Introduction to Planning and governance of cities in globalization

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Volume IV: The Planning and Governance of Cities in Globalization

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Introduction and context

Volume IV in the series addresses the diverse challenges ‘global’ (and globalizing) cities present for planning and governance. The selected essays provide an overview of key themes and debates that have emerged during a century in which the spatial frames of reference for the world’s largest cities have undergone immense change. As seen in the preceding volumes of this collection, whilst the concept of ‘globalization’ has been contested since the latter part of the twentieth century, there is general agreement that such cities are places where ‘the global’ is strongly in evidence while, at the same time, the extension and intensification of global city functional relations are producing multiple spaces of political contestation within and beyond metropolitan boundaries, raising new and searching questions for what are appropriate forms of institutional structure, planning and governance arrangements, and democratic engagement. Put simply, the scale of the urban planning and governance challenge has grown immeasurably over the course of the last century.

To put this into some context, whereas 200 years ago London’s population of one million was then the largest in the world, eighteen cities now exceed 10 million and six of these cities have in excess of 20 million population. So what has happened? Well, 100 years ago, there were sixteen cities in the world with a population of one million, with London (still the largest) approaching 7 million. Of these sixteen cities most were located in the advanced capitalist economies of the North Atlantic. Fast forward to the present day and there are in excess of 500 cities with a population of one million. Importantly, eight of the world’s 10 biggest cities are located in Asia or South America, with many of those cities adding to the burgeoning number boasting populations in excess of 1 million, 5 million, and 10 million also located in the Global South.

What we take from this is that the geographical proportions and functional scales of these cities have brought sharply into question what is meant by the city, and the region. Indicative of this is how we have seen the emergence of a plethora of metaphors to describe the spatial extent and composition of these pivotal societal and political-economic formations beyond the late twentieth century conception of the megacity, and no less than the development of a new spatial grammar seeking to grasp the processes witnessed in contemporary globalization. Prominent terms to emerge over just the last decade include
global city-region, mega city-region, world city-region, mega region, metro region, metropolitan regions, polycentric metropolis, mega urban region, polynuclear urban region, meta-city region, new megalopolis, and megapolitan region. Casting even sharper focus on these issues is the unprecedented rate of urban expansion currently underway in China. Indeed, the recognition that if current trends hold, China alone will have 219 cities with a population of one million by 2025, with 24 cities in excess of 5 million. On the one hand, it is worth remembering that only 20 years ago there were only 272 cities in the world with populations of one million, while only 35 European cities currently have a population in excess of one million (McKinsey Global Institute, 2008). Yet on the other hand, we are already seeing the emergence of a new spatial grammar as the twin processes of increased global economic integration and rapid urbanization leads to a belief that in globalization “bigger and more competitive economic units [...] have superseded cities as the real engines of the global economy” (Florida, 2008, p. 42). Evidence of this belief is perhaps best illustrated by the recent UN–HABITAT State of the World’s Cities Report for 2010-11 which identifies eight super urban areas in Asia, South America and Africa with populations ranging from 25-120 million as “the new engines of global and regional economies” (UN-HABITAT, 2011).

It is this context which has helped guide our decisions as to which of the key contributions we have chosen for inclusion in this volume. In preparing the volume we have been guided by a desire to draw particular attention to the following themes: (1) the evolving spatial form (from cities as large population centres → city and regional relations → globalizing/global cities → global city-regions) and scale of the urban planning and governance challenge over the course of the last century; (2) the politics associated with the changing scale of the urban planning and governance challenge; and (3) the broadening of the research lens to include global and/or globalizing cities in the Global South and the particular planning and governance challenges facing cities in so-called developing countries. By virtue of this it is clear we are unