence in 1975, due to the mass departure of the population of Portuguese

<sup>6</sup> In more recent years, this duality has been expressed by the use of terms "cidade" or "cimento" instead of *cidade de cimento*, and *subúrbios* or *bairros* instead of *cidade de caniço*.



origin and of the nationalisation of real estate property. This had allowed many Mozambican families, who previously lived in the *cidade de canico*, to move to the *cidade de cimento* (Roque et al 2016).

At the same time, Maputo began experiencing gentrification from the 1990s when Mozambique adopted more liberal political and economic approaches and greater commodification of the housing market (Roque et al 2015). This phenomenon began accelerating from the mid-2000s alongside increased investment in the housing market. Gentrification has affected many areas of the *cidade*, accompanied by what Lemanski (2014) has called "downward raiding" in the poorer *suburbios*. Particularly in the *cidade*, many families who had had access to high-quality but still affordable housing after independence, were selling or renting out their properties and moving out to the *suburbios* (Roque et al 2015). While for a period the city centre had accommodated the juxtaposition of a range of socio-economic classes within its built form, these outward movements seemed to indicate that Maputo's *cidade* was no longer accessible to its poorer people, other than in the concentrated spaces of popular markets such as the Barracas do Museu, and the population of informal traders. Increasingly, though, the latter have become symbols of disorder, too close for comfort to the perceived order of a certain kind of class-based modernity.

The combination of the two phenomena – on the one hand the 'urban ordering' led by government authorities and, on the other, the desertion of Maputo's *cidade de cimento* by many of its poorer residents – has generated a conflict-provoking character to the project of modernising the Barracas do Museu. The project seems to epitomize a growing effort by the authorities to protect or produce what is perceived as 'true urban space', through policies and practices of selective exclusion or reconstitution. It is the suspicion of this exclusionary intention that prompts Arminda, the owner of a stall in Barracas do Museu, to point her chin to the new high-rise building a few meters away and ask, "Do you think they will want a market like ours next to that building?".

The spatial juxtaposition of social and material expressions of wealth and poverty in Maputo's urban cityscape, and the project to modernise the Barracas do Museu, points to ongoing battles not only about access to urban space but also over meanings of what urban space and urbanity are or should be. Should a modern high-rise building co-exist with a place such as Barracas do Museu? Should the Barracas food sellers exist next to the Polana's high-end trendy restaurants? Should the noisier popular outside gatherings around Barracas's public bars happen next to the more private Polana bars? These are ultimately contestations over urban citizenship and belonging. But they are also questions related to key practical decisions of urban management in mostly poor and economically highly unequal cities across Africa, with significant social and political impact.

## Conclusion

Adopting what we are calling a 'juxtacities approach', this paper reflects our interest in urban divides as generative spaces, and our evolving attempts to develop conceptual and methodological lenses that help reveal their productive qualities and effects, as well as the ways these divides are produced. Among other things, this entails attention to how differently positioned actors produce, reinforce, contest or use urban divides. We are particularly interested in the articulation between forms, processes and practices of urban division on the one hand, and the production of and contestations over urban authority and citizenship on the other. In this paper, we have drawn on two from among a range of resonant empirically grounded works-in-progress, to provide initial illustrations of what this approach might offer. However, the comprehensive application of the juxtacities approach is still being tested in our own work and that of others, and will be presented in a forthcoming special issue of *Urban Forum*, focused on Juxtacities.

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Please note: this paper a work in progress and further refined at the presentation in the conference.

## **Spatializing Care via Sharing Urban Walls: Theorizing South-South Urban Practices**

Elahe Karimnia

(3B-1.2 'Juxtaposition, conflict and segregation in cities')

### Introduction

Walls and the city have long- term relationships particularly as tools of policing and governmentality (Foucault, 1991 [1978]), technologies of *immunity* (Sennett, 1996), but also separation and control. This paper highlights the (under-researched) social life of urban walls, beyond their defined symbolic function and meaning, and emphasizes on social and political relations of urban walls. Through this wider perspective, and based on Brighenti's (2009) analysis of urban walls, the paper discusses the shift and transition in the role and meaning of urban walls by investigating and theorizing an urban practice known as 'Wall of Kindness'. This practice was originated in different cities of Iran, under conditions of austerity as a pattern of sharing goods for the poor along urban walls. The iteration of this pattern, first in the neighbouring countries (such as Afghanistan and Pakistan) and further to the other cities of the Global South in particular (such as Rio de Janeiro) highlights certain characters of these practices. This paper addresses such characters including the process through which the wall becomes public, and citizens appropriate them based on care and support of 'others'. The paper contributes to the existing literature of urban walls and sharing practices in cities and theorizes how Wall of Kindness emerged, grew, and evolved in different parts of the world by unfolding the knowledge and approach of these practices. The research argues the role of local knowledge and social network in identifying the location, designing, facilitating and activating walls, as well as the role of 'giving' as a cultural value in the way these practices are mobilized.

### Wall of Kindness – a brief

Adding a few hooks and a splash of paint, walls in poor neighbourhoods across Iran were transformed and became an outdoor charity initiative through which anyone can leave goods no longer needed for those who need them. The message reads "Wall of Kindness", (Deewar-e-Mehrabani), a place where passers-by are invited to "leave what you do not need" or "take it if you need." Practices such as 'Wall of Kindness' highlight the systematic issues of our societies result in excluding certain people from cities. Through the rhetoric of

excluded ones in public space, as an active part of the public, they should be able to argue for their rights (Mitchell, 1995). Wall of Kindness is an example of practicing right to the city yet through the established citizens who fight and care for 'others' as less visible groups of society.

The history of walls in urbanism has not been discussed extensively. The recent scholarly publications on urban walls (see for example Brighenti and Kärholm, 2019) highlight the life of urban walls, as they are not mute. Walls represent memories, desires, and frustrations. As socio-political elements of cities, walls have been part of certain groups such as artists and activists who get engaged in such vertical surfaces as 'constitutive parts of the system of distribution and display of symbolic values' and therefore possible to be part of a shift to symbolic economy (Tripodi, P.47). On the other hand, Andron (2019) illustrates the 'right to the surface' and the complexity of and conflicts within these surfaces between public order and private owners, which affect the degree of interactions and accordingly their publicness.

Urban walls are discussed as media, projecting lived experiences. They reflect human-making activities that are 'invoked, promised, contested, challenged and struggled over' (Brighenti and Kärholm, 2019). Through this perspective, urban walls are territories of dualities and thus in constant becoming. They both constrain as well as enable flows, separate and reflect; they are part of the spatiality of everyday interactions and also conflicts; they are public and private. There is a coessential relationship between urban walls and public domain (Brighenti, 2016) where the wall becomes subject to both strategic and tactical appropriations in everyday practice. Here we talk about the power of appropriation, which involves different forms of spatial rights associated with the levels of spatial control (Lynch, 1980, pp. 205–207). Urban walls as in-between territories are important places for appropriations (Karimnia and Haas, forthcoming). These practices can interrupt the established power, defined meanings, expected uses, spatial order, and what is considered proper' (Karimnia, 2019). Appropriations can contest urban walls and turn them into infrastructure for achieving equity and justice. Supporting and sustaining such practices are democratic acts, which could be possible through designing their materiality (providing the intended levels of visibility to these practices and their actors) as well as immaterial conditions (their operational network between actors, locations, support services as well as plans and rules).

The materiality of walls affects their level of visibility and also the possibility for appropriations in everyday life. Appropriations along of the walls as 'surfaces of projection', make individuals or private issues public or a public thing a concern. So urban walls as media for visibility of the invisible things, issues, and people are political. What is projected on the walls can show the degraded needs or unrecognized voices, or those structurally excluded and unrecognized. Urban walls bridge between metaphorically 'them' and 'us' and accordingly are territories of conflict.

Appropriations can be in the form of collective actions, by sharing spaces in cities. While Western literature on future cities and urban practices explore 'sustainable' or 'smart' practices of cities mainly through socio-technical studies of the material city, 'sharing' city spaces and resources is a recent phenomenon. Sharing viewed as 'pro-social behavior' (Benkler, 2004, p. 275) can foster community. It provides as the precondition and motivation for collective action (McLaren & Agyeman, 2015). In the Western context, due to the contemporary economic crisis, there are public budget cuts, which influence the responsibilities of maintaining and managing urban infrastructure. The result is the rebirth of practices known as do-it-yourself (DIY) tactics, in which groups of citizens, professionals, and activists appropriate private or public space into temporary urban commons (Bradley, 2015). Through this perspective, urban space is considered as public good that is reclaimed by locals for small-scale activities. Among these practices, sharing (of goods such as tools, or clothes) has got a formal shape and there are initiatives for donating, swapping or buying second-hand items. Such initiatives have claimed different parts of city spaces such as natural spaces, streets, sidewalks, squares or empty buildings, and sustained based on a different source of support such as funding, volunteering, etc. Meanwhile, there are many criticisms on these practices and mostly questioning their capability in dealing with structural issues such as social inequality in cities ( Krivý and Kaminer, 2013).

In the context of the Global South, sharing of resources, infrastructures, goods, or services, is part of everyday life, as a self-initiated or collectively-organized activity, mainly due to governmental failure in accommodating rapidly expanding needs efficiently. Sharing practices initiated by citizens and categorized under *Informal Urbanism* have a significant contribution to the urban economy of the Middle- and low-income urban dwellers (Dovey, 2012). To sustain in cities, they have to negotiate over space, as well as deal with the challenges of



state rules, everyday surveillance, and control (Agyeman et al, 2017; Kamalipour & Peimani, 2019).

The relationship between urban walls and sharing practices in support of equity and justice (care for others) has not been discussed in particular. Urban walls as established territories can support everyday tactics and temporary strategies in associating their territories (Kärrholm, 2007). For example, street vendors negotiate the space of the sidewalk and their proximity to urban edges (Kamalipour & Peimani, 2019) to adjust their visibility and sustain in public space. As much as urban walls are the physical assets for sharing experiences, they can constraint them. Therefore, the visibility and accessibility of the walls both physically and socially are related to flexibility in the management structure and agency.

#### Analysis and Discussion

The urban dwellers' strategy in the cities of the Global South has been around tactical and small actions of survival that could serve their everyday needs. The contribution of "Wall of Kindness" to such practices though was for urban dwellers with the least right to the cities, such as homeless people and the poor. These practices were studied based on secondary data, in Tehran and Rio de Janeiro in particular, and theorized based on the similarities and differences between them.

Wall of Kindness shows the creativity of citizens in sharing as a solution for their communities and others by transforming the city spaces. Sharing practices can be narrowly conceived as being primarily about economic transactions (McLaren & Agyeman, 2015). The creativity of these practices was an everyday concern and initially based on care for the poor, and the culture of 'giving' which is a unique value among Iranians. Giving is a culture seen among the businesses that leave extra goods out of their shop (on the street) for the homeless or offer free foods in their shop. What is unique with Wall of Kindness is the 'affect' of care and not an act for a political statement. The way these practices were initiated, both givers, as well as receivers, stay anonymous and the wall is an in-between spatiality that connects between the two, a possibility for projecting care and otherness.

The practice evolved and traveled by similar driving forces and walls became the infrastructure for the communities to address their needs. Some of these practices found new models of partnership, for example involving public administration and their support such as space or human resources (such as appropriating the school wall by students led by

their teachers to make a shared library). The main intention of appropriations for equity and justice has not changed across different examples. Such communal models of sharing that build solidarity and spread trust should inspire city leaders for a systemic change in distributing resources and investment in the public realm.

Wall of Kindness reveals the power of local knowledge in identifying the existing opportunities in the urban context, including space of and items for sharing. The location of the wall is important as the initiators of these practices should reach an agreement with the actors involved in the surveillance and control of the wall, even with the property owners and neighbours. The research shows that the main intention of such practices: care for others, help in achieving such informal agreement with the locals which avoids later interventions by the local authorities. The location of the walls should provide a certain level of visibility both for the givers and for the receivers but the walls with high public visibility are usually the subject of economic productivity and accordingly either transparent or too permeable for this purpose.

Wall of Kindness creates interactions across the walls, not on the two sides of the walls. It reflects larger separation and class divisions in society and has become a tool for filling such a socio-economic gap. So, it is a live stage, a call for engagement, and care of others. The walls are purposely beautified to create a pause in passers-by movement and a moment in their mind. The design associates an invisible territory on the walls and reconstruct a new character of the walls beyond e.g. evilness, ignorant, vanity, the passiveness of the walls. The community takes walls as an opportunity to support the poor, whom the government has failed to support efficiently. Solid and less permeable walls are chosen as they create a new rhythm for passers-by by featuring colours, stuff, and text, and thus interrupting the regular rhythm and expected image of and along the wall. This interruption, if prolonged, might engage people, and similar to graffiti writing, this relationship between the wall and the action matters.

Citizenship requires a multitude of spaces, and urban walls have become the kind of space to reflect issues of citizenship (Iveson, 2007), to bring the invisible into 'public' and her/his right to the surface. As Iveson (2009) argues, physical public space and the media, each has different possibilities and constraints for different forms of public address. Wall of Kindness is a process of producing publicness, where sharing is the action for public address (Iveson,

2007, P.8). Although Wall of Kindness emerged as a bottom-up approach with no intention of public visibility, the public sphere such as social media provided opportunities for mobilizing them. Khan et al (2018) studied the role of Twitter in spreading these ideas, but also activating them through fundraising or encouraging donations beyond the community engagement. According to Iveson, this is a shift from understanding walls as public space to Wall of Kindness as public address to 'denote a renewed analytical focus on what people are doing when they are doing publicness.' (Iveson, 2009, p. 242).

### Conclusion

This study marks one of the first attempts to study the Wall of Kindness as an urban practice and its iterations in the cities of the Global South. In a time of mainstream media highlighting the unchangeable issues of cities of the Global South, the belief of change through best practices (North-South implications) is still valid and common. This study is an effort to highlight South-South practices even though it is difficult to understand how ideas exactly travelled to other contexts. Reviewing different examples reveals similarities as well as differences in the way they evolve.

Grassroots initiatives such as Wall of Kindness shed light on other creative alternatives, where change is not revolutionary but small-scale and effective. These practices contribute to the specific social and political intersection of 'walls and the city' (Brighenti and Kärrholm, 2019) and to the movement of sharing cities (McLaren & Agyeman, 2015). They are based on solidarity and care among the citizens that confirms how the material city is reconstructed socially and for the public. Although the appropriation of urban walls has been discussed through practices such as graffiti writing, this research aims to explore how urban practitioners can learn from such creative appropriations and instead of echoing them reflect the underlying issues and make radical social changes. This research provides such a foundation for this aim to be investigated further.

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## 3B-1.3: Identities and Heritage

**Co-chairs/discussants:** Dr Clare Melhuish, Director, UCL Urban Laboratory; Co-convenor, Curating the City cluster, UCL Centre for Critical Heritage Studies  
Dean Sully, Lecturer, UCL Institute of Archaeology; Co-convenor, Curating the City cluster, UCL Centre for Critical Heritage Studies

Manuscript not available

**The city as grounded theology: religion and the neoliberal project in urban space**

Kamalika Banerjee, PhD candidate, National University of Singapore

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**Playing or being played? Ambivalence and ambiguity in the Tokyo 2020 Volunteer Programme**

Conor Moloney, PhD candidate, Queen Mary University

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**Hummus(ising) the homeland: crafting space through identity fetishism**

Ahmed Alaqra, PhD candidate, Université Paris Diderot  
Yasmin Huleileh, Co-founder, FANA

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**New mosque architecture in Dhaka: ethics, aesthetics and the religious imaginary**

Priyanka Hutschenreiter, PhD candidate, SOAS University

## PLAYING OR BEING PLAYED?

Ambivalence and ambiguity in the Tokyo 2020 Volunteer Programme

[Slide - Title]

### INTRODUCTION

[Slide – Conference intro]

One of three questions posed by this conference is how “processes of reproducing everyday life, identity politics, popular mobilization and contestation are remaking urban experiences”. In this paper I suggest this can also be read in reverse; that is, that new forms of urban experience are remaking processes of social reproduction. This I aim to demonstrate by drawing on preliminary findings from fieldwork conducted this summer with participants in the Tokyo 2020 Olympic & Paralympic Games Volunteer Programme.

### CONTEXT & THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

[Slide –Playful / performative examples]

This research is a pilot study I conducted as part of wider doctoral research on urban experiences which have a playful or performative character. My enquiry critically examines these relational invitations now so ubiquitous in cities associated with a wide range of commercially and citizen-led activities: product placements, pop-up events, relational art practices, climate activism, community engagement, urban games, and so on. In work spaces play is used to foster creativity, socialise and retain employees, build emotional intelligence and alleviate boredom, and extend the working day blurring boundaries between work and leisure (Morgan & Nelligan 2018). In retail spaces it is used to create consumer experiences, build brand awareness and loyalty, and overcome the growing distance between distribution logistics and point-of-sale, which is itself increasingly virtual (Scott 2017). In cultural spaces it is deployed to democratise high culture, create new opportunities for art practice, reach new audiences and drive patronage (Harvie 2013). And in public spaces it is used to support place-making, provide activity and animation, stimulate conviviality, enliven memorials, reconcile different user groups and manage their differing norms of behaviour (Stevens 2007).

While these various spatially-led or sectorally-led approaches have generated scholarship of considerable value, the instrumentalisation of play as a cross-cutting phenomenon in contemporary urban space has yet to be adequately researched, theorized or critically analysed. In taking up these invitations and attending to the immediacy and conviviality of such events, I contend that our critical awareness may be involuntarily suspended: we enter into the ‘fun’ of it and thereby the social, economic and political dimensions of the events can become obscured to us. Accordingly my approach to the ‘relational turn’ in contemporary urbanism is cautious (Bourriaud 2002). I wish to draw participants’ attention to the context and terms of the relational ‘contract’, and I wish to draw producers attend to their ethical responsibilities in structuring that contract. In taking up playful invitations, I would like us to consider are we playing or are we being played.

[Slide –London]

London is the principal spatial focus of my research. Playful and performative invitations have proliferated in London in recent years. These have been driven by a range of socio-spatial factors, ranging from the rapid pace of redevelopment and gentrification to the increasing casualisation in the creative arts. I contend that two significant events have accelerated and diversified this process in London. The first is the opening of Tate Modern in 2000, and in particular the associated regular commissions of installations for its Turbine Hall which have stimulated the innovation and scale of ‘relational’ art practices, that is, those that engage audiences socially –with audience members often involved tacitly or explicitly in the work (Harvie 2009, 2013). The second is the London 2012 Olympic & Paralympic Games, which stimulated huge expansion in the use of temporary installations and

'pop-ups' to take advantage of the commercial opportunities presented by this global mega-event. Thanks to the impact of the 70,000 London 2012's 'Games Makers', the Games can also themselves be understood more clearly as a relational event. Many 'Games Makers' report their participation as having had a major impact on their lives, which would seem to confirm my earlier proposition that urban experiences can remake processes of social reproduction; fieldwork in 2020 will seek to verify to what extent this is the case. In the interim, an opportunity arose to observe preparations for the Tokyo 2020 volunteer programme and conduct longitudinal research pre- and post-Games, which is the focus of the current paper and to which I now turn.

## TOKYO 2020 VOLUNTEER PROGRAMME

[Slide –Olympic Volunteer homepage]

Under neoliberalism the commercialisation and professionalisation of sport has intensified globally, yet everywhere it remains heavily dependent on unpaid volunteers at all levels - from the few stalwarts needed to run an after-school sports club to the tens of thousands needed to host mega-events. In terms of the Olympic & Paralympic Games, Sydney 2000 pioneered the integration of volunteers into the event concept, and by London 2012 the 70,000 'Games Makers' had given the event its defining character.

The organising committee for Tokyo 2020 explicitly sought to replicate London's approach, however it faced a number of challenges. Firstly, the training and branding associated with the 'Games Makers' programme was not available as it remains the intellectual property of the London 2012 sponsors who delivered it – the fast food chain McDonald's. Secondly, voluntary work in Japan (for example in earthquake response and recovery) is much more rooted in a sense of duty or obligation than in charity or freewill; indeed the Japanese language lacks its own word for volunteer, and instead relies on a loan-word – borantia –transliterated from the English.

Accordingly the Tokyo 2020 volunteer programme was designed from scratch and aimed to adjust to Japanese norms; notwithstanding the explicit 'borantia' branding that was chosen, the recruitment call in late 2018 was considerably oversubscribed with over 200,000 applications for 80,000 places. The strong reputation of the Olympic movement in Japan is likely a significant factor in this success, through association with the 1964 Tokyo Olympics which contributed to the country's postwar rehabilitation. Furthermore sports volunteering is a distinct category of volunteering which is popular and well-established in Japan; for example the Tokyo Marathon – one of the six World Marathon Majors – involves 10,000 volunteers annually.

## FIELDWORK

[Slide –Volunteer orientation event]

The induction and training process for the 80,000 successful applicants is necessarily protracted and logistically demanding. The first stage of the process took place in mid 2019 with a series of selection and orientation meetings to confirm the suitability of short-listed candidates, provide an initial briefing on the volunteer role, and undertake team-building exercises. Fieldwork was conducted at one three-day event in July 2019 where approximately 2,000 short-listed volunteers undertook a two-hour training session.

There were three strands to this fieldwork: ethnographic observation of the training event in progress; 35 'flash' interviews with participants on the sidelines of the training event; and 15 more detailed semi-structured interviews with selected participants and event organisers. The participant interviews aimed to determine participants' immediate motivations and expectations for their volunteer experience, and establish a 'baseline' of attitudes and opinions for follow-up and comparison post-Games. Interviews with the volunteer programme designers and managers added situated knowledge regarding group dynamics and learning style in Japanese culture, as well as insights on programme planning and logistics. Further interviews and desktop research on the Volunteer Programme in print media and academic circles yielded important insights into its impact and perception in Japanese society. Interviews were conducted in English which is widely spoken by participants and organisers,

in many cases to a high level of fluency. Preliminary findings of this first stage of the research centre on two interrelated themes, ambivalence and activism, which I will now consider in turn.

## AMBIVALENCE

[Slide – Field Cast]

While key aspects of the Games Volunteer programme are decidedly dramaturgical, there appeared to be considerable ambivalence on the part of participants and organisers in carrying this through into a more relational volunteer experience. On the one hand, the training explicitly conceptualised volunteers as cast members – like in a theatrical production – and encourages them to ‘shine’ (kagayaku) in their allocated role so that each “...floods confidence and brims over with pride...” (Nishikawa 2018, trans.). Participants repeatedly referred to affective and performative aspects of their anticipated experience at the Games and their excitement to “...feel the atmosphere in the stadium...”. Yet across the sample the Japanese participants repeatedly declared the primary motivation of duty, necessity, and responsibility to “...make the Olympics successful...and help people to enjoy themselves...”. There was recurrent reference to ‘omotenashi’ – the specifically Japanese tradition of hospitality – which is necessarily grounded in authenticity rather than pretence. The training session itself was highly structured with participants moved swiftly through a series of stages – registration, briefing, team-building, interview, and uniform fitting – with friendly efficiency but little sense of occasion.

[Slide – Mascots]

In one corner of the training venue, large cut-outs of the Olympic and Paralympic mascots were set up for participants to take photos and ‘selfies’, but relatively few took up the opportunity. One organiser disclosed their own doubts, admitting that the Games “...reminds me of Disneyland; they aren’t really volunteers... [they] are not really helping others, they’re participating in a festival...”.

[Slide – Tokyo Marathon]

This ambivalence in the Tokyo 2020 volunteer role is all the more surprising when compared with the explicitly performative and relational role of the 10,000 volunteers for the Tokyo Marathon. In the marathon, “a Volunteer is an Entertainer” – a ‘Voluntainer’ - who will “enjoy their participation while delighting the marathon participants and spectators with their hospitality”.

## AMBIGUITY

[Slide – Black Volunteer]

This ambivalence has a counterpart in the ambiguities of a novel strand of anti-Olympic activism that has emerged in response to the Tokyo 2020 Games. The scale of a 21st century Olympiad almost inevitably reproduces and exacerbates the power relations of its host city as much as it intensifies and distorts its inequalities (Gold & Gold Eds., 2016). While anti-Olympic activism is undoubtedly more effective at ‘Candidate City’ stage, the award of ‘Host City’ status unleashes the process through which the more severe differential impacts and legacies are actualised. Eminent domain involves disenfranchisement, site selection necessitates displacement, development accelerates urban change: all are perennial objects of anti-Olympic activism. Yet for the first time in Tokyo 2020 the Olympic Volunteer programme has also become a focus of critique. In an exposé titled ‘Black Volunteer’, investigative journalist Ryu Honma contrasted the unpaid labour of volunteers toiling for long hours in the heat of a Tokyo summer with the unlimited access, generous remuneration and insulated luxury of Olympic staff, sponsors and aristocracy; he concluded that the relationship was essentially exploitative (Honma 2018).

The problem was compounded on the launch of the Volunteer Programme, whereby the call emphasised eligibility and availability criteria – including the requirement that applicants cover their own travel expenses – prompting leading daily newspaper Mainichi Shimbun to characterise the programme as “using [participants’] feelings of purpose in an underhanded way to guarantee a



workforce that will agree to work long hours” (Mainichi Shimbun, 2018). The inference is that the exploitation is not just economic but also social and cultural, and that traditional Japanese social practices associated with hospitality, sincerity and duty are here instrumentalised for profit and privilege. However this rather transactional understanding of the role fails to account for the relational dimensions increasingly common in the arts and creative sector generally, whereby boundaries between performers and audience are more ambiguous and audience agency is integrated in the event.

## CONCLUSION

[Slide – PokemonGo]

For me the most surprising finding of this study is the Tokyo 2020 Volunteer Programme’s apparent lack of integration of play and performance – of all places here in the city of cosplay, gaming and digital art. Perhaps it is precisely its lack of contrivance that enables participation in an informed way, whereby the context and terms of the relational ‘contract’ are explicit from the outset. This will only become clear on completion of the follow-up fieldwork post-Games in 2021 and comparative study with London 2012 Games Makers’ experiences. In the meantime, my research turns to the different formulations of audience agency in theatre and performance theory, to provide a framework for a citizen-centred perspective on playful invitations in the city.

[Slide – Acknowledgements & Bibliography]

## **Hummus(ising) the Homeland:**

Crafting borders and national identity through fetishism and neoliberalism.

Yasmin Huleileh, co-founder, FANA'

Ahmed Alaqra, PhD candidate, Paris Diderot, URMIS

### **Introduction**

'Hummus(ising) the homeland' is a satirical title that suggests that Palestinians fetishise Hummus as a way of re-affirming their national identity. Hummus is stripped out of its context as a daily food to then become one of the most important pillars of a national identity in the Israeli Palestinian discourse. Following Oslo and the incarceration of Fayyad's government, the Palestinian Government took a turn that may be very evident in its political and economic liberalisation policies, and more importantly in the re-fabrication of a new neoliberal citizenship that is at the core of such policies.<sup>1</sup> For this neoliberal order to appeal to the Palestinians or the public, certain aspects of Palestinian culture and identity were romanticised, and at times fetishised in an attempt to institute a legitimate economic order than can be acknowledged as a world-class identity. This paper focuses on ways in which the neoliberal order finds its roots in the commodification, alienation, and most importantly the fetishisation of objects found in the many manifestations of spacial, social, and cultural productions. It is argued that human relations are displaced by unreal objects in the secular culture and, in turn these objects start to carry social value represented through material culture.<sup>2</sup>

### **The fetish**

Fetishism is usually associated with theorists such as Marx or Freud, and yet there is no pre-determined discourse in which fetishism may emerge. Unlike Marx's accounts of fetishism that address the economic value of commodities at the levels of production, or Freud's conceptualisation of the fetish as a desired substitute for a suitable sex object, this paper is more concerned with fetishism as a means of mediating social value through material culture.<sup>3</sup> Marx's theory of alienation addresses the division of class yet nevertheless acknowledges an autonomous rational worker being driven and exploited by the bourgeoisie. Marx makes a clear distinction between the subject and the object and asserts the primacy of the human subject.

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<sup>1</sup> Khalidi, R. and Samour, S. (2014). *Neoliberalism and the Contradictions of the Palestinian Authority's State-building Programme*. In: M. Turner and O. Shweiki, ed., *Decolonizing Palestinian Political Economy*.

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> Dant, T. (1996). *Fetishism and the social value of objects*. *Sociological Review*, Vol. 44 (3): p. 495-516.

However, Baudrillard for example, identifies the fetish as the site of a merging or confusion of subject and object and, especially in his later works, the object seems to be primary.

Within the context of the Palestinian claim to identity, socio-political ideologies overlap the economic policies leaving culture and identity as alien. Once alien, they are commodified and fetishised to as to make sense within the present socio-political and eco-political realm. The appropriation of identity occurs once the fetishised object comes to stand as a representation of the owner's social, economic or political status. More importantly, once this representation is accounted for as 'Palestinian', one assumes that being Palestinian is limited by such representations, all of which are evoked by impersonal means.

### **The fetish, The Homeland and the Neoliberal Order**

Similar to Hummus, the Homeland, as a fixated image, became a symbol of the Palestinian cause since its loss in 1948. Palestinians actively constructed their identity around their imagery of a lost homeland, and as this identity was actively reshaped, it allowed different manifestations of such romanticised imagery in Palestinian society and culture.<sup>4</sup> However, following the year of 1993, homeland for the first time was represented as a self-autonomous region, willing and able to establish a national state and national home for the Palestinian people.<sup>5</sup>

The Palestinian Liberation Organisation (PLO) failed to achieve its goal of the liberation of the land and the people, "Tahrir al ard wal insan," through armed resistance. It then resorted to maintain a public diplomatic image, and failed to succeed in the negotiations that followed. This gave room for the international community to interfere, leaving the PA in 2009 to adopt a new strategic plan: "ending the occupation and building the state." This new project introduced the recent political and economic reforms,<sup>6</sup> which laid the foundation for a future Palestinian state that is free and recognised internationally. Given that these policies were endorsed by the international community, the PA had to redefine the relationship between citizen and government while building a new economic apparatus and instituting a strong armed internal security to protect this new project.<sup>7</sup>

As part of building the state, it was important for the PA to appeal to the people through the idealisation of a neoliberal state as guardian of culture, history, land, and the solution to the long

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<sup>4</sup> Dorai M. K. (2002). *The meaning of homeland for the Palestinian diaspora : revival and transformation*, Routledge, pp.87-95,.

<sup>5</sup> Tartir, Alaa (2015) *The evolution and reform of Palestinian security forces 1993– 2013*. Stability: International Journal of Security & Development, 4 (1). ISSN 2165-2627

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

lasting occupation<sup>8</sup>. Thus, it could be said that the structure of the neoliberal order in Palestine found its root in the commodification and the alienation of the homeland. The way in which the homeland was imagined and practiced through the daily life became symbols imbedded within big corporate advertisements, governmental buildings designs, accessories, clothes, etc etc. Banks were reformed to facilitate “the struggle” of Palestine, new cities were erected to protect the land, and new symbols and images were fabricated and idealised.

## **Fetishising the Spatial**

In April 2019, the Palestinian ministry of commerce unveiled the curtains of its new Palestinian pavilion that shall be constructed in Dubai expo 2020. The new design compromised of features that represented an assumed narrative of what a Palestinian national identity entails focusing on Jerusalem as an important pillar of the Palestinian national identity<sup>9</sup> The design included embroidery, olive trees, Ottoman arches, Mahmud Darwish’s poetry, and a skyline of Jerusalem old city. The Pavilion meant to promote a specific image of Palestine, an image that alienates and fetishises the Palestinian identity for the sake of crafting a national homeland, or in other words, “The Palestinian State.”

“Public and private spaces are given geopolitical meaning, as part of the strategy of nationalist politics to control territory and establish a state in the name of a national homeland.”<sup>10</sup>

The neoliberal project couldn’t have succeeded in its current form without the emergence of a new social class in Palestine that benefited directly from the eco-political reforms. The elites’ formation in the occupied land profited from the privatisation of the non-state enterprise and the liberation of the almost non-existent market<sup>11</sup>. The rise of the new social order required the creation of new spatial means that would accommodate and showcase the new Palestinian lifestyle, which constructed new spaces particularly from the upper middle class and elites. Malls, Cafes, streets, and residential cities were erected so as for the new Palestine to prosper<sup>12</sup>. Ramallah has seen its

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<sup>8</sup> Al-Ju’beh, N. 2008. Palestinian Identity and Cultural Heritage. In Heacock, R. (Ed.), *Temps et espaces en Palestine: Flux et résistances identitaires*. Beyrouth, Liban: Presses de l’Ifpo. doi:10.4000/books.ifpo.491

<sup>9</sup> Jerusalem is Presented in Expo 2020 {Al Quds Hadra fe Expo 2020} (2019). Retrieved 20 October 2019, from <http://www.hotelandrest.com/ar/tourism-news/article-53680/> you should write translated on the citation

<sup>10</sup> Falah, G., & Flint, C. (2011). Geopolitical Spaces: The Dialectic of Public and Private Space in the Palestine–Israel Conflict.

<sup>11</sup> Khalidi, R. and Samour, S. (2011). Neoliberalism as Liberation: The Statehood Program and the Remaking of the Palestinian National Movement. *Journal of Palestine Studies*, 40(2), pp.6-25.

<sup>12</sup> Grandinetti, T. (2015). The Palestinian Middle Class in Rawabi. *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 40(1), 63-78. doi: 10.1177/0304375415581259

population double in the last decade, reaching around 100,000 people, and hosting a growing army of NGO workers, diplomats and private investors.<sup>13</sup>

“These people need food, need to sit down and talk, need to hold receptions. This explains the increase in restaurants.”<sup>14</sup> - Mohammad Amin, head of Ramallah Chamber of Commerce in Reuters, 6th of April 2011.

The wealth that was directly the result of the new economic order was of course confined to a certain social class who were able to purchase land all across the West Bank. This emerging social class was able to change the spatial reality of Palestine cities and villages and propose a new identity, manifested in the usage of spaces all around Ramallah.<sup>15</sup>

“Make Your Connection to Palestine a Reality” is an advertisement for UCI (Union Construction and Investment) inviting local and international investor to buy land in Palestine in order to feel or actually be connected.<sup>16</sup> What is problematic in the advertisement is the representation of the act of investing in the occupied land, as a means of affirming a long lost identity. The land here is displayed online as a centre piece to the Palestinian cultural production and ultimately abstracted to an object or commodity in which one can value economically.

A similar process is found in the narrative accompanied by the new residential complexes, one of which is the city of Rawabi. Rawabi is being promoted as the new image of an urban, liberal, consumerist society, that is already enjoying the privilege of a free national state. “Live, work, grow” is the slogan for the city, promoting a specific kind of life style and attracting the newly emerging middle class of Palestine<sup>17</sup>. Most of Rawabi’s promotions and advertisements depict the terraced hills of the Palestinian landscape as an important feature of Rawabi’s surrounding scenery. The terraced hills that are of agrarian nature are now on display in the balconies of a middle class family house.

Fetishism of the spatial is not only confined to the flow of money but also to the political representation of the neoliberal project. The Palestinian authority as “sole” representative of the

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<sup>13</sup> Khalili, N. (2012). Ramallah: The ‘Transforming City’. Retrieved 20 October 2019, from <https://arenaofspeculation.org/2012/12/17/ramallah-transforming-city/>

<sup>14</sup> Assadi, M. (2011). Cafe culture blooms in West Bank's Ramallah. *Reuters*. Retrieved from <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-palestinians-restaurant/cafe-culture-blooms-in-west-banks-ramallah-idUSTRE7352UZ20110406>

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.12

<sup>16</sup> Why buy land in Palestine. Retrieved 20 October 2019, from <https://www.tabo.ps/why-buy-land-in-palestine/>

<sup>17</sup> Rawabi. (2019). Retrieved 20 October 2019, from <https://www.rawabi.ps/en/news/1522768429>

Palestinian people has also tried to contextualise its project in the localised reality. For example, in front of the PA's headquarters in Ramallah, a number of olive trees are displayed. While the tree itself is rooted in the Palestinian identity for its importance in the Palestinian daily life and for the fact that its being under constant threat by the Israeli project, we find that the PA tries to establish its legitimacy as a political power through alienating the processes in which this tree became a symbol for Palestinians. For the authorities, the display of the tree in front of the head quarter is what is important; a highly fetishised image that could appeal to the public.

The old city of Ramallah was abandoned by its original inhabitants, and later on populated by migrants during the Nakba and the Naksa<sup>18</sup>. However, with the infiltration of the neoliberal order, the old city became an object of fetishism. What was once an old village that was inhabited by the poor working class has become a newly gentrified old city that represents the Palestinian national identity in its finest forms. With many high-end restaurants, and cafe projects racing to find old houses that can accommodate this new life style, the inhabitants of the city found themselves facing evacuation orders to make room for new businesses. The old houses became a space of modern and capitalistic businesses, and therefore displaced from their meanings and attributed a national constructed identity that is accommodated by a neoliberal order.

## Conclusion

The neoliberal reforms undertaken by the Palestinian authority have in no doubt altered the relationship between Palestinians and their cultural identity. It allowed space for the alienation of the citizen from his identity, while constructing a second fetishised identity that is proposed as a limit and external. The neoliberal system at its core pushes for this to occur, where identity practices in the Palestine everyday life became a mere display decorating corporate advertisements and political institutions' facades. Nevertheless, it is impossible to blame these processes only on the neoliberal system, as the relationship between the subject and the fetish object is simply more complex. The process of alienation and fetishism started from the need of the neoliberal agenda to blend within the existing contextual dynamic. The connotations of the existing material cultural and spatial productions were displaced, alienated from their original context and reproduced so they can be accommodated in the newly proposed neoliberal spatial order. Along the way, the identity of the Palestinian was folded and refolded to enable for this to occur.

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<sup>18</sup> Zakarneh, M. (2016). Old city of Ramallah is on the edge of collapsing. *Raya.Fm*. Retrieved from <https://www.raya.fm/news/950234.html>

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## New Mosque Architecture in Dhaka: Ethics, Aesthetics and the Religious Imaginary

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Architecture in Dhaka, and wider Bangladesh, has been capturing the attention of architects and cultural commentators across the world since the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. More recently, new and thoughtfully designed mosques have been constructed across the country. These are not state-mosques and stand out through their striking designs by award-winning architects. Though these mosques can be found across Bangladesh, I focus on Dhaka here. Most mosques in Dhaka today are solely spaces for men to say prayers. In contrast, the function of these new mosques, while being spiritual spaces primarily, is also imagined beyond prayer and intertwined with new dreams of the city. This is in stark contrast to the usual stacked, cramped mosques built in between residential and commercial housing and above shops in Dhaka, these mosques are spacious and open in their design.

In this paper, I explore the imagination imbued in the designs of these contemporary mosques and the ethical concerns the architects express. I employ a conception of ethics born out of the anthropology of ethics (Lambek 2010, Mattingly 2014, Laidlaw 2014, Faubion 2011). This field reflects a curiosity to understand what kind of lives are considered ‘good’ and virtuous. This is not to essentialise cultures – people do not all act the same way and adhere to all the same notions of what is good simply because they belong to the same community, society, nation, religion, etc. Indeed, these writers highlight the intersection of each person’s multiple identities and how this makes ambiguity a fundamental part of everyday life.

Rather than focus on the lived everyday, I consider the ideas and the imagination the architects have imbued these new mosques with. How do these architects want mosques to be used? How do they legitimate certain design choices? What implications does this have for local discourses on Islam? How do these mosques affect life in Dhaka? All these questions are fundamentally about ethical visions and expectations settled behind design choices. Architecture is thus employed as a powerful tool in shaping a ‘good’ mosque and a ‘good’ city.

Indeed, space, buildings and objects are intimately connected with their users. Daniel Miller (1987) and Bruno Latour (2005) emphasise how people are in a dynamic relationship with the things surrounding them in daily life. This applies to space as well, and I follow Setha Low (2016) in her appreciation of space as layered and of culture as spatialised. The material and the immaterial are thus on dialogic terms. Immaterial social and religious life does not function separately from material space and objects – they mutually constitute each other. When speaking of lived Islam, and religion more broadly, anthropologists mostly speak of individual and communal practice, habits and choices, but modern religious space is still new terrain. Writers like Saba Mahmood (2005), Nadia Fadil (2011) and Annelies Moors (2009) elaborate on affective objects in Islam and the power they have in shaping the subjectivity of a person. By extension, Oskar Verkaaik (2013), in his edited volume on religious architecture, proposes that architecture can be thought about in very much the same way, as space, too, is affective and has agency (Navaro-Yashin 2009). However, rather than looking at the communities using the mosques on a daily basis, I consider how the spaces of these mosques relate to Dhaka and religious discourses in Bangladesh more broadly.

I focus on three mosques in different parts of Dhaka: the Baitur Rouf masjid in Faydabad, north Dhaka, the Red Mosque in Keraniganj, south-west Dhaka, and the Gulshan Society Jame masjid in the central-north district Gulshan 2. While the Gulshan mosque caters primarily to an upper-class community in the financial hub and most affluent district, the other two are built in lower-middle to low-income neighbourhoods in remoter parts of town. By unearthing the ethical trajectories of the

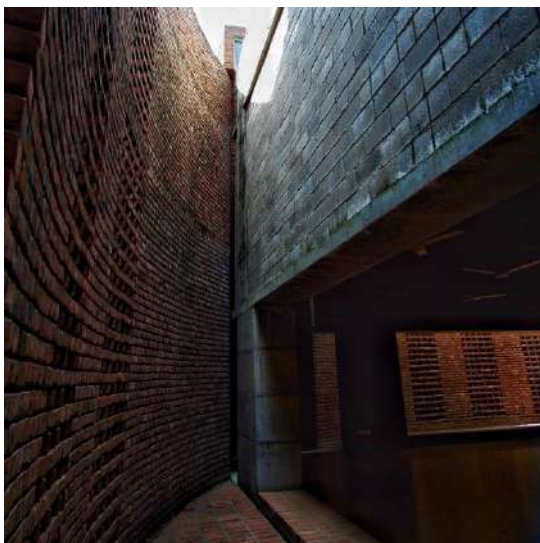


architects, I focus on (a) the traditions and histories they ground themselves in, (b) their focus on climatic conditions, and (c) the needs of the communities they cater to. Together, these form the ethical underpinnings of the mosques' designs and allow the architects to reimagine the experience of the mosque and the city space more broadly.

The Baitur Rouf mosque was designed by Marina Tabassum Architects. Completed in 2012, it won the Agha Khan Award for Architecture in the 2014-2016 cycle. The mosque is made primarily of red brick, naturally ventilated and lit by sunlight. Its main square structure, with an inserted cylindrical form, is based on the traditional Bengali pavilion, but also on the original mosque structure from Middle-Eastern prophetic times. It eschews Islamic symbolism, such as a minaret or calligraphy. The mosque space is constituted by one wide prayer hall which allows the congregation to pray together as equals. Mosques in Bangladesh are primarily male spaces, with smaller atriums reserved for women, which are often unkept and unvisited. Tabassum's idea was also for women to be able to use the mosque equally, and though they are allowed into the prayer space, they do not appear to be included, as equals, in Friday prayers.



Figure 1: Exterior of Baitur Rouf Masjid, Dhaka (Iwan Ban 2017)



Figures 2 & 3: Interior Baitur Rouf Masjid (Ashek Ur Rahman 2019)

The red brick and lack of religious symbolism is a common trait of modernist Bangladeshi architecture. The minimalist design and material choice are inspired by Sultanate mosques, which in turn are aesthetically related to the ancient Hindu temples and Buddhist monasteries in the region. In a society where many Muslims reject Bengali cultural norms as rooted in what they term as ‘non-Islamic’, ‘Hindu’ customs, this is a stance associated with secular-liberalism. Secular or liberal writers in Bangladesh often emphasise this heritage as inherent to Bengali/Bangladeshi identity and culture today (Rozario & Samuel 2010; Uddin 2006; Murshid 1997; Mookherjee 2007). Simultaneously, Tabassum refers to the traditional use of the mosque in the Middle East during prophetic times to substantiate her idea of the equality of every person in the mosque, and to suggest its use for communal and social activities beyond prayer (Architectural League New York 2019). Referring to Middle Eastern Islamic history and the time of the prophet invokes a sense of the shared identity of all Muslims and also centres the Middle East as the physical and spiritual centre of Islam. This form of argumentation is considered problematic for some because, by focusing on a ‘true’ and central form of Islam, it questions the validity of local, vernacular manifestations. The architect, then, is using two very different modes of argumentation, and two very different but entirely connected traditions (local Bengali and Middle-Eastern Islamic), to make a case for an accessible mosque space in Dhaka today. Drastic shifts in daily habits have not necessarily been made, but the design signals creative changes in the discourse around the ‘right’ kind of Islam for Bangladeshis today: one that is grounded in multiple traditions and histories. Moreover, it signals a move towards reclaiming public space for leisure, recreating public life, and allowing the mosque space to accomplish this end.



Figure 4: Red Mosque, Keraniganj (Al Fozan Award 2017)

The Red Mosque in Keraniganj is similar in the environmental and base structural principles it employs. The mosque was designed by Urbana under Kashef Chowdhury, and commissioned by the current national minister for energy, whose constituency lies in the area. It is a densely populated and low-income neighbourhood on the south-western outskirts of the city. The mosque is designed according to the traditional Bengali pavilion, the base structure of traditional housing in the region. It is surrounded by glass panels on three sides, with rectangular slabs composing the roof, and supported by red pillars which branch out like trees, alluding to the arches of traditional Islamic architecture (Snyder 2019). Natural light and ventilation were also incorporated. The Red Mosque, like the Baitur Rouf masjid, is surrounded by open space dotted by trees, allowing for people to linger in a space that incorporates nature – a luxury in contemporary Dhaka. Within and outside the building, the project takes into account the climatic conditions of Bangladesh, the need for sustainability, and a will to connect the natural landscape of the countryside with the city. Here, employed in a mosque, they emphasise the need to connect people, place, climate, history, tradition, the modern, spirituality and Islam. The mosque thus becomes not just a place of prayer but expands to offer space and sanctuary in multiple forms.



Figure 5: Gulshan Society Jame Masjid (Salma Begum 2019)

The Gulshan Society Jame masjid stands in stark contrast to the former two in that it is located in an affluent neighbourhood and primarily serves a middle to upper-class community. It was also designed by Urbana and commissioned by the Gulshan Society, an association of wealthy local residents. The mosque is a monolith, occupying a whole block and rising up to six floors. There is also a well-lit and fitted basement space with a separate entrance for women prayer-goers. Though women do not share equality in space with men, the fact that there is a fitted and well-maintained space for women reflects the interest of upper-class women to attend mosque regularly and the power to demand it. The main spaces of the mosque are high-ceilinged and are reserved for men. The first floor is visible through the large glass panels surrounding three sides of the building. These are covered by a stone *jali* or lattice work spelling out the Islamic invocation “la-ilaha-illallah” in kufic script. It is naturally lit through the glass, and simultaneously protected through the surrounding *jali*, which filters the dense sun during the hot months (ArchDaily 2019). However, it is also fitted with air conditioners throughout the buildings, myriad clocks with all the different prayer times and indicators of holy days, and two elevators. It does not include outer spaces and it is carefully guarded by security personnel outside of prayer times. For many, even of the affluent classes, the mosque is considered a vanity project and is thus avoided for simpler structures in the area. This mosque does not espouse the same kind of social inclusivity, potential functions, and call to the natural and historic conditions of the country to solidify its presence and engage its users. Rather, it takes up the sense of a good life espoused by certain segments of the upper-class who value these comforts and do not see them as divisible from Islamic practice.

The Baitur Rouf and the Red Mosque are similar in the various historical narratives and claims to tradition they take up to justify their aesthetic. They further go beyond what one would usually find in a Dhaka mosque and offer outer spaces, thus becoming spaces of urban social life beyond the spiritual. The Gulshan mosque does not lay claim to the same sense of rootedness in Bangladesh, its climate and heritage. Yet, as the former two, it affords the communities it serves a new kind of religious space that is commensurate with their lifestyles. In all three, the architects emphasise spirituality, leisure, and sanctuary as part of contemporary urban mosques. They thus use them to imagine a new kind of mosque, grounded in the multiple traditions of the old, but also making use of the sanctity of mosques to open up public space within the city. This is not to say that they compel mosque users to use the space as envisioned by their designers. Indeed, the fact that communities do not necessarily do so is an important point in understanding the dialogic nature of the relationship between people in Dhaka and religious space. In this sense, both the spaces themselves and their users have agency in choosing what ‘good’ use of a mosque is ‘good’ for them. But by allowing their designs to embody multiple discourses, they invite mosques, Islamic communities, and city space to enter into a new relationship with each other, creating a new imaginary for religious and urban life.

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## 3B-1.4: Insecurities and Violence

**Chair:** Dr Katherine Saunders-Hastings, Lecturer in Latin American Studies, UCL

Manuscript not available

**'The art of not knowing and of not being known.' Urban violence, cumulative ignorance(s) and the right to opacity in the city of Cape Town**

Dr Enora Robin, Research Associate, Urban Institute, The University of Sheffield

Manuscript not available

**From Kingston to Brussels: exploring the sensory regimes of urban violence**

Dr Alana Osbourne, Researcher, Royal Netherlands Institute for Southeast Asian and Caribbean Studies

[Link to journal article](#)

**Linking urban violence and climate change: an agenda from institutional political ecology**

Dr Arabella Fraser, Nottingham Research Fellow, Faculty of Social Sciences, School of Geography, University of Nottingham

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**The causes and effects of energy injustices in Dhaka's slums**

Mark L. G. Jones, PhD candidate, The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL

# The Causes and Effects of Energy Injustices in Dhaka's Slums

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## Abstract

This article contributes to the energy justice debate through an investigation in a slum of Dhaka, Bangladesh. The study identifies energy injustices in the slum, and then explores the causes of those injustices and their effects on the residents. Energy injustices are found to be generated from (a) the socio-political landscape of Bangladesh, (b) the energy system of Dhaka, (c) local energy practices within the bostee and (d) insecurity of tenure. The effects on the people are assessed through engagement with the Capability Approach. This study consulted with residents as to their most valued capabilities and then measured the impacts of local energy practices on those selected capabilities. The case study settlement, Kallyanpur Pora Bostee, is a squatter settlement in Dhaka with illegal electricity practices and a majority using firewood cooking. Informed by the research findings, the article concludes by offering a number of principles of energy justice which may contribute to a framework for energy justice in the global South.

## Introduction

Energy supply is widely acknowledged to be a fundamental determinant of human well-being<sup>1</sup>. The repetitive mantra of the energy poverty literature is that 1.2 billion people are without electricity and 3 billion people are dependent on solid cooking fuels. Energy poverty is a far-reaching condition and an important research area. It is reasonable to argue that energy services in slums, are mostly insufficient to give the world's one billion slum dwellers the capability to lead a good life. This paper seeks to clarify *energy justice* issues for the urban poor living in slum conditions through the research question: 'What are the causes of energy injustices in Dhaka's slums and what are the effects on the people?'

My PhD engages with the academic debate in 'energy justice'. The contention of this article is that energy injustices prevail in informal settlements, and that these injustices impact on people's ability to lead a life that they value.

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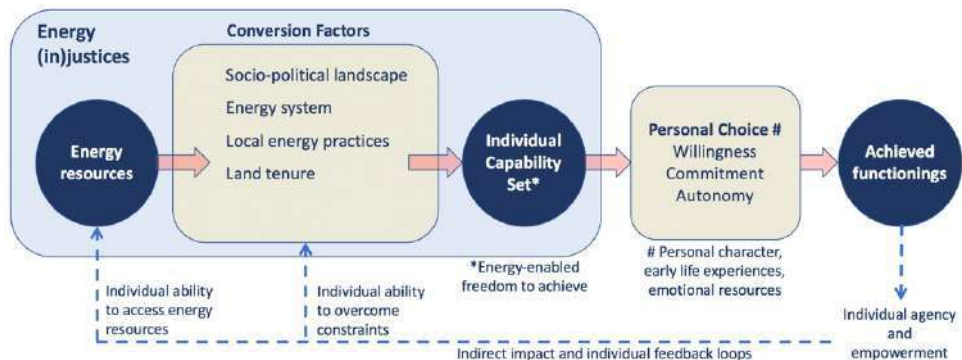
<sup>1</sup> (Niu et al., 2013; Ouedraogo, 2013; Practical Action, 2018)

## Theoretical Framework

This study seeks to advance the energy justice debate by opening up a dialogue with the capability approach (CA). According to Sen<sup>2</sup>, Nussbaum<sup>3</sup> and many others since, the important measure of outcomes in development programs is not merely an economic metric but rather an assessment of improved human capabilities. The CA is an approach that considers that which makes a person's life worthwhile. Day et al.<sup>4</sup> assert that the CA is a “*theoretically coherent means of comprehending the relationship between energy and wellbeing*”, focussing on human flourishing, rather than on resource inputs<sup>5</sup>.

Figure 1 re-interprets a prevalent model in the CA literature by applying an energy focus. Transformation of energy resources into human capabilities is enhanced or restricted by conversion factors. Capabilities may then enable human functioning, but that potential is affected by personal characteristics.

**Figure 1:** The capability framework and energy (in)justice<sup>6</sup>



## Case Study

The case-study slum for this research is Kalyanpur Pora Bostee (KPB) in the Mirpur district of Dhaka. This is a squatter settlement built on government-owned land with a population of about 20,000. In the 30 years since inception of the bostee, there have been many attempts at eviction, reportedly including the use of violence, arson, and demolition<sup>7</sup>. Images of the bostee are shown in figure 2. A map of the bostee is presented as Figure 3, which shows the points at which household surveys were conducted.

<sup>2</sup> (Sen, 1999, 1985)

<sup>3</sup> (Nussbaum, 2000)

<sup>4</sup> (Day et al., 2016, p255)

<sup>5</sup> (Day, 2018; Gardiner, 2018)

<sup>6</sup> Derived from: Trani et al., (2011, p252); (Biggeri and Ferrannini, (2014, p62); Robeyns, (2017, p83)

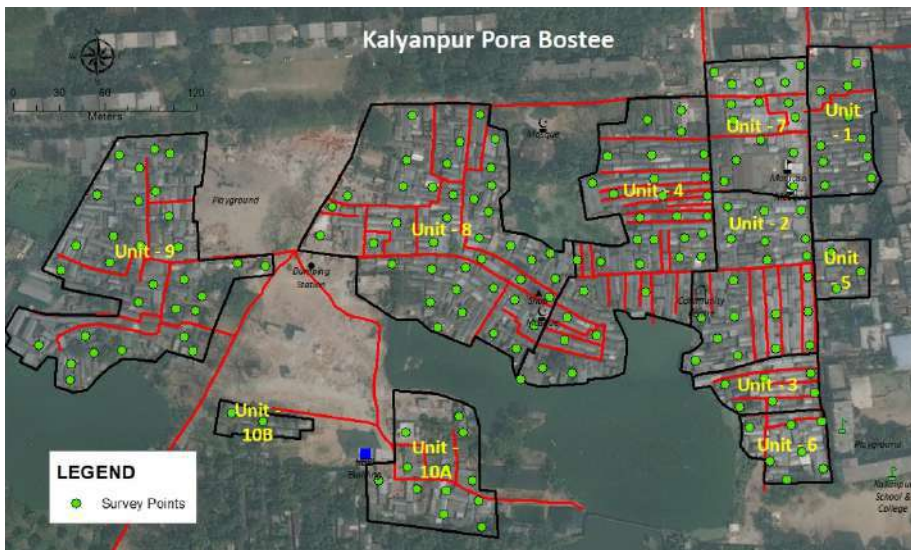
<sup>7</sup> <https://www.thedailystar.net/city/hc-orders-stop-kalyanpur-slum-eviction-205072> - accessed 16 October 2019



**Figure 2:** Images of Kalyanpur Pora Bostee (M Jones)



**Figure 3:** Bostee survey sampling map



(M Jones commission of Dhaka University [copyright])

### Valued Capabilities

Initially a set of focus group discussions (FGDs) determined the capabilities of greatest value to residents. The basis of those discussions was a list of fifteen capabilities determined from the literature, presented in Table 1. After discussion covering each of the listed items, participants voted on their most valued, the scores of which are listed in the table 1. Figure 4 shows a set of FGD posters with voting stickers after one session.

**Table 1:** Central capabilities list for Dhaka’s slum dwellers and voting score<sup>8</sup>

Item	Capability	Score
a.	Having good health	17
b.	Having physical security	4
c.	Having legal protection	29
d.	Having an education	27
e.	Having dignity and self-respect	12
f.	Having a job and fair pay for work	14
g.	Having secure occupation of your house (land tenure)	30
h.	Having opportunity for activities you value and enjoy (such as art, reading, etc)	4
i.	Having freedom for religious observation	12
j.	Having decent housing	37
k.	Having decent clothing	7
l.	Having a political voice	4
m.	Having a family life and a social life	6
n.	Having freedom to be with anyone you choose	4
o.	Having control over your assets	7

**Figure 4:** Capabilities posters for a focus group discussion (W Truer)



<sup>8</sup> List derived from: Nussbaum, (2000); Robeyns, (2003); Biggeri et al., (2006); Vizard and Burchardt, (2007); Alkire et al., (2009); Greco et al., (2015)

The results of this exercise revealed that the three most valued items, shown in green, were the freedoms of having a decent house, having secure tenure and having legal protection (mostly from eviction). These most desired qualities are argued below as drivers of energy injustices for residents of KPB. The next four most valued capabilities, shown in blue, were (a) health, (d) education, (e) dignity and self-respect, and (f) livelihood.

### Energy Practices

This section describes the provision and use of electricity and cooking fuel in KPB. All information has been derived from bostee fieldwork.

Electricity supply to KPB is organised by a committee of bostee leaders who deal informally with officials from the electricity provider, DESCO<sup>9</sup>. The bostee has two electricity entry points that are metered. Connections from these central meters to individual households are installed by non-qualified personnel and the installation is of a poor standard of workmanship. There are many uninsulated (or inadequately insulated) junctions, cables mostly hooked from buildings and many loose cables (Figure 5).

The poor quality of the installations leads to frequent accidents. It was claimed in FGDs that there have been occurrences of bostee dwellings becoming ‘live’ during rain events. One distressed female participant reported on the recent death of her husband by electrocution in the bostee. Further, fires have reportedly resulted from electrical faults. Clearly, the electricity cabling installation represents a health and safety risk to the bostee residents.

**Figure 5:** Unsafe electrical cabling (M Jones and S. M. Younus)



<sup>9</sup> Dhaka Electricity Supply Company (a publicly owned company)

A calculation on electricity cost determines the price to be about 7.5 takka per kWh<sup>10</sup>. This compares to the tariff for legal consumers in middle class Dhaka of 3.5 takka per kWh<sup>11</sup>. Thus, KPB dwellers pay twice the rate per unit of legal consumers, consistent with another study in Dhaka's slums<sup>12</sup>. Voltage drops in the supply causes considerable discontent. Lights dim and fans slow down at times of peak usage. In many dwellings, the level of lighting is inadequate for reading. And slowing fans obviously cause increased thermal discomfort for occupants of the tin shacks. Unreliability of electrical supply represents a serious frustration for the bostee residents.

Related to the issues of cost and reliability is sufficiency of electricity supply and of electrical appliances. Most households are one room and have one light and one fan. A single light, when operating fully (no voltage drops) appears to be sufficient for multiple occupant activity. Nevertheless, families would benefit by having additional lighting to better illuminate various concurrent activities. The single fan per household is unquestionably inadequate, a function of the tropical climate combined with the inappropriate configuration of the dwellings. Household ownership of refrigerators is just 19%. Acquisition of a refrigerator would allow safer food practices and reduced food wastage. Residents of KPB have insufficient electricity and insufficient electrical appliances to meet basic modern human needs.

The people report that failure to meet payments for electricity results in disconnection of the service or eviction, both of which are usually preceded by threats of violence at the hands of the dreaded mastaans<sup>13</sup> who are employed by the providers. Intimidation by powerful people within and outside the slum, expressed through the mastaans is an ever-present part of life for the squatter population. (Refer to Appendix 1). These unequal power relations are a source of anxiety for many bostee residents and represent an unjust element of energy practices in the bostee. Electricity has inherent problems of unaffordability, insufficiency, unreliability, a lack of safety, and acts of intimidation.

Cooking is undertaken in all households by the women. Cooking fuel is 50% firewood, 33% gas and 15% of households use both fuels. Firewood cooking repeatedly causes fires which damage property and there are frequent burn injuries, mainly involving women and children. As is well documented globally<sup>14</sup>, smoke from cooking fires is detrimental to human health with severe respiratory impacts, especially for women. Firewood cooking has severe health and safety impacts. Gas cooking is mostly on a single burner stove with a single gas bottle. Almost all firewood cooking in the bostee is undertaken on individual mud stoves, mostly located adjacent to the door of the house (Figure 6).

<sup>10</sup> Based on fan and light at 50W, each in use for 15 hours a day

<sup>11</sup> Minimum rate for low usage customers: <https://dpdc.org.bd/article/view/52/Tariff%20Rates> – accessed 16 October 2019

<sup>12</sup> (Lipu et al., 2016)

<sup>13</sup> Gangster musclemen in the employ of powerful figures

<sup>14</sup> (Practical Action, 2018)

**Figure 6:** Typical cooking arrangements: gas (left) and firewood (right) (M Jones)

The average cost of electricity per household, with one light and one fan is 340 takka (£3.30) per month, which equates to almost 5% of the median monthly income of bostee households at 10,000 takka (£96.50). The average cooking fuel expenditure is 1,030 takka (£10.00) per month, representing over 10% of the median household income. The average total energy expenditure is about 15% of the median income. Energy poverty literature cites a figure of 10% being a reasonable maximum for energy costs<sup>15</sup>.

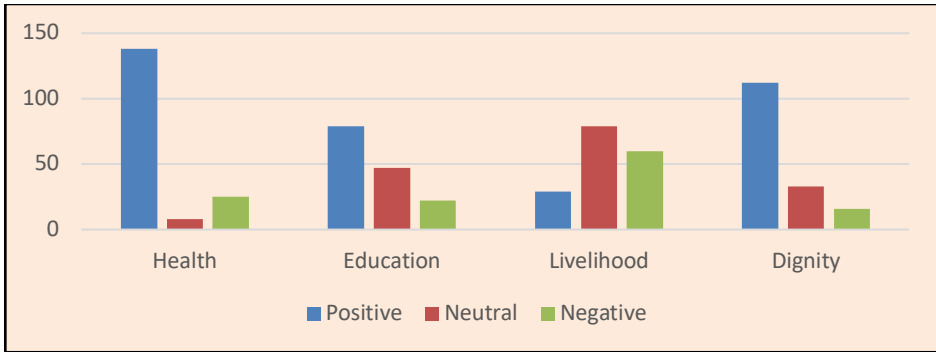
### Capability Impacts of Energy Practices

Participants in the bostee survey were asked to assess the impact of electricity and cooking fuel on family members in each of the four selected capabilities: health, education, dignity and self-respect, and livelihood. Subsequent to each response, participants were asked ‘why did you give that answer?’.

In a somewhat unexpected outcome, the electricity is viewed favourably by residents (Figure 7), despite the serious shortcomings of the system described earlier. Electricity in affecting health is regarded as positive by about 80% of respondents, most referencing the essential nature of the ceiling fan to moderate indoor heat. For impacts on education, 53% of respondents are positive, mostly backed by comments on the essential nature of the fan to enable study. For electricity’s impact on dignity and self-respect, over 70% were positive. In most cases, positive respondents stated that they were proud to have the electricity.

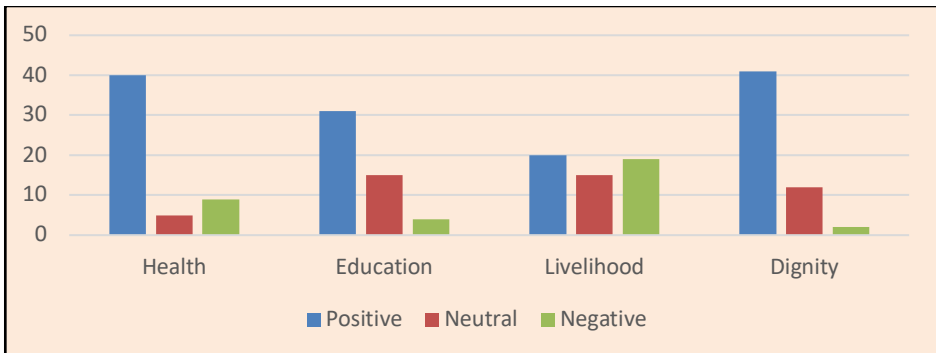
<sup>15</sup> (Bouzarovski and Petrova, 2015)

**Figure 7:** Survey results: electricity impact on capabilities

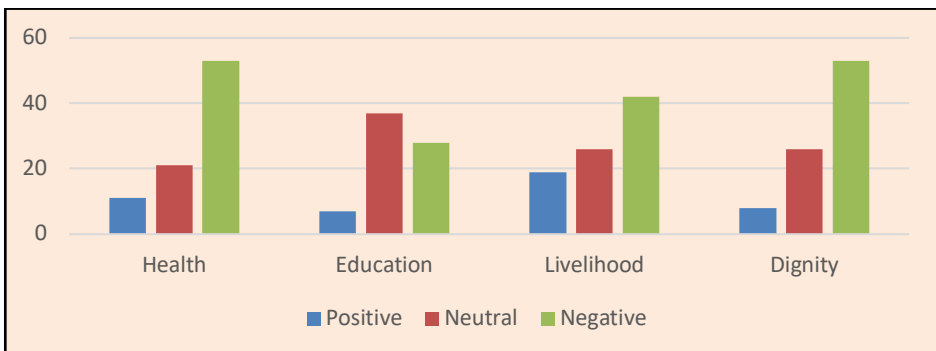


As would be expected, the impact of cooking practices on the selected capabilities is sharply divided between those using gas and those using firewood (Figures 8 and 9). Gas is universally appreciated by users as the optimal cooking technology.

**Figure 8:** Survey results: gas cooking impact on capabilities



**Figure 9:** Survey results: firewood cooking impact on capabilities



The impact of cooking with firewood on health was regarded as negative by 62% of respondents, and for gas, 74% positive. Smoke from firewood cooking is universally understood to cause respiratory bad health. For education, gas cooking has a positive impact according to 62% of respondents. In the case of firewood, about 40% see the impact as negative, smoke filling the house cited as preventing children from studying. In terms of dignity and self-respect, most people with gas are proud to have that technology. Most with firewood are ashamed of their cooking fuel due to the low social status of firewood cooking, and issues of disturbing neighbours, smelly clothes, blackened households and general cleanliness. The time advantage of gas cooking is noted by many.

### ***Energy Injustices***

The following discussion examines conversion factors (Figure 1) under the CA to identify energy injustices for residents of KPB.

#### *Socio-political Landscape and Energy System*

There is considerable academic literature that laments the state of governance in Bangladesh. According to Lewis<sup>16</sup>, Bangladesh is “*suffering from severe problems of governance and high levels of corruption*”. Institutions of the state in Bangladesh tend to favour private gain for the leadership over public benefit<sup>17</sup>. The use of fear and violence is widespread throughout the socio-political landscape<sup>18</sup>. Government leaders engage the police to carry out unsavoury acts including politically motivated violence and evictions<sup>19</sup>. Core concerns repeated through much of the literature include an endemic system of political patronage, poor separation of powers, suppression of the right to protest and dubious electoral processes. These conditions maintain an entrenched system of economic inequity and social injustice.

Expert interviews regarding the energy system of Dhaka revealed a set of institutional corruptions. At the large project scale, bribes must be paid through the approval and implementation processes to politicians and bureaucrats in order for a project to proceed. At the local level, bribes are required to obtain household connections and company officials are often involved in the theft of electricity. As a result of these corruptions, the public good is inevitably compromised.

#### *Local Energy Practices*

Fieldwork illuminated a number of clear injustices arising from local energy practices in the bostee. For electricity, these concern unaffordability, lack of safety, unreliability, and the inadequate electricity and appliances, and acts of intimidation. With firewood cooking, cost is excessive, radiant heat is arduous for residents, and safety is a serious concern. The greatest injustices of firewood-use, however, relate to

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<sup>16</sup> (Lewis, 2011, pp2-3)

<sup>17</sup> Supported by many authors eg (Khan, 2015; Lata et al., 2019; Morshed and Asami, 2015; Shafi, 2010; Shafique et al., 2018).

<sup>18</sup> (Shafi, 2010; Suykens, 2015; Swapan, 2016)

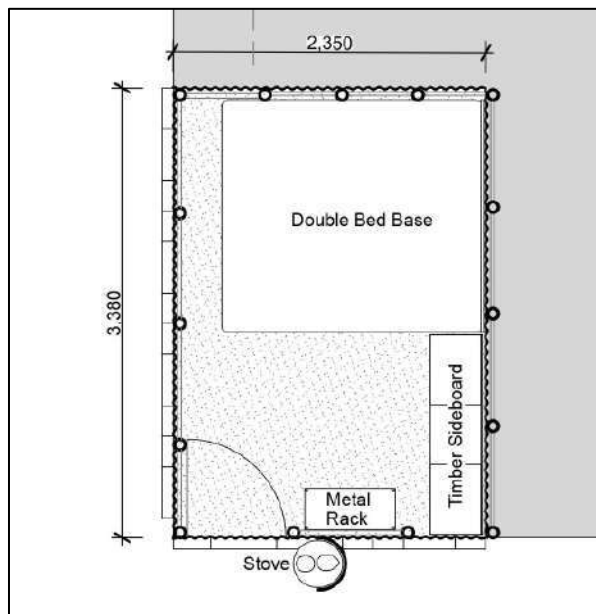
<sup>19</sup> (Riaz, 2015)

the generation of smoke from cooking-fires. This has obvious impact on human health, with an additional justice divide between the genders.

### *Insecure Tenure*

Lack of security of tenure is one of the defining conditions of slums. Therefore, slum dwellers commonly live under the threat of forced eviction. Bangladeshi researchers have noted the impacts of fear of eviction on people's mental well-being and their ability to operate effectively within their household and in the broader economy<sup>20</sup>. Focus group discussions in KPB determined that security of land tenure and the quality of housing are the principal aspirations of residents of KPB. The absence of land tenure has practical repercussions for residents of KPB, notably the inability to access legal services and limitation in housing quality. Unable to access formal services, residents in the slums resort to the use of illegal, non-modern and/or poor-quality energy services. Housing in KPB mostly comprises single room (about 9m<sup>2</sup>) dwellings of re-used corrugated steel. Houses are uninsulated and have no openings other than the front door, creating poor thermal conditions. A typical floor plan is shown in Figure 10. Figure 11 has views inside the same dwelling. Electric fans must run all day and night for the entire year. In this tropical climate, the temperatures inside houses are mostly well above comfort conditions. Previous research has revealed serious consequences for human health in these settings<sup>21</sup>. Natural light in the dwellings is also insufficient, requiring the use of an electric light even during the day. The consequence of the poor housing design is unjust energy demand

**Figure 10:** Typical house floor plan (L Taylor)



<sup>20</sup> (Mohit, 2012; Nawaz, 2004; Shafi and Payne, 2007)

<sup>21</sup> (French and Gardner, 2012)



**Figure 11:** Typical house interior (W Truer)

### *Conclusion*

The premier energy-related deficiencies of bostee dwellers identified in the fieldwork are (1) affordability, (2) safety, (3) reliability, (4) sufficiency and (5) freedom from intimidation. Another element that emerged was (6) gender equity. Notably, most of these principles are impacted by (7) security of land tenure, (8) access to the regulated city system and (9) housing quality. The socio-political landscape offers broader energy justice concerns, including (10) governance for the public good (including a focus on elevating the disadvantaged).

Based on the findings of this site-specific study, development of a framework of energy justice for the global South would need to give due consideration to the ten attributes mentioned above. Contributing to development of such a framework is the ultimate objective of my PhD research.

### *Acknowledgements*

This paper is the basis of the author's PhD at the Bartlett Development Planning Unit under the supervision of Dr Alexandre Apsan Frediani. Local support was provided by Professor Nurul Islam Nazem, Department of Geography and Environment, University of Dhaka. Appreciation is also extended to Wendy Truer and the local team of research assistants for conducting the fieldwork with me. MJ

## Appendix 1

### *Mastaans*

There is considerable commentary in the literature about the menacing and pervasive presence of the *mastaans* in Dhaka's slums (Banks, 2016; Hossain et al., 2013; Lata et al., 2019). These are the gangster style 'musclemen' supporting powerful people including the local MP. Household interviews specifically about the *mastaans* were conducted. Respondents explained in detail about the ubiquitous threats of the *mastaans* and their frequent acts of violence and extortion in the *bostee*. These acts related to rental and services payments, protection rackets and in some cases were connected to eviction threats. One family provided physical evidence of violence in the form of smashed household items and bodily bruising. There is a complex network of allegiances involving the MP, local government politicians, public officials, DESCO officials, the landowner, *bostee* leaders, *mastaans* and the police. It is unlikely that an outsider could achieve clarity on these relationships, but it is clear that the network is based on patronage and extortion. *Bostee* residents sit in a vulnerable position at the bottom of this hierarchy.

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## 3B-2.1: Community Collaborations, Activism and Conflict in Planning

**Chair:** Dr Pablo Sendra, Lecturer in Planning and Urban Design, UCL

**Discussant:** Prof. Sophie Oldfield, Professor of Urban Studies, University of Cape Town-University of Basel

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**Scaling up the fight to stay put on London's final gentrification frontiers?**

Prof. Loretta Lees, Professor of Human Geography, University of Leicester

Manuscript not available

**Just Space**

—an informal alliance of community groups, campaigns and concerned independent organisations, formed to act as a voice for Londoners at grass-roots level during the formulation of London's major planning strategy, particularly the London Plan.

Manuscript not available

**'Fighting for planning, planning for fighting': an experience of conflictual planning—Vila Autodromo, Rio de Janeiro**

Prof. Carlos Vainer, Institute of Urban and Regional Planning and Research, Federal University of Rio de Janeiro

## 3B-2.2: Collaboration and Participation: Experiences

**Chair:** Iromi Perera, researcher and activist

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**African fabbers cities: new opportunities for selforganisation and self-production in the African urban context**

Dr Paolo Cascone, Scientific Director, African Fabbers School  
Maddalena Laddaga, Teaching Fellow, African Fabbers School

Manuscript not available

**Mapping towards inclusive city-making: exploring participatory mapping methods in Freetown's informal settlements**

Dr Beatrice de Carli, Lecturer, University of Sheffield

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**Coproducing knowledge for urban equality: processes and tensions in community-led city-wide partnerships**

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**Storytelling as sentipensante: a co-designed platform for learning on slum upgrading strategies**

Dr Catalina Ortiz, Associate Professor, The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL

**African fabbers cities:****new opportunities for selforganisation and self-production in the African urban context**

Dr Paolo Cascone, Scientific Director, African Fabbers School

Maddalena Laddaga, Teaching Fellow, African Fabbers School

This paper focus on the African Fabbers Project [AFP] case studies developed in cities around Morocco, Ghana, Mali, Burkina Faso and Senegal. The project bridges informal and advanced approaches with the aim to reshape public spaces as spaces of relation and production through collaborative practices. Such approach is based on the exploration of new-paradigms on circular economies and “local industry” potentials for African cities post-colonial growth. 500 million population that is going to live in urban areas in Africa in 2020. 90% of whom are still living in slums. (UN Habitat) The problems of African societies are often depicted by our media as just an object for humanitarian aid. However, as explained by major international analysts, three powerful positive trends are likely to sustain Africa’s growth in the coming years. First of all, as mentioned by UNDP the continent has a young population with a growing labor force – a highly valuable asset in an ageing world. Secondly, Africa is still urbanizing and much of the economic benefit lies ahead. Productivity in cities is three times as high as in rural areas and, over the next decade, an additional 187 million Africans will live in cities, according to the United Nations. Thirdly, African economies are well positioned to benefit from rapidly accelerating technological changes that can unlock growth and leapfrog the limitations and costs of physical infrastructures in important areas of economic life.

Based on this premise the above mentioned case studies will be compared and analysed with the aim to develop possible design to build processes able to bridge vernacular, spontaneous and advanced cultures generating new opportunities of self-organisation and self-production for African urban context. Therefore the [AFP] has recently implemented, thanks to the support of the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the African Fabbers School (Douala-Cameroon) : the first community oriented school of urban ecologies and self-construction in Africa. The School is based on a learning by doing methodology that investigates on the new social role of designers as facilitators of participatory processes for the regeneration of public residual spaces within a circular economy approach. This methodology was the result of a series of on site urban experiments developed in the last 10 years of with the aim to decline different urban tactics according to site specific conditions and social scenario. Such approach has been inspired by the collaboration of Paolo Cascone with Fabrizio Carola, an Aga Khan awarded architect known for his pioneering thirty years work in the sub-Saharan region. Carola’s was the story of an independent thinker, one of the few who have been able to develop theory via practical work, anticipating contemporary themes that are crucial for new generations – and for more than just architects. Fabrizio very quickly understood that Africa was the right place to test an ecological approach to urban design and architecture, in which social, mental and environmental ecology could flow into one another. He grasped that technology would have a fundamental role in this by making building processes sustainable. Above all, he understood – once again, before everyone else – how important it is to work in a state of osmosis with the landscape and the people living there within a post-colonial perspective. From this point of view, his interdisciplinary approach can be seen today as very advanced, despite the “primitive” techniques used. In his work, the building site was also his studio – an applied research laboratory focused on an idea critical in Africa: self-sufficiency. Using this simple concept, he developed a method that could generate concrete responses to problems created by climate change, such as deforestation and impoverishment. Via a simple yet integrated process, he was able to transform the critical environmental and economic issues of an urban context into generative elements in his designs. Equally, his tendency to see the construction site as a place of production and dissemination contributed to giving his work its subversive character.

His idea of evolving Hassan Fathy’s compass to create building shells (such as domes and vaults) created entirely using “0 km” materials was just one product of this. Carola, with his profound understanding of African society, understood how important it was to transform the construction world into an opportunity to redistribute wealth more equally through a community (such as a village or a town district). By reclaiming the vernacular sub-Saharan culture, he saw the potential for interpreting construction as a collective practice able to hold a community together, as happens in Djenne, in his beloved Mali, at the end of the rainy season. Probably the most interesting example of his understanding of the social role of productive urban space in Africa is the medicinal herb market in Bamako (Mali). The project itself is perfectly integrated in one of the major public markets of Bamako and is conceived as space of production of medicinal herbs as well as a space of commerce. The organisation of the space around a central and open courtyard made by a diversified system of domes shapes the market in an overshadowed space of relation. Such environmental strategy transformed such micro-infrastructural project in an urban attractor. The idea of conceiving the

building site as a factory (of bricks, above all) became a strategic element in the definition of a sustainable approach keeping the dependency on imported materials to a minimum and asserting a model of the circular economy long before we had a name for this idea. This holistic approach generated extraordinary public buildings promoting the collective good, such as the hospital in Kaedi (Mauritania) and the research centre for traditional medicine in Mopti (Mali).

Thanks to the collaboration with Carola the [AFP] start to develop its applied research agenda with the aim to investigate on new opportunities for self-organisation and self-production for African cities. Such agenda was gradually informed also by other interdisciplinary approaches on post-colonial issues, among the others the work of Pier Paolo Pasolini in his documentary *Notes Towards an African Orestes* (1970) and the one of Rem Koolhaas in his *Lagos: How it works* presented at the Venice Biennale in year 2010. In the documentary of the Italian film director and writer there is a critical and still actual description on the controversial development of the new post-independence African cities and society during the seventies. In the case of the Lagos's research of Khololhas, developed with his students of the GSD Harvard, emphasis was put on the consequences of this African modernism and the capability of informal activities to shape the so-called generic city. Another interdisciplinary approach relevant to our research is coming from the work of the ethno-mathematician Ron Eglash at the intersection of computer science and cultural anthropology. In his book *African Fractals* Eglash describes the sub-Saharan spontaneous settlements as emergent systems coming from implicit and so called contextual algorithms. Such spontaneous systems analysis explains in a scientific way the cause effects relations between geometric complex configurations, functional aspects and social organisations. The result of these interactions generates resilient solutions responding to very interesting criteria of material optimization, spatial diversity and environmental responsiveness.

With this cultural background the agenda of [AFP] started to develop an applied research platform based on design to make strategies for African urban context with the aim to generating a new synthetic vernacular urban prototypes. The first experiment was developed with the atelier paolo cascone – ESA (Paris) in collaboration with the local community of Ouagadougou in Burkina Faso. The design process aims to develop high-tech design / low-tech construction approach to performative design merging computational process within vernacular construction techniques based on the use of earth bricks for evolving Nubian vaults technologies. The project is the result of the participatory process involving the community of Suourgoubila for building a primary school playground. This space is conceived to allow the children of the school to play and study in an overshadowed playground .

This on site initiative generates the opportunity to develop the smart shell project selected by UN-Habitat to participate at the 6th World Urban Forum. This micro-structure is conceived in order to provide off-grid shells for both public activities and temporary housing solutions for African cities. The shell is designed as a transportable, fast-deployment and energetically self-sufficient structure. The design process investigates the relation between high-tech design and low-tech construction. the project provides flexible solutions for different uses from low-cost dwelling to off-grid emergency hospital etc. ; the structural system consists in a foldable modular arches made of wood covered by photovoltaic textile strips. The second on-site experience of the African Fabbers programme in Morocco was developed in city of Sale in Morocco. The project was developed in the framework of the Quartier du Monde initiative in collaboration with the Swiss Cooperation with the aim to involve the inhabitants of a poor neighborhood into a to regenerate a public space. This lightweight structure is conceived as a tensile fabric shelter for the public garden of Sale. The project is inspired by traditional cables system for generating overshadowing solutions in the ancient medina. the aim is to create a relational space in cooperation with the local community involving them into a self-construction project for a common shaded gathering place. After this initial case study in Morocco the [AFP] has been invited to take part at Marrakech Biennale in year 2014. The project consists in the transformation of an abandoned hangar in a productive atelier for Moroccan design students and the local community of artisans. The space was equipped to be a temporary laboratory, with a big delta 3D printer for natural materials, an arduino coding location and a computer area. Inside the atelier we have developed with the local artisans an energetically sufficient 3d printer and explored the potential of 3d printing with natural material to realize structural components prototypes for a hydroponic pavilion made by interlocked ceramic elements fabricated extruding local clay.

With this both urban and educational experience we have started to be in touch with the network of African fab-lab in Africa supporting them to become urban fabrication laboratories. The first project developing such analogue-digital approach in manufacturing has been realized for the Dakar Biennale in 2014. Such initiative was developed to support the DefKo Ak Niep (Do it with others) fab-lab in Senegal. The project provides a small infrastructure, an open air laboratory for local craftsmen and makers. The construction of the structure has been designed and realized in the framework through a participatory process involving both the local community and the European of makers with the aim to bridge traditional and advanced knowledge.

#### conclusions

The above mentioned experiences convinced the African Fabbers Project team that an innovative education system is needed in order to respond to the lack of universities in the region and to support a new generation of urban drivers.

Therefore the [AFP] is now developing and building the first school of urban ecologies, digital fabrication and self-construction in Africa. The African Fabbers School is based in Cameroon, in the framework of the Camon project powered by the COE and financed by the AICS - Italian agency for international cooperation.

With this premise the School is implementing an housing research programme, a community-oriented initiative. The programme aims to explore off-grid housing scalable solutions by bridging vernacular architecture with more technological systems inspired by Jean Prouve's tropical house. thirdly, african economies are well positioned to benefit from rapidly accelerating technological changes that can unlock growth and leapfrog the limitations and costs of physical infrastructures in important areas of economic life. This aspect could be crucial to develop local 4.0 industries, which will able to transform and re-purpose local materials within an ecological approach that may reconcile nature with tekne'.

For this reason an initial scale 1 to 1 prototype was realized with the School students in order open up to the african fabbers start-up factory: an urban fabrication laboratory connected to a network of local and international industries able to design and make high and low tech sustainable solutions in the field of urban design and building constructions in Africa.

The next step will focus on improving the environmental performances of the prototype while implementing scalable configurations to be developed with local and international institutions. This with the aim to respond to the needs for affordable and ecological habitat in the African context.



## 3B-2.3: Co-Designing Urban Infrastructures

Transcript not available

This session will showcase projects, methods and tools for co-designing infrastructure. Community partners will contribute their knowledge of the projects and experiences of co-design processes, and participants will be able to test software and physical design tools used during the workshops.

Prof. Sarah Bell, Professor of Environmental Engineering, The Bartlett School of Environment, Energy and Resources, UCL

Robin Brown, Just Space

Slaney Devlin, Chair, Somers Town Neighbourhood Forum

Dr Charlotte Johnson, Senior Research Fellow, The Bartlett School of Environment, Energy and Resources, UCL

Joanna Vignola, Kipling Estate Tenants and Residents Association

## 3C-1.1: Infrastructures of Extended Urbanisation

**Chair:** Dr Andrew Harris, Associate Professor, Department of Geography, UCL

**Discussant:** Prof. Christian Schmid, Professor of Sociology, Department of Architecture, ETH Zürich; Future Cities Laboratory Singapore

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**The masking of an urban Southern Ocean**

Charity Edwards, Lecturer, Department of Architecture, Monash University, Melbourne

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**Cities and the eel: urban political ecology, metabolic flows, and the European Eel across the longue durée**

Dr Seth Gustafson, Lecturer in Human Geography, UCL

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**Urbanization without an Inside: sand, scale, and territory in Southeast Asia**

William Jamieson, PhD candidate, Royal Holloway, University of London

Manuscript not available

**From an urban to a planetary metabolism: developing a theoretical framework**

Arnout Sabbe, doctoral researcher, Department of Urbanism, Delft University of Technology

UCL Urban Laboratory

**At the frontiers of the urban: thinking concepts and practices globally**

## **THE MASKING OF AN URBAN SOUTHERN OCEAN**

### INTRODUCTION

This paper considers the operationalisation of spaces least likely to correspond with traditional notions of 'the urban', such as the Southern Ocean, in order to foreground them in debates of what might be deemed 'spatially appropriate' for conceptualising urban processes in the contemporary age. Often described as at 'the end of the Earth', the Southern Ocean is an extraordinary geo-imaginary, typically removed from everyday experiences of the world (Elzinga, 2016) and expressed through a narrow range of representations. These mythologised pasts, visions of a 'pure' present, and techno-utopian futures all work to limit our conception of the Southern Ocean. A landed bias also renders oceanic volumes invisible: to be considered only as a smooth shipping surface or volume from which to extract resources (Steinberg and Peters, 2015). In contradistinction, oceanic space is a clear manifestation of what Brenner and Schmid (2015) describe as 'extended urbanisation': that is, a vast planet-scaled landscape co-opted by expansive and exploitative urban processes.

An urbanising Southern Ocean thus represents a significant arena of critical disregard. The world's 'newest' and most vulnerable ocean hosts unusual entanglements of water, ice, weather, atmosphere, land, and life; and is of great import to disruptions that have been popularly framed via the Anthropocene. Although, when we reduce the ocean to a mere backdrop for human action, our capacity to respond to planetary transformations enacted by everyday urban practices is fundamentally diminished. To further problematise this frontier of urbanisation, this paper will address the masking of the urban Southern Ocean, and ask: how do urban processes manifest in remote environments such as the Southern Ocean? And in what ways do imaginaries represent this volume as un-urbanised when evidence exists to the contrary?

### THE OCEAN AND THE URBAN

Brenner and Schmid (2015)'s notion of 'extended urbanisation' helps to reveal the concealing practices of urban discourse that erase the ocean from consideration. As a little-understood though regularly co-opted field, the ocean is increasingly severed from 'nature' and consumed through apparatuses that sustain urban processes at the scale of the planet (Arboleda and Banoub, 2016). Since at least the 18<sup>th</sup> century,

oceanic spaces have been made, masked, and remade many times over in the service of labour, 'progress' and economic growth. Now, more than ever, they constitute a "market monstrosity" (Arboleda and Banoub, 2016: 3). For instance, just as earlier sealing and whaling interests reconfigured the Southern Ocean as an expanded hunting ground after mammal populations crashed elsewhere (Avango, 2017), recent efforts to dramatically expand krill harvests in this space may be driven by the near-collapse of marine ecosystems and fisheries in the South China Sea – as well as protein demands from increasing urbanisation throughout Asia and beyond. Given the scale of planetary re-ordering prompted by such processes, I note the absence of oceanic spaces from urban debates; and question why this disregard continues.

The world ocean, and Southern Ocean in particular, highlights the failure of city-centric theorising and its capacity to respond to less obvious landscapes of accumulation (Clausen and Clark, 2005). A "methodological cityism" (Angelo and Wachsmuth, 2015: 16) is generally deployed to constitute notions of the urban, though this flawed rhetoric has more recently been argued against by Brenner (2014), Buckley and Strauss (2016), Merrifield (2014), and Schmid (2018). Even so, it is not clear what enlarging the frame of the urban means for oceanic space. These 'operationalised landscapes' have been interrogated piecemeal thus far – notably in studies of the Atlantic and Mediterranean oceans by Brenner and Katsikis (2014), Adams (2015), Arboleda and Banoub (2016); and the Barents Sea by Couling (2014) – and most often in locations where the relations of colonial occupation, settlement, development and trade across the sea clearly signal a long-industrialised character.

Beyond the more obviously urbanised ocean landscapes of the northern hemisphere however, emergent realities of planet-scaled urban processes present themselves. So too increasing alertness to the imbrication of the deep sea, coastal environments, and cities around the globe; not least for those in the 'disappearing' low-lying island states of the Pacific. In an argument echoed by many political geography scholars working at the intersection of cities and climate change, Dalby (2013) notes socio-cultural representations, technical practices, and policymaking for cities reinforce a strange polarity between the supposed urban 'centre' and a non-urban 'periphery'. Metropolitan-driven climate change is off-shored to oceanic environments somehow quarantined for disruption: a conceptual sink, which subsequently is also identified as threatening to cities and prosperity itself. Extended urbanisation thus spreads

through the ocean in unpredictable ways, and becomes critical in an age not only of increasing urban populations but also rising sea levels, frequent wild weather, and steep trajectories of ocean acidification.

The potency of impacts upon vast planetary landscapes kept from consideration in a presumed 'global urban age' (Burdett and Sudjic, 2007, Burdett and Rode, 2011, Burdett and Sudjic, 2011, Burdett and Rode, 2018) should raise concerns in many quarters, but both methodological and epistemological flaws in current urban debates work to prevent such interrogation taking place. Environments common to these processes are more often articulated as remote wildernesses, even where co-opted through speculative extraction and biogenetic exploitation and, in time, broadly operationalised in the interests of transnational capital accumulation (Brenner and Schmid, 2011, Kaika and Swyngedouw, 2014). This amounts to a planet-scaled ecology of urban extraction, and due consideration must be given to those spaces that remain occluded from this enquiry, such as the (not-actually) remote wilderness of the Southern Ocean. Together, these concerns register an urgent need to extend current orthodoxies of the urban.

#### AN UNORTHODOX OCEAN

The ocean generally presents an unexpectedly sheer physical obstacle that complicates claims for urbanising spaces beyond the container of the city, and only more so for the Southern Ocean. For it is vast, mobile, barely explored, under-researched, governed from a distance via overlapping legal regimes, constituted from a materiality resistant to surveillance, and completely unsuited to attempts of human control. More troubling is the almost total dismissal from current urban debates of this significant volume; and here, the notion of "blind fields" (Lefebvre, 2003 [1970]: xii) – a physical and ideological 'not-seeing' that is also a 'not-knowing' – becomes significant. Lefebvre urged us to interrogate spaces that limit conceptions of the urban by relinquishing prior theoretical frameworks, synthesising fragmentary information, and revealing *difference*: that is, the analysis of urban phenomena requires "gathering together of what gives itself as dispersed, dissociated, separated, and this in the form of simultaneity and encounters" (Lefebvre, 1996 [1968]: 143). Attention thus returns to the codification of what is considered 'appropriate' for the ocean to contain.

Leane (2015) argues the Southern Ocean is mostly conceived as *extra-planetary* space – ‘like visiting another world’ – via popular media, heroic biography, fiction, and cinema. This is confirmed through the highly curated range of representations we encounter: visually (*dazzlingly white, uninhabitable, heroic survival*), conceptually (*preserved, pristine, untouched*), geo-politically (*extreme territories, wild journeys, global commons*), and legally (*delineated, circumpolar, latitudinal*). Elzinga (2016, 2009) reminds us though that such imaginaries are deliberately produced through romantic imperialist, techno-utopian, depoliticised myths that do little to share the diverse ecologies within this territory. Very much of *this* world, the Southern Ocean is governed via interdependent multilateral treaties<sup>1</sup>, regionally-focused protections<sup>2</sup>, and international bodies<sup>3</sup>. These networks are global in scale but remain legislated, implemented, and policed through the frame of the nation-state; leading to conflicts between territorial claims, resource opportunities, and globalising economic potential in a region purportedly dedicated to the pursuit of scientific knowledge. Research, exploration, and commercial infrastructures also lay foundations for the urban however, and ocean wilderness representations falter as exploitation, capital, and geopolitical narratives are revealed in this space.

The extension of urban processes into the Southern Ocean also moves beyond a conventional conceptual limit: what Steinberg (2013) characterises as the ‘land-sea binary’. As such, ‘thinking *from* the ocean instead of about it’ (Stel, 2013, Bremner, 2015) might reveal overlooked relationships operating in these blind fields. Meaning is made and remade abstractly via arbitrary systems of demarcation, and representations are controlled and constructed from a distance – all while the ocean itself is perpetually in movement (Antonello, 2017, Hemmings et al., 2017, Jones, 2016). Moreover, masking the urban in the Southern Ocean also misrepresents its lengthy industrial occupation. The late 18th century age of heroic polar exploration obscured industrialised harvesting practices even as commercial premises began to spread. Antarctic factory facilities testify to intensive exploitation of seals embedded in global financial networks while in the 19th century, overharvesting almost obliterated the ‘working potential’ of the Southern Ocean and was remedied only by a new boom in whaling (Avango, 2017). Natural resource exploitation and institutional apparatuses recede behind images of heroes battling harsh elements, but

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<sup>1</sup> Including the 1959 *Antarctic Treaty System (ATS)*, the 1991 *Madrid Protocol on Environmental Protection to the Antarctic Treaty*, and the *United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS)*.

<sup>2</sup> Such as the *Convention on the Conservation of Antarctic Marine Living Resources (CCAMLR)*.

<sup>3</sup> For example, the *International Maritime Organisation (IMO)*.

manufacturing remains dispersed across the sub-Antarctic islands should dispel any notion of a remote and pure wilderness (Avango, 2017).

Urban processes and the Southern Ocean have been constituted as *distinctly separate* though they were, and are, tightly bound together through the supply of important resources for fuel and commercial goods. Clear lines are drawn between the prized wilderness of the Southern Ocean and *everywhere else* on the planet (where everywhere else the presence of urbanising activities is normalised, and the Antarctic remains remote and 'pristine'). The Southern Ocean thus continues to be held at a distance from cities: experienced through tightly-controlled reportage that masks expanding scientific research bases, tourism, defence, support and logistics infrastructure; and growing pressures from commercial fishing, mining exploration, and bio-prospecting interests within the oceanic volume itself (Ferrada, 2018, Miller et al., 2018).

Radical technologies expanding into the ocean, such as autonomous underwater vehicles (AUVs) for scientific research and resource speculation purposes, also present an altogether new aspect for consideration within this urbanising space. Robotic innovation financing is tied to powerful institutions intent on maintaining power in everyday life via surveillance technologies, while the potential of such objects are restricted to parameters conceived most often by defence- and resource-focussed commercial developers (McNeil and Burrington, 2014). Even those "rebranded 'good drones'" (Jackman, 2016, 3) – submersible robots used in marine science and oceanographic research – are positioned as instruments of safety and responsibility. This is a 'cyber-infrastructure' deemed critical to conduct science year-round in areas inaccessible to all except space-borne monitoring systems (Kennicutt et al., 2016). In this manifestation of the urban, the production of new relations of extraction and exploitation are harnessed through submerged beings for particular scientific (though perhaps more accurately, future commercial) potential.

#### MORE 'THINKING FROM SOUTHERN OCEANS'

The Southern Ocean suffers both from remote geographical distance and normative forms of spatial ordering that work to conceal actual conditions of urbanisation over time, and key to this disregard is the matter of their representation. As Rickards et al. (2016) note, urbanisation – and any critique thereof – requires new cartographies, visualisation methods, representational reflexivity, and most of all, a new lexicon

through which to set forth analysis and interpretation. In this context, I argue that forms of urbanisation spread through the Southern Ocean in unpredictable ways – and have done so, unexamined for over 150 years. This position echoes a timely reminder from anthropologist Stefan Helmreich (2014: 266) that we require more “thinking from southern oceans”. My doctoral research therefore seeks to collate fragmentary evidence of increasing urbanisation at the intersection of *surveillance* (AUV and sensor imagery) and *speculation* (an emerging research/commercial nexus combining treaty gaming and mineral resource extraction) activities, which are operating at a planetary scale in the Southern Ocean.

Temporary support infrastructures already exist throughout the Southern Ocean *above* the water line – traversing routes, air fields, fuel depots, field camps, and the like – but underwater technologies allow for a *permanent* sub-surface expansion of surveillance, research, extraction, and exploitation. Here, ‘the urban’ manifests through opaque operations of under-ice exploration, subglacial analysis, and pairing with animal-borne sensors for remote bio-logging (Wilmers et al., 2015). The ‘robotisation of the sea’ is lauded by many for its capacity to improve sustainable exploration, marine resource management, and scientific research (Simon, 2015), but we should be aware that NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory Artificial Intelligence Group have been working with oceanographic researchers and commercial operators to develop AI-embedded drones for remote extra-planetary exploration ventures (Brandt et al., 2016). Collectivised intelligences operating for thinly-veiled commercial benefit within the ocean signals an escalation of potentially destructive urban processes in order to sustain new scientific, geopolitical, and commercial ambitions of populations back on dry land (Edwards, 2019). Operationalising the Southern Ocean shifts our understanding of this space. No longer a remote wilderness: instead, a vast urbanising field embedded with technology and accessible resources, and worryingly *masked from view*.

## CONCLUSION

This paper has considered the operationalisation of the Southern Ocean as a clear manifestation of Brenner and Schmid (2015)’s notion of ‘extended urbanisation’, and revealed a vast planet-scaled landscape co-opted by expansive, exploitative and emergent urban processes. The realities of these planet-scaled processes – and increasing alertness to the imbrication of the deep sea, coastal environments, and cities across the globe – register an urgent need to extend current orthodoxies of the



urban. The world's 'newest' and most vulnerable ocean hosts unusual entanglements of water, land, life, and technology; all of which are threatened by the masking of the urban Southern Ocean. Urban processes clearly manifest in remote environments like the Southern Ocean, and this paper argues that they have done so for more than 150 years. By representing the oceanic volume as un-urbanised we not only ignore evidence that exists to the contrary, but continue to maintain depoliticised myths seeking to erase diverse ecologies within and across this planet.

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Seth Gustafson

*Eels and the City: Urban political ecology, metabolic flows, and the European Eel across the longue durée*

Precis

## Introduction

For centuries one of Europe's most widely consumed fish, stocks of the European eel (*Anguilla anguilla*) since the 1970s have declined upwards of 95%. Ecologists account for this via a range of anthropogenic factors: habitat loss, overfishing, contamination, among others. While still regionally popular in Europe, high demand from municipal east Asian markets for young eels has made the European eel both the world's most trafficked species and its illicit trade immensely financially lucrative. As recently as early November 2019, prices for illicit glass eel (i.e., baby eels) in this Europe-East Asia trade go for at least 2,000 EUR per kilogram.

Eel has not always been this expensive, of course, but there are deep historical and geographical roots to the very profitable trade of eel, especially when it became cheap food for urban industrial workers in Europe in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. This project relies primarily on a framework from urban political ecology (UPE) and its central concept of *urban metabolism* to analyse the financial, labour, pollutant, and animal flows that have characterised human-eel entanglements in European cities for centuries. There are other components to this research—oral histories of eel fishermen from Norfolk whose livelihoods depended on London's eel consumption, the metabolism in human bodies of fat and protein from eel especially those in the industrial-era working class, current urban conservation and citizen science efforts aimed at restoring eel stocks, and more—but this paper instead focuses on a historical era: the Dutch eel trade with London from 1731-1938.

## Theoretical Notes

Using UPE here is useful and provocative here for several reasons. First, most research in UPE is contemporary. Historical reflection is not entirely absent from UPE but the historical empirical roots of metabolic flows today are uncommonly examined in UPE. This is both interesting and unfortunate as metabolism as articulated by Marx is indeed highly historical, grounded in the theory of the metabolic rift separating city and countryside. For Marx, socio-ecological relations of soils, labour, cities, farms, and more shift and evolve over generations. Though metabolism is central for UPE, its historical depth is not nearly as fully present as it could be.

There is opportunity, then, for UPE to draw upon further historical analysis of urban metabolisms as well as the work of environmental historians. Jason Moore's work on metabolism in the world-ecology approach is helpful here insofar as he insists on capitalist

modes of accumulation as emergent within historical natures rather than as simply an appropriation of abstracted nature. Investigations into metabolism, then, should not rely on a dualistic ‘Society + Nature approach’ in which metabolism happens when society acts on nature. Instead, metabolism is an emergent property of a bundle of human/non-human relations in which capitalism (and other systems of relations) initiates new patterns and responds to existing patterns of flows, connections, and relations. One contribution from an historically-minded UPE could situate cities and their metabolic flows into these historical natures, to demonstrate the roles of cities, hinterlands, infrastructures, and municipal institutions in these shifting, emergent, and metabolic relations.

Lastly, while urban political ecology and other similarly positioned subfields with a focus on urban-hinterland environmental connections have accounted for non-human flows of water, food, pollution, fertiliser, and other commodities, human-animal relations understood through the lens of metabolism is still under-developed and under-conceptualised. This is particularly pressing because while the European eel is only one of many decimated species in our contemporary age of extinction, scholars are only beginning to articulate the position of cities in extinction crises. The eel, for instance, has a fossil record extending nearly 50 million years, but it is only in the last 50 of those years that it has faced such a crisis.

### **Three historical moments in the urban metabolism of the Dutch eel trade in London, 1731-1938**

A full history of the various metabolic flows that comprise the eel trade are is too lengthy for this paper and presentation, but I have selected three moments that exemplify the urban infrastructure making possible these historical metabolic flows. The first is the particular style of boat used to carry eel, known as *schuyts*. The second is the expanding network of fisheries and markets across the North Sea and Baltic Sea that served to supply London. Lastly, I provide some detail on intersecting financial and sewage metabolisms, both made possible by infrastructures that both sustained and ultimately decimated the eel trade. The Dutch eel trade in London started in the late 1600s, but I have selected 1731 this as the starting point in this discussion because it is the year that W. & A. Visser Zonen, the Dutch company that dominated the eel trade to London for much of its history, began their business. These empirical findings are based on ongoing archival research at the City of London archives and at the Fries Scheepvaart Museum in Sneek, the Netherlands.

#### *Dutch schuyts*

Eels are at once a hardy yet fragile fish. Their ability to live in both fresh and salt water—and to transition between these two without perishing—is an unusual characteristic

and is necessary for their lengthy migratory patterns. At the same time, eels are difficult to preserve once dead and virtually all eels when sold are either sold prepared (via smoking or jellying) or they are sold live. This fragility makes bringing them to market somewhat trickier than other fish.

The Dutch eel trade to London relied on *schuyts* to both take advantage of the fresh/saltwater capabilities and to keep eels alive for long periods post-catch. With the capability to carry 15-20 tons of eel at once, *schuyts* were double hulled, sitting low in the water and carrying a small crew. Between the two hulls of the ship were several box-like casks, fully enclosed except for a lid on top and a perforated copper plate in place of wood on the exterior hull. This perforation allowed the water around the ship to flow in and out of the containers as the ship sailed. The ship's eel cargo was loaded into the casks and the eels adjusted to the changing gradients of saltwater and freshwater along the way.

Infrastructures for food to sustain and reproduce urban populations have always been necessary and the Dutch eel boats were a central infrastructure for how Londoners were fed for centuries. Eels in these casks could be held at the moorings outside of Billingsgate for days, weeks, or however long it took to sell the ship's supply. The particularity of this infrastructure calls our attention to the liveliness of eels in their particular characteristics and capabilities and their difficulties of commodifying this specific fish beyond very local markets. Research into commodity chains and translations of value are relevant here, It also calls our attention to the demands of London's urban market for cheap food that can feed a growing industrial population.

#### *Expanding networks in the industrialisation of eel farming*

Archival records from London's Billingsgate Market suggest that the market in 1880 imported 1,267 tons of eel from the Dutch eel traders—just over 2.5 million pounds of eel in a single year. The late 1800s represent a high point in this volume of trade and it should be interpreted against a backdrop of the growth of industrial scale eel farming across Europe. While most eel fishing in Europe dating back to the Middle Ages was typically one person with a wicker trap, the mid to late 1800s saw a consolidation and expansion of eel fisheries in France, the Low Countries, the UK, Germany, and Denmark. A capitalisation of the eel market intensified in this era, with eel trading companies financing, developing, and consolidating eel fisheries, mostly to feed growing urban industrial populations.

W & A Visser & Zonen account for a varying but dominant portion of the Dutch eel trade with London throughout this period. At one point, the company traded nearly a million pounds of eel in London, mostly at Billingsgate Market. Demand in London for eel was soaring and the capacities for supplying urban demand for eel also grew. In short, the eel business was



booming. It was during this stretch, from at least the 1870s to 1914 that the Vissers began to augment their Dutch trade with eel from Denmark and occasionally from Germany. Most Danish eel came from Copenhagen and Esbjerg, with substantial volumes—up to 10-15% of the annual trade—coming from Denmark.

It is not yet clear exactly why the Vissers began to draw on these Danish sources for eel. From 1900, their overall volumes fell precipitously until World War I and then never recovered between the wars. More investigation is needed into the financial, ecological, and other relevant factors that either encouraged or pressured the business to look abroad for their eel sources. In any event, from the perspective of urban infrastructure, the intensification and expansion of the eel trade into new markets is a reflection of the planetary nature of urbanisation. The social reproduction of urban industrial workforces is vital for continued accumulation and cheap sources of fat and protein are especially important for this process.

#### *Intersecting metabolisms: finance and pollution*

When the last eel boat docked at the Dutch moorings in the Thames just outside of the old Billingsgate in 1938, it came at the end of a five-year legal dispute over the Dutch rights to the moorings. From the beginning of WWI, though, the Dutch eel trade was in decline and never truly recovered after WWI. Archival evidence suggests that it was two related, intersecting flows of finance and water pollution that brought down the Dutch eel trade.

W & A Visser & Zonen, like other Dutch traders, conducted business in multiple currencies. Buying eel in Dutch guilder and later Danish kroner and selling eel in pounds sterling meant that their business was highly susceptible to fluctuations in currency markets. Concerns over the shifts in the relative value of currencies is written through their accounting ledgers and more research is needed to unpack just to what degree the financing of the company depended on the currency markets. What is clear, however, is that the company's debts were rising after WWI and that the business simply was no longer profitable. In correspondence with the Port of London Authority, the Chair of Visser & Zonen notes that their profitability rests entirely on the relative strength of the guilder to the pound, so more research is necessary to see how currency markets in London, Amsterdam, and Copenhagen both enabled and disabled the flow of eel in and out of London as well as its purchase in Danish and Dutch fisheries.

If the flows of capital are less clear in their impact on the eel trade, what is much clearer is the role of the flow of human waste into the Thames. In the early 1800s, Visser & Zonen ship captains had noticed that their eels started dying near Erith and Woolwich and became sick during their journey up the Thames and in 1828—30 years prior to the infamous Great Stink—one of the Visser sons gave testimony in British Parliament about the deleterious effects of the

Thames' water on their eels. Later in the 1850s, Visser & Zonen ship captains gave similar testimony to Parliament about their eels. Other correspondence in the late 1920s and early 1930s indicates that water pollution was still a major concern and the Vissers cite it as a primary factor in ultimately selling the business in the late 30s.

## **Conclusions**

The empirics as presented here are scattered and I am still very early in the research both empirically and conceptually. In this portion of the research regarding the Dutch eel trade with London, the roots of the eel's current predicament are examined with the aim of not only providing some historical context to the current extreme exploitation of the eel, but also to establish the eel trade as a historically shifting urban nature. Thinking with the eel also is useful for considering metabolism from both an UPE and an environmental history perspective; that is, metabolism as driven by urbanisation and extended infrastructural connections as well as contingent and emergent in particular historical natures.

The empirics here represent just one small chapter in the long history of the eel trade, though for now it helps me pose questions at the intersection of urban political ecology, extended urbanisation, extinction studies, and environmental history. The research project as a whole examines the eel trade's urban, historical, and political geography to frame eels as lively capital, metabolised to feed growing urban and industrial populations; translated into various value forms across different urban, rural, and political contexts; and balanced on the precipice of extinction.

# Urbanization without an Inside: sand, scale, and territory in Southeast Asia

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Sand has a way of getting into things. Any day at the beach will attest to this. Holding a single grain in the palm of your hand is already a cliché; think of sand for more than a moment and you picture it slithering through the neck of an hourglass, already standing-in for something else. Sand gathers together seemingly of its own volition, moves and spreads according to sparsely-understood granular dynamics. It is shaped by air and water and shapes them in turn; the geology of the planet parsed by the elements into granular material that can flow like a fluid or compact into a solid. But beyond the allure of the landscapes it conditions and the well-established study of its geomorphological properties, sand is deeply embedded in contemporary modes of urbanization. The world is running out of sand, as numerous alarming news articles and journalistic exposés attest to, while environmental scientists are posing the question of a looming ‘tragedy of the sand commons’ (Torres *et al* 2017). In terms of quantity, aggregates, including sand, are only exceeded in consumption by water (Schandl *et al* 2016). Demarcations between sand, silt, and gravel are arbitrary, and diverging standards of measurement of each category of material problematise strict definitions of what constitutes ‘sand’ or ‘gravel’, as they are primarily differentiated in their industrial consumption. In this paper, I invoke sand as a more expansive term, following Welland (2010), to encompass rocks and minerals that express granular dynamics, which, when formed by rivers is well-suited for mixing into concrete, and when formed by seas is better used as infill in land reclamation. Despite its overwhelming presence in urbanization and the immense scale of its extraction, scant attention has been paid to sand in urban geography. This paper wishes to posit sand as a thread that connects contemporary urbanization to its socio-ecological outsides, and understand them as constitutive for capitalist urbanization as a historically contingent mode of production.

This paper will be primarily drawing on Singapore's land reclamation project and the extensive sand extraction across Southeast Asia that has spread to resource this territory, as well as their import sand for construction. In considering sand, Southeast Asia offers us a view of a resource intimate with the underside of the region's geopolitics. The main driver of sand extraction across the region over the past 30 years has been Singapore, often the world's number one importer of sand. This is in large part due to its land reclamation project, which has seen the country increase its land mass by 24%, from 581km<sup>2</sup> in 1959, to 724km<sup>2</sup> in 2016 (Singapore Land Authority 2019). From the 90s, to the 2000s, to the 2010s, Singapore's regime of imported sand has been plagued by bans, blockages, and corruption scandals (for which Singapore has always rejected responsibility for), and so its granular frontiers have expanded from Malaysia and Indonesia to encompass Cambodia, Vietnam, Myanmar, the Philippines, and China.

The mining itself is often done on a quasi-legal basis, without environmental impact assessment, or with the assessments fabricated. The toll on local ecosystems and livelihoods has been difficult to account for: fishermen notice catches declining, precipitating greater financial strain within communities. In Koh Kong, Cambodia, this entailed the displacement of a fifth of a village (Marschke 2012: 73). Along the Mekong river in Cambodia and Vietnam, houses have fallen into the water as the severity of the dredging has intensified riparian currents (Beiser and Sim 2018). Topalovic estimates that 75% of Singapore's reclaimed land has been built using foreign sand. This prosthetic territory has always acted as a recurrent, malleable 'puzzle piece' Singapore has relied on to realise its much-vaunted model of statecraft (Topalovic 2014), with many of the city-state's strategic industries and spectacular sites integral to its construction as a global city located on reclaimed land.

The story of a single grain, as it is offloaded from the bulk carrier into the sand stockpile of a concrete company, or sprayed on top of a dune that will be used to reclaim land, is a trajectory of urbanization from the outside in.

In noticing the curious absence and opacity of the construction site to urbanism, Elinoff *et al* present it as a 'point of entry into the fractal socio-material landscapes produced in the process of assembling urban spaces' (Elinoff *et al* 2017: 581). The construction site convenes frictional flows of labour, finance, and materials that coagulate into buildings and infrastructures, inviting us to think through the socio-material precarity and particularity of urban accumulation. How sand fits into the construction site, and urbanization in general, bears teasing out. Concrete, a construction material overwhelmingly attached to the political and cultural project of modernity, became ubiquitous partly through its lower-skilled labour requirements compared to other building materials (Forty 2013: 226), which stimulated its transposition to a variety of socioeconomic contexts. Sand is the substrate through which the mixture of cement and water acquires its coherence as concrete, modernity's problematically ubiquitous construction material. But sand simultaneously draws a line from the construction site to the extraction site. In its presence in piles and dunes waiting to be mixed into concrete, it forms an underside to the more measured materials of steel and cement, an unaccountable bulk that just arrived on a truck, off a boat, from *somewhere*.

Sand's (under)production as a resource that is cheap and available relies on the disarticulation of the externalities of its extraction. The massive extraction of sand from Koh Kong, a rural province in Cambodia that was Singapore's main source of sand from 2007-2017, caused a catastrophic and non-linear *unwriting* of ecologies and livelihoods; sand is a dynamic interlocutor between land and water, and so its extraction disrupts the overlapping ecological and geomorphological processes it binds together. However, the lack of visible scars which one expects with dry land-based extractive practices made the effects of sand extraction, as Arboleda and Banoub contend with the ocean, hard to apprehend 'without scientific or political mediating', leaving the 'staggering scale of destruction' masked by the surface of the water (Arboleda and Banoub 2016: 133). The sand is imported through a patchwork of subcontractors who purchase the sand off upstream sector partners, fragmenting the commodity chain, insulating the state from upstream externalities. For the

sand to flow into a commodity, the friction caused by its extraction from coastal and fluvial ecologies must be allayed. But this also connects urbanization to its constitutive outside(s).

The planetary urbanization thesis of Brenner and Schmid posits urbanization as a spatial modality expressed in concentrated and extended forms, and proposes the urban as a category that can accommodate manifold processes of socio-spatial organization and as the analytic lens through which they become intelligible (Brenner 2014; Brenner and Schmid 2015). But the provocatively centripetal account of 'urban theory without an outside' has received criticism for its denial of exteriority. As Jazeel contends this epistemological approach 'inflate(s) planetary urbanization's "analytical epicentre" in ways that would do epistemological and political violence to those views from outside' (Jazeel 2017 :411). While it is impingent urbanization's planetary implications that exceeds bounded scales, it is the consideration of the outside which remains vital for systematizing the implications of capitalist urbanization as a historically contingent mode of production; furthermore, exteriority is crucial for understanding capital's ecological regime (Moore 2015). The ways in which certain places and processes are disarticulated from planetary urbanization in order to consolidate the urban and give it its 'planetary' coherence must be attended to.

Sand is one such resource through which the disarticulations of planetary urbanization express themselves most keenly: sand is a frontier of urbanization whose concealment constitutes a condition for its cheap ubiquity. The ecologies and communities it is wantonly extracted from form a necessary outside, forming an underproduced and unstable frontier that shifts once the friction of extraction disrupts the cheap and plentiful flow. Sand becomes the forensic evidence of this interconnection, offering one way in which the planetary urbanization thesis could take seriously the socio-ecological 'outsides' through which it develops its spatial form, and perhaps offers the possibility of recognising, following Loftus, 'the ongoing production and reproduction of unevenness and difference' absent in the abstraction of the 'planetary' (Loftus 2018: 88). As Schmid has recently clarified, the planetary urbanization thesis is a historical, not universal one (Schmid 2018). Positing sand as an infrastructure of extended urbanization, we can align its shifting frontiers of extraction with the current spatial configuration of (capitalist) planetary urbanization, and identify some contingencies of its historical development and ecological regime through sand's porous commodity chain.

Through land reclamation, sand becomes a conspicuously geopolitical infrastructure of extended urbanization. This novel geopolitical function partly stems from its promiscuous state of matter. In its geomorphological context, sand is often a mediator between land and water, both a product and interlocutor of their interaction. That both terms make sense through sand, as a flow that can become a ground as solid as any other, is enough to situate it as problematical territory. In reclaimed land, we encounter a stark betrayal of sand's mediation between solid and fluid: sand's granular phase transitions are used to both demarcate and fill a volume of sea until there is no sea, and consolidated to become solid ground. Sand's granular dynamics are inverted by the logic of the capitalist state to enact the construction of territory as the projection of sovereignty.

The much-contested term of 'territory' is best conceptualised as a 'political technology', according to Elden, that focuses on the techniques through which a state volumetrically quantifies and qualifies its space by 'weighing, measuring, surveying, managing, controlling and ordering' it (Elden 2013: 49). Terrain is instrumental to understanding the political materiality of territory, if it is understood beyond the dry, terrestrial, and solid, as it combines 'the physical and human dimensions of geography, and the way they complicate political and legal questions (Elden 2017: 217). Sand, as commodified terrain, inflects the instrumental rationality of reclaimed territory with extra-governmental factors, such as supply chains, contracting arrangements, and labour relations, which unsettles the territory's eerie unfurling. The volumes of territory itself are produced through the displacement and disarticulation of the ecology and geomorphology of the extractive frontier, which becomes the condition of terrain's commodification and territory's political technology.

The state's calculative strategies in securing its volume must be understood alongside the concomitant practices of enclosure and resource extraction by non-state actors and the opaque commodity chain that facilitate it and examined in terms of how they link and fragment to ensure the production of territory appears as the seamless projection of the state. Unpicking the abstractions that inhere in reclaimed land is crucial for demystifying the political necessity behind this production of territory, and a defetishizing the instrumental rationality of the state in its projection of sovereignty. As anthropogenic geo-engineering at the scale of the nation-state, land reclamation seems to parody Steinberg, Peters, and



Elden's criticisms of territory as the flat, bounded, and dry container. Without considering the territory that has changed state at the other end of the commodity chain, reclaimed land is a spectacle without history, when in actuality it inverts the colonial formula: instead of invading, occupying, and subjugating another territory to extract its resources, extract its territory as a resource to expand your internal frontier. Koh Kong's territory, at least 80 million tonnes of it, is in the process of settling into the military base of Pulau Tekong or the next-generation Tuas Megaport, while a fifth of Koh Sralao still hasn't returned to the village, and various other parts of Koh Kong are being carved up for hotel resorts, airports, and seaports. Following the sand becomes a way of critically interrogating the territory of land reclamation by excavating its forensically intimate relation and indebtedness to its outside, however obscured by its commodity chain or the spectacle of reclaimed land itself.

By pulling on these threads of sand that bind urban forms, the abstraction of planetary urbanization becomes porous to its outsides. These outsides, externalities, exteriorities are no longer analytic obstructions but structured disarticulations and erasures through which urbanization reproduces itself.

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## 3C-1.2: Innovating Infrastructures

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This paper is taken from a recently completed book entitled *Urban Comics: Infrastructure & the Global City in Contemporary Graphic Narratives*. The book has three broad aims. First, it tries to open up new decolonising trajectories for future research into the widely recognised – though still under explored – relationship between comics and graphic narratives and cities and urban spaces. Second, it works to de-centre a lingering geographic preoccupation with comics from and about the global North by taking graphic narratives emerging from cities across the global South as its primary material. And finally, while influenced by commentaries on the formal architecture of comics, it uses the vocabulary of critical urban studies to read the form of graphic narratives instead as a kind of infrastructure. It is this latter idea that I want to introduce in this paper.

An image from Joe Sacco's *Palestine* allows for a succinct introduction to this core idea: a large, double-page splash that depicts the Jabalia refugee camp in Gaza as a space of infrastructural deterioration. Here roads are reduced to muddy slush, concrete blocks hold down corrugated iron roofs, and skips overflow with uncollected trash. Economically and geographically isolated by the Israeli Occupation, the camp's built environment is constructed from scavenged materials, precarious in its informality and visibly on the brink of infrastructural failure. Yet the image also depicts the vibrant urban life, enduring economic activity and social resilience of the camp's Palestinian inhabitants – sacks are loaded onto horse drawn carts, girls in hijab pick through the mud on their way to school, basic housing is built from recycled bricks and metal sheets. In this conflicting spatial contest, Sacco's page encapsulates the competing concerns that underpin what, throughout the book, I call 'urban comics'.

Reading comics through the lens of critical urban studies deepens our understanding of what I call the 'infrastructural' qualities of the graphic narrative form; indeed, urban comics can help us – urbanists and other social scientists included – to rethink, and perhaps even to rebuild, more socially and spatially just cities in the twenty-first century (see Soja, 2010). Contemporary graphic narratives from across the global South repeatedly depict various states of discriminatory infrastructural development, failure and violence. But as for Sacco, in both their formal innovations and radical content, they also frequently counter this violence by offering templates for cultural and political resistance, and conceiving alternative models of urban habitation and socialisation.

It may seem peculiar to begin an analysis of urban graphic narratives – the latter word denoting their sequential component – with this much-commented on image of Sacco's. This is a single panel, and while there are of course multiple narratives taking place on this page, the formal techniques specific to comics are absent. The image breaks away from the hectic rhythms of *Palestine*'s other pages, which tend to be criss-crossed with multiple grids, text boxes, speech bubbles and competing lines of sight. Yet if this page is devoid of comics' architecture, what also remains hidden from view are the political conditions of Gaza's economic deterioration, or 'Israel's architecture of occupation', as the architect Eyal Weizman has described it (2012a). This architecture is only revealed as readers turn overleaf to discover a 'white tower that rises from the Israeli Defence Forces base and watches unblinkingly over Jabalia refugee camp' (Sacco, 2001: 149). Now the perspective of the camp offered on the preceding splash page is revealed to belong, as Jeff Adams observes, to the 'unblinking' gaze of the Israeli watchtower, which subjects the residents of Jabalia camp to a regime of surveillance and spatial control (2008: 127-128).

There is an 'intimate' connection between Sacco's depiction of the infrastructures of the Israeli occupation, on the one hand, and the infrastructure – that which is more commonly described as the 'architecture' – of the comics form, on the other. The deteriorating infrastructure depicted in Sacco's image of the camp is a physical consequence of the blockade of Gaza, which stagnates the camp's economy, stalls its infrastructural development and reduces Palestinian housing and roads to a condition of informality. This infrastructural 'informality' is then registered in the formal discrepancy of Sacco's splash page, as the 'planning modalities' of both the Israeli Occupation and the comic's grids and panels disappear from view (see Roy, 2005: 147). It is for this reason that the image, though devoid of comics' architecture, begins the visual conflation of urban infrastructure – the various physical grids and systems that give shape to urban social life – with what I call, throughout the book, comics' 'infrastructural form'.

If the damaging effects of the Israeli Occupation are evidenced by the camp's material lack of

infrastructure, Sacco's portrait of the camp is similarly cut away from the comic's organising infrastructural system of grids and panels. Palestine's central splash page, like the refugee camp it depicts, is a 'space of exception', to use Giorgio Agamben's term. The camp is the spatial correlation of this exception, a 'zone of indistinction' that is both 'outside and inside' (Agamben, 1998: 181), excluded and included in the Palestinian case by the infrastructural regime of Israeli surveillance and spatial control. Comparably, Sacco's image of the camp is both inside and outside the gridded infrastructure of the comic's narrative, dislocating readers from the rhythm of its chronological progression. The lack of comic's infrastructure – its grids, gutters, and other architectural materials – resonates with the lack of infrastructure that the page depicts. If the exceptional space of the camp deprives Palestinian refugees of their political rights, this lack of rights shows up not only in Sacco's depiction of the camp's failing infrastructure, but also in the deteriorating infrastructure of the comic's page.

While the fragmented urban landscapes of Palestinian refugee camps are not conventional cities of the sort I discuss in the book's main chapters, I centre such spaces of exception because both theoretical and artistic responses to them can deepen our understanding of other twenty-first-century urban spaces. These artistic responses help us to realise the malleability and contingency of the physical infrastructures that shape urban life. Infrastructures are not static, banal, depoliticised objects, but rather highly charged material actors that allow some forms of social life to exist while also prohibiting others. Built from a formal infrastructure of their own, urban comics are able to unpick the violence that is solidified, like a sediment or residue, into the material infrastructure of the built environment.

The multi-dimensional or vertical capacities of comics are crucial here. In the West Bank and Gaza, infrastructures such as roads and highways, sewers and water pipes, walls and electricity cables, are all enmeshed in a kaleidoscope of competing social, political and economic forces, spatial tensions increasingly to be found in other cities around the world (Graham, 2011: xviii). While infrastructures, like national borders and boundaries, are conventionally mapped from above on a flat, horizontal cartographic plane, they also operate vertically in three-dimensional space, coded with the various political interests that have driven their construction – infrastructure is a kind of "political plastic" – social forces slowing into form' (Weizman, 2012b: 7). Two-dimensional maps and crude top-down plans struggle to capture this proliferating infrastructural complexity. In response, formally innovative modes of narration and representation have arisen to grapple with the evolving material shape of cities the world over. Cultural forms must increasingly stretch and warp to grasp the complex topographies of infrastructure developments, not to mention the inequality and segregation they often perpetuate. Thus Stephen Graham asks: 'is it possible for us to shift our perspectives sufficiently to see boundaries and relations between layers, and levels within volumes of geographic space, to be as important as those that horizontally demarcate traditional "flat" notions of bounded territory?' (13).

The answer I offer is yes, it is possible, and it is happening right now. A loosely interconnected movement of urban artists and collectives working in cities across the world are realising the potential of the comics form to engage with – and to challenge and resist – the infrastructural violence of twenty-first-century urbanism. While Sacco's comics journalism makes vertical shifts to expose the violence inflicted on Palestinian refugees, groups such as Forensic Architecture bring together architects, artists, journalists and lawyers to transform seemingly mundane built environments into evidence to be used against perpetrators of human rights abuses in courts of law. As the organisation's director, Eyal Weizman, writes of this investigative practice, forensic architecture 'regards the common elements of our built environment – buildings, details, cities, and landscapes, as well as their representations in media and as data – as entry points from which to interrogate contemporary processes and with which to make claims for the future' (2017: 9).

Like Forensic Architecture, contemporary graphic narratives concerned with urban space 'focus their attention on the materiality of the built environment and its media representations' to advance a renewed right to the city narrative (Weizman, 2017: 11). For example, Samir Harb, a Palestinian architect and comics artist based in Ramallah, worked with the collective Decolonising Architecture on a project that explored the Oslo Accords' demarcation of the West Bank into an archipelago of divided territories (see DAAR, 2010). Presented in an exhibition that combined the work of architects, artists

and urban theorists, Harb's comics explored the exceptional legal-architectural space of the lines that were drawn in pen onto geopolitical maps of the West Bank during the Accords. While these boundary lines organised the space on either side of them into administrative units, the ink of the drawn line itself signified a 'thickness' that, at the scale of 1:20,000, translated into more than 5 metres of real geographical territory. Diving into 'the thickness of this line', Harb's series of short comics, themselves feats of architectural engineering, document the everyday activities of Palestinians who build in these interstitial, lawless zones in order to resist the spatial constrictions of the occupation.

In this interrogation of the gap between the physical environment and its representation (the map and the landscape, the blueprint and the building), Harb points to the exceptional spaces in which a decolonial project might take root. Crucial to Harb's attempt to realise the political potential of fragmented infrastructure space are the formal components of the graphic form. After all, Harb's comics are themselves composed from the juxtaposition of segmented spaces and the strategic insertion of boundaries and gutters from which alternative narrative configurations emerge. The engineering of the comic's page thus allows Harb to decolonise and reorganise both the built environment and the various political and historical narratives that are solidified into it.

This practice is best demonstrated by Harb's comic about Ramallah's Al Muqata, a building layered with the region's political history: it was a British military compound until 1948; then a base and prison for the Jordan Legion until 1967, after which Israeli forces used it for similar purposes; and now, since the Oslo Accords, it functions as a presidential compound and prison for the Palestinian Authority. In his comic, Harb presents a satellite view of Al Muqata, before erasing with a 'white-out' pen the various architectural additions and corresponding narratives that the building has accumulated through time. The infrastructural components of the comic's gutters, which reverse the accumulating narratives of colonisation as the sequence progresses, function formally to decolonise what are now the Occupied Territories of the West Bank. By its concluding panel, the roads that link the Palestinian cities of Jerusalem, Nablus and Ramallah are reopened via a constructive destruction of the many checkpoints, walls and security zones that currently regulate their traffic (Weizman, 2012a: 6-7). Thus the form of graphic narrative does more than capture the political forces that solidify into the material infrastructure of contemporary urban spaces. In addition, the process of building the comic, or the engineering of a graphic narrative as a kind of infrastructure, produces a decolonising counter-narrative that might posit alternative ways of organising and inhabiting urban space.

## **On alternative infrastructures and new urban commons in Palestine**

**Lana Judeh**

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For millennia, the geography of Palestine has been a palimpsest of mega infrastructural projects that once fulfilled the dreams of imperial and colonial expansions from the Roman Aqueducts to the Ottoman Railways, the British Mandate electrification project, and the National Water Carrier of Israel. These systems have influenced the lives of the ordinary who lived around them, and have played a role in shaping their political, social and economic realities.

This paper looks into disruptions, gaps, dysfunctions, and inefficiencies in the existing infrastructural systems in Palestine as an opportunity to think of concepts that generate new forms of urban metabolism and urban commons. With the present large and complex infrastructural systems dominated by Israel and seen by Palestinians as violent tools of disposition, subjugation and dependency, the paper explores alternative systems and reconfigurations which can provide local solutions to economic, environmental, and social issues. Such alternatives can offer means of support and connectedness and create different urban realms and networks for the flow of materials, human labor, information, and energy. Infrastructure in this sense is seen as “extended material assemblages that generate effects and structure social relations through engineered” and non-engineered activities (Harvey, et al., 2017, p. 5).

From the food supply chain in the local urban centers, to the struggle of Bedouin villages for access to water and infrastructure, this paper looks critically not only at the colonial control over land, resources and flows, but also at the prevailing linear economic system of extraction, production, distribution, consumption, and disposal. In this entangled version of materials economy, the landscape of the West Bank, for example, has been turned into sites of vicious forms of extraction and disposal and securitized zones for deregulated production while the Palestinian built-environments have become major hubs for consumerism.

### **Infrastructural realms**

Infrastructures of closure are indeed made to prevent different forms of movement and mobility, but they are still made permeable for specific forms of flows. Permeability through the separation wall in Tulkarm city, for example, has allowed truckloads of hazardous waste from the illegal industrial zone of Nitzanei Shalom to the official landfill which is designated by the Palestinian Authority for Municipal Solid Waste disposal from Palestinian localities in the West

Bank<sup>1</sup>. This gated industrial zone which is surrounded by a second wall separating it from Tulkarm city, has a small gate which allows Palestinian labors into its factories. Tulkarm city's wastewater on the other hand, is transferred to nearby Israeli treatment plants where Israeli farms make use of the treated water. Israel charges the Palestinian National Authority for the treatment of wastewater (ARIJ, 2015).

The field of architectural and urban design can be a terrain for envisioning more recursive systems, circular modes of production, and new networks, flows and processes which can mediate different spatial and social configurations. Between 2017 and 2019, a group of undergraduate students of architecture at Birzeit University explored the design of hybridized urban spaces where small and medium scale technological systems are integrated with the everyday spaces as alternatives to traditional centralized infrastructures. Their proposals aimed at producing new resilient modes of urban living for Palestinian communities and new communitarian relationships among their users. Hybridity requires an unexpected mixture of interdepending functions and activities that would generate un-programmed situations and relationships, and would create unforeseen forms of coexistence (Mozas, et al., 2011). Such hybridity is expected to continuously produce and transform these socio-technical relationships.

Different sites of investigation culminated in a larger mapping of local realms with various forms of flows and metabolism. Under the theme *Infrastructures and Urban Commons*, three graduation projects looked into the geography of Palestine for areas of resource scarcity, waste abundance, networks of distribution and collection, and sites of extraction, storage, transit and disposal. These projects investigated questions of energy production and waste management and the integration of public uses for wide range of people with specific forms of infrastructures. This hybrid design approach addressed technological systems as key design drivers. It focused on new technologies' environmental impact and contribution to cities' and towns' social and cultural fabrics, and how they respond to larger urban environments. The projects also explored the spatial morphologies and typologies of local built environments, and understanding the forms of integration between the proposed infrastructures and their socio-economic organizations.

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<sup>1</sup> A report by al-Haq organization was released in 25 August 2016 entitled Environmental Rights Case Succeeds in Holding Israel Accountable for Illegal Hazardous Waste Dumping in Palestine . See online at <http://www.alhaq.org/publications/6392.html> (accessed 18 October 2019)



## New Water Ecologies

In her project *Gaza Metabolism: Water Infrastructures as Productive Commons*, Salwa Hussein looked into the water crisis in Gaza city, specifically in the Beach Refugee Camp known locally as "al-Shati" on the Mediterranean coast. She saw water scarcity as an opportunity to think of new hybrids which integrate water harvesting and treatment systems, with a program for the existing fishery community, another for the preservation of the ecology of an eroding beach, and finally with an entertainment area for the camp community. The history of the subterranean worlds in Gaza especially in the years of blockade after 2008 was also present in thinking of vertical and horizontal interconnectivity among the levels of the sky, the surface and the subterranean (Hussein, 2018).

Salwa studied medium-scale technologies of greywater recycling, fog and rain harvesting and contaminated sea water treatment and the possibility of integrating these technologies in an expanded structure which provides solutions to the beach erosion near the camp through breakwaters. Breakwaters would allow the creation of fish farms and would provide services for the camp fishermen community such as boat maintenance and fishnet mending. The project is desired to become a community beacon which would not only provide a good share of clean water for the camp but also to cultivate knowledge about the different technological and ecological processes regarding sea and water conservation. The fourth program was designed for children and families to learn, operate and explore the technological systems through rides and games mimicking the technical operations (Hussein, 2018).

Contextual integration and societal acceptance also meant the necessity for technologies which are simple to navigate, replicate, manipulate and repair by the skilled labor in Gaza. With Gaza's long history of cycles of destruction and reconstruction, there is a need for models that are easy to recover.



## From Bio-waste to Biofuel

In the second project, Ashraf Hamdan explored another form of informality which emerged in Jerusalem area after the building of the separation wall in 2004. “Post-Oslo Camps”<sup>2i</sup> is a term given to the new dense and unregulated urban sprawl within the municipal boundaries of Jerusalem city. These parts are separated from the city by the wall. In his project *Loosening the Knots: Infrastructures within the Informal*, Ashraf maps one of these emerging neighborhoods near ‘Anata town which lies four kilometers northeast of Jerusalem's Old City.

Ashraf studies the new morphology of informal neighborhoods which emerged rapidly in the past decade with new social and economic formations that lacked any official form of local governance. It is not extreme poverty which renders al-Salam Neighborhood; instead it is characterized by an inflated real estate market, high consumerism, scarce public services, inefficient infrastructures, absent collective organization, socio-cultural tensions and environmental challenges (Hamdan, 2019).

The project proposed “expanded system integration” where hybrid designs are tied into a larger infrastructural network (Kara, et al., 2017). The main question of the project was how infrastructural networks can have massive ordering effects across multiple scales” (Harvey, et al., 2017). The research traces residents’ modes of consumption, their household waste management and their informal networks of transportation.

More than 50% of Municipal Solid Waste components in Palestinian areas are organic materials (GIZ, 2014). The design proposed plug-in systems for organic waste disposal and collection through the household kitchen sinks in the apartment buildings of Al-Salam neighborhood. Ashraf mapped clusters of leftover spaces between residential buildings and turned them into sites of underground interim storage for organic waste. These interim storages are imagined as neighborhood commons where playgrounds and communal areas can emerge on their ground level. In the location of existing open waste dump, the project provides a medium-scale biofuel plant. The network also includes stations for biofuel distribution for public transit instead of the low-quality gasoline which causes air pollution in the area (Hamdan, 2019). Ashraf envisioned new social and spatial manifestations that would emerge within this contributory system which transforms organic waste into biofuel. He looked into the knots where materials are processed, stored and distributed, and he saw an alternative network formation within this informal built environment.

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<sup>2</sup> The term was introduced by Razi Nabulsi in his article *Post-Oslo Camps: Kafur Aqab as a Model* in Assafir Al-Arabi newspaper. See online at <http://assafirarabi.com/ar/5708/2016/12/29/%D9%85%D8%AE%D9%8A%D9%91%D9%85%D8%A7%D8%AA-%D9%85%D8%A7-%D8%A8%D8%B9%D8%AF-%D8%A3%D9%88%D8%B3%D9%84%D9%88-%D9%83%D9%81%D8%B1-%D8%B9%D9%82%D8%A8-%D9%86%D9%85%D9%88%D8%B0%D8%AC%D8%A7%D9%8B/> (accessed 18 October 2019)

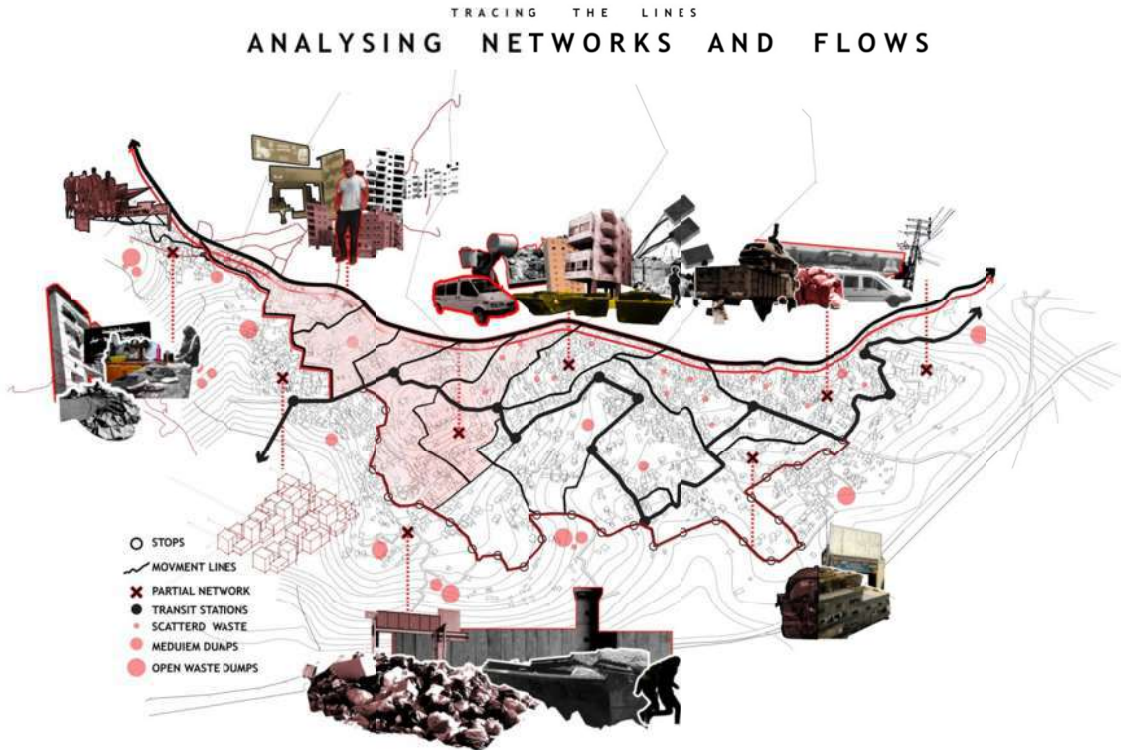


Figure 2. Map showing the existing networks of waste and transportation in 'Anata and al-Salam Neighborhood [Source: Hamdan, 2019]

### INFRASTRUCTURE AS A TOOL

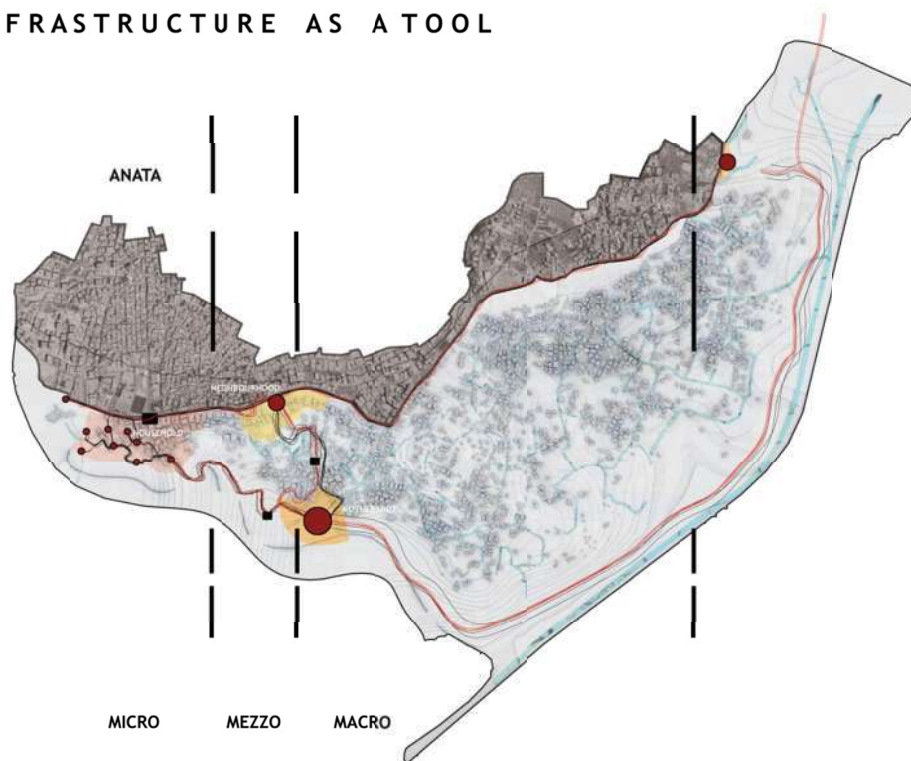


Figure 3. Map showing the chosen site and the hierarchy of scale for the new proposed bio-waste to biofuel network [Source: Hamdan, 2019]

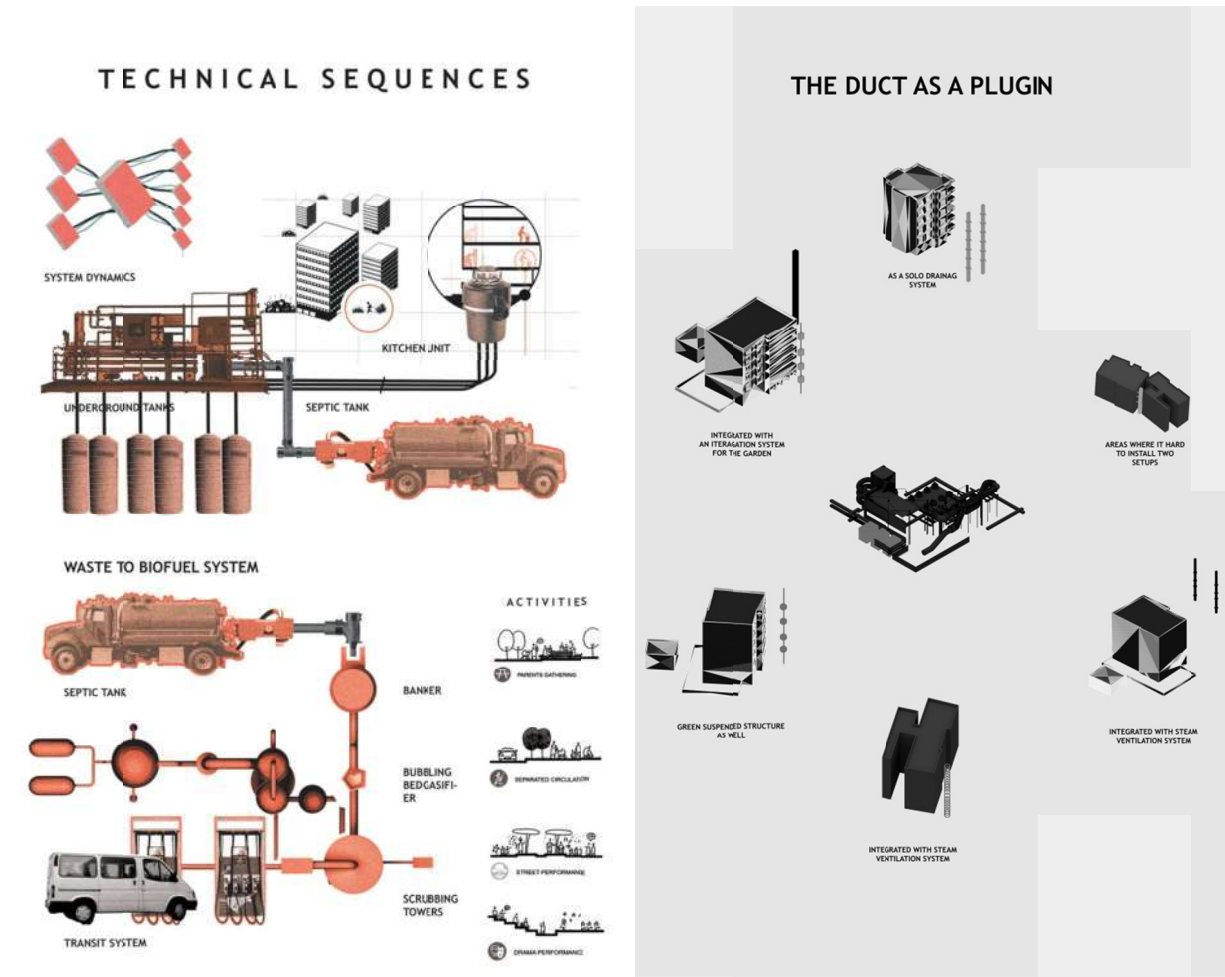


Figure 4. Diagrams from the project *Loosening the Knots: Infrastructures within the Informal* showing systems and spaces of the new proposed bio-waste to biofuel network [Source: Hamdan, 2019]

## Disfigured landscapes

The third project by Mustafa Makhtoub investigated the landscape disfigurement by stone quarries and car graveyards highly visible along the road between his village Al-Qubeiba and the city of Ramallah. He mapped clusters of car graveyards and quarries scattered throughout Area C around Palestinian villages of the West Bank. Thousands of end-of-life vehicles are channeled from Israel to the West Bank every year where an informal economy for local car part dealers is thriving. Car part dealers consider the car itself the best storage and cataloguing system for retrieving car parts, thus no dismantling operations are conducted until parts are needed. Only when most parts are retrieved, vehicles metal scrap is transferred to Israeli factories for recycling (Makhtoub, 2019).

The project looks critically not only into the shadow economy of Israeli end-to-life vehicles but also into the growing local automobile import and trading in the past decade. Car loans by local banks almost tripled from \$40 million in 2008 to \$112 million in 2011 (Abunimah, 2014). According to the Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics, there are now more than 250,000 registered vehicles in the West Bank which is comprised of 2,900,000 inhabitants. 31,000 vehicles were registered in 2018 only. The design scenario assumes that this boom will not continue, and a decline in new car imports in the local market will occur in the future. Second-hand cars will dominate the local market then.

Instead of private businesses owned by few traders, the project envisions a shared economy with labor-intensive programs; a network of hybrid zones which combine an automotive dismantlers, shredders for metal retrieval and recycling, and auto mechanic training centers. The program also includes warehouses for automobile spare parts with maximum storage capacity and minimum possible footprint, in addition to an Information Technology center which would be responsible for cataloguing systems that make it possible to accept, store, sort, and retrieve parts according to needs (Makhtoub, 2019).

The project assumed another scenario where car graveyards retreat to the nearby quarries which reached the end of its working life. Quarry cliffs would conceal parts of the industrial operations of this zone. The industrial form and aesthetics of the shredding machines inspired the design of a rollercoaster that would make use of the different topography of the site and would attract a different type of users.



Figure 5. An Aerial view of the village of Barta'a in the north of the West Bank where End – of-Life-Vehicle Yards are scattered on one of the main village roads [Source: Makhtoub, 2019]



Figure 6. An Aerial view of the main project site Rafat south of Ramallah where an End-of-Life-Vehicle Yard lies adjacent to a stone quarry [Source: Makhtoub, 2019]

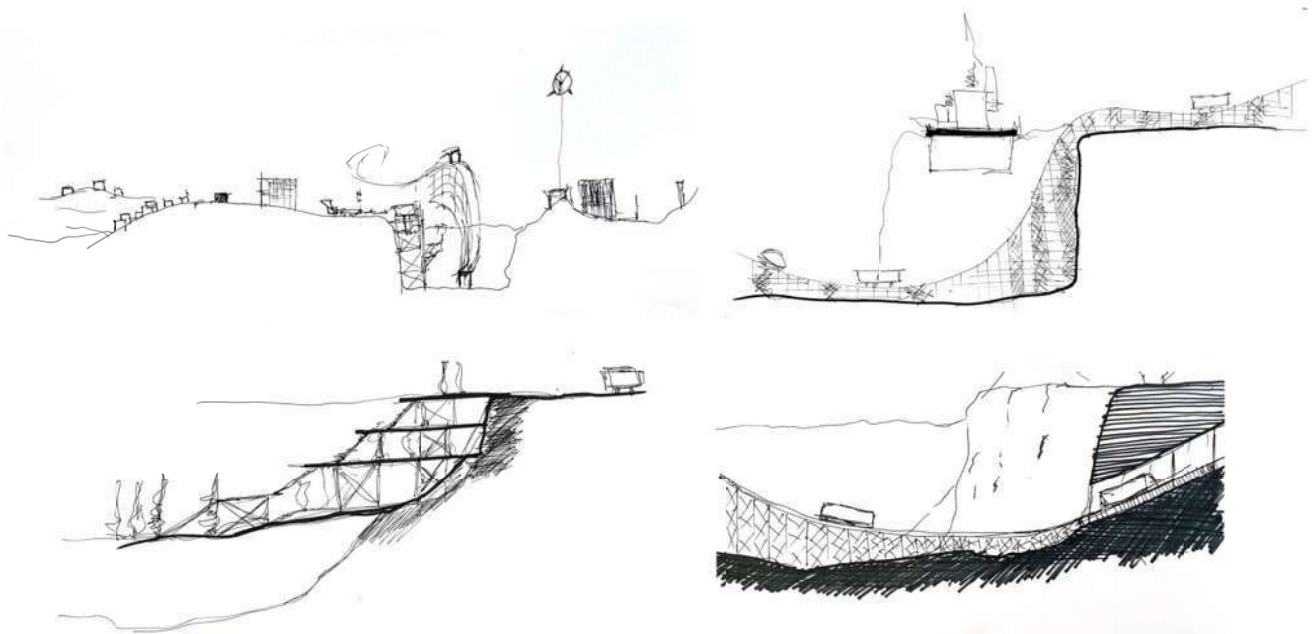


Figure 7. Conceptual sections [Source: Makhtoub, 2019]



## Hybridity and Urban commons

The described projects aimed to create forms of symbiosis in which different programs and users benefit from various processes and relationships. New infrastructural practices which are visible in the public realm would instigate new spatial, social and cultural practices, and would generate more heterogeneity in urban milieus. In the case of the described projects, hybridity also tries to bring answers to the question of obsolescence and how the social and public programs can expand to eventually take over the space when the used technological systems become obsolete.

Through small scale infrastructures which are easy to navigate with the provision of localized knowledge (MIT Center for Advanced Urbanism, 2016), “scarcity and crisis” can be turned into resilience and opportunity when citizens are conscious contributors to the governance and management of resources, energy and waste. It has been more evident that new forms of collectives and governance structures are essential for local communities to reshape the process of urbanization. The decolonization of space requires the creation of local contributory and interdependent practices away from commodification and the logic of market exchange and market valuations. All of the projects described above are envisioned under the colonial condition. They operate within promoted periods of “economic independence and prosperity”. or “relative calm”. However, they offer a different mode of thinking about concepts of autonomy, liberation and progress which necessarily require the re-localization of production and the reduction of material footprint.

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## **SOCIAL CAPITAL AND NORMALITY: LOW-INCOME URBAN DWELLERS' SOCIO-CULTURAL ATTITUDES TO ADOPTING DOMESTIC ENERGY INNOVATION IN CAPE TOWN AND MUMBAI**

*Anika Nasra Haque & Charlotte Lemanski<sup>1</sup>*

### **ABSTRACT**

While there is growing recognition that decision-making related to the uptake of energy innovation is not restricted to technological and financial constraints, there is little scholarship related to the socio-cultural constraints and norms that affect households' energy decisions. Using examples from empirical fieldwork in low-income settlements in Mumbai and Cape Town, this paper demonstrates the role of *normality* and *social capital* in affecting uptake of domestic solar energy innovations. Socio-technical innovations such as solar energy installations are clearly associated with daily lives, and therefore rely on the variable notion of *normality* and the social processes behind maintaining normality, which are highly reliant on social influence. This paper uses the conceptual lens of social capital to critically explore the ways in which social influence determines uptake in energy innovation within low-income urban communities in the global South. It argues that adopting a critical perspective in exploring the potential relationships between social capital, normality and technology uptake provides crucial insights for understanding energy transitions at the household and communal scale of low-income settlements. By highlighting the importance of social capital and the related concept of normality for the uptake of energy innovation this paper reveals new theoretical approaches to energy transitions in the global South that are grounded in the everyday lived experiences of low-income urban dwellers.

### **KEY CONCEPTS**

#### **Social Capital:**

Social capital is an ever expanding concept, but broadly it can be defined as a collective asset generated through shared norms and values, social relationships, mutual trust, social networks. It is a complex concept having multiple dimensions involving repertoire of cultural and social value systems. It not only relates the relationships among the members within a group, but it goes beyond that enabling to access resources outside community. These aspects are further elaborate by stressing on three dimensions of social capital: bonding, bridging and linking capital (Putnam, 2000; Woolcock, 2001). The social ties within the group can be defined as bonding capital, which is often formed within homogenous groups reinforcing the internal ties. Bridging capital is defined by more distant ties. Bridging capital helps in narrowing the gaps across communities and more civically engaged (Bhandari et al. 2009). Linking capital extends this network beyond the homogenous group to a heterogenous

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network to access other agencies for benefit of the group, for example, to leverage external resources.

### **Norms and normality:**

The concept of ‘normality’, is defined as the descriptive and prescriptive representations of being normal, which sets a reference point for behavioural decisions (Bear et al., 2017). Normality is considered as a beneficial reference point to rely for human behaviour regarding social functioning (Roese, 1997). Our social behaviour is largely shaped by social norms (Gavac et al., 2014). Such social norms can be defined as customary standards for behaviour, attitudes, beliefs shared among members of a group/community, or in the other words, social groups are formed based on shared norms. Social influences are exerted on our thoughts and behaviours, the way we respond to the social world. It includes human beings tendency to conform to other among the peers by voluntarily altering behaviour or attitudes: simply imitating what other within the group is doing.

### **CASE STUDY 01: MUMBAI, INDIA**

The case study, Natwar Parekh Colony, is a slum rehabilitation housing (SRH) in Mumbai accommodating 4800 households in 59 eight-storied buildings (figure 1). 60% of the surveyed households were found to be energy poor spending more than 10% of their household income for energy purposes. Apart from these, there are increased cost in many other aspects of daily lives after being rehabilitated, for example, electricity cost, transportation costs, maintenance bills, property tax etc. Hence increased household cost pushed them to find alternative ways to reduce the electricity cost.



**Figure 1: Natwar Parekh Colony**

Due to hybrid gentrification, middle and low-income households co-exist in the same building (many SRH recipients have sold their tenement). It was found that many households (even the lower income groups) own air conditioner (even though they might not use it frequently due to electricity cost) in an attempt to emulate the practices of their wealthier neighbours (figure 2), as part of a desire to move out of poverty.



Figure 2: Installed air conditioner in SRH

It was found in two of the surveyed buildings that the building co operative societies (voluntarily run by the households of the buildings) have taken initiatives to install solar panels on the roof top (figure 3) and the electricity generated from that is used to serve the communal services such as lighting in the common spaces, pumping water, running the lifts etc. Both the co operatives were female led, they mutually identified ways in which they can reduce the communal costs based on mutual trust and collective expectations. And they used their information channel which not only allowed them to access the networks outside their community and access NGOs, but also allowed them to further extend their network through the NGO and they accessed an international donor who were working on a pilot project for solar technology. The communities mutually decided to test the technology and installed solar panels in their buildings. After running it for few months, they could see the clear benefits as the common electricity bills were coming as net zero (before installing the solar panel, they used pay a monthly bill of INR 400 to cover the common electricity bills) and all the communal services could run with the electricity generated through the roof top solar panels. After few months of test run, they took over the system including the maintenance.



Figure 3: Solar panels installed in the rooftop of the buildings

This was further replicated in three more buildings within the SRH where the co-operative societies from the first two buildings (who installed solar technology) shared their experiences with the other communities and informed about the benefits. The bridging capital across the wider community allowed them to replicate the technology. It is worth to note that, the technology was replicated in those buildings where significant number of households were rehabilitated from the same community as the earlier two buildings. Though the communities were rehabilitated more than a decade ago, the distant tie allowed them to share information, leverage the outside resources that were accessible to the other communities by accessing the NGO and the donor and replicating the same technology. It clearly shows the bridging capital existing between the communities (i.e. social bond, trust, interaction) allowed them to do so. Hence, social capital was also fundamental for the uptake of the solar technology in different communities within the SRH.

## CASE STUDY 02: CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

Joe Slovo (Cape Town) is one of the oldest informal settlements in South Africa. It is estimated that the Joe Slovo informal settlement is home to around 8000 residents, living in 2800 informal structures. The Joe Slovo SWH implementation project was one of the many initiatives undertaken by the South African National Department of Human Settlements as part of a national flagship housing project. The project aimed to showcase new approaches to sustainable housing delivery. Inclusion of energy efficient technologies and Solar Water Heating (SWH) systems was part of this programme (figure 4). The installation of the SWHs in the newly built housing aimed to improve the quality of life (health and well-being) and livelihood opportunities of the residents (poverty alleviation) and improve energy efficiency (thereby offering money saving to households, improving carbon footprints, and removing pressure from the national electricity grid).



Figure 4: Roof top solar water heater in Joe Slovo

While the local community of Joe Slovo were to be the recipients of the project, they were not included in the project design and informed of the project only after the completion of the design phase (at the implementation phase). Formal information sessions were held to inform the community of how the project was to be implemented however no opportunity for input was provided for the community. This caused problems early on. A voluntary agreement was

put in place between the community and the project implementor stating that at least 75% of the households would participate in this program. However only 50% of the households participated in the program – it appears largely due to the dissatisfaction of the local community with the project design. There was significant resistance to this project by the community as a whole and a number of protests and disputes took place. While the conflict between the project and the community of Joe Slovo has a large underlying story, the lack of community engagement and consultations in the project design was responsible for the lack of identification of these issues before the implementation started. This barrier eventually led to a delay in the project and as a result not all the planned SWHs were delivered. By 2014 only 1,572 of the anticipated 2,886 SWH had been installed largely due to community protests. Another barrier was the failure of the lack of general community engagement. As people were not properly aware of how the systems operate this led to dissatisfaction. The relationship between the project implementers and the community was strained from the beginning as the community was excluded at the design phase which also added to the lower rate of acceptance by the community of the SWHs. The project's objectives and procedures were only communicated to the community during the implementation stage. During this stage communication about the project took a top down approach and took place through fixed and formal information sources and methods created with little influence from the community itself.

## DISCUSSION

The two case studies discussed here demonstrate evidences for failure and success of technology acceptance and energy uptake: how top-down approaches were resisted by communities for not considering the social implications of energy behaviour, and the other case shows how bottom-up initiative derived from the common energy needs was successfully executed and also adopted by other communities. The Mumbai case study shows how the community used their bonding capital to get together to address their common needs, and how they utilized their linking capital to access outside sources (NGO and donors in this case) to serve their needs. Also it represents how bridging capital across communities helped to spread their energy innovation practice to other communities, and how it influenced higher and faster energy uptake within other neighbouring communities. The virtuous circles of relationships produced through their communal bonding further reinforced their social capital and not only contributed to meet their communal needs but also helped to sustain the new technology.

Both the case studies show a normative ideal towards energy behaviour due to the desire to be visibly distinct from the poor. The Mumbai case study demonstrates how normality influences households to conform to the behaviour of their 'wealthier' neighbour by buying different appliances or adopting different energy behaviour, even if it does not necessarily conform to their individual energy demands. For example, despite they might not use air conditioner frequently, many of the households purchased (or aspire to purchase) air conditioner even for being visibly distinct from 'poor'. Another social influence to own (or

aspiration to own) more appliances was the feeling of climbing up in the social ladder as they were rehabilitated to formalized housing (Sunikka-Blank et al., 2019). All these shows the influence of normality, responding to social norms of conformity and thereby altered energy behaviour in SRH. The inclination towards conforming to this normative ideal was also vivid in Cape Town. Solar technology is perceived there to be the alternate energy option for poor, where the application is limited in wealthier communities. Hence, the resistance to accept the technology derived largely from being deprived of their aspiration to be able to behave similar to the wealthier group, also they declined to embrace energy technology that is explicitly designed for the poor. Again, in this case as well, the aspiration-for-normality is heavily framed by a normative desire to function within the assumed practices of those who demonstrate greater wealth. Note that, it only represents how the low-income urban settlers perceived and reacted to the technology, the practices of the 'wealthier' classes are not always particularly sustainable and not suggested to be emulated as examples of 'modernity' or 'poverty alleviation'.

It depicts how households' energy behaviour is largely shaped by their situated social context (Hole, 2014). Here we can find a close relationship between normality, social capital and technology adoption. Social capital reinforces normality (e.g. the tendency to conforming to peers), which in turn influences adoption of certain energy behaviours or technologies. Normality generates largely from the needs of affiliation to belong to a community, also for acceptance from the community (Gavac et al. 2014 and McDonald et al. 2015). Individual household is more likely to engage in behaviour adopted by their peers in the community. The stronger the social capital, the more the tendency of conformation to social norms. This tendency is very much demonstrated by the behaviour of households in Mumbai case, where low income households' inclination to respond to certain energy technology was derived from conforming to their neighbours. Even if it might undermine their underlying circumstances, financial condition. Such behaviour can also be explained by the need for accuracy that triggers to conform to follow others within the community to determine the right way to act (Kate et al, 2010). It is largely determined by the information of what others (majority) in the community are doing, which kind of gives them a sense of assurance of behaving correctly (Contractor et al. 2014). Conformity has imperative implications for this behaviour by trigerring technology adoption when peers are engaged with desired behaviour (Shove, 2003a, 2003b). Therefore leveraging this social influence of conformity might act as an effective way to influence energy behaviours.

Also reciprocity in response to their social affiliation to certain group catalyses social influence on households energy behaviour (Frederiks et al. 2014). For example, in case of Cape Town, it is not confirmed that none of the households could see the benefit of using solar technology, but one of the reasons for rejection might possibly derived from their reciprocity to their social belongingness to their community where majority was in declination to accept the technology. Individuals are driven to be consistent with those with whom they have an existing relationship (i.e. their community) (Roese, 1997). Hence, in the Cape Town case study the community largely showed resistance to accepting the new technology partly represents the reciprocity to the community. The stronger the social capital



is, the more social pressure of accountability is exerted (Frederiks et al. 2014). Not to overlook the temporal aspect attached to the technology acceptance in the south African case, the long history of racial segregation has further contributed to the longstanding disbelief for government partially influencing the resistance to government initiated projects with limited or no consultation to the target population. Another problem has been the poor standard and low quality of the SWHs provided as part of cost-cutting measures, and also those do not specifically cater to the needs of the poor (i.e. insufficient water capacity, and hot water at the wrong times of day). A number have had to be removed in other SWH projects in Cape Town as they have stopped functioning and begun leaking (adding to the water costs of the home and causing structural damage). These further added to the rejection. Social acceptance is a vital factor for adoption of certain practices or energy uptake. Hence, lack of consideration for social capital and the social influence on energy behaviour can act as a barrier to implementation of any initiatives undertaken by macro level actors (Hole, 2014).

The dominant approaches of energy policy making largely focuses on the supply and consumption side, but not considering or engaging with the underlying norms influencing everyday energy behaviours which largely generates these consumptions (Parkhill et al., 2013). This is applicable for debates around energy futures as well (Shove et al. 2014). The common approach is to take current energy practices (particularly at micro level) for granted and non negotiable, and focus more on how the demands can be met. As a result, it largely fails to acknowledge the complex social influence on daily life and energy practices. The tendency here is to identifying ways to meet the energy demand with sustainable and efficient resources without questioning or exploring the social norms that defines energy usages at micro level. Hence it reproduces the 'status quo' by sustaining and legitimizing' the existing social practices (which as we mentioned earlier is considered as the unquestionable part of the system and non negotiable) rather trying to influence it to respond to long term impact of climate change (Shove et al, 2014, p. 53). It largely represents the flawed process of energy policy making. Note that, we are not questioning technological innovation and approaches for energy efficiency, but pointing out the need to engage with the social aspects of energy practices at micro level. So, a key intervention for energy policy making should focus on exploring the everyday social norms and practices around energy usage and demands.

## **CONCLUSIVE REMARKS**

The discussion in this paper is rather indicative than conclusive. One of the reason is that 'social capital' as a concept is nebulous and complex, there are diverse variables attached to this concept, only addressing some aspects of it (e.g. reciprocity, conformation, affiliation) may not represent the concept fully. But the focus here is on understanding the underlying implications of social norms and social capital behind everyday energy practices and need of addressing the social construction of energy behaviour/practice for technology adoption and energy uptake. To attain long term sustainability in the era of climate change, it requires to engage more with the dynamics social practices on which energy demands and behaviours depend.

## Osmotic city: negotiating Chennai's salt water geographies through engineering practice

*Niranjana Ramesh*

### Introduction

In the city of Chennai in south India, there's a cognitive geography of water quality that's often expressed in prosaic, everyday conversations. For instance, a friend might advise you in finding a place to stay, "Do not look in that neighbourhood, the water there is salty all the time!" Another might suggest, "You should come to our area, we get water sweet as nectar, even without deep borewell." Still others complain that the water in their area is so hard it ruins their clothes and appliances, "You can feel the water sticking to your hand long after it's washed! Investing in a good purifier is a must." Discussions about local landlords and skilled plumbers might ensue. Visiting friends or family in their homes sometimes involves a ritual of water tasting and critique or appreciation of its qualities.

Apart from articulating an implicit understanding of multiple waters and the technologies or actors involved in accessing them, these throwaway statements also conveyed the extent to which life in the city was entwined with its subterranean water systems ie. not sewers and supply mains as much as groundwater directly pumped up. This pop geography, however, is fast changing thanks to reverse osmosis (RO) technology taking the city by storm, in the form of desalination plants and domestic purification units, rendering all water clean, safe and tasteless.

In the social study of water, multiplicity has largely been examined as variation in its conceptualisation brought about by acculturation (Hamlin 2000, Strang 2004), the ontological politics of its governance (Alatout 2010, Bakker 2005) or because of its "varied enactments in different sociotechnical assemblages" (Barnes & Alatout 2012, cf. De Laet & Mol 2000, Ranganathan 2015). But, materially speaking, as Christopher Hamlin (2000) points out, the identification of water's 'pathogenic potential' in 19<sup>th</sup> century London was considered such a landmark that the rich variety of waters and the knowledge about them that prevailed before were all but replaced by the categories of safe and unsafe or clean and unclean. On this side of history, while water multiples continue to exist, urban research has predominantly taken the centralisation of water supply in early 20<sup>th</sup> century industrial cities into circulatory flows as the starting point of urban water infrastructures. Pioneering work in urban political

ecology, built on the Marxist idea of metabolism, has analysed the logic of capitalist urbanisation and technocratic power driving such circulatory flows (Gandy 2004, Swyngedouw 2009). However, even as a critique of the modernist ideal of circulatory and invisible infrastructural flows emerged in these studies, infrastructures in the global south have almost axiomatically been characterised as fragmented, uneven or incomplete, a condition ascribed to the racialised and corrupt trajectory of their colonial to postcolonial development (Gandy 2008, McFarlane 2008).

The focus on circulatory flows thus offers limited insight into how a large number of cities in the global south, in fact, work on an everyday basis, employing a myriad of socio-material technologies, not simply to cope but to make and maintain the infrastructures of postcolonial urbanism. To frame it as a question, how do we take seriously the socio-technics by which cities around the world bring together apparently fragmented infrastructures in a (re)productive network? As Furlong & Kooy (2017) argue, centring the experience of southern cities in building theory about water's urbanisation would mean paying attention to ecological connections and unexpected forms of fragmentation embedded within what constitutes infrastructure in the 'majority' world.

### **Seeping chemical geography**

In Chennai as in several other Indian cities highly reliant on deteriorating groundwater reserves (Srinivasan 2008), RO today appears set to take on a role akin to bacteriology in re-categorising material and cognitive multiple waters into a binary of potable and non-potable water. But, rather than being simply a 'fix' (Swyngedouw 2013) or an artefact of financialisation (Loftus & March 2016), it also arrives in continuity to a long line of household technologies negotiating the chemistry between water, salt and land – backyard shallow and bore wells, motorised pumps, mechanical filters, tap fittings to filter salt particles, overhead tanks, sensors to control pumps, and the list goes on. It participates in the existing ecology of 'seeps' and 'fills' that characterise household water access.

Whether it is timed water supply from the centralised network or groundwater pumped up from backyards, most households in the city fill up water – in pots, buckets, overhead or underground tanks for daily use. The city at large is dependent on water seeping through the ground during monsoons to recharge its aquifers. Filling and seeping, rather than flow, thus

constitute the dominant imagination of water systems in the city. The uniqueness of reverse osmosis membranes, used in household purifiers as well as large seawater or brackish water desalination plants, in this socio-ecological setup is that they intervene in the electrochemical composition of water in order to filter out all its mineral salts, and not just suspended particles as traditional filters do.

When fresh water mixes and assimilates into saline water through a semi-permeable membrane, it is osmosis (see figure 1). Water passes through the membrane into the saline side because of osmotic pressure, caused by the difference in the concentration between the two liquids. In reverse osmosis (RO), external energy is applied to overcome this pressure, enabling a reversal of flow through the membrane from the saline to the freshwater side, leaving the minerals behind. Apart from the social implications carried by the role of pressure in water engineering (Anand 2011), RO also drew attention to the chemical composition of urban environments and the discrete, incremental, negotiated and highly mediated interactions by which they became urban material flows. Calling this a chemical geography, Andrew Barry argues, “the chemical compositions of atmospheres, landscapes and bodies have become critical sites for politics, government, and everyday experience.” This is of course evident in issues of environmental pollution and monitoring that geographers are engaged in studying.

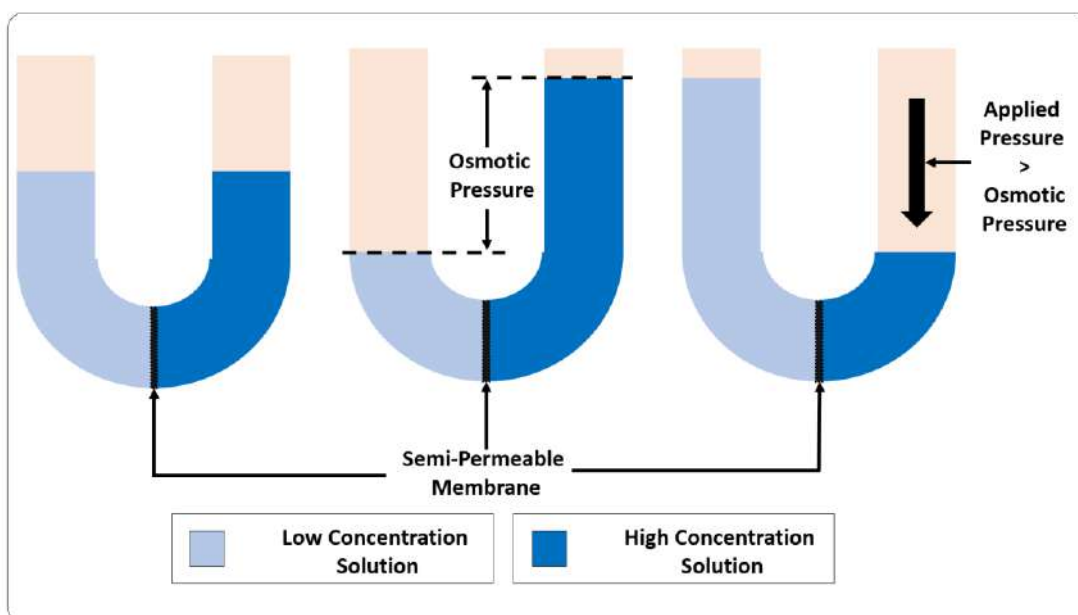


Figure 1

Take for instance the wide range of ways in which urban residents dealt with salinity in their water, before RO became ubiquitous. A young upper class professional claimed he did not prefer to use borewell water and would rather buy water if it came to it because he did not trust water that was saline. “It means it probably has some contamination from effluents, right?” A family of fishers in a settlement of urban poor said they were hesitant to use borewell water when it turned saline during summer because it ruined the bathrooms fittings they had invested considerably in. “See my shirt – it has to be sparkling white always,” one of the men in the family said. “Washing just wouldn’t work the same with saline water. Yet, we cannot afford to dress shabby, this is how we gain and retain respect in the city.” Still another upper class homeowners family had invested in an RO unit well ahead of its time. “It’s simply brilliant,” one of the women in the family exclaimed. “Maybe this will mean I have to deal less with the plumbers who we used to be at the constantly at the mercy of before – repairing our rusting and blocked pipes all the time.”

### **Engineering negotiation**

RO is popularly understood through the U-shaped illustration above (figure 1). The high levels of energy and pressure associated with RO means we imagine a volume of water gushing through a membrane leaving behind impurities as in a sieve. This misunderstanding, however, is quickly clarified in Chennai, whether by engineers or by household users. It was quite important to understand that a desalination plant is comprised of a large number of membranes, possibly of varying vintage, an engineer explained, after ensuring I watched a half hour video tutorial on the subject. This is something critics point out as a maintenance problem with desalination. The image that should come to mind is a roll of fabric, which are the membranes layered around one another in the form of a pipe filtering the highly pressurised saline water sent through them (see figure 2). Reverse osmosis occurs at a molecular level because of the electrochemical action of ions in the water. The membrane is permeable to these ions and not to the mineral ions. It takes repetitive iterations of the filtration process to achieve a steady stream of potable water, constantly fighting the system’s tendency to move to equilibrium. If there wasn’t attention given to the system, it would spiral into equilibrium, in a manner of speaking. So for an engineer, to achieve flow, equilibrium needed to be resisted.



Figure 2

In 2010 and 2013 respectively, Chennai Metrowater, the quasi-public utility that's in charge of the fraction of centralised water supply – centralised is a cautious term here because Metrowater also pumps up groundwater from what it calls its well fields and supplies it around the city using water lorries apart from feeding into its piped water system – opened two seawater desalination plants. Until then, the total volume of water supplied by them was estimated to be, at its seasonal peak, around 500 mld, from surface water sources and supplemented by the above mentioned groundwater well fields. With each of the desalination plants having a capacity to supply 100 MLD and two larger ones planned, Metrowater is looking towards doubling its supply volume.

This coincided with the official expansion of the city's municipal corporation in 2011, thus expanding Metrowater's spatial obligations. At the same time, various tiers of engineers and technological practitioners are engaged in devising household and building level water supply apparatus, often using borewells and reverse osmosis units in combination for abstraction, purification and recycling. As several engineers working as building contractors or in the business of filtration said, "For the first time, there's some demand for chemical engineers (evidently considered to be at a lower tier than civil or mechanical engineers)! There's opportunities to be trained abroad (usually Singapore or Dubai) in membrane technologies and make a real impact on this city's infrastructures."

Civil engineers and plumbers in the city had always been active on this front. As a building contractor explained, "The first step with any development in the city is drilling a borewell and setting up an RO purification unit. You can't use saline water for construction, you see." These units are then repurposed to supply water to residents or offices in the development. "If we set up two units, one of them will be repurposed for recycling." Ultimately, the two networks – the groundwater apparatus and the Metrowater pipes - collide within homes and private buildings. Yet, far from being fragments, they come together to incrementally and iteratively constitute water infrastructure.

The tension between the limited circulatory system that the city aims to expand and household groundwater systems is, in fact, negotiated through technological practice. As a Metrowater engineer explained, "When housing development or any construction happens, its residents or local technicians already become familiar with the hydrology of the area and ways to make use of it." He was one of the utility's 15 area engineers, assigned to be in charge of everyday distribution and management in one of its supply areas. This existing knowledge then becomes useful for the engineer to shape Metrowater's own systems towards specific local needs and limitations. The promise of centralised infrastructures means residents and technicians are largely happy to collaborate with Metrowater in this endeavour. In other words, both systems are pervious enough to allow seepage of expertise and material connections within each other, in the process making a claim towards inhabiting the city.

## **Conclusion**

The apparent ruthlessness of RO, in Chennai, belies continuities in how water has been and is accessed in the city through negotiation with salt, land and other socio-materialities. This paper has argued that paying attention to 'osmosis' as a socio-material process offers a useful framework through which to understand and critically engage with apparently fragmented infrastructural formations in the global south. In this case, reverse osmosis, a seemingly precise techno-fix, is employed to explore how water infrastructures as well as technological expertise are socially constituted through a gradual, accumulated and acculturated process of knowledge and material flow that can be likened to water seeping through a semi-permeable membrane. It also means to take seriously the operationalisation of that exchange as a claim towards making and inhabiting the city.

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## 3C-1.3: Smart Cities

**Chair:** Prof. Ayona Datta, Professor of Human Geography, UCL

Manuscript not available

**The making of Singapore in Amaravati: the geographies of policy mobility, spatial politics, and ground realities of developing the smart capital**

Dr Diganta Das, Assistant Professor, Humanities & Social Studies Education Department, Nanyang Technological University, Singapore

Manuscript not available

**When small goes smart: postcolonial urban futures in the Global South**

Dr Srilata Sircar, Research Fellow, Department of Geography, UCL (paper co-authored with Prof. Ayona Datta and the ESRC-ICSSR team)

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**Remaking Anaklia: trial, error and reproduction in the making of a logistical frontier**

Evelina Gambino, PhD candidate, Department of Geography, UCL (Paper co-authored with Tekla Aslanishvili)

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**Understanding participatory platforms through urban assemblages**

Yu-Shan Tseng, PhD candidate, Durham University

## Remaking Anaklia: trial, error and reproduction in the making of a logistical frontier. Evelina Gambino and Tekla Aslanishvili

### Intro

A short drive south from the coastal village of Anaklia in West Georgia, crossing a vast expanse of rough terrain once populated by the small holdings of local inhabitants, the bumpy road converges onto a three-hundred-meter-long boulevard. This avenue, adorned by palms on both sides, emerges behind a mountain of giant concrete tetrapods only to end abruptly, shortly after, in the scrubs and swamps which compose most of Anaklia's current topography. Behind the palms, on the right-hand side of the street, a futuristic structure emerges: massive glass volumes, carried by steel columns, are floating in space, as if they were trying to escape each other and the ground. The structure, which from a distance appears shiny and new, shows on closer inspection the signs of wear and corrosion resulting from its exposure to the harsh weather of the Georgian Black Sea coast: the frequent rains have rusted its edges, and its metal coating has started to peel off due to the salty air and winds. Though this strange landscape is mostly desolate, too far from the center of the village to be frequently crossed by people on their daily errands, nevertheless it has developed a life of its own, the traces of which are scattered across its architectural elements. The building is monitored twenty-four hours a day by security personnel, but at night local boys use the unfinished boulevard as a race track, and the words 'start' and 'finish' are chalked in English on the tarmac; and despite being regularly erased by street sweepers, they always reappear in time for the next race.

### Anaklia

The village of Anaklia lies on Georgia's northwestern edge, only a few kilometers from Abkhazia, a *de facto* state and site of multiple conflicts since the collapse of the Soviet Union. Currently reachable only by car or infrequent minibuses, the settlement is set to become a transit node for goods and people. The latest project includes a deep sea port, a free economic zone and a smart city to be named Anaklia City and commonly referred to as 'the city of the future'. All of these developments are aimed at positioning Georgia as a key juncture on the middle corridor of the Belt and Road Initiative. The Chinese-led BRI is set to connect China to the European market through the development of an unprecedented web of logistics infrastructure, which in turn will be connected via a number of competing corridors.

Anaklia City and free economic zone is, thus, set to be a pioneering space for Georgia, aiming to lead the way for future developments of similar kind in the country. Anaklia's makeover is currently operated by a private consortium named Anaklia Development Consortium (ADC). Unlike the port, that is currently in concession to the company for 50 years, before returning to the state, the city and Free Economic Zone are a freehold, comprising over four thousand hectares of land under the control of the consortium. The plan, as Ketii Bochorishvili, the City's CEO has declared to me, 'is to build a completely private city! If they succeed – she adds – it would be like a dream come through!'

Talking about the future city, Keti becomes animated: ‘this will not be another cement city! – she states – It will be a place where all of us are going to want to live and it will include smart solutions, eco-friendly technology’. Most importantly, she continues, it will be a space of experimentation!

Keti’s words resonate with an emerging planning paradigm described by media historian Orit Halpern as “test-bed urbanism” (Halpern et al 2014). Within this type of urban planning the development of a grounded vision is replaced by a process of repeated simulations and speculation. “The test-bed [...] transforms time, change and events into uncertainties and trials”(ibid 290). It manufactures an endless cycle in which every limit, becomes an engineering challenge, a new frontier to develop towards an ever extendable horizon (ibid: 291) as such, it knows no limits and no failures.

What happens to the errors, the clashes, the boundaries and lifeworlds that stand in the way of infinite trials?

What I will show in this short presentation is the scars, the ruins and awkward adjustments that are hidden underneath the layers of concrete and the new renderings that are reshaping Anaklia. Rather than disappearing into an endless learning curve, the trials and errors necessary to build a seamless space have left traces that provide the traumatic and uncertain foundations on which current developments are taking shape.

### Lazika

The semi abandoned landscape described at the beginning of this talk has never performed its intended function. It constitutes what’s left of an early attempt to position Anaklia at the center of global logistical routes. The central building, now in ruins, was designed by the Georgian firm Architects of Invention in 2011. Equipped with public service and wedding halls, as well as office spaces on the top floor, this “municipality building” was meant to be the first piece of former Georgian president’s Mikhail Saakashvili’s ambitious project to turn the territory into a Special Economic Zone (SEZ), named after the ancient reign of Lazika. In 2012 another construction, the Lazika Pier Sculpture designed by German architect Jurgen Meyer, was erected not far from the Municipality Building. Although minimal, the sculpture presents all the characteristics of so-called blob-architecture. Algorithms of advanced design software have perfectly curved its white metallic body, creating a structure which is at once ephemeral and imposing.

Saakashvili, who ruled Georgia for a decade, came to power following the Rose Revolution in 2003 and was eventually ousted after multiple scandals detailing his abuses of power. His administration is responsible for implementing rapid and pervasive market deregulation and privatization processes, which still shape Georgia’s economic landscape. During the last years of Saakashvili’s government, a number of smooth buildings by Meyer were commissioned to

house the public institutions that organize and control the movement of goods and people across Georgian territory. All the buildings present the same design characteristics, materializing an ideology of free forms and experimental structures, where computational power is deployed to (self)organize the management of space, labor and trade. Saakashvili's demise halted the Lazika project. Even in its embryonic stage, however, it is possible to observe the contradictions powering its speculative planning. The planned city was set to lay its foundations on the territory adjacent to the village of Anaklia, this area, partially covered by the northern section of the Kholketi National Park, is occupied by a large wetland, providing an instable and potentially dangerous terrain for construction. As one of the architects in charge of the design, Nika Japaridze, stated in a recent interview<sup>1</sup>, the building was initially designed for another Georgian port city and industrial center, Poti. After being rejected from the official competition, the project was personally selected by President Saakashvili the following year, this time for the supposedly entirely new city of Lazika. Despite gesturing performatively towards lightness the structure weighs heavy on the landscape surrounding. So heavy, Japaridze shared with us, that the pillars sustaining it have to dig deeper underground than the entire height of the building above ground.

The building, moreover, according to its architects, is inspired by Yona Friedman's concept of the 'spatial city'. Friedman, a proponent of 'mobile architecture', had envisaged the 'spatial city' as the materialisation of his quest for a mode of architecture able to adapt to its inhabitants needs. What Friedman themes a 'feasible utopia' is the belief that shifting the relation between the built environment and its inhabitants would enable a more sustainable form of existence within the eco-systems that we inhabit<sup>2</sup>.

Following, in Architect of Invention's description of the Lazika Municipality, we read that:

'the ambition of this project was to make a building as a sculpture made out of one material. The suspended volumes create public spaces, separated from each other, forming a monument, and saliently, a benchmark for the new architecture of new futuristic city.' (Architects of Invention 2011).

Rather than attempting to materialise the possibilities and the openness of Friedman's spatial city, thus, Architects of Invention constructed a 'monument' to its perceived aesthetic principles. Contrarily to Friedman's intent, the Lazika municipality only mocks the democratic spatial possibilities conferred by improvisation, imposing instead an alien structure on an unwelcoming landscape and fixing it deep into the ground, foreclosing any possibility of change.

Rather than embodying a future of infinite possibilities, these structures are what Charmaine Chua has recently termed 'indurable monstrosities' (Chua 2018). At the core of these buildings' design there is the trade-off of sustainability for appearance and of provision –

<sup>1</sup> The full interview will feature in Tekla Aslanishvili's documentary film *Algorithmic Island*.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.archdaily.com/781065/interview-with-yona-friedman-imagine-having-improvised-volumes-floating-in-space-like-balloons>

social, economic, or structural – for a process of endless speculation. These features, according to Chua, are central to the constant race towards expansion in which the logistics sector is locked in: observing the competitive growth of the shipping fleets of the major global providers, Chua, argues that rather than for chasing cargo, the incremental growth of vessels is due to a toxic mixture of masculinist ideology, unmitigated hope and utter disregard for environmental impact. Such deadly mix, moreover, is currently at the very core of the production of spaces, politics and subjects engendered by logistics expansion.

## Conclusion

Thus the Municipality Building is not only a visual manifestation of the great ambitions and aspirations informing the development of a fluid, technologically-managed and self-improving urban centre in Anaklia, but also of the mistakes that these fantasies inevitably contain. The fraud that lies in the foundation of the Municipality Building, its inability to adjust to the changing environment or effectively reflect or care for social needs, stands for the actual “dumbness” of many other smart city developments, even in more advanced economies, where intelligence is merely a simulation (cf Halpern 2014a:196). In its embryonic life, therefore, Lazika has been indeed a global city, its global features, however, rather than the seamless and speedy flows of capital it sought to attract, are its social and environmental recklessness and the chauvinist performance it sought to materialise.

Years have passed since the Lazika project was halted and the new developments claim no kinship to what happened in the past, despite striving for the same goals – to turn this remote angle of the black sea into a crossroads for trade and leisure, the investors composing Anaklia Development Consortium claim their rights to fresh new experiments. But a profound, violent, clash between these futuristic experimentations and the populated ecosystems that encompass them is taking shape in Anaklia. Its random brutality can be condensed in a single image: broken wings are scattered on the perimeter that surrounds Mayer’s Pier Sculpture as birds confused by its uneven shapes crash into its edges and fall onto the ground to die mutilated.

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## Understanding participatory platforms through urban assemblages

Yu-Shan Tseng, PhD candidate, Durham University

Hello everyone, I am Yu-Shan Tseng, today I am going to share one of the empirical chapters which I am converting into a paper for urban studies. This paper is based on empirical data I collected during ethnographic fieldwork conducted in Madrid City Council and the Taiwanese Government, and a collaborative project with Pol.is Inc on recreating the participatory process of the Uber-case on vTaiwan-Pol.is platform.

Decide Madrid and vTaiwan are two participatory platforms which are assembled and installed by Madrid City Council and the Taiwanese government to facilitate public participation in the policy-making process since 2015. Decide Madrid is designed and invented by Madrid City Council; whereas the Taiwanese government utilises Pol.is, which is software provided by a US-based Inc. Both platforms crowd-source and analyse ideas from participants about cities with different participatory processes. Today I will only focus on participatory budget in 2015-16 with an annual 100 million Euro budget (Decide Madrid) and Uber-consultation (vTaiwan-Pol.is). Even though Decide Madrid faces the threat of being withdrawn because of the newly elected mayor of Madrid in June 2019, both exist and are employed by more than 70 governmental institutions around the world: Rome, Beuno Aries, Porte Alegre and the Canadian Government...

This paper examines and compares the two participatory platforms - Decide Madrid and vTaiwan-Pol.is, through the lens of the assemblage (Anderson et al. 2012; McFarlane 2011). The notion of the assemblage provides a twofold approach to conceptualising two platforms: 1) by highlighting particular translocality of participatory platforms; 2) by foregrounding the algorithmic processes of participatory platforms as the contingent and emergent interactions between user-generated data and algorithms. In doing so, I respond the calling for a deeper and engaging investigation of 'platform urbanism' made by Rodgers & Moore (2018), who call for researchers to investigate the ontological nature of platforms, how the 'urban' is related to platforms, and the forms of urban politics that platforms create.

I will discuss how the material parts and interactions matter for understanding the forms of urban politics that two platforms create. I argue that the forms of urban politics that platforms produce are issue-oriented and those issues create and constrain political possibilities.

[translocality]

As two platforms have been disseminated to more than 70 governmental institutions around the world, they illustrate a translocality that they are '[locally] place-based but not limited to that place' (McFarlane 2011, p.3). The translocality of two platforms is constituted 'all the other local interactions distributed elsewhere in time and space' (Latour 2005, p.194) and grows through being made mobile to be potentially reassembled in other urban contexts (McFarlane 2009; McFarlane 2011). The translocality refers explicitly to the political mandate and resources - that assemble Decide Madrid and vTaiwan and their capacity for being reassembled elsewhere. For example, whilst I was accompanying the team of Decide Madrid to promote Decide Madrid platform to the Greater London Assembly (GLA), a GLA officer expressed doubts that it could be employed in London, not because of the technical incompatibility but because: "that GLA is the scrutiny body for the mayor, we do not have any real power, it would be difficult of the mayor to come up for the mandate for it now and the actual money for a new program is not very big". What he expressed is both a lack of political will from mayor Sadiq Khan and a general distrust of the idea of allocating resources for a participatory budget in London. Importantly, I use this example to highlight the important role of a government plays out in shaping the translocality of Decide Madrid and vTaiwan. Different political commitment and resources precondition the scope of urban issues prior to they are formed through interactions between algorithms and user-generated data. In addition, it points to the 'more-than-territorial' (Zebracki & Luger 2018, p.16) dimensions of platform urbanism, where two platforms become a global example and solution of digital participation. This global example is reinforced through both platforms being widely disseminated in other cities / active research foundations.

Secondly, the assemblage approach, as Anderson et al. (2012, p.181) have argued, pays attention to the emergent source and 'to the agency of both the parts and the whole' that can transform within or beyond the assemblage. They state that the component 'parts' have 'importance as autonomous actors that may or may not alter the nature of the assemblage' (ibid). It is from this point I use the

assemblage as a material approach to examine the selected participatory platforms. Decide Madrid and vTaiwan-Pol.is are materially constituted by the interaction between two parts

- 1) a visible 'on-stage' participatory process (the participatory parts)
- 2) and a 'behind the scenes' process of algorithmic calculation (the algorithmic parts)

This understanding of participatory platforms is necessary because it foregrounds my argument that it is the algorithmic interaction with user-generated data that assigns the political possibility for particular urban lives, such as Uber drivers, the homeless or stray animals, as legitimate issues to receive attention and political resources in the policy-making process. It is in this way that urban politics are (re)oriented to the prioritised issues. In this way, I demonstrate that the notion of assemblage can unpack the understanding of participatory platforms.

[participatory parts]

The participatory parts refer to participants write and support the particular urban lives in the proposals/comments and votes.

Participatory parts matter for each piece of user-generated data (votes, proposals or comments) because they increase the possibilities: for different urban lives to be seen; to obtain significant public funding (100 million Euro); and: to obtain resources (holding a referendum or drafting a bill in the parliament) for policymaking. By voting positively to a particular proposal or comment, users give a value (1) to the particular lives that are addressed in the data. Also, participatory parts generate 'urban descriptions' (McFarlane 2011a) that present a possibility for understanding the cities which are not necessarily known by governments. Participatory parts illustrate the urban 'description that exposes a multiplicity of differences, an accumulation of possibilities to think differently about how cities might work'. For example, in the consultation of Uber (vTaiwan): 100 comments concern about the legal, safety, risky perspective of Uber company, driver and passengers. In the participatory budget (Decide Madrid): 5072 proposals concern about improving urban infrastructures for sustainability and public welfare (bike lanes, sound-proof walls, public toilets and drinking waters). Providing spaces and public services for the elders, children, refugees or other vulnerable people, dogs and abandoned animals.

[The algorithmic interactions]

Algorithms work relentlessly through the ranking of user-generated data which can be understood as 'algorithmic interactions'. It is the algorithmic interactions that define and prioritise what count as issues that are allowed to receive political resources (such as 100 million participatory budgets in Decide Madrid, a legal proposal in the Parliament in vTaiwan). As much as Kitchin and Dodge (2011, pp.71–73) describe that the ways in which code/spaces transduce some parts of our everyday, we must also negotiate code/spaces in terms of what it is to be human. Here, algorithmic interactions negotiate and count what urban lives are it to be prioritised, or not, what urban politics are to be composed, or not. In other words, these algorithmic interactions matter because they bring a political possibility to urban lives by highlighting them as issues whilst closing down possibilities for others to be seen in the policy-making process.

Decide Madrid employs ranking algorithms that interact with participatory budget proposals simply based by counting how many votes they receive. The more positive votes an urban description receives, the more likely it would be highlighted as an issue, an official urban project that will be funded by the 100-million-Euro budgets from Madrid City Council. vTaiwan-Pol.is deploys the machine-learning algorithms that interact with participants until grouping participants on the basis of their similar relationship with comments as 'opinion groups', from which algorithms rank comments with the highest agreement rate both across and within different opinion groups. vTaiwan-Pol.is uses machine-learning algorithms which open up a different possibility for highlighting urban lives that are important to each opinion group and across different opinion groups, rather than simply adding up and accumulating the number of positive votes for proposals as the ranking algorithms do in Decide Madrid.

Picture 1 uses the Uber case to attempt to visualise how the algorithmic interaction can identify similar voting patterns (see picture 2) amongst participants as a basis for creating opinion groups. vTaiwan-Pol.is employs machine learning algorithms which make its algorithmic interactions 'materially



unstable' (Mackenzie 2006, p.177). This means that machine learning algorithms do not completely follow a predefined rule in their computation of the opinion groups and common opinions. Rather, they interact with each user-generated data, namely the voting pattern, until they complete the rules in grouping users into different opinion groups, and singling out the common comments that are important within and across different opinion groups.

It is because the algorithmic interactions with user-generated data that shows the point of controversy. For instance, opinion group A establishes a particular position concerned with the illegal status of Uber which has threatened other domestic transportation businesses' livelihood and jeopardised the safety of the public, whereas opinion group B articulates a different position which prefers to use Uber to navigate cities despite the concerns raised by opinion group A. In so doing, vTaiwan's algorithmic interactions provide a unique political possibility for visualising what is concerned across and within different opinion groups. Both the comments from the majority (across different opinion groups) and from minority (within opinion groups) are found, visualised and highlighted by the said algorithmic interactions.

I argue that algorithms generate interactions with user-generated data that are a significant component in constituting the urban politics for they are politically shaping and anchoring which urban lives are to be prioritised as legitimate issues in the policy-making in a particular moment. It is the algorithmic interaction of parts that turns urban lives into an issue and generates an issue-oriented urban politics (Latour 2007, Marres 2007). Just as Latour (2007) points out that if there is no issue, there is no politics if there is no interaction, there are no urban lives turned into as issues in the policy-making process. Echoing Amoore (2019, p.6) who highlights the importance of the interactions between algorithms and user-generated data, here, if a different data is generated by users, or a different algorithm is used, then, different lives will be made visible as issues

Even-so, issue-oriented urban politics closes down possibilities of other urban lives being seen, stressed and inscribed as legitimate issues. Likewise, it does not mean that issues are solved once life becomes legitimate issues in the policy-making process. Urban lives, whether they are recognised and prioritised as legitimate issues or not, will find other ways of making themselves visible to the public and politicians in Madrid and Taipei City. For vTaiwan, Uber is a 'solved' case. However, it does not stop Taxi-drivers from protesting in central Taipei City due to their inability to compete with Uber in March 2019. For those lives who are not seen and made known through Decide Madrid and vTaiwan, they are made visible through ways. There are on-going disputes on social housing, the public-private-partnership on Taipei Dome, and disputes on illegal street vendors, Airbnb legalisation and car free zones in Madrid City. Participatory urbanism, therefore, can never completely represent urban life, never signify all the potentialities that cities offer.

## 3C-2.1: Re-Orienting Sustainability

**Chair:** Dr Ellie Cosgrave, Lecturer in Urban Innovation and Policy, UCL

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**The commodification of waste: from threat to frontier**

Dr Mohammed Rafi Arefin, Assistant Professor/Faculty Fellow, NYU Gallatin

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**Transdisciplinarity vs. transdisciplinaries: a radical approach to sustainability or a method to co-produce solutions?**

Carolina Neto Henriques, DINÂMIA'CET—IUL, Centre for Socioeconomic and Territorial Studies, Lisbon

**At the Frontiers of the Urban:  
Thinking Concepts and Practices Globally  
UCL Urban Laboratory**

The Commodification of Waste: From Threat to Frontier

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**Abstract:**

In this paper I use archival documents, oral histories, and interviews, to construct an account of how Cairo's garbage and sewage were transformed from a threat to the city in the early twentieth century into a fiercely sought-after frontier for surplus accumulation in the present. Beginning at the turn of the twentieth century, I document how garbage and sewage posed a danger to public health and served as material limits to the expansion of the city. I then demonstrate how colonial engineers, and later the postcolonial state and international development agencies, sought to manage and extract value from Cairo's waste. Through this hundred-year investigation of waste's transformation from a threat into an object of value, I urge for greater attention to what I call the political economy of abjection. While the political economy of waste occupies an important place in urban studies, few studies trace the historical and geographically contingent commodification of garbage and sewage. To properly analyze the privatization and enclosure of sanitation systems, especially in cities of the global South, I suggest that a situated conceptual and empirical account of how waste is commodified is required. But due to waste's abject nature, its commodification cannot be analyzed through the lens of political economy alone. Emotive, affective, and unconscious forces intimately shape how waste is commodified. Therefore, I conclude by arguing for greater attention to both the historical economic and extra-economic logics at work in the commodification of waste to better account for contemporary projects of privatization.

**Keywords:** waste, commodification, abjection, urban history, Middle East

My contribution to this session emerges from my research on sanitation in Egypt which traces the development and contestations of Cairo's garbage and sewage systems. In my talk today, I construct an account of how Cairo's garbage and sewage were transformed from a threat to the city in the early twentieth century into a fiercely sought-after frontier for surplus accumulation in the present.

Tracing the commodification of Cairo's waste, I argue for greater attention to what I'm calling the political economy of abjection. By this I mean, a close examination of the historical economic and extra-economic logics at work in the commodification of waste in cities across the globe. Such examinations are necessary in order to better account for and resist contemporary projects of dispossession and privatization which are often justified under the label of green design or sustainability.

It is now widely recognized by scholars, the general public, and waste activists, that waste is no longer just a troublesome incidental of production. A field that for a long time was the purview of households and informal economies, waste management today across the globe is big business. For example, in 2015, the solid waste industry worldwide was valued at "\$433 billion, a sum projected to rise... reaching \$562 billion in 2020" (O'Neill 2019: 59). To get an idea of the size and profits of

these private waste management firms, consider Waste Management, Inc. The largest waste management company in North America, Waste Management, Inc. reported revenues of 14.86 billion US dollars in 2017. And yet, these surprising statistics only represent waste streams that have already been made valuable.

Waste streams that have not yet been rendered profitable are no longer capitalist value's antithesis but, as geographers Gidwani and Reddy (2011) remind us, waste is a fiercely sought-after frontier for surplus accumulation. For example, the total value of all raw materials present in discarded electronics was estimated at approximately 55 billion euros in 2016" (O'Neill 2019: 5). Furthermore, the global waste-to-energy market was worth 26 billion US dollars in 2014 and is expect to jump to 44 billion US dollars by 2024. (O'Neill 2019: 41).

If the size and value of the global waste industry are surprising, that's good. I've shared these numbers in order to stress the fact that these kinds of profits from waste are historically unprecedented. The growth of the waste industry is a product of complex global histories of production, consumption, disposal coupled with changes in the spaces where these processes more frequently occur—the city. In order to untangle the politics and consequences of these shifts, I argue, for studies that detail how, why, and under what conditions waste has been rendered wildly profitable. More than a traditional political economic analysis though, I am also interested in how commodification works when dealing with objects such garbage and sewage which evoke disgust, loathing, fear, and horror.

The research I will share today is based in Cairo, Egypt. Cairo is an important city from which to understand that local and global politics of the commodification of waste because it stands as paradigmatic case of privatization in the solid waste management field and was the site of some of the largest sewer upgrade schemes in international development history.

In an infamous 2002 decision, Cairo's solid waste management was contracted to multinational corporations, dispossessing the Zabbaleen, Cairo's semiformal garbage collectors and recyclers, from the trade they had developed over decades.

Recounting the lead up to the first day the multinational companies began their work, Nabeel—a prominent organizer in the Zabbaleen community—explained in detail how Cairo was split into four districts which were then sold of to multinational companies. From the tone and precision with which he detailed the state led take over of Cairo's waste management, it was clear that he had told this story many times over. In the first five days of the new system, garbage collectors tried to resume the work they had been doing for decades, but as Nabeel explained they were met by "police who told garbage collectors, its finished the multinationals are here now."

Contracts for Cairo's waste management, were sold by the Egyptian government and bought by foreign companies because Cairo's waste and its collection were positioned as profitable. In an interview, I asked Dr. Laila Iskandar, a development consultant and former Minister of Environment, about the profit margins of Cairo's garbage. She responded:

"Garbage is not profitable. That is the basic myth that keeps the city from understanding what it wants to do. It is not profitable. It is a public health issue. But because for years they have exploited the Zabbaleen and they've accepted it, the government thinks, hey! It must be lucrative. But no one has calculated the true cost. I'm not just talking about health costs to the Zabbaleen. But time, labor,

machines, electricity, etc. They have not calculated it. So in fact the person we can point to is the Zabbaleen themselves. They've accepted it."

Dr. Iskandar organized a study of waste collection costs, and found that in fact, the margins of Cairo's collectors and recyclers were far from large sources of profit. How, then, was waste transformed into a commodity?

Iskandar argues that, in part, what allowed the commodification of Cairo's waste and attracted the attention of foreign capital was a long-standing discursive practice in which Cairo's local system of waste management was framed as backward. Iskandar argued that this produced what she called a "perceived modernity" of western sanitation systems. I asked her to expand on this phrase and she replied frankly, "Look behind us, we have skyscrapers." Gesturing outside the window to Cairo's Nile City Towers, which house a five-star hotel, an expensive shopping mall and elite businesses, she mimicked anti-Zabbaleen arguments—"how can you propose for a city that looks like this, a system based on dirty, traditional, garbage collectors? You must be mad!" The idea that garbage is a commodity in conjunction with the perceived modernity of western sanitation, Iskandar claims, is "the whole crux of this thing."

Cairo's garbage was not the only waste product being transformed into an object of economic value. On the outskirts of Greater Cairo in the suburb New Cairo, a private-public partnership is selling treated wastewater back to the suburb's residents. New Cairo, a satellite city east of Cairo's downtown, was founded in 2000 and is home to some of the country's most prestigious private universities, elite hotels, and golf clubs. A hallmark of this growing suburb is its greenery. The most impressive of these is perhaps the Mirage City Golf Club courses. Transforming desert land into green golf courses is a difficult feat. Since its founding, New Cairo has been plagued by issues with water delivery. In 2009, the government entered into a partnership with an international firm to treat the suburbs' wastewater and sell it back to New Cairo's residents to water their vast unsustainable greenery. In a 2018 working paper, which was part of a worldwide initiative called "Wastewater: From Waste to Resource," the World Bank praised New Cairo's wastewater treatment project as a leading example of a sewage reuse scheme that involved private capital (World Bank, 2018).

Over the 20<sup>th</sup> century and into the present, waste was transformed from a threat to a frontier of surplus accumulation. In the full paper I trace what I call the political economy of abjection by detailing the process of commodification over a 100-year timespan. In doing so I bring together scholarship in urban political ecology and social theories of abjection. In this presentation though, I am going to share how the process of commodifying Cairo's waste began with the sewage system at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A quick note on terminology here, when I use the term commodification of waste I am referring to an abstraction that is both spatial and temporal to include the commodification of waste's collection routes, transport, storage, and reuse.

At the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, both sewage and garbage posed a threat to the health of Cairo's residents and the city's expansion. Reports dating back to the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century attribute the city's relatively high death rate to overflowing cesspools and mountains of garbage which accumulated on the outskirts of city.

Yet, discussions of waste as only a threat began to shift. This started with the colonial construction of Cairo's sewage and drainage system. Charles Carkeet James, a British colonial engineer, was

tasked with the job after completing sanitation projects across India. Before he got to work on the system, he completed a survey of the city.

In the survey, James wrote: “The sanitary conditions of the city at the time were very defective. In the absence of sewers, the most modern hotels, residences, and flats were compelled to deal with their sewage by means of underground cesspools and soakways... Landlords of properties in the best quarters of the city have in some cases had to pay away practically the whole rent in pumping the soakaways...” (61).

Colonial officials understood the lack of a proper sewage system not just as a threat to public health, but also as a threat to accumulation. I want to point out two features of Cairo’s first sewage system. First, when surveying the city, James broke up areas and houses by three classifications. This effort catalogued and built into infrastructure, colonial class relations. Inequality would not only reign above ground, but would be structured into the underbelly of the city. Second, and what I will focus on here is the construction of a sewage farm; it was at the sewage farm that James was able to begin the process of transforming sewage from a threat to “landlords in the best quarters of city” into a waste-based commodity. I point to the construction of this sewage farm as the beginning of the process of commodifying Cairo’s waste.

Located at the end of the system in the North-Eastern outskirts of Cairo, the farm in Gabal Al-Asfar received the partially treated sewage of the city. James was adamant that this project was a scheme that extracted value out of sewage and would yield handsome profits. Surveying the state of the farm in 1915 James wrote:

“about 35,000 trees had been planted ... with careful supervision the farm will be a source of great profit to the Egyptian Government, probably yielding a net return of \$E10 to \$E15 per acre annually... The profits from the sewage-farm will be an increasing figure year by year as house-connections are made and the volume of sewage increases, and it is estimated that eventually a net return of at least \$E30,000 per annum....” (94-95).

A major setback to the commodification of waste is the abject nature of the work, physical risk from close work with sewage is compounded by symbolic vectors of contagion and filth. For James, the question of who would build and then work on his farm was a concern quickly remedied by a request to the Department of Prisons. “...by arrangement with the Prisons department, 600 convicts were employed. They were housed in a camp constructed on the farm... This practice in a general way was quite successful, and by the end of the 5 years about (374 acres) were ready for cultivation.” (91). Another archival document I obtained reported that in 1925 the head of the Department of Prisons issued an order to establish permanent housing for prisoners on the Gabal Al-Asfar sewage farm.

This early history of colonial infrastructure intimately shaped its future. With recent waves of liberalisation in the Egyptian economy throughout the 1980s, postcolonial Egypt was framed as a new investment market for the United Kingdom. In fact, on her visit to open a wastewater treatment plant in Cairo on 18 September 1985, Margaret Thatcher delivered a speech conveying how excited she was to see “cooperation not just between governments” but that the “private sector is also well represented” (The Thatcher Foundation 1985). These newly forged capital flows were built on enduring legacies of British colonial occupation. Commenting that the British were leaders in wastewater technologies, Thatcher went on to say:

“The first [sewerage] scheme [in Cairo] was designed by a British engineer, Mr. Carkeet, to cater for an expected population of nearly a million in 1932. His system, with some extension and expansion, is the one operating today. Surely, he would have been delighted, as am I, that it is British engineering and British financial skills that are once again playing an important role. (ibid.)”

In the full paper, I argue that it was at sites like the sewage farm that the process of commodifying waste began which intimately shaped how the contemporary relationship between global capital and sanitation—a relationship which positions western sanitation, in colonial discourse, as superior. The idea that waste is profitable and that western sanitation is inherently more efficient, emerge from long standing colonial relations.

From this brief account of the commodification of Cairo’s waste, I want us to think about how the psycho-social force of abjection creates urban relations which are structured by radical exclusions that are never fully repudiated. These exclusions continually insist as “a terror that disassembles” (Kristeva, 1982: 4). Capital functions through the liminal space where the abject resides—operating sometimes within a fixed distinction between waste and value, but other times shifting these boundaries in search of surplus. An approach that takes both political economy and abjection seriously sheds light on to the economic and extra-economic logics which shape how, when, and why waste is transformed from a threat to a frontier accumulation. While work by geographers such as Vinay Gidwani has detailed the conceptual relation between waste and value, more historically informed work has to be done to detail the conditions under which waste is commodified. My work does not only give us more nuanced understandings of the past, but it also sheds light onto contemporary discourses.

**At the Frontiers of the Urban:  
Thinking Concepts and Practices Globally  
UCL Urban Laboratory**

**The Internet of Things: Enabling Cities to Strive Towards a Circular Economy**

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**Abstract:**

Circular economy is beginning to be recognised as an essential strategy to meet the Paris Agreement goals and more pressingly, the goals laid out by the Inter-governmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) report noting the urgency to prevent a 1.5C global temperature increase. Circular economy is rethinking the perception of value creation for products, materials and services, and is starting to be embraced and promoted by business consultants, business associations and governmental policymakers. Tracking service and material supply chains, urban flows and product diagnostics require the creation and analysis of big data sets produced from large numbers of information networks. This poses the challenge of how feasible the circular economy is to implement on a large city scale. The Internet of Things (IoT) has emerged as one of the solutions to fill this statistical data analytics gap. With the collections of large data sets key for improving efficiency, the placement of IoTs throughout an urban landscape, empowered with artificial intelligence, embedding intelligence in objects and products across a city will enable more resilient, responsive and sustainable urban systems.

This paper will examine IoTs as an essential component and enabler of achieving greater circular economy models within cities that allow expanding prosperity without degrading natural resources and capital. The role and benefit of the circular economy within cities and its potential large contribution towards achieving carbon-targets will first be discussed. The rest of the paper will subsequently describe and discuss three key areas of application of IoTs in the urban context which provide potentially the most benefit in aiding to transition towards more sustainable systems and cities.

**Keywords:** Smart cities, Internet of things, Circular economy, Material management

The emissions targets laid out in the UN Paris Climate Agreement and the IPCC 1.5°C report (IPCC, 2019) are a momentous challenge for both Europe and the world to achieve. The IPCC report states with no or limited overshoot of an 1.5°C increase, global net anthropogenic CO<sub>2</sub> emissions must decline by about 45%, almost by half, from 2010 levels by 2030. It gives just a 50% possibility of achieving this in the next ten years. The fast pace advancement and implementation of renewable and carbon-neutral energy and the sharp decline of PV panel costs shine some light at the end of the tunnel but it won't take us all the way.

Implementing wide-spread low-carbon energy production is not enough, even with achieving 100% low-carbon energy by mid-century, emissions would far exceed the available carbon budget of even a 2°C target (Material Economics, 2018). Though it is hard to confidently quantify, with figures slightly varying, low-carbon energy is stated to be responsible for



around half of the carbon budget with material extraction and production accounting for the remaining half (Blok *et al.*, 2016; Material Economics, 2018; The Ellen MacArthur Foundation and Material Economics, 2019). However, there has been much less focus on material management than efforts towards zero-carbon energy production. This calls for greater insight into the extraction, production and end-of-life cycle of materials and products.

Circular economy (CE) has emerged to prominence in the last decade as a vital initiative to accomplish carbon targets. It is a concept rooted in ideas from Industrial Ecology (Jelinski *et al.*, 1992), The Performance (Service) Economy (Stahel, 2010) and Cradle to Cradle (McDonough and Braungart, 2010), and aims at decoupling resource consumption with economic growth and development. Circular economy focuses on maintaining the value of products and materials as long as possible while reusing and recycling materials in an endless loop to remove the necessity to consume more virgin materials. The Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2015), a leading figure promoting CE, list designing out waste, sustaining the diversity of stakeholders, using renewable energy, thinking in systems and incorporating costs of externalities in prices as key principles for achieving a circular system. Achieving circularity largely falls into three stages; circular design in product manufacture, optimal use or value retention during usage and finally value recovery after user life. Focus on all three stages and the entire life-cycle of materials and products is what makes CE effective in decreasing virgin material consumption.

Cities can play a fundamental role in creating a genuine circular economy. Not only do they consume the majority of natural resources and produce the majority of waste, their compactness and high density of people and businesses mean that they can efficiently interconnect the actions of a wide variety of actors (Ellen MacArthur Foundation and Waughray, 2016).

The Internet of Things (IoT) has been seen as an important tool to develop and sustain a circular system in cities by its utilisation of real-time data collection and interconnectivity (Lopes de Sousa Jabbour *et al.*, 2018). IoT refers to the interconnectivity between things, such as smartphones, smart sensors and other electronic devices through the internet by means of unique identification tags to allow communication between one and other to achieve common goals (Da Xu, He and Li, 2014). Real-time data collection and sharing are then able to happen between stakeholders (Zhong *et al.*, 2017), allowing visualisation of material and information flows that can be analysed and optimised. Radio frequency (RFID) technology tags and barcodes are the most frequently used means in implementing IoT.

According to the ReSOLVE framework (*Regenerate, Share, Optimise, Loop, Virtualise and Exchange*) developed by the Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2015), a global leading charity in the circular economy field, the internet of things promote mainly optimisation by the greater accessibility to data, feedback loops and ability to analyse how a whole system interacts within itself.

Using IoT technology in the urban context has great potential to bringing us closer to achieving our carbon targets, particularly through material management and data collection. The key applications of the internet of things to develop sustainable systems in cities are described and discussed in this paper.

### **Three key uses for now and the future**

Three key areas for the implementation and utilisation of the internet of things found that were prominent in literature are described in this section; monitoring, using products at their highest utility and maintaining value and the internet of materials.

#### **Monitoring**

Creating and implementing a more closed-loop resource system in a city requires a thorough analysis of its resource flows to identify resource leaks and opportunities. A key method to analyse and quantify materials flows through a city is urban metabolism, aimed at understanding how a city consumes resources from its local/global hinterlands, digests the resources to perform its various functions which then creates waste. It can be defined as “*the sum total of the technical and socioeconomic processes that occur in cities, resulting in growth, production of energy, and elimination of waste*” (Kennedy, Cuddihy and Engel-Yan, 2007).

Calculating the urban metabolism of a city relies on available local resource and material flow data, however, this has been cited as one of the main difficulties related to creating accurate assessments as there is little available data (Hage and Söderholm, 2008; Currie *et al.*, 2015; Prendeville, Cherim and Bocken, 2018), with methods of quantification across the world not standardised (Hashimoto and Moriguchi, 2004). Furthermore, only twenty comprehensive urban metabolism studies of cities worldwide have been published (Voskamp *et al.*, 2017). In general, studies of resource flows have been done at the national level, rather than the city level, where the boundaries are clearer and data more readily available (Barles, 2010). Conducting urban metabolism studies at the city level requires extensive amounts of data due to the systems approach of the urban metabolism concept (Minx *et al.*, 2011), thus requiring significant time, money and resources to conduct such a study.

The OECD (2019) saw particular problems in Colombia, where efforts to address issues of waste were hindered by poor reporting, in Czech Republic, where the co-existence of two separate, inconsistent information systems led to faults and duplications of data. Norway saw the amount of hazardous waste increase, between 1995 and 2008, by two-thirds, the main reason being better reporting and data collection.

IoT's can play an integral part in collecting and analysing resource flows from user-generated data, through looking at both the production and consumption trends. IoT's can act as communication networks, collecting data of energy, materials flows and usage from utilities, sensors and smart meters from manufacturers, businesses, public spaces and households. This data would then be stored in a central big-data system, processed by a real-time calculation unit and algorithms that can provide feedback to environmental indicators. This can then provide a basis for better decision-making and more effective efforts towards better circular resource management and optimisation. It can also aid to overcome the apparent main bottleneck for circular strategies in cities of lack of environmental indicators (The Partnership on Circular Economy, 2018), by allowing for stakeholder specific indicators based on more accurate data. It can also attempt to improve data visualisation in terms of resolution

and spatial differences, from the citizen level to the national level, as well as frequency, acquiring real-time feedback.

### ***Using products at their highest utility and maintaining value***

An integral part of sustaining a more circular urban metabolism is to prolong resource cycles, described by The Ellen MacArthur Foundation (2015) as *the power of the inner circle* and *the power of circling longer*. This means using products and materials as long as possible by preserving its value by repairing and maintaining. Bugs and faults in digital software and programs can be detected relatively quickly because of the real-time data collection of user usage and bug reporting through internet connectivity. The same can be true regarding physical products by integrating IoT technology. Products such as cars, fridges and washing machines with information communication technology would be able to send data of its usage to the manufacturer, monitoring performance and condition of different components. Usage data can highlight key areas to focus and optimise by analysing the big data received of which components break down the most, which parts are most frequently used and what the typical usage of the product is. Indeed, big data is seen as an important tool for improving products and added value to organisations (Roblek, Meško and Krapež, 2016; Lopes de Sousa Jabbour *et al.*, 2018). Users and organisations can benefit from increased performance where, for example, predictive maintenance can be scheduled based on real-time data reporting of current conditions of products (Ellen MacArthur Foundation and Waughray, 2016).

Furthermore, integrating IoT capabilities make products more compatible with Product as a Service (PaaS) business models, where high-value assets belong to the manufacturer who is incentivised to maintain their products as long as possible and then to take back products after for reuse or remanufacture. It is also a key component of encouraging the full utilisation of a material/product. This is particularly the case with cars. Given the example of Zipcar in the United States, a hugely successful car-sharing company, Zipcars are in use almost 34% of the time, compared to a mere 4% of private vehicles – a factor of 8 in improved asset use (Blok *et al.*, 2016).

### ***The Internet of Materials***

To be able to understand the circular value potential of materials, products and systems, a reliable set of data of their composition, history and condition needs to be known (Luscuere, 2016). Asset tagging and material passports aim to fill this data gap by providing this information. Prevalence and accessibility has risen in recent years thanks to the invention and use of blockchain, a transparent, globally accessible charter.

The ability to be able to visualise all materials being currently exchanged, used and stored enables circular economy in the urban context in several ways. Firstly, using asset tagging, enabled by IoTs, to gain information of the location or availability of certain assets or materials will help improve utilisation and combining this data with geo-spatial information further makes it possible to gain insights into resource and material flows through a city (Circle Economy, 2015). It also allows for tools to be developed which could 'scout' the market for available resources and inform design decisions on the availability of local materials, with

the IoT enabled transparency of materials to facilitate the rise of local secondary markets (Ellen MacArthur Foundation and Waughray, 2016). Examples of this are the *Scottish Material Brokerage Service* and the *Dutch Excess Materials Exchange*.

Furthermore, material passports would be an essential enabler of what is known as buildings being resource banks. Rather than the ownership of materials being on the business or person who pays for the construction of a large-scale building, the ownership stays with material or construction company who recover those materials at the end of the building's life cycle or function. Around 40% of global materials are used for construction, where inside the EU currently construction and demolition waste accounts for approximately 25-30% of the total waste produced (Thelen *et al.*, 2018). A model based on buildings as resource banks improves the potential to loop or cascade building components and materials afterwards and prolong utilisation, making it less necessary to extract virgin materials and minimising demolition waste. A key example is a company called *BAM*, who generate automatic embedded product inventories which provide material passports to multiple stakeholders, allowing resources to be returned to them afterwards. This model also works well with modular building components which can be moved around at the end of a building's desired function to help form another function and space or otherwise being returned and used in a new location.

#### *End remarks*

Data and communication underpin much of the essential systems of what makes circular economy effective and doable. Much like the dynamic systems of nature which are inherently circular, a circular economy in society will also have to be dynamic, resilient and interconnected. The internet of things can provide a reliable interconnected data and communication system on which a circular economy can utilise and thrive on, bringing us closer to the reality of preventing a global heating of more than a one and a half degree increase in the coming decades to avoid the worst of climate breakdown.

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## TITLE

Transdisciplinarity vs Transdisciplinarity: a radical approach to Sustainability or a method to co-produce solutions?

## ABSTRACT

In recent years, Transdisciplinarity (TD) has grown in popularity in Urban Studies (US) programs worldwide. Facing the risk of becoming a buzzword devoid of any real meaning, it is imperative that researchers become aware of the fundamental differences between two approaches to TD that may lead to radically different understandings of Sustainability, namely the Nicolescuian and Zuriquian approaches. On the one hand, the first takes on quantum physics and spirituality as the foundations for new, non-western centric ontologies that consider the complexity of Sustainability; on the other hand, the second approach sees TD as a methodological framework to solve problems together, tending to focus more on the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG). The two share the same basic claim – Cartesian, disciplinary thought is no longer suited if we are to overcome 21<sup>st</sup> century's biggest challenges; however, the consequences of this claim might have unforeseen consequences, such as the questioning of the Research University model or the value of disciplinary knowledge. The time to reflect upon these consequences is now. We claim that these differences might weigh on our chances to think better futures together. This presentation is part of a PhD research underway that is looking into how these approaches are being channeled by researchers and practitioners who are adhering to TD discourses and praxis in Portugal. The ultimate goal is to find out more about the implications of changing how we conduct urban science in the advent of a potential paradigmatic turn.

## KEY WORDS

Transdisciplinarity; Sustainability; Urban Studies; Disciplinary knowledge; Urban Futures

## TEXT

This communication represents the first time I'm presenting part of my PhD project outside my academic context. This project, titled "Transdisciplinarity in Urban Studies: logic of production of knowledge and emergent paradigms" (SFRH/BD/144977/2019) is focused on understanding how the evolution of how we organize and produce scientific knowledge - leading to a recent push for transdisciplinary research - has contributed to shape Portugal's urban studies' agenda. In this communication, I will focus on reconstructing the genealogy of transdisciplinary thought, who are the actors behind the two main schools of thought and how these two paths may lead to different outcomes in Academia. In an era where complex or wicked problems seem to demand tighter efforts to produce scientific knowledge that is capable of presenting real-life solutions, urban research has not escaped the pressure to increase the production of inter- and transdisciplinary knowledge (Bina, Balula, Varanda, & Fokdal, 2016) (Cruz & Costa, 2015). First proposed by authors such as Kurt Gödel, Niels Bohr and Jean Piaget during the 20th century, Transdisciplinarity has challenged scientists to overcome the limitations of disciplinary knowledge production, which have, for some, become the main challenge to produce the complex solutions our 21st century needs (Ferreira, 2006) (Guerra, 2002) (Nicolescu, 2009) (Nunes, 2003) (Santos, 2018) (Wallerstein, 2003). Recently, two currents of thought seem to stand out: the Nicolescuian and Zuriquian approaches – or theoretical and phenomenological Transdisciplinarity (McGregor, 2015). The first sits on complexity theory and calls for a new spirituality. The second is integrated in Mode 2 knowledge society reflections and advocates for transdisciplinary methods to solve problems together. The Nicolescuian approach owes its name to physicist Basarab Nicolescu and was first presented at the First World Congress for Transdisciplinarity in 1994, in Arrábida, Portugal (Nicolescu, 1994). With supporters like Edgar Morin, this humanist approach is based on its own ontology and epistemology, having its methodology assured by axioms based on quantum physics; doesn't have a particular research focus, being a theoretical approach; and proposes that transdisciplinary knowledge is more than the sum of different areas of disciplinary or interdisciplinary knowledge, based on principles that can be traced back to Habermas' communicative reason (Nicolescu, 2010). This approach is marked by the call for a "transcultural spirituality" that should contribute to reconnect Humankind with ethical concerns about societal and ecological challenges as well as desirable futures (Ferreira, 2006). The Zuriquian approach was created later and owes its name from a meeting that took place in Zurich, Switzerland, in 2000, after some researchers critiqued the first group for an attempt of "creating a meta-science" (Klein, et al., 2001). In this meeting, a new group focused on debating consensus around what could be a transdisciplinary methodology and how to create favorable institutional conditions for its practice (Klein, et al., 2001) (McGregor, 2015). This contrasting new approach proposes Transdisciplinarity as a methodology capable of



articulating societal, scientific and technological concerns; is focused on the praxis of scientific research and its applications; and its intention is the reconfiguration of existent knowledge. Central to the Zuriquian approach is the work of Michael Gibbons and Helga Nowotny, where Transdisciplinary is formulated as one of the five pillars of Mode 2 knowledge society (Gibbons, et al., 1994) – representing a revision of the Mode 1 Humboldtian model (Rubião, 2013) (Ruegg, 2011). Because of Gibbons' influence in circles such as the World Bank, the Zuriquian ontological and epistemological orientations became somewhat dominant in the quasi-omnipresent Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) strategy design (McGregor, 2015) (Rubião, 2013), indicating that behind what may seem to be healthy academic debates about different methodological pathways may actually be silent power struggles taking place which could eventually determine the agenda of scientific and naturally urban research. The discussion presented here represents part of the first research goal of this PhD project: to study the historical, political and cultural (sociological) contexts of the two approaches represented above, reconstructing a “genealogy of emergence” (Santos, 2018). Reconstructing a genealogy of emergence is significant here because, if heteronomous rationalities are included in the process of validating scientific knowledge, then the study of these transdisciplinary “war of definitions” (Nicolescu, 2010) could help identify dominant and emergent paradigmatic visions with the potential to carry with them the power to formulate the questions and the answers that may shape how the 21st century history unfolds (Bourdieu, 2015 [2001]) (Nunes, 2003) (Santos, 2018). After finishing this genealogy, our proposal is to create “ideal-type” profiles in the Weberian sense (Weber, 2006 [u.d.]), which will guide the second part of this research: to study how this “war of definitions” is being experienced in Portugal's urban research and practice. Here, the utilization of ideal-types isn't a comprehensive method for all possible interpretations of empirical findings but fulfills two essential purposes: a) it provides us with a profile-type against which the found logics that ground the production of transdisciplinary knowledge can be compared with; and b) allows for a situated reflection on the differences found among the praxis of the actors reproducing these logics; but I will not elaborate further on this second goal now, as it falls out of the scope of this communication. The Urban Studies community in Portugal is still considerably small and fairly young. Studying how these different logics of knowledge production are being adopted by actors driving urban research or intervention in this national context should contribute to help us understand better what is it that we are doing when we want to produce transdisciplinary knowledge; to help us reflect about directions and strategies for this thematic area of knowledge, and to help identify gaps and needs for national academic programs to consider. In the near future, the results of the research goals outlined here should be published in a paper reflecting on the paradigmatic visions entailed in the two approaches to Transdisciplinarity, currently in preparation.

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## 3C-2.2: Exploring Alternative Urban Futures

**Chair:** Prof. Camillo Boano, Professor of Urban Design and Critical Theory, UCL

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**Cooperative urbanity: scaling-up self-managed housing policies**

Prof. Santiago Benenati Balparda, Associate Professor, FADU (School of Architecture, Design and Urbanism), Uruguay

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**Temporary collectives in Beirut**

Sandra Frem, Lecturer, American University of Beirut; Founder at Platau|platform for architecture and urbanism

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**Slow urbanism in Ho Chi Minh city: experimenting the possibility of a metropolitan garden**

Prof. Anne Jauréguiberry, Associate Professor, École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Strasbourg (ENSAS)

Manuscript not available

**Housing cooperatives in Kigali: what is there to show for?**

Billy Ndengeyingoma, PhD candidate, LSE

## **Cooperative urbanity. Risks and opportunities of scaling-up self-managed housing policies. The case of Uruguay.**

Santiago Benenati

Associate Professor, FADU (School of Architecture, Design and Urbanism), Uruguay

### **1– Cooperative housing model, strengths and challenges**

Cooperative housing movement arises in the nineteenth century from a wider social movement that ambioned a more democratic and equitable society through open participation. Under this framework, as Hayden<sup>1</sup> and Kries<sup>2</sup> among others have revealed, a series of experiences were developed questioning the urban and architectural configuration of its time by exploring different ways of community involvement in housing development and management of everyday activities. In all of this cases, we can find an underlying intention to rearrange the power structure involved in the creation and management of the built environment under the comprehension that “housing is an instrument for politics [...] It can be used to maintain the social order, or to support challenges to it.”<sup>3</sup>

The last two decades have seen a renewed interest in the cooperative housing movement and its urban/architectural potential. A growing number of academic articles and specialized publications have widespread across Europe and North America<sup>4</sup> discussing the potentials of the model while many civil organizations embraced the model as a basis for innovative alternatives for affordable housing through self-management. As Tummers<sup>5</sup> suggest, although the discourse presents certain variations across countries, consistency among a set of themes can be established internationally. First, the capacity of the cooperative model to provide innovative solutions for an ageing and socio-culturally diversifying society as strong involvement of inhabitants in the process of urban development, as it's the case in cooperative housing, can contribute to innovative approaches to

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<sup>1</sup> Hayden, *The Grand Domestic Revolution*.

<sup>2</sup> Kries et al., *Together!*

<sup>3</sup> Madden y Marcuse, *In Defense of Housing*, 85.

<sup>4</sup> Tummers, «The Re-Emergence of Self-Managed Co-Housing in Europe»; Kries et al., *Together!*; Balmer, Ivo y Bernet, Tobias, «Housing as a Common Resource? Decommmodification and Self-Organization in Housing – Examples from Germany and Switzerland»; Mullins, David y Moore, Tom, «Self-organised and civil society participation in housing provision: International Journal of Housing Policy: Vol 18, No 1»; Lang y Roessl, «The Governance of Co-operative Housing».

<sup>5</sup> Tummers, «The Re-Emergence of Self-Managed Co-Housing in Europe».

urban and architectural design. Secondly, Cooperative initiatives foster social capital<sup>6</sup> among members as active participation in the co-creation of living environments helps to establish social networks, delivering more cohesive communities. Finally, recent literature discusses the capacity of the model to act as a trigger for urban development under the conception that cohesive and stable communities can have a positive effect in the larger neighbourhood fostering social integration.

## 2 – The case of the Uruguayan cooperative movement

Uruguayan Cooperative housing movement is one of the largest and more elaborated cooperatives experiences in the sector worldwide. It grows in the mid-60s from grassroots organizations, e.g. workers unions, and a group of architects interested in searching for new possibilities to face the shortage of housing for mid and lower income households. In this scenario, as a consequence of the strong pressure from these civil organizations and the successful result of a few cooperative housing initiatives seeing as promising from the government, a pioneer legal framework (Ley n°13728 del 13/12/1968: Plan nacional de viviendas)<sup>7</sup> was established in 1968<sup>8</sup> and remains until today as the protocol under which the housing cooperatives are developed. This experience has grown over the last fifty years to become the mainstream procedure for social housing provision in the country having a strong impact on the process of building Uruguayan cities.

This paper argues that one of the main reasons behind its success is the development of a model that proposes a deep interrelation among a specific governance model fostering citizen participation, a vision for urban and architectural development and strong state support. The creation of this normative framework established the state as a main actor which guides the entire process and establishes not only a procedure in order to obtain access to land and state funding, but also a broad set of architectural rules that relate to most of the physical aspects of the housing project, from the spatial organization within the units, to the size of the domestic and collective spaces.

Among its main achievements, it could be named its affordability, the system has achieved in recent years a final cost of around 50% when compared with other social housing models in Uruguay<sup>9</sup>, its

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<sup>6</sup> According to Dorit Fromm (FROMM, «Seeding Community». p 391) Social capital is “an intangible asset gained through informal trusted relationships. While not measured like ‘capital’ it does provide value through reciprocity, facilitating individual and community action” .

<sup>7</sup> Asamblea General, Poder Legislativo de la República Oriental del Uruguay., Ley 13.728. PLAN NACIONAL DE VIVIENDAS.

<sup>8</sup> The law was surrounded by a strong debate about the role of the state in relation to public policies in general, and specifically about housing provision. Uruguay, and South America in general, was living times of strong political mobilization. The social movement that pushed for this law can be related to a series of social movements around the world, like, for instance, May 68 in Paris.

<sup>9</sup> Nahoum, Benjamín, «El movimiento cooperativista del Uruguay. Autogestión, ayuda mutua, aporte propio, propiedad colectiva.», 43.

contribution towards the decommodification of housing by the development of alternative tenure models like the communal ownership of the buildings, its innovative approach to architectural and urban projects, especially in those developed in the years after the model was implemented, and its capacity to deliver cohesive and resilient housing environments, fostering social capital and resilient communities<sup>10</sup>. Most studies remark the multidimensionality of the system: the model proposes a method to articulate the provision of social housing with a process that builds community by empowering lower income citizens to participate in the definition of their own urban environment. In that sense, the cooperative housing model acts not only as an effective procedure to deliver affordable housing but also as an innovative governance model.

As many studies suggest, and the Uruguayan case can clearly testify, there is a correlation between the process of self-management and the production of cohesive and resilient social environments<sup>11</sup>. The autonomy of the cooperative group to collectively move forward their initiative is one of the central reasons behind the possibility to develop the potentials of the model. In the Uruguayan case, the will for scaling up the system led to define quite a rigid set of rules in order to easily define which developments should be funded by the model and to control the procedure of each cooperative by the governments agents. The first form of control regard the cost, and that is limited by the amount of the loan that the cooperative gets from the state. Then, the legal framework establishes also an extra set of control rules that relate to the architectural project: it defines the type of spaces allowed (living-rooms, bedrooms, kitchens and bathrooms) and doesn't discuss the possibility of including any other space that relates to not-dwelling activities such as work spaces, commercial stores, public facilities for the complex or the neighborhood or recreational facilities with the exception of a communal space which is explicitly defined in size in relation to the amount of units. In the same line of simplifying the spatial dimension of the dwelling, the normative defines a limit regarding the maximum area for each type of space and for the entire unit.

This paper argues that historical strong state guidance and support in the Uruguayan case implied a two-fold characteristic; on one hand it can be understood as its main virtue in the sense that it institutionalized the overall political support and habilitated the extensive application of the model, but on the other hand it has defined an extremely rigid normative framework which appears as one of the reasons for the recent process of ossification that cooperative housing projects are suffering.

### **3 – Contributions to rethink the Uruguayan cooperative system**

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<sup>10</sup> Machado, Gustavo., «Habitar las experiencias: aprendizajes y sociabilidad comunitaria en las cooperativas de vivienda en Uruguay».

<sup>11</sup> FROMM, «Seeding Community»; Williams, Jo, «Designing Neighbourhoods for Social Interaction: The Case of Cohousing: Journal of Urban Design: Vol 10, No 2».



The final chapter of this paper explores possible paths for the process of re-thinking the model by pointing out a series of debates and questions that intends to articulate the institutional framework and the built environment. These are understood as triggers, rather than recipes, to open discussions in a field that lacks reflection in the Uruguayan context.

### **Embedded autonomy. Spatial potentials of an increased design autonomy.**

Cooperative housing experience in Uruguay grows from a contradiction, it needed (and needs) state support while at the same time it requires a certain level of independence to maintain its central political principles and to be truly efficient. As Miazzo<sup>12</sup> states, in order to achieve a successful articulation of bottom-up initiatives with top-down procedures, is essential to limit the pre-conception of the outcome of policies that foster self-management “the institutions should provide support for open-ended and nonspecific processes (openness)”<sup>13</sup>.

In the specific case of Uruguay, regulations regarding cooperatives have started working as instruments for standardization rather than stimulus to effective design processes, enforcing almost a catalogue of urban elements rather than being developed as a tool to enable. The Uruguayan framework defines a maximum area for each unit according to the quantity of bedrooms<sup>14</sup>, this means that the size available to each household doesn't relate to the capacity of the cooperative to get better construction costs but to a fixed amount, which doesn't encourage innovation for better economic resources use. At the same time, the fact that the area of each unit is fixed works as an obstacle to explore new arrangements within the domestic space.

The rigidity regarding the architectural project doesn't relate only to a process of simplification of the domestic arrangement, but also has consequences in the urban environment that the cooperative proposes as it will be pointed out in the next part of this paper.

### **Cooperative housing as urbanism.**

Across Latin America urban segregation appears as a widespread phenomenon that defines a fragmented spatial organisation<sup>15</sup> with clear negative social consequences as “the denial of basic infrastructure and public services, (...) intense prejudice and discrimination, and higher exposure to violence.”<sup>16</sup> Is in this sense, that connection and accessibility in relation to urban upgrading and

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<sup>12</sup> Miazzo, *We Own the City*.

<sup>13</sup> Miazzo, 57.

<sup>14</sup> The area is set in 40 sqm for a one bedroom apartment and adds 15 sqm for each extra bedroom.

<sup>15</sup> Balbo, «Urban Planning and the Fragmented City of Developing Countries».

<sup>16</sup> Feitosa et al., «Global and local spatial indices of urban segregation», 300.

housing policies emerged as key topics at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century.<sup>17</sup> In the specific case of Uruguay, and its capital city Montevideo, while most studies showed its regional exceptionality as a socially integrated urbanity with early access to basic services and infrastructures during most of the 20th century<sup>18</sup>, that situation started to drift at the mid-90s and beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century as the result of a broad financial crisis and the lack of urban policies to face emerging problematics<sup>19</sup>. In this context, urban fragmentation became a key problem of Uruguayan built environment in recent times as many studies suggest<sup>20</sup>.

Cooperative housing movement grows from a contradictory urban dynamic, on one hand, it has a high potential to deliver social cohesion within its limits but, at the same time, it tends to strongly define its separation from the surroundings<sup>21</sup>. This characteristic appears of particular importance against the emerging problematics of segregation in Uruguayan cities. This situation is accentuated by the rigidity of the regulatory framework which establishes a mono-programmatic simplified approach to housing that lacks of institutional arrangements to include other stakeholders that can articulate the cooperative with a broader urban context. As other self-managed experiences show<sup>22</sup>, including non-residential activities in the complex have contributed to link the cooperative development with the neighborhood by defining a negotiated relationship between the inner cooperative community and the wider urban area.

With this in mind, this paper calls for the establishment of an institutional terrain that can coordinate different actors in order to include a variety of stakeholders that bring non-residential activities to the cooperative projects while habilitating a broader set of spatial strategies that could contribute to establish a more open relationship between the cooperative and the neighbourhood.

#### **4 - Current developments and experiences**

During the last years a few pilot practices have appeared in the Uruguayan context, pushing the boundaries of its historical experience. Those actions relate mostly with institutional procedures to

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<sup>17</sup> In this sense Favela Bairro programme in Rio de Janeiro, and transport infrastructure development like the Metrocable in Medellin can be taken as examples.

<sup>18</sup> Kaztman, Filgueira, y Errandonea, «La ciudad fragmentada. Respuesta de los sectores populares urbanos a las transformaciones del mercado y del territorio en Montevideo».

<sup>19</sup> Cecilio et al., *La gestión urbana en la generación de los tejidos residenciales de la periferia de Montevideo*.

<sup>20</sup> Machado, Gustavo., «Habitar las experiencias: aprendizajes y sociabilidad comunitaria en las cooperativas de vivienda en Uruguay», 29.

<sup>21</sup> Stavrides, *Common Space*.

<sup>22</sup> Benenati, Santiago, «Cooperative urbanity.»

land acquisition<sup>23</sup> which would give cooperatives the possibility of locating in central areas of Uruguayan cities, and in doing so, increasing its capacities of exercising the right to the city and access to adequate services and infrastructure. Also, during 2019, a pilot programme from the local government of Montevideo has started to develop a protocol for the rehabilitation of abandoned empty urban properties<sup>24</sup> searching for strategies for the densification and intensification of use in central areas of the city. Taking this initiative as a starting point, a group of researchers from the School of Architecture are currently working in the development of a pilot programme for abandoned urban properties management, which includes among other initiatives the articulation of cooperative housing developments with civil non-residential initiatives, under the intention, among others, of fostering connections within the urban context of cooperative developments.

The case of Cooperative housing in Uruguay appears as a complex system of housing provision developed over decades with a series of remarkable achievements, nevertheless, while there is abundant literature concerning the benefits of cooperative housing, a lack of research about the difficulties for developing further the model has been detected, especially regarding the Uruguayan context. With this in mind, this paper expects to open the discussion and contribute to what seems to be an emerging focus of interest within the discipline.

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<sup>23</sup> Ministry of Housing, Land Planning and y Environment, «National strategy for urban land access (Estrategia Nacional de Acceso al Suelo Urbano)».

<sup>24</sup> «Programa Fincas Abandonadas | Intendencia de Montevideo.»

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# Temporary Collectives

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## 1 Introduction

The following design research reflects on collective practices in Beirut- in their present expressions and potential futures, as a condition to be reclaimed and as an instrument of positive transformation in the city today.

Interpreting the collective in Beirut- as practices in the public realm; is paradoxical: Indeed, the city's public life is mostly enacted and expressed in the private sphere. This is mainly due to the lack of supportive public infrastructures and to the governing policies of Beirut's sequential municipalities, who encouraged neoliberal private development models to the detriment of public interest and communal spaces<sup>1</sup>. As a result, there is a sharp absence of collective equipments in Beirut today- such as parks, squares, public transport- that could have nurtured collective experiences of moving, recreating and coming together in the city. Furthermore, practices such as privatization<sup>2</sup>, commodification, security and exclusivity of public space are reshaping the experience of the city to one that is fragmented along sectarian, social and economic strata.

Yet since 2017, Lebanon is witnessing an unprecedented economic crisis that resulted in a complete halt of the real estate sector; with high rates of vacancies in the building stock<sup>3</sup>.

In such context, the research starts by looking at existing collaborative practices in Beirut as emerging forms of collectivity. Such cases have managed to escape formal channels of development and planning, in order to create temporary investments and yield collective experiences in the city. They include Mansion, a cultural co-op which emerged from a barter agreement between owner and occupants and Antwork, a co-working model which hacks existing buildings.

Building on these practices and taking the ongoing crisis as a departure point, the design research considers the real estate hiatus as an opportunity to test new models for development in Beirut; proposing to use vacancies as an opening to adopt new urban profiling processes that trigger collaborative investments and draw public engagement.

In the context of an undermined public realm, the research posits that collective experiences can be enacted in the private sphere in Beirut through a temporary reuse approach, and through a collaborative process that could be an alternative to formal planning models.

## Part 1| Collaborative Practices

The past decade witnessed the growth of several collaborative practices in Beirut, which created platforms for working and producing in the city that were not possible before. Part of a global shift to a more equitable and value-driven economy that is currently enacted in different cities around the world<sup>4</sup>, such practices take a local significance in Beirut, where they fill a critical gap between the lack of state initiatives and a profit-driven private sector, and provide alternatives for collective experiences. In each case, the research analyzes their different characteristics (model, audience, modes of operations, interactions) and their negotiation between individual modes of practice and collective experience.

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<sup>1</sup> A. Saksouk-Sasso and N. Bekdache, with inputs from M.Ayoub, 2015, September 01, Private interest closing social space? A critical analysis of Lebanon's real estate sector, HLRN Publications. Retrieved from [https://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/Soksouk-Sasso\\_Bekdache\\_Real\\_Estate\\_EN\\_2015.pdf](https://www.hlrn.org/img/documents/Soksouk-Sasso_Bekdache_Real_Estate_EN_2015.pdf)

<sup>2</sup> H.Ghattas. 2015, March 17. "A city without a shore: Rem Koolhaas, Dalieh and the paving of Beirut's coast". retrieved from <https://www.theguardian.com/cities/2015/mar/17/rem-koolhaas-dalieh-beirut-shore-coast>

<sup>3</sup> T.Schellen. 2019, September 09. Questioning Lebanese real estate as an investment proposition. Retrieved from <https://www.executive-magazine.com/special-report/questioning-lebanese-real-estate-as-an-investment-proposition>

<sup>4</sup> Compendium for the Civic Economy: What our Cities, Towns and Neighborhoods Can Learn from 25 Trailblazers. Publisher: Valiz/Trancity 2013.

## Case 1 | Antwork



Figure 1. Axonometric of Antwork in its context. source: author

### *A model for flexibility<sup>5</sup>*

“Antwork” initiative started in 2015 as an answer to a group of start-ups who needed an alternative to traditional office buildings. The business model developed as an “instant enabler” for this group and for the growing startup audience in Beirut, offering them the ability to launch in “zero time” thanks to flexible workspaces, shared amenities, business services, structural support, as well as fast access. Most importantly, Antwork was based on rental rather than ownership of space, as a low-risk model that could grow in many locations. Antwork would “incubate” host buildings, rented out from their original owners, who would refurbish them into co-working spaces based on Antwork’s specific criteria and qualities. A dedicated team would manage the space and transform it into a platform for startups through a dedicated mobile application, that handles members’ access, offering on-demand tariffs that range from one-day pass to full-time access; with different complementary tools like space booking, networking, linking members to neighborhood services. This flexible model enabled a more efficient use of the space, ensuring financial viability and encouraging communication.

### *Growing a Community*

Opening in 2016, the Kantari location was the first physical prototype of this model, with a resident community of 250 persons and 5000 memberships. It spans over two mid-century residential buildings that were converted to flexible co-working spaces, with a shared courtyard. Like many co-working spaces, Antwork was structured around collaboration and its common spaces act as the backbone of its campus, allowing the different members to gather, interact, collaborate, and “grow a community”. Common spaces are powered by regular daily activities in addition to events targeting a citywide audience and designed to grow a collective knowledge ecosystem. Furthermore, Antwork was successful at linking global with local talent through its public program, in order to nurture an active community of contributors, empower local initiatives and connect diverse entrepreneurial cultures with valuable learning experiences.

### *Financial Co-Investment*

Antwork has relied on diverse investment sources in the beginning, with micro-financing schemes that allow supporters to invest small amounts of money. Later financing included a fund, with operational costs gradually covered by membership fees. A shared characteristic of these financing methods is that they rely on the building of trust within dense social networks that are motivated by Antwork’s mission, leading to the overall success of this collective in Beirut.

<sup>5</sup> Based on an interview with Ms Zina Bdeir Dajani, co-founder and CEO of Antwork, on 13<sup>th</sup> February 2019.

## Case 2 | Mansion <sup>6</sup>

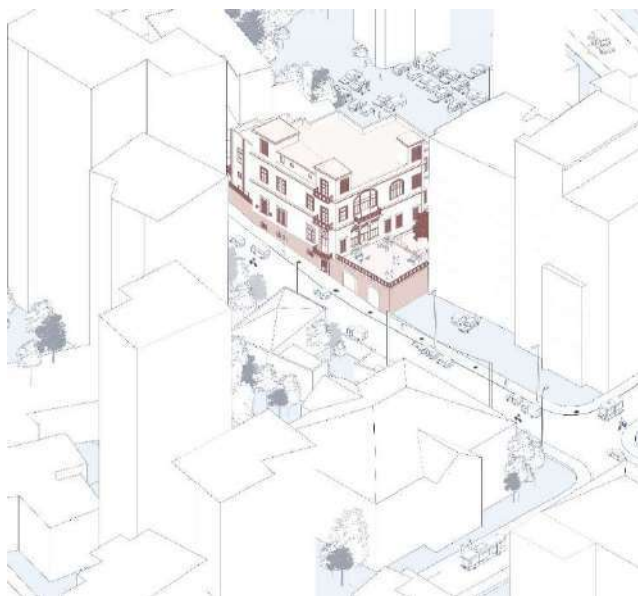


Figure 2. Axonometric of Mansion in its context. source: author

As opposed to Antwork, Mansion embodies an informal, organic approach of a collective occupying a historic villa in Zuqaq al-Blat, Beirut, with a deliberate will to stay “off-the-grid”. The villa was falling in ruins due to decades of vacancy, and the building owner lacked funds to rehabilitate and register his property in official registries. Mansion’s founder was in search for a property that he could rent at a low price, to grow a cooperative in Beirut that hosts artist studios and collective space. After countless searches, the founder came across the villa owner, and formed an agreement with him to legally “squat” the space in return for its maintenance.

### *Social Capital*

Since 2012, the building has slowly transformed into a shared initiative, conscientiously maintained by its inhabitants and visitors; a slow building that avoided the vicious circle of post-war reconstruction, which typically demolished historic structures that stood in the way of maximum exploitation. In contrast, Mansion became an experiment in collective dwelling; creating engagement, ownership and social capital for the reused heritage and reclaiming the divested space for collective habitation, access, encounter, and cultural production.

Mansion’s community gradually reached its peak with 20 residents—artists, researchers, architects, activists, curators, designers—operating out of 10 studios spaces, sharing with the public a library, meeting room, projection room, silk-screen print station, sound studio, communal hall, kitchen and outdoor garden. In these communal spaces, Mansion hosts diverse public events that connect with people from diverse backgrounds, turning it into a cherished collective in the local community and in the wider creative scene.

### *Civic Economy*

Liberated from the obligation to maximize revenues, Mansion’s organizing strategy was based on a barter economy and social capital. Operating costs of the common areas were covered equally by residents, with contributions from the common space’s users and donations from friends. Through such strategy, the cooperation showcased an innovative approach in collaborative investment, and is currently aiming to find other host buildings to grow the cooperation network from an initial experiment to a formal network.

<sup>6</sup> Information collected from two interviews with Mr Ghassan Maasri, founder of Mansion (February 2019), and Mansioners Jad Melki, Ghaith Abi Ghanem, Ayman Hassan, Balsam Abou Zour ( July 2019)

## Part 2 | Temporary Collectives

### *Context*

In their book “Urban Catalysts, Strategies for temporary uses”<sup>7</sup>, the authors notice that gaps for temporary uses usually open up in a context where the real estate market is weak and there is no demand for new exploitations-like in Beirut today; more specifically in areas that are characterized by a moment of standstill between the collapse of previous uses and the beginning of new development. That is the case of Beirut’s north eastern district, which includes the neighborhoods of Mar Mikhael, Medawwar and Karantina. We propose to use this interim condition to implement community oriented scenarios through the temporary re-use of vacant properties across the district.



Figure 3. Lot vacancy typologies in Beirut’s north eastern district. Source: Author

### *New processes and organizations*

In order to turn vacancies into opportunities for collaborative practices, it is necessary to create a new urban profiling process, and new methods of organizations.

The process starts by the creation of an intermediary agency that will act as a mediator between different cultures<sup>8</sup>: investors, community groups, municipality and owners; to facilitate the temporary reuse of vacant properties. But most importantly, such agency is central to establish key connections between catalytic stakeholders and users, essential for initiating collaborations. These third-party agents catalogue vacancies in the district, detecting available opportunities, and create a digital database made available to the public through a phone app, which matches investors and citizens to available opportunities.

By including their vacancies in the database, owners agree to short-term rentals in a barter or low-rate agreement, in order to test community-oriented programs and raise the value of the properties at the same time. Finally, the agency stipulates agreements for the temporary re-occupation of the area, making it available to short-term reuse.

<sup>7</sup> Philipp Oswalt, Klaus Overmeyer, Philipp Misselwitz. *Urban Catalyst: The Power of Temporary Use*. DOM Publishers, Berlin 2013

<sup>8</sup> In *Urban Catalyst: The Power of Temporary Use*, authors mention temporary use agents as intermediate. Some agents could be intermediate agencies but also highly motivated individuals with close ties to municipal/official stakeholders.



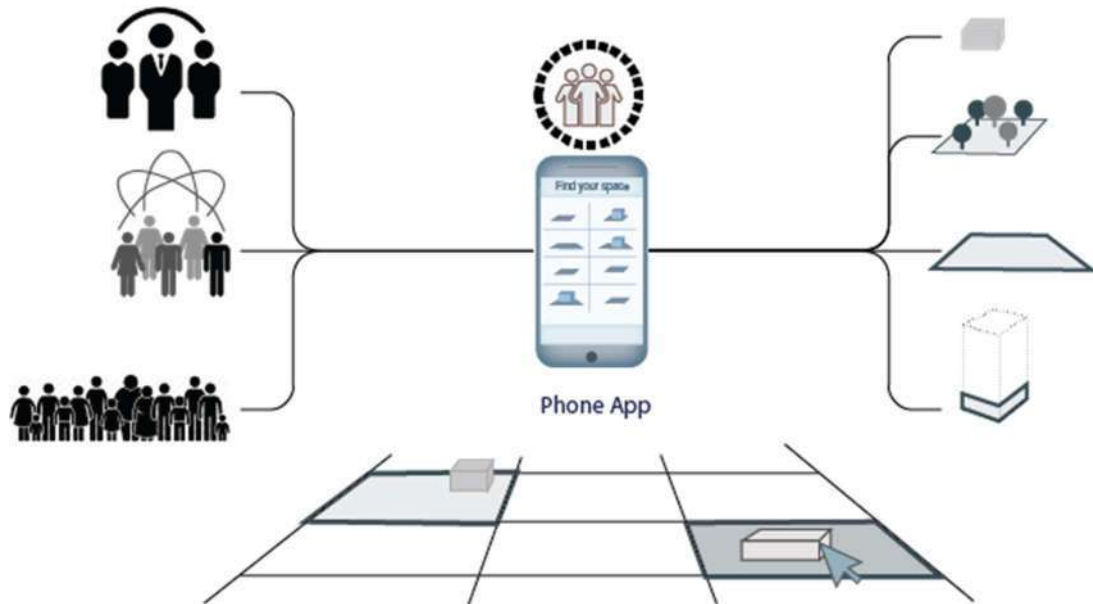


Figure 4. Intermediate agency linking investors to available vacancies through a digital database. Source: Author

An essential precondition to kick-start the process is to grow active residents' groups at different scales, that include a fair mix of owners / tenants. At the neighborhood scale, this re-organization of individuals into collectives happens often with the aid of digital media platforms and professionals who have taken up the role of community organizers, fundraisers, project developers. Often initiated by these catalytic actors, collectives could develop their activities through collaborative experiments, like hacking vacant spaces for temporary use activities, neighborhood improvement, social commons, communal coops, ect...

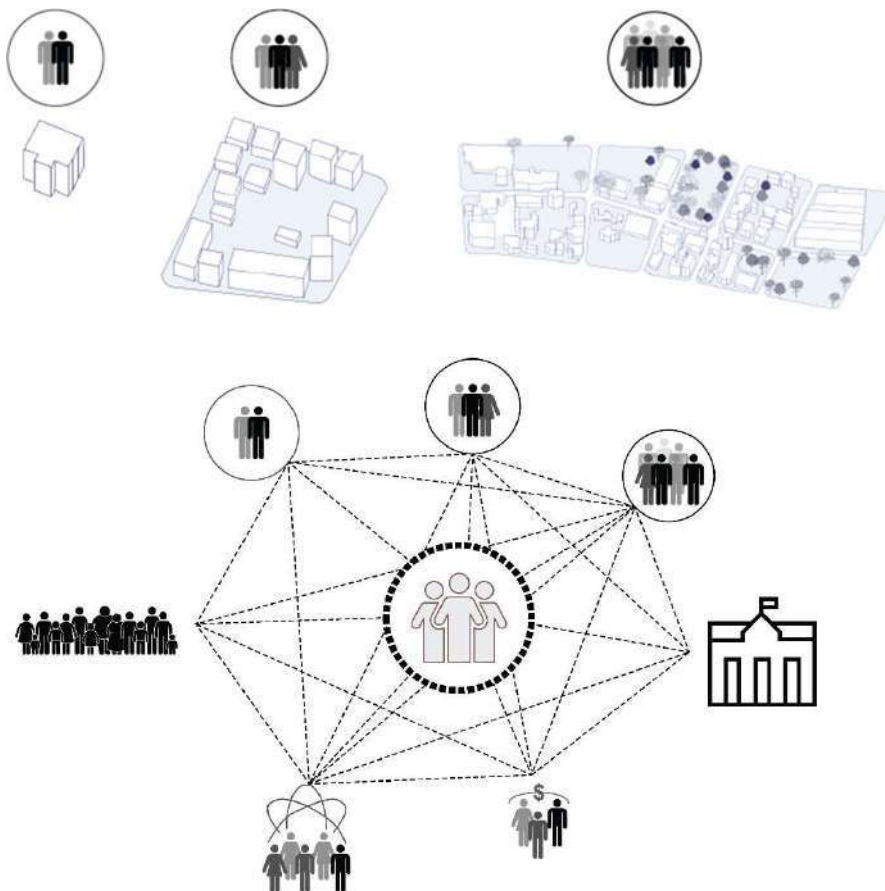


Figure 5: new modes of organization: re-organizing citizens into collectives with the aid of catalytic actors and platforms. Source: Author

## Scenarios

Through the following speculations, the research focuses on vacancies with visual exposure and public impact on the district. They are presented by vacancy typologies and temporary reuse possibilities.

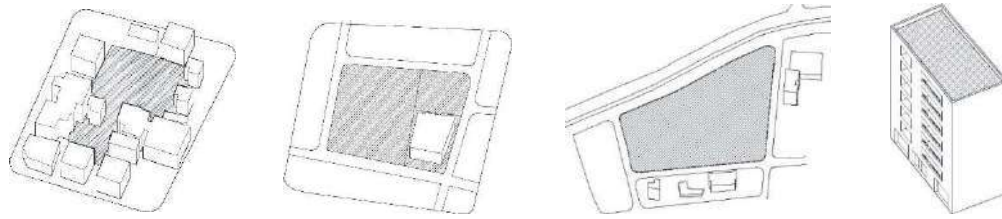


Figure 6. Vacancy typologies from left to right: residual lot space, inner neighborhood lot, exposed lot, building. Source: Author.

### Context 1: residual lot spaces

Residual lot spaces are a predominant typology in residential parcels; small amounts of leftovers in adjacent lots usually too small to use individually, but that make a sizeable interior space when combined together. The aim would be to launch -through the lot committee; a collaborative process for the implementation of shared commons that could include gardening and leisure space, among others. Triggered by catalysts such as community organizers, the process would start through a collective fund with lot users as investors, and grants from agriculture and civic ngos. The collective will be envisioned through participatory workshops, implemented and maintained through volunteering.

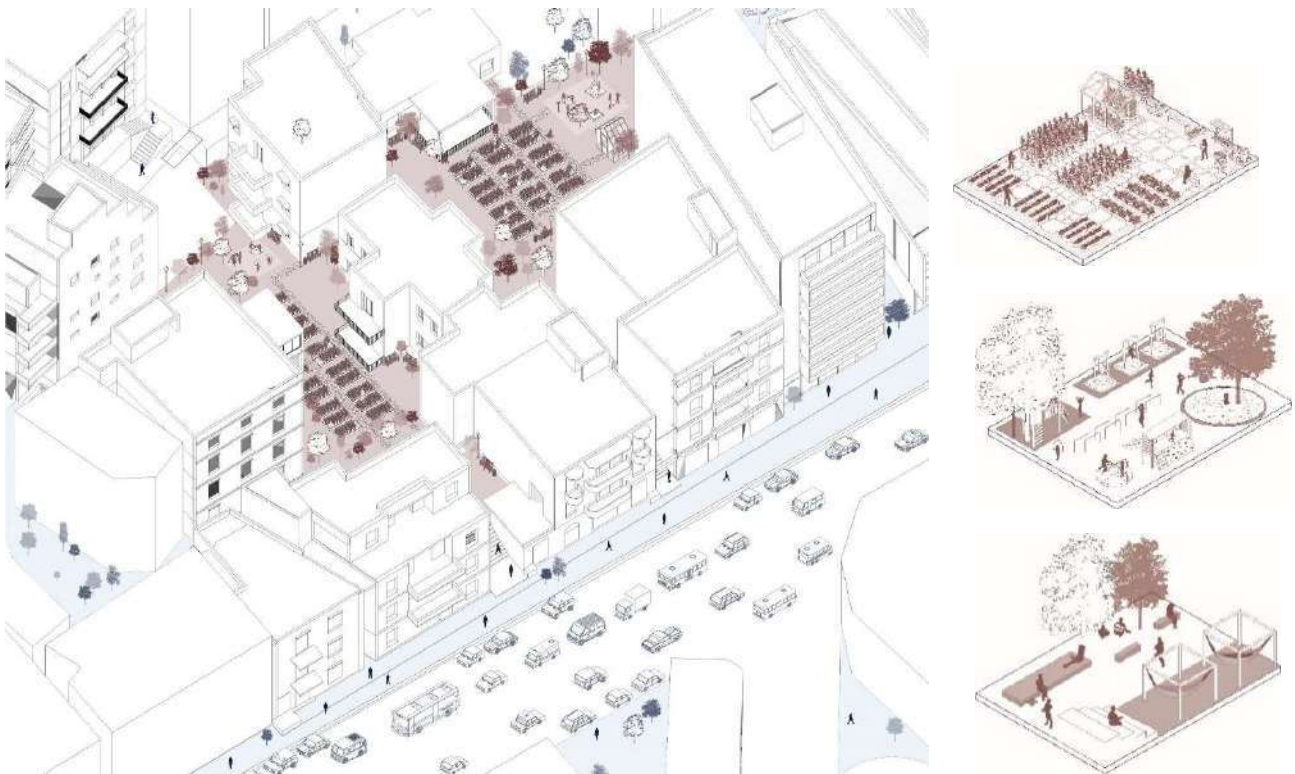


Figure 7. Left, community gardening on a residual lot space in Mar Mikhael. Right, typologies of reuse: communal gardening (above), communal playground (middle), communal amenities (bottom). Source: author

### Context 2: vacant lot in inner neighborhoods

Vacancies situated in inner neighborhoods can be the recipient of uses aimed at local users. Typologies include leisure (community playgrounds, sports microstructures or temporary installations), moveable services (after schools, health services, awareness campaigns...), temporary workshops, public structure to host various events. Reuse programs in such sites usually attract similar uses to nearby sites, influencing the development of clusters. Using the intermediate agency to match their needs, investors targeting such sites are usually institutions (health ministry), community development ngos (after school volunteering, youth programs, continuing education) or private investors (startups and creative entrepreneurs).

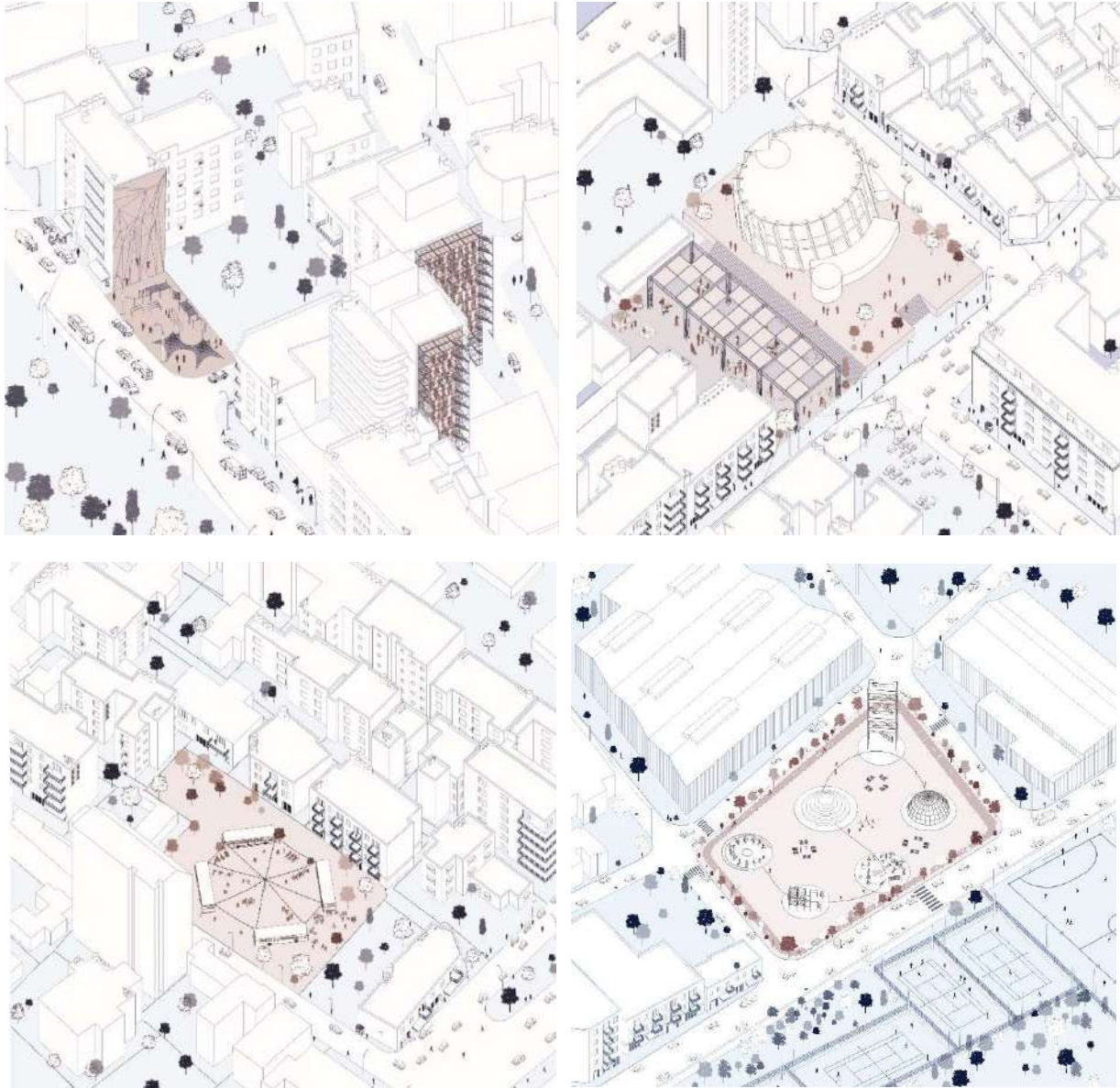
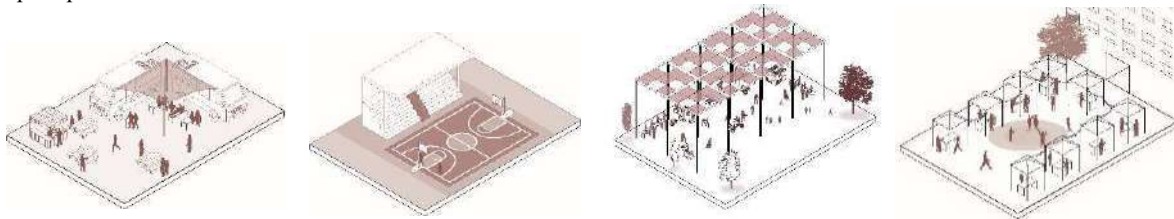


Figure 8. Above: top left, outdoor gym and climbing wall on an empty lot on Armenia Street. Top right, public roof by Mar Mikhael Church. bottom left: moveable service on a vacant site in Medawwar. bottom right: fitness trails near sports facility in Medawwar. Below, typologies of reuse from left to right: moveable clinic, public roof, sports microstructures, repurposed open space.



### Context 3: vacant infrastructural lots

These sites have a prime exposure to the city’s main roads, and their ownership is mostly public. With the state as an owner, collaborative processes are more diverse and public in nature, such as the development of useable public art, public amenities and programs that raise the quality of life, joint public-private events and subsidized services that address citywide users. Typologies include as temporary structures, workshops, multifunctional shading to double for parking and the hosting of fairs, second- hand reuse markets, urban amenities, reuse old railyards as space for collective events, festivals and urban camping.

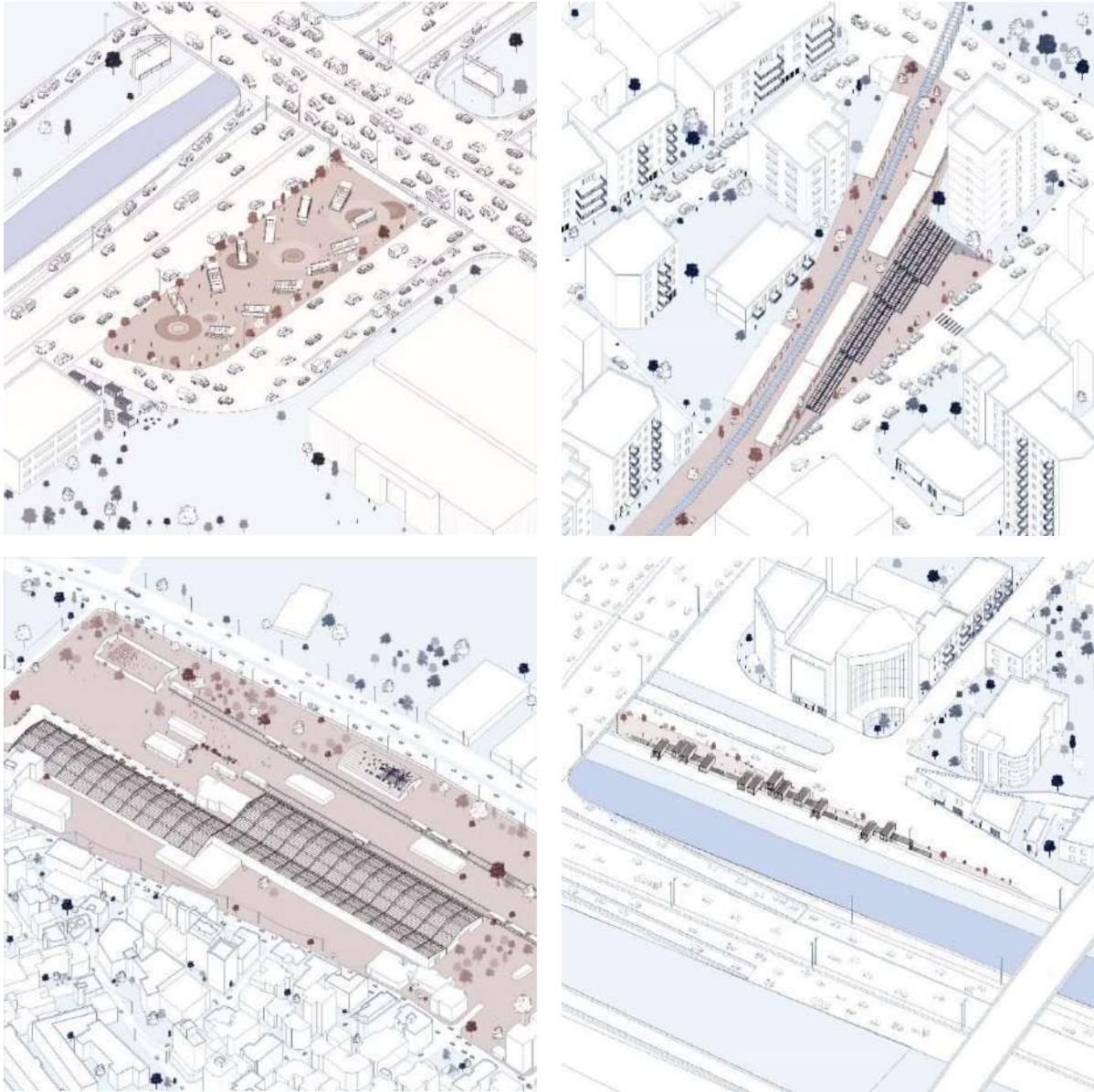
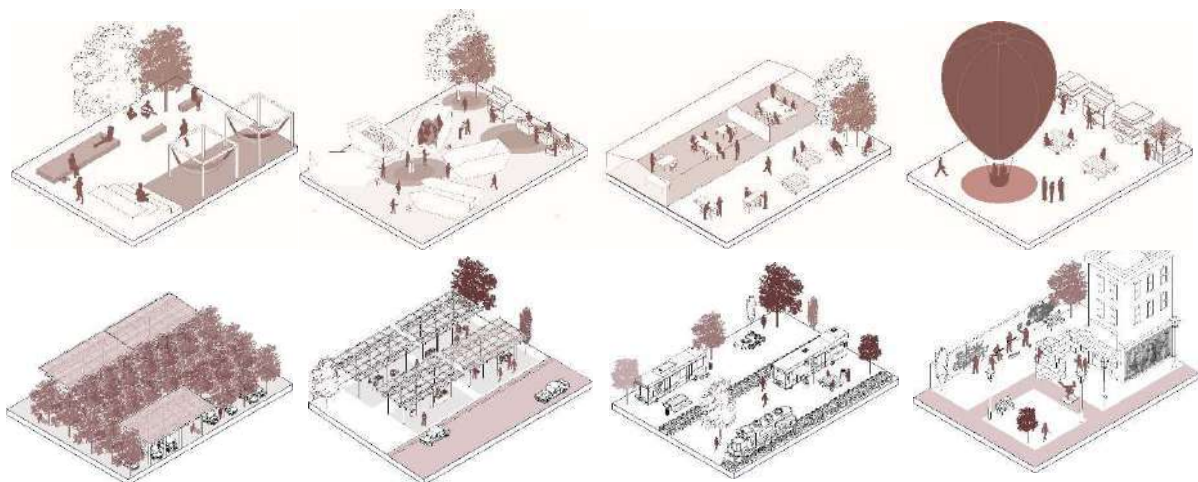


Figure 9. Above: top left, second hand fair on an infrastructural leftover by the highway. Top right, public amenities by Mar Mikhael train tracks. bottom left: festival grounds on Mar Mikhael train station. bottom right: pop up workshops and exhibition spaces by the Beirut River channel.  
 Below: typologies of reuse from top left to bottom right: public amenities, second hand market, temporary workshops, recreational programs, multifunctional shading, temporary sheds, reuse of abandoned structures, urban art.



## Context 4: vacant building

Stakeholders of such vacancies involve building owners' associations. Investments target vacant parts of the building (the reuse of a party wall, or a vacant roof) or its whole repurposing. Scenarios include vertical agriculture, urban wallpapers, gathering spaces, cultural collectives, shared working, communal housing and associated uses.

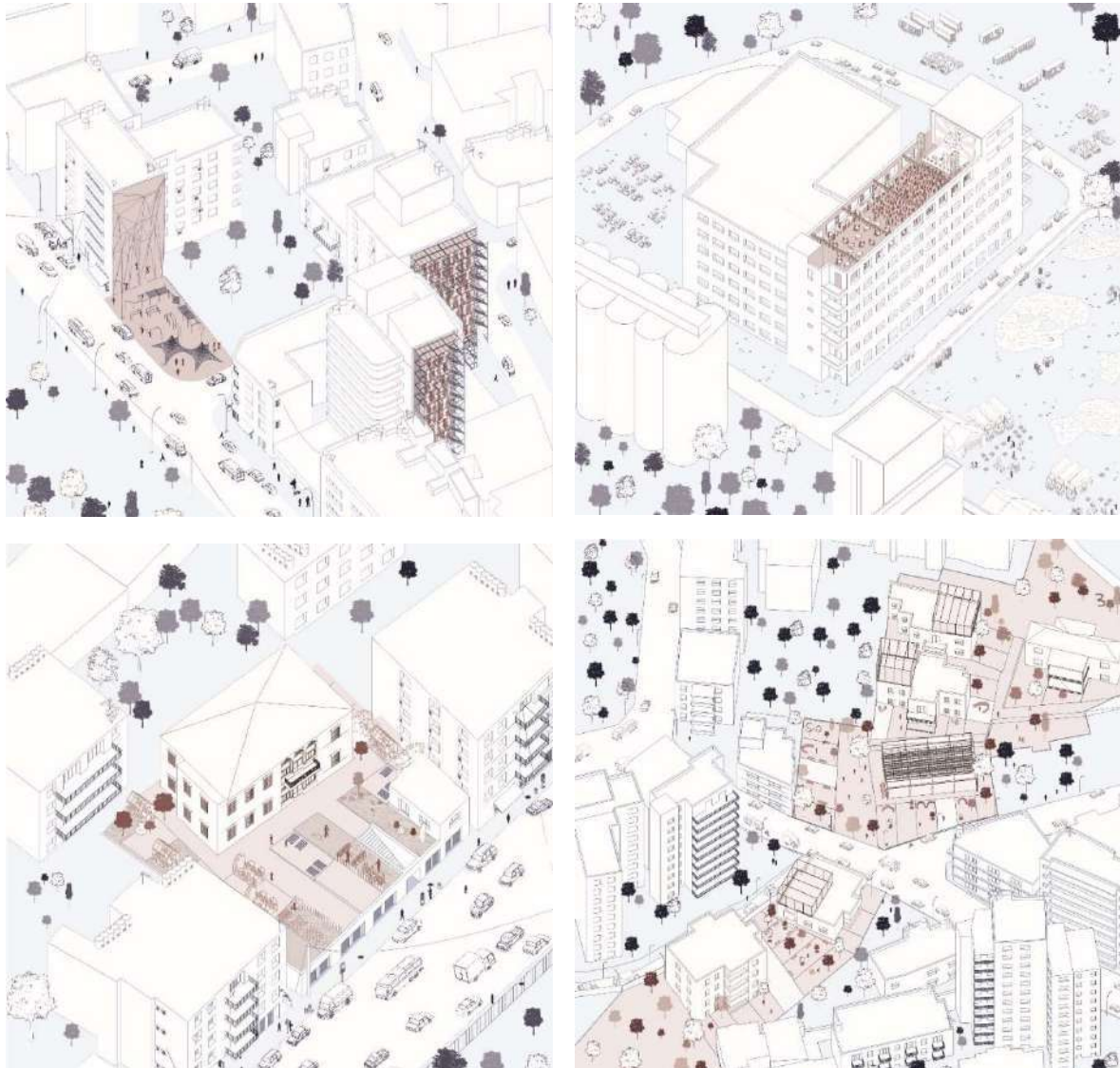


Figure 10. Above: top left, vertical agriculture and climbing facilities on party walls. Top right, gathering space on a postindustrial rooftop in Karantina. bottom left: repurposed historical house and garden as cultural collective in Mar Mikhael. bottom right: repurposed co-working spaces and park on former Fouad Boutros highway's expropriated lots.

## Conclusion

In the context of a weak real estate market and the absence of formal planning processes, the research posits that the temporary reuse approach is relevant to Beirut due to its flexibility to accommodate the needs of citizens on the short term and its adaptation to uncertainty and fluctuating changes on the long-term. But most importantly, its greatest potential is that it can allow citizens to participate in the making of the city and increase the number of spaces and privately-run programs that would act as temporary collectives for the city.

## Slow Urbanism in Ho Chi Minh City: Experimenting the possibility of a metropolitan garden

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**Contribution for** “UCL Urban Laboratory conference ‘At the frontiers of the urban’” London, UK from May 10 to 12 nov, 2019.

The talk will present



Vietnam’s economic capital, Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) is caught in an intensive “development” process, supported by government, real estate sector and international aid agencies, and fuelled by a growing demography. Consequently, areas historically considered unfit for construction are now under the pressure of development (Harms, 2016), regardless of their geographic and climatic role in environmental risk mitigation (Daum, 2019).

Located relatively close to the centre, the peninsula of Binh Quoi, Binh Thanh District, is such a territory. Subject to a series of masterplans awaiting funding, Binh Quoi has been frozen for over 20 years. It appears as a rare green “island” with numerous gardens, agricultural lands, recreational ponds, and few abandoned zones. Meanwhile, with no right to develop, sell or improve their land, residents live in a seemingly precarious situation, yet they keep this territory alive. This situation of Binh Quoi is easily labeled by mainstream discourses as “late in development”. But a closer look at the area shows another reality: nor can it be seen as abandoned or wasteland; rather it is an inhabited space - rural and productive. In this context, our research-action project used ‘slow urbanism’ as a tool to develop a collective thought about the territory, questioning its resources and resourcefulness to develop as a metropolitan garden.

With this paper, we propose to explore the philosophy, means and tools of this experimentation, and its associated challenges in the specific context of HCMC urban development and the post-socialist economy. More specifically, we show how slow urbanism offers to inquire into the geography, landscape and climate of Binh Quoi, before revealing the human intelligence and capacity to adapt to the territory through vernacular architecture. As the research comes along the architecture & urbanism festival Playtime, it integrates experimentation. Knowledge is exchanged when building temporary installations and playgrounds using vernacular materials, as well as during participative activities, both enabling neighbours, researchers and participants to discuss the living environment in Binh Quoi, and its existing qualities. Finally, the research focuses on concepts of vulnerability, isolation, resistance and beauty as responding and complementary processes that reflect on the resilience of the natural environment, humans, and their interconnections.

### **Thinking a contemporary urbanism:**

‘Slow urbanism’ is an experimentation focused on a new way to involve the population in the debates and decisions concerning their living environment. It is based on a geographical and climatic context, human settlements, their culture, local economy, landscape, initiatives; and it considers the coupling of all these elements as the basic resources to think a contemporary urbanism. This can sound like an evidence, but the reality of contemporary urban development shows us otherwise. The issue is then to settle an action which allows to give access to this culture of ‘living environment’ (2). Forms of this action can be various -

installation, events, debates, cultural exchanges - but all aim at understanding the local economy, and bridging with local initiatives to imagine the future.

The goal of this experimentation is not to adopt a position antagonist to that of the real estate vision; rather it is to create a situation in a geographical context, with the local reality, the economy, the richness of the landscape, the local resources and social organisation, and to try to settle in the time of the event a short moment where a smooth democracy is blooming to create and imagine a co-constructed future. It is important to understand it as an experimentation of crossing knowledge and not the adoption of an antagonist position.

### **The urban and architectural situation:**

The Binh Quoi area, located in a meander of the Saigon river close to the centre of HCMC, prevails as a rural territory. Its residents develop fishponds, snail farms, coconut plantations, rice paddies, lotus ponds, and a varied local economy composed of crafts, engine repair, kennels, slaughterhouses, services (such as domestic helpers who live at their clients' place during the week and come back there on week-ends), retirement... It functions like a territory linked to the city, providing a certain complementarity to Ho Chi Minh City - a 'faubourg' yet quite central.

A lot of these economic initiatives could be considered as a last resistance before eradication and real estate development, but the people we met during our action and research explained it otherwise: they try to resist, to create new agriculture forms, to prove the potential to keep this territory as a rural exploitation - on the long run. If the inhabitants consider this part of HCMC as a resource which allows them to produce and create economy, they need it and try to keep it, and consequently sustain the richness and the shape of the site. The urban and architectural forms of these settlements on the territory illustrate as much an adaptation to a constraint (the ban on building) as a specific link to a territory-resource.

The idea was to create an installation in Binh Quoi area, that should necessarily be reversible as a reflection of this observed context. With a difficultly-obtained authorisation to be on the land, we too had to respect the rule not to build anything durable. It was therefore imperative to find local, common materials that could be easily dismantled and recycled and exchanged after the event. Financial viability was also important, as the project was supported by



crowdfunders, volunteers, the University of Technology of HCMC and a grant from the “Villa Saigon” Programme, French Institute in Vietnam.

### **Scenography of a site:**

The project took place in a rented field and aimed at creating a playground composed by new vernacular architecture pavilions built with local materials. Mutable, the pavilions created spaces for open-air cinema, discussions, meetings, workshops, while the playgrounds were designed for both children and adults. An important aspect of the project was to create beauty and a specific atmosphere from these vernacular materials and the addition of local elements - the sounds of wind-chimes made by a local craftsman, the blues and greens of fishnets transformed into hammocks, the peaceful swaying of swings made of cajeput wood and bike tubes. These reversible installations were settled in a field of bushes, which was preserved in its original shape and occupied by cows and pigs!

Strolling on the site developed an awareness of the local landscape, the possibility to observe the countryside, the quality of an architecture made with raw and common materials. It created a familiar atmosphere with designed and tested prototypes in cajeput wood all around the festival site.

This field became a public space for 10 days, which was sincerely difficult to imagine and organise in Ho Chi Minh City. We were in the middle of this metropolis, creating a specific moment of culture, of landscape consideration, by exchanging moments with farmers, workers, fishermen, and inhabitants, debating about the evolution of this territory, attempting to understand through surveys what was positive, what was considered as a value.



### Smooth activism through workshops and practices:

Once the site was organised and settled, the pavilions and playgrounds were built, activities, could take place. Discussions, film screenings, workshops, sketch walks, games were organised and to name a few (4):

- Screening of the documentary “Milieu”, by Damien Faure, which develops on Augustin Berque’s concept of the “geographical human” (3) the idea that geographics inform a specific way of human installation, notice the cleverness of these humans to always choose an adequate place to settle their homes, and organise a climate-related agriculture and stocking method;
- Discussion on the value of vernacular rural and urban settlements as a courageous recycling movement in architecture;
- Workshops to discover the value of nature as a fabulous source of medicinal knowledges, poetical inspiration to be, to live, to be together.
- Workshops to reflect on ecological material such as fabricating bricks from sugarcane waste;
- Discussion on the old trash collection and recycling networks developed in Vietnam (Dong Nat);
- Banquet where neighbours could share their recipes and own knowledges.



The main idea was to create a connection, to provoke a dialogue with the residents. We didn't aim at making a “busy” festival that would attract a lot of people from the centre and scare off local residents. Rather, the festival proposed small-scale actions with various perspectives on the territory. The relative isolation of Binh Quoi played in favour of this preferred low-participation. Temporally speaking, we chose to have activities taking place on week-ends

only, giving a week of “breathing” to the site - an open window for potential reuse and transformation by the neighbours. Creating a culture about this living environment, we exposed one interpretation to the neighbours, passers-by, participants, awaiting for their feedback, which was formulated through:

- participation: spontaneously visiting the site, once, twice - sometimes daily! -; adults bringing their children to the playgrounds or the activities; kids taking possession of the playgrounds; to neighbours animating activities (such as the neighbours banquet);
- comments: neighbours inviting us to their place for lunch and in order to discuss more privately the installations, project, their feelings;
- behaviours: a less “positive” feedback - the stealing of elements during the week off; the collective disassembling of the site once the festival over - tested the limits of the “commons”.

This event, a form of experimentation of slow urbanism could create small moments of culture, exchange of ideas, discussion, altogether forming a soft democracy.

### **Forms of resistance:**

Reflecting on this event, its responses and the accumulated observations and testimonies, we defined a series of concepts that help better understand the relation of residents to their living environment:

- Vulnerability: from geography to urban planning strategies, strong constraints are imposed upon the residents of Binh Quoi. Yet, they accept this situation and transform it into a resource. From dying rice paddies to attractive lotus ponds, from “poor” materials to rich aesthetics, from difficult childhoods to passionate lives, vulnerability grounds stories to find balance, harmony;
- Isolation: The idea of Binh Quoi as an island marks the imaginary of most people in the city, and often provokes negative associations. But the lack of connectivity to the outside enables a stronger network of invisible links inside the territory: an economy, a social organisation, a culture: people play with it to transform the island into a semi-wild semi-domesticated garden, protected from the pervasive aches of the city;

- Resistance: in this rural territory, inhabitants develop their own economy, nurture their territory which appears to them as a resource: as they protect it, they make sense and inscribe their relation to their living environment in the geography, temporality and landscape, sustaining its richness;
- Beauty: besides the beauty of the natural environment, the picturesque rural, that contrasts with the intensity of the metropolis, beauty emerges from humans' adaptation to the territory. The poetics of this adaptation and the beauty that is created at the scale of the daily routine appears in practices, architectures... Making beauty appears as a minimal attempt to settle, physically and aesthetically claim a link to the land.

### **Revealing the dispossession of the land:**

In the context of Binh Quoi, we created urban and architectural situations that can be understood as smooth activism by practice. The combination of both research and action defines "slow urbanism". We attempt to experiment several approaches, forms of actions and type of projects, but with a sustained goal to enhance a smooth democracy, exchanges of culture, and an understanding of different and positive aspects in order to upgrade a territory to a contemporary living environment.



Finally, slow urbanism develops experimentations to raise awareness that the current trends of urban development contribute to dispossessing humans of their responsibility towards their living environment. The environment has always been a resource for humans, a relation which forced them in return to value, develop and protect it. This dispossession disrupted the

environmental concern and it seems to us to be a main element contributing to the ecological collapse we are observing today. Through these experimentations and events, slow urbanism attempts to raise awareness about the possibility to share with the territories' actors and policies in order to imagine together a sustainable future.

## 3C-2.3: Beyond Informality

**Chair:** Dr Catalina Ortiz, Associate Professor, The Bartlett Development Planning Unit, UCL

**Discussant:** Dr Tatiana Thieme, Associate Professor, UCL Geography

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**Towards more responsive urban governance: embracing informality in times of uncertainty**

David Corbett, PhD candidate, Queensland University of Technology

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**Experiencing urban shrinkage in a declining historical neighbourhood: the role of social capital in inhabitants' trajectories and perceptions**

Solène Le Borgne, PhD candidate, University of Amsterdam

Manuscript not available

**Conceptualizing the 'spatial status' of Groups**

Dr Yosef Jabareen, Assistant Professor, Faculty of Architecture and Town Planning, Technion — Israel Institute of Technology

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**A decolonial critique of Critical Urban Theory in the Andes**

Martin Mejia Tamariz, PhD candidate, Nottingham Trent University

# Towards More Responsive Urban Governance: Embracing Informality in Times of Uncertainty

## Abstract

Urbanisation puts pressure on infrastructure, natural resources and space. In-migration and increasing contestation for a decreasing pool of resources contribute to uncertainty and insecurity. Conventional forms of governance and planning that assume predictable patterns of growth have been found wanting in contemporary cities. Neglected and disenfranchised citizens engage in informality, appropriation and insurgency to create livelihoods and improve their daily lived experiences. These forms of agency contribute to the 'grit' and micro-level dynamism of cities. As a valuable resource for collaboration and instigating change, these processes are misunderstood and rarely encouraged successfully. Top-down and rigid governance inhibits engagement with context-specific challenges, including marginalisation. This paper explores the capacity required for urban governance and institutions to engage effectively with emerging local issues and alternative expressions of agency. We critique existing models of governance to identify flaws resulting in the perpetuation of marginalisation. The lead author conducted semi-structured interviews with built environment professionals from Cape Town, South Africa and Logan, Australia. The findings offer insight into how context shapes the structures of urban governance in two very different urban settings. We report on the characteristics of current governance approaches, which hinder inclusive engagement. We use initial insights from fieldwork to propose how urban governance and those networked within it could better respond to hyperlocal challenges, collaborate with the local citizenry and affect long-term, inclusive change.

## Introduction

Urban governance has experienced a surge in interest in both academia and practice. Driving this is the recognition of cities as critical sites to address contemporary challenges including climate change, inequality and mass migration (da Cruz, Rode, and McQuarrie 2019) - as demonstrated by the urban focus of the UN Sustainable Development Goals (Pieterse 2017)). Pierre (2011) defines urban governance as "the interplay between state and society and the extent to which collective projects can be achieved through joint public and private mobilisation of resources."

The expansion of informality and other forms of citizen agency to produce cities has given rise to new avenues of research regarding local governance capacity (Hodder 2016; Jaffe and Koster 2019). Alternative forms of urban development, citizenship and livelihood strategies – commonly enacted by non-professionals outside of formal structures – represent both challenge and opportunity. Their manifestations are both *spatial*, (e.g. through the appropriation of space for different uses than intended) and *non-spatial* (e.g. through the circumnavigation of by-laws to overcome a lack of service delivery), and require attention in the urban governance literature. Traditional frames of governance are limited in mediating the efforts of large corporations, community groups and citizens, putting in question the state's capacity to lead and govern. New governance approaches facilitating collaboration as opposed to top-down managerialism are required to move beyond what Arnstein (1969) refers to as tokenistic forms of participation (da Cruz, Rode, and McQuarrie 2019).

Engagement with citizens involved in grassroots and alternative forms of city-making requires building capacity both within the institutions of governance *and* those who are governed by them. In this paper, we focus on the former by asking: *What is the institutional capacity required to respond meaningfully to informality and other manifestations of bottom-up city-making?* We conducted expert interviews with urban development professionals in Cape Town, South Africa and Logan, Australia. Expert interviews were chosen in part in response to criticism of the gap between research and practice in governance literature (da Cruz, Rode, and McQuarrie 2019). Based on the initial findings, we present key insights regarding capacity-building for future governance.

## Literature Review

Alternative forms of city-making, evident across increasingly diverse urban settings, constitute what Miraftab (2009) refers to as a "struggle for citizenship." Disenfranchised citizens manufacture their citizenship and opportunity to engage (Miraftab 2004; Cornwall 2002). Both Jacobs and Lefebvre (2016; 1996) recognised the value and potential of this scale of change and dynamism. However, questions remain regarding the capacity of city administrators to respond to these changes. Exclusion is a direct result of a disconnect between professional aspirations, planning and the reality of the city (Skinner and Watson 2017).



Informality, as an example of such struggles, has become prevalent across developed and less-developed cities (Pratt 2018; Acuto, Dinardi, and Marx 2019; Alsayyad and Roy 2004; Hodder 2016). The distinction between formal and informal is not binary. Urban scholars call for the pluralism of the concept to be further explored and broadened (Varley 2013; Banks, Lombard, and Mitlin 2019; Pratt 2018; Acuto, Dinardi, and Marx 2019; Ananya Roy 2005). Yiftachel (2009) highlights a discrepancy in the treatment of informality when enacted by those with power (legitimised or ignored) as opposed to those without (policed and formalised).

Appropriation, a related concept, presents similar discrepancies. It describes a practice through which individuals and groups identify and capture the value of a publicly deployed resource by applying in-depth knowledge of the resource and the system in which it exists. The legitimacy of appropriation is influenced by *who* is appropriating. It could be celebrated or seen as insurgency and nuisance by institutions deploying the resource. Appropriation of public assets by non-marginalised or elite groups could be framed as 'placemaking.' Whereas, the appropriation of park furniture for rest and sleep by marginalised homeless citizens elicits a defensive design response (de Fine Licht 2017; Petty 2016). There are instances in which it may be unsafe or a temporary, ad hoc solution to severe social problems or lack of formal service delivery. Affected individuals take matters into their own hands and utilise the resources available for survival.

Insurgency is affiliated with informality and appropriation. It involves excluded individuals shaping development despite the "selective inclusion" of voices in formal city planning and decision making (Miraftab 2009). Selective inclusion is closely linked to colonisation and the influence of Western ideals of urban form and function. Insurgency is therefore central to processes of decolonisation (Miraftab 2009; A. Roy 2014). Marginalised groups can develop a "counter-politics" and imagine alternatives which disrupt normalised hegemony (Friedmann 2002).

More recently, experimental and collaborative models of governance are emerging (Evans, Karvonen, and Raven 2016; Fuenfschilling, Frantzeskaki, and Coenen 2019; Swilling, Pieterse, and Hajer 2018). These are more networked, ad hoc and focus on a local scale. Examples include participatory budgeting, urban living labs and urban acupuncture (Dezuanni et al. 2017; Caprotti and Cowley 2017; Houghton, Foth, and Miller 2015). These models demonstrate a shift towards engaging with local complexity and using novel participation models for more inclusive processes. However, researchers have questioned how inclusive they are if projects are chosen and maintained by those in power instead of decentralising decision making (Healey 2004; Karvonen, Evans, and van Heur 2014). The translation of hyperlocal governance interventions into broader systemic change is yet to be realised.

Da Cruz et al. (2019) argue that much of our current understanding of urban governance is based on research from the 1970s or '80s. Urban challenges, forms of participation, types of stakeholders and resources for

governance have changed significantly since. There is a gap for research which interrogates how governance can adapt to these changes and how context affects this ability.

## Aim and Methodology

Our fieldwork focused on Cape Town, South Africa and Logan, Australia, zooming in on the suburbs of Bellville and Logan Central. We aimed to investigate how urban planning practitioners engage with alternative forms of city-making. The main author conducted sixteen semi-structured interviews from mid-2018 to mid-2019. Participants were professionals from Cape Town (10) and Logan (6), affiliated with local government (7) or Non-Profit Organisations (NPOs) and community groups (9). Interviews lasted an hour. Questions were consistent but adapted to the context and role of each individual. Six to eight questions guided the conversation to themes of governance, livelihoods, regeneration, formality, informality and marginalisation.

## Context

Bellville lies on the Voortrekker Corridor – a transport artery running from Cape Town Central Business District (CBD) to the Northern Suburbs. Despite having experienced socio-economic decline and transition, Bellville has a vital role to play in the vulnerable South East region of the city as a transport and business hub (City of Cape Town 2018). NPOs including the Greater Tygerberg Partnership (GTP) and Voortrekker Road Corridor Improvement District (VRCID) guide the regeneration of the area by identifying emerging opportunities for social integration and economic development and addressing social issues such as litter and crime, respectively. Bellville has a thriving informal economy which provides livelihoods to people from diverse African nationalities. There is a high retention of informal traders in the area, with many having traded there for six to ten years (Greater Tygerberg Partnership 2018), and some providing wholesale goods to the broader informal economy in Cape Town. The integration of formality and informality, as well as cultural and racial diversity of Bellville represents a core challenge for urban governance.

The City of Logan lies between the tourism hub of Gold Coast to the South and Brisbane – Queensland's state capital and the third most populous city in Australia – to the North. The traditional owners of the Logan River Area are Aboriginal people from the Yugambah and Jaggera clans. Divided by a motorway, the Eastern suburbs are more affluent than the Western ones. Logan is categorised by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as socio-economically disadvantaged relative to national performance (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2016). As a result, the city and its residents face stigma from neighbouring cities. There are 217 different ethnicities represented in Logan with over 26 per cent of residents being born overseas (Logan City Council 2010). The suburb of Logan Central has been an entry-point for refugees in Queensland and also presents a strong pattern of secondary migration (Harte, Childs, and Hastings 2011). The local council is grappling with effective ways of mobilising this diversity towards a strong place identity. Logan has a young population and a higher proportion of Indigenous population than its two neighbours.

When comparing the two cities, the level of disadvantage in Cape Town is more severe than in Logan due to the higher standard of living in Australia. The historical context of South Africa must be acknowledged, where. Specifically, the Apartheid legacy of Apartheid planning which perpetuates marginalisation and inequality. Ongoing xenophobic violence has occurred in Cape Town. Safety concerns have been a factor in the clustered settlement patterns of migrants. However, safety concerns and racial tensions also affect Logan (SBS News 2019). Both cities have large migrant populations, concentrations of socio-economic disadvantage, face stigmatisation and are challenged by social issues and a lack of cultural integration.

## Results and Discussion

In Cape Town, good leadership, focussed on inclusivity and long-term objectives, was identified as pivotal to progress. In both cities, city staff cited rapid turn-over of officials as an inhibitor to creativity, risk-taking and trust-building. This was especially problematic when engaging with vulnerable members of society (e.g. refugees, the homeless) as consistency of in-person interaction is paramount to building trust. Similarly, NGOs staff working with vulnerable populations mentioned challenges in engaging with decision-makers without continuity. There should be a greater incentive for those in governance institutions to retain the same role and build relationships with the relevant local communities. The value of this is more consistent and rich communication with local stakeholders which could inform context-specific goals and inspire and legitimise more creative and meaningful interventions.

Local governance Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) are rigorous, can be misguided, and stifle flexibility. The relatively fast-changing roles and those who occupy them contributes to the need for a stringent bureaucratic process. A participant from Logan voiced frustration regarding the pressure to design award-winning public spaces as opposed to spaces which facilitate appropriation for various functions by citizens of diverse backgrounds. Changing how success is measured in urban design and landscape architecture projects could provide freedom for professionals to understand and experiment with what kind of places would maximise value for the local citizenry.

Participants from both Logan and Cape Town agree that governance which engages at a local scale is most effective. It is preferable to support existing networks and initiatives through skills development as opposed to parachuting in completely new plans. Developing capabilities to communicate with and understand these networks is critical. In Logan, this involved collaborations with local artists and the mapping of an 'ecosystem' of local start-ups and social enterprises. In Bellville, a participant gave the example of an interaction with informal traders who were disposing of waste in undesignated areas. Their actions were not due to negligence or malice (as portrayed to be), but rather due to a lack of formal service provision and understanding of expectations. A hard-handed response of punishment would be ineffective. Instead, by engaging with local traders and leadership figures, understanding of the hierarchical social structure and the central role of religion and dialogue was developed and used to communicate the formal waste disposal

process effectively. A participant from Cape Town stressed the importance of demonstrating trust and recognition of interaction from the community by investing time to provide the information necessary to make informed contributions.

Before partnering outside of the institution, partnering within is essential. Participants found that the human resources available within governance institutions are often neglected. Consultants are brought in from outside instead of identifying and using the skills within. This also occurs in the broader context of interactions within the network of private, public and non-governmental organisations. Participants from Cape Town stated that competition and politics can obstruct effective governance and planning.

Recognition of cultural differences plays a significant role in determining the inclusivity of engagement. Participants stated that finding a balance between formality and informality, and investing in learning the practices of others is essential to effective collaboration between a heterogeneous group of stakeholders. Participants referred to informality as contextualising engagement rather than imposing a generalised Western blueprint. For example, considering the various African nationalities represented, in Bellville this would entail awareness of religious commitments, time commitments of small businesses and where appropriate, facilitating the preferred informal and conversational approach to discussing issues.

From the interviews, it was clear that participants' conception of their role had changed over time. The notion of the expert was challenged. Instead, a participant believed that those with local authority have a duty to be the "eyes and ears on the street" and ensure that these concerns are given a platform.

## Conclusion

The relationship between governance institutions and those carving out citizenship through informality, appropriation and insurgency needs to change. To do this requires capacity building on both sides. Those within governance structures require longevity in their role to engage with local actors, build trust and, in doing so, challenge the perception of active citizenship as an inhibitor to a 'good' city. Challenging this stigma opens further opportunity to identify existing networks, practices and communication methods and to integrate them instead of running in parallel or opposing them. Engagement approaches are required which are appropriate to the cultural, religious and lived practices of citizens. Meaningful engagement can be achieved when citizens are imbued with the information necessary to participate in decision-making. This requires more time and continuity of mutually beneficial relationships at the local scale.

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## Experiencing urban shrinkage in a declining historical neighbourhood

### *The role of social capital in residents' trajectories*

This paper will present the results of a research interrogating the impact of degrading historical housing on residents' experience, in the centre of a French medium-sized shrinking city. How are the residents affected in their living conditions, what is their experience of urban shrinkage, and how are they impacted in their residential trajectories? I will start by presenting, more generally, the topic of urban shrinkage itself: what does this phenomenon consist of and what is the state of the research (1)? Then I will present my project and the contribution I hope it will bring to the academic debate (2). Finally, I will explain more in depth a part of the results of this project: the role of social capital in the newcomers' residential trajectory (3).

#### **1. What is urban shrinkage?**

The topic of urban shrinkage has been for about twenty years on the European research agenda, raising awareness on this phenomenon and eventually placing it as a first-rank planning and political issue. Although there is no academic consensus on a common definition of urban shrinkage, shrinking cities have been defined as "urban areas that have experienced population loss, economic downturn, employment decline and social problems as symptoms of a structural crisis" (Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012, p. 214)

There are five major factors of shrinkage, two being often enough to cause it: economic decline, demographic change, suburbanisation, structural upheaval and environmental pollution (Wiechmann and Bontje, 2015). In Europe, the restructuration of the Fordist industrial production system, the increased globalisation of the economy and the profound change in the information and communication technologies participated to the economic decline of many regions (Fol and Cunningham-Sabot, 2010). Demographic change is another major driver of shrinkage, whether it is first caused by outmigration (because of the negative economic trends) or by falling birth rates (Wiechmann and Bontje, 2015). Yet these two trends have also been accompanied and reinforced by a deep spatial reconfiguration of Western cities from 1950 (Wolff and Wiechmann, 2018). In particular, suburbanisation has led to a hollowing out of city centres, while residents and employment were moving toward the peripheries (Charmes, 2019 ; Wiechmann and Bontje, 2015).

Ročak refers to the consequences of shrinkage in terms of hardware, mindware and software. Shrinkage affects buildings and infrastructures (hardware), causes a negative reputation of the area (mindware) and affects the social structure (software) (2018). Among the material manifestations of shrinkage, these cities are facing high commercial and residential vacancy.

The maintenance of technical and social infrastructure is also made more difficult, mainly because of lower municipal income (Ročak, 2018). Shrinkage influences local socio-economic trends, such as the labour market (Wolff and Wiechmann, 2018). Finally, increased sociospatial inequality and segregation is a typical pattern (Ročak, 2018). Yet, these consequences are never identical and depend a lot on local contexts. Therefore, any general and standardized policy is almost impossible to implement (Wiechmann and Pallagst, 2012).

Urban shrinkage is not a recent phenomenon: it has been documented since the 1970s (Bradbury, Downs and Small, 1982 ; Göb, 1977 ; Häußermann and Siebel, 1987). Yet, the problem has increased in recent years. About 20% of European cities experienced population loss between 1990 and 2010 (Wolff and Wiechmann, 2018). Despite a diversity of contexts, urban shrinkage is becoming remarkable by its geographic extent and globality (Pallagst et al., 2017). It seems to be a structural crisis which is expected to continue spreading (Bontje and Musterd, 2012), especially given the expected demographic trends (Großmann et al., 2013).

Following the pioneers works realised in the United-States on the hollowing out of city cores, and in Germany about the housing vacancy crisis, research on urban shrinkage really expanded in Europe from the early 2000s (Oswalt, 2005 ; Popper and Popper, 2017). Progressively, the debates that were initially held at the national level started to overcome borders, creating a space for international and comparative analysis (Cunningham-Sabot and Fol, 2009). Yet the presence of the topic on the policymakers and planner's agenda is even more recent (Wiechmann and Pallagst, 2012), and all the manifestations of shrinkage are not yet completely understood (Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2016). So, despite the pioneer works and the fruitful recent studies and debates, urban shrinkage remains a rather "recent" research object, which needs to be developed further.

## **2. Investigating the sociospatial dimension of shrinkage**

In France, which might have been less affected by this issue, or in a less spectacular way, than the American Rust Belt or eastern Germany for example (Cauchi-Duval, Béal and Rousseau, 2016), urban shrinkage has been an emergent theme from the end of the 2000s (Wolff et al., 2017). In this country, medium-sized cities are particularly affected by shrinkage, and more precisely, the central cities are more affected than their periphery (Cauchi-Duval, Béal and Rousseau, 2016 ; Guéraud, 2018). This is why this project has been looking specifically at the historic centres of shrinking cities.

Much literature on the topic of shrinkage focuses on its most visible manifestations, such as the commercial and residential vacancy, population loss or the economic consequences on the industrial sector (Florentin, 2017). Less is known about social manifestations, both as drivers and consequences of shrinkage. Thus, to fill this gap while building on the knowledge on architectural change in shrinking cities, this project focused on the residents' experience of their neighbourhood in degrading housing conditions and architectural environment. This qualitative analysis is based on 40 interviews, which were realized as part of an ethnographic study, conducted in Nevers in 2018. I organized semi-structured interviews, which lasted approximately two hours, with local residents as well as major actors of the housing sector, such as important private landlords.



### 3. The role of social capital in inhabitants' residential trajectories

The aspect which will be developed in this last part form some of the results of this project: the role of social capital in this context of shrinkage. More particularly, how does it play a role in the success of the residential trajectory of the newcomers ?

We questioned the logics behind this capacity or incapacity to arrange favourable living conditions in a degrading built-environment, focusing on the role of social capital. Why social capital? This aspect was not expected to stand out, but the results highlighted the importance of this resource in the success of the residents' trajectory. A successful social trajectory will have an influence on the residential trajectory. In this context, social capital becomes a resource, to limit how one can be affected by shrinkage.

To illustrate and explain this, I am taking two groups of residents as an example: those who have the most advantageous residential situation (and are satisfied of it), who belong to the local economic bourgeoisie, and those who declare having a problematic residential situation, who are also more socially diverse than the first group.

I will start with the first group, because in a context of outmigration, brain drain, ageing and impoverishment, I found interesting to investigate the logics driving young families and qualified professionals to settle for good in the city?

As they are arriving in a rather small city, these new households expect to live in an individual family house in the centre. But these are very scarce and only constitute 12% of the dwellings. Thus, it often proves more difficult than expected. What I found, is that if financial capital is of course a necessary condition to buy these homes, it is not enough.

Whether it is thanks to a friend who works at a notary, or because some other friends are leaving and offer to buy their house, there is a secondary informal housing market, which is based on word of mouth. So, it is actually their social capital, which in the end allows a sustainable installation.

However, what is interesting is to understand how this resource was acquired by these newcomers. They did not have such a network when they arrived. So, how did they become integrated? Two key elements were identified as main drivers of social integration for this group of people.

The story of their arrival in Nevers is one of a fast integration into a new sociability network through the invitation to social events. One of the interviewees said several times that he immediately became friend with the "jet-society". He also describes the city as very "bourgeois". An architect who arrived in the late 1970s declared:

*" It's a traditional city, it's a kind of conservatory of ancient social practices. [...] When I lived there, I had the impression of jumping back in the nineteenth century, you know. So, as I was an architect, well for them it's a notable right? So, well I was invited to a dinner organized by a notary, who had invited the bishop, the mayor... and I found*

*myself in a downtown mansion<sup>1</sup> still in its original state, with the original dishes, and a table as one would have imagined in the nineteenth century.” (D.F.)*

In addition, one school in particular has played a key role in the integration of new households.

*“With the children's school we made friends very quickly. No, but it's true that school did it all. [...] And there was a large playground, where parents met while waiting for children. [...] And it created an incredible link from the start. [...] We phoned someone who knew people in Nevers, who gave us a contact, and the only recommendation we were given was ‘put your kids at Fenelon if you want to make friends’.” (F.L.)*

This private Catholic school has been a place of socialization for both children (unsurprisingly) and parents. This is a conscious choice, which has been made possible thanks to a recommendation. Once again, the network is mobilized to be developed further.

These bourgeois residents of the city-centre are not the only ones who have a large and active sociability network. What distinguishes their stories is the fact that they all share this experience of fast integration and strong relationships built and recall this aspect as a crucial element of their arrival and trajectory in their city. This aspect was even more striking as several interviewees from different social class or generation on the contrary talked about their difficulty to integrate when arriving in the city at first.

Now, how did their story help understand the mechanisms at work in the city centre, beyond this group ? I compared it with some residents of the city centre who do encounter problematic situations with their house or immediate environment.

The discourse of these residents about their situations expresses a feeling of abandonment, isolation or fear of loneliness, caused by disempowerment and lack of information. Not at any moment can we see them make use of a social network. Either they don't know anybody, or they do have friends but don't consider them as a possible resource.

As we mentioned above, these residents are socially diverse and belong to different generations. Some of them are young, or old and poor, some moved after a divorce. Behind the capacity to have a comfortable living environment is the capacity to make use of a network. The residents who are the most affected by shrinkage in their living conditions are not just the poorest, but more precisely the most precarious, fragile or isolated.

## **Conclusion**

This analysis builds on the literature on urban shrinkage, which advocates for smart shrinkage planning strategies aiming at improving the quality of life for local residents, rather than searching for exogenous regrowth (Popper and Popper, 2002). But improving quality of life for current residents also means working on social inclusion where it is lacking.

<sup>1</sup> « Hôtel particulier ».

And the results also showed that declining city centres can attract a type of more fragile population of tenants, for example to compensate a certain isolation (elderly people), or else because it is a place where housing is affordable.

Thus, it appears that in this context of decline, ageing and impoverishment, historic city centres have a special role to play, and can offer opportunities for innovative planning strategies that would combine the spatial and social issues, especially by focusing on the quality of housing, and the access to it.

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### **A Decolonial Critique of Critical Urban Theory in the Andes**

My interest in the Urban started almost at the end of my studies in Architecture. It was during my undergraduate dissertation (Mejia, 2010), that I got to know the barrio La Balanza in peripheral Lima, Peru. There I found a striving street theatre group based in there, aiming to bring cultural activities to the marginal parts of the city since the 1990s. It was evident the cohesion of the neighbours, and the set of activities that were constantly taking place, at the same time it was evident the lack of support and recognition from the authorities. Despite this, the barrio managed to host an international fair (FITECA) that captured the spirit of the neighbours and called the attention of international theatre groups. The purpose of that dissertation was to understand what was happening based on empirical evidence. I concluded that the barrio developed a socio-cultural vision and aimed to achieve an urban objective. By that time, this felt like a possible method to be replicated with other neighbourhoods.

Years later, in the context of my master's dissertation, I attempted to understand how the socio-cultural vision and the newly built community centre were built, challenging the idea of development, and based on self-organization and alliances. This research was done from the distance and was informed by a new world of theorizes, from Lefebvre, Foucault, and Sen, it felt possible to understand this process this time from the planning perspective. It was until I started my Ph.D., that I took a retrospective point of view. By this time, it was clear what happened, where this happened, and how this happened, it was however unclear why? Why the neighbours of La Balanza had to take active citizenship even to get the minimum, the most basic for their subsistence? It took me over ten years to realize that the people living in La Balanza, represented many communities, not only in Lima, but along the Andean countries, people that are systematically marginalized, not for being poor, but rather for being *cholos*.

*Cholo*, a word of colonial origin still in use in the Andean countries, it describes an indigenous migrant clashed, adapted, or superseded to the urban. This word of racial connotation was camouflaged in affection and many times attempted to be used as a new identity. Moreover, this type of discrimination was internalized, and has influenced, and formed the socio-political and cultural structures in which the people in the Andes live. What Anibal Quijano described as the colonial matrix of power, is the perpetuation of the racial discrimination, named Coloniality, established since the European invasion of the Andes. The Andes is an ancient area of territory, that existed before the invention of America, and would overlap the current states of Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia. Its original inhabitant, the Andean man, was since the invasion, a victim of racial discrimination and marginalization. After the Independence, the mestizo-creole who became the heir of Europe would attempt to perpetuate modernity and its hidden side, coloniality.

### **An alternative view of Modernity**

The concept of Modernity originated in Europe and placed it in the world hegemony, centring on the local history, mentality, and ways of living and feeling (Mignolo, 2019: 30-31). It has an evolving discourse: Salvation, Civilization, Progress and Development (Mignolo, 2011: 205), but it has excluded: hybridity, ambiguity, and contingency of other life forms (Castro-Gómez, 2000: 145). Wherever it lands, it imposes the supremacy of the Modernity subject: male, white, and heterosexual (ibid: 149). The first Modernity (1492-1650) started with the invention of America where everything new to this 'new world' was better (Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992: 586) during the second Modernity (1650-1945) the structure of the world system shifted, changing the Eurocentric lead, from Spain to England and France (Grosfoguel & Cervantes-Rodriguez, 2002: XIII; Dussel, 2006: 41). During this stage, Capitalism became the ruler of the world system and continued up to the third Modernity since 1945 after World War II, when the United States took the imperial leadership (Mignolo, 2005: xiii).

### **A critique of Modernity**

- It is Eurocentric, and the Europeans became “the exclusive bearers, creators and protagonists of modernity” (Quijano, 2000: 542).
- It excludes everything which does not fit within its rationality: dreams, mysteries, nature, and cultures (Otavalo, 2001: 53), understands itself as superior (Dussel, 2000: 49), and the ‘other’ must be conquered, colonized, superseded, and converted (Mignolo, 2013: 316).
- It invented its own tradition from Antiquity, Middle Ages, and Colonization, and imposed its World History to the colonized civilizations (Mignolo, 2011: 160).
- It created dichotomies as the Global /Local, Modern/Traditional, Sacred/Secular, Cult/Popular, Formal/Informal (Otavalo, 2001: 53).
- It founded the racist/ colonial culture and the global capitalist system that we are living in today (Grosfoguel & Cervantes Rodriguez, 2002: XII)
- It has a rhetoric of advancement associated with ideas like Development, Progress, Evolution, and Civilization (Patzí, 2009: 20).
- It expands through Capitalism, and social production became a process of economic production (Lander, 2000: 32).
- It becomes accepted as ‘common sense’ by colonized people who believe or perceive their belonging to modernity, but see their reality in a marginal position, as they are not fully accepted, but accept these ‘configurations’ (Domingues, 2009: 122).

### **Modernity in the Andes**

In the Andes, racial discrimination kept been imposed during the Republic by the responsible for carrying out the Modernity, the heir of Europe, the Mestizo-creole (Mignolo, 2000: 64), who adopted and reproduced the common sense of Modernity. In this rhetoric, race informed institutions and discourses, together with national and local configurations of power, culture, and subjectivity; creating racial discrimination and the inferiority of human lives considered dispensable (Lao-Montes, 2013: 177; Mignolo, 2011: 3). The new creole oligarchy used this common sense as a camouflage to cover their own miscegenation, and this explained the furious reaction to the Andean native and its commitment to ‘Europeanize Latin American societies’ (Castro-Gómez, 2011: 48). The indigenous population is perceived as a problem for the Modern Nation-State in the international debate about the ‘Indigenous Problem’ that lasted almost two centuries (Quijano, 2008: 110). While colonialism, the economic expropriation that Europe made of the colonies ended at independence, coloniality, the epistemic expropriation continued (Castro-Gómez, 2009: 130) in a form of a socio-cultural hierarchy now inside the structure of those countries (Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992: 550).

### **A critique of Modernity/ Coloniality in the Andes**

- Modernity and coloniality placed women under two structures of domination, race, and gender (López, 2017: 311).
- The disappearance of diverse identities, for the power of homogenization that Modernity causes (Macas, 2001: 26).
- The idea of race is the foundation of the universal pattern of social hierarchy and domination (Quijano, 2001: 1).
- Capitalism became the universal pattern of world social exploitation (Ibidem: 1).
- The State is the universal central form of control of collective authority and ensures the Modernity hegemony (Ibidem: 2).
- Eurocentrism is the hegemonic form of control of subjectivities, particularly in knowledge production (Ibidem: 2), and it is no longer exclusively maintained by Europeans, but by all indoctrinated under its hegemony (Quijano, 2007: 94).
- Non-white populations cannot be consolidated into citizenry without serious social conflicts, as they are seen as a problem (Quijano, 2005: 65).

### The Paradigm of Development

Development was conceived as the full use of all-natural and human resources with the intention of providing conditions needed for its full flowering, then it was differentiated from mere economic growth (Salazar Bondy et al., 1995: 21). It also considered, the consolidation of institutions to procure democracy and access to social benefits for the population at large (Grosfoguel & Cervantes-Rodriguez, 2002: XXII-XXIII). It has been used as a tool to advance social projects, but at the same time, from the Coloniality perspective, it has been used as a comprehensive concept of control. Then assumed a crucial role in reconfiguring the global identity of ex-colonies (Grosfoguel & Cervantes-Rodriguez, 2002: XXIV)

### A critique of Development in the Andes

- There was no such a concept as development in the native indigenous populations, there is no conception of a linear process that establishes an earlier or later state (Acosta, 2008: 34)
- European culture became a universal matrix of development, making it impossible to measure non-European cultures in their own terms (Quijano & Wallerstein, 1992: 13; Maldonado-Torres, 2009: 691).
- After the Second World War, the development model of import substitution caused the fast growth of cities by industry and the destruction of traditional agricultural production (Riofrío, 2003: 1; Zapata, 1995: 182).
- Industrialization created the conditions to leave behind the 'Other' knowledge and replace it with Modern technical-scientific knowledge. (Castro-Gómez, 2013: 294)
- A model of the 'Latin American city' was created from the social sciences highlighting the dichotomy between urban formality and informality (Gilbert, 1998)
- Appears infinite and its representation keeps evolving, this makes it impossible to ever achieve, and will always make a differentiation between what is developed and what is not (Castro-Gómez, 2013: 294).

### Under-development in the Andes

The concept of Development applied to Latin America has been highly unequal (Stavenhagen, 2012: 116). While Mexico, Brazil, Argentina, Chile, and Uruguay were able to keep their capitalist development dependent, and strengthened the urbanization of their population, ensuring economic growth, were branded developing countries. The Andean countries, Ecuador, Peru, and Bolivia, where the public spending was historically drastically controlled, leaving little room for alternative routes (Riofrío, 2004: 75) and failed to propel themselves to reach higher standards of living, unable to use its natural resources to their advantage (Salazar Bondy et al, 1995: 82; Matos Mar, 1968: 181), are branded underdeveloped. It is not surprising that are precisely those countries which concentrate the largest amount of indigenous population in Latin America.

### Critical Urban Theory

Critical Urban Theory was built following the critical position of Marx in economics and politics. It was named critical to differentiate from 'conventional' urban theory, like the one from the Chicago School. It has been produced after Castells (1977) and Lefebvre (1974) critical analysis of the production of the space, and Soja (1989) all centred on the theorization of cities. During the mid and late twentieth century, it was influenced by postmodern scholars: Foucault (1980) questioned the power/knowledge relations through critical historiography, Gramsci (1977), Lacan (1957) four discourses and mimicry, and Derrida's (1976) Deconstruction. In the twentieth-first century, a contingent of Urban theorists, Bettencourt et al (2007), Glaeser (2008), Chibber (2013), and Scott & Storper (2015) have embraced orthodox views of Critical Urban Theory, aspiring to achieve universal and abstract propositions (Brenner, 2019: 38). Roy (2016) would argue that current Critical Urban Theory coming from western academia, is not critical, and it would benefit from the inclusion of postcolonial scholars as Said's (1978) Orientalism, based on Foucault; Spivak's (1999) Postcolonial critique, based on Gramsci; and

Bhabha's (1994) the location of culture, based in Lacan and Derrida. It can be argued, however, that including postcolonial scholars, inspired by post-modern scholars, would only perpetuate the modernity discourse.

### **A Decolonial critique of Critical Urban Theory in the Andes**

- The city was hegemonized as the Urban unit, leaving aside the idea of Andean communities.
- The stigma of the city as an imposition of the Eurocentrism has been removed, the question of whether cities are or not compatible in the Andean countries was not considered.
- The rural-urban migration was caused by the unbearable coloniality in the rural communities.
- The peripheral neighbourhoods had historically adopted the same territorial appropriation logic of the Andean communities.
- Indigenous migrants that had all the right to live in this land, were never legitimized, and more than class struggles, it was racial discrimination that marginalized them.
- The role of the municipalities to keep order, under strict violent measures has deemed traditional ways of space occupation, and rather than proposing alternatives bespoke to the Andean cultural background they imposed solutions based on Eurocentric standards.
- Taxation was imposed for general urban services, same as it was during the colonization, despite existing a historical mistrust of the public authorities, and little than urban andeans would expect from them.
- Government authorities are displacing people through violent dispossession to the favour of mining and people reclaiming their lands are branded radicals or antidevelopment.
- There is a need from the authorities to have control over any type of informality, either by formalization or eradication, but there is little reflection regards the nature of the informality.

### **Conclusion**

While Critical Urban Theory continues producing visions of the world, its intention of universalizing knowledge will be insufficient to explain phenomena in many regions. Also, many efforts to include post-colonial studies in Urban Theorization would only reproduce the modernity discourse, then Critical Urban Theory would perpetuate the coloniality of knowledge in the world. Despite this fact, Urban Theory is very important for decolonial studies, as it is through knowledge that the coloniality evidence and reproduces itself. This decolonial critique, therefore, is showing, that there is either a need for an Urban Theory that would go beyond eurocentrism, beyond modernity and the idea of development; or another Andean theory that builds on our own vision of the world. This is however not an easy undertaking, considering that my research is framed within Eurocentric Epistemology. As suggested by Mignolo (2003) decolonial critiques must start building the base for real decolonization, and this will only be possible if we adopt Border Thinking as a methodology. This means placing us on the border of Eurocentric Epistemology and be able to critically see inside and outside this Epistemology. As this critique highlighted, it is essential to start producing an Urban theory that would have the narrative of the urban production as a historical process, this time from the eyes of the colonized. Is it then possible to suggest, the need for an Andean Urban Theory?

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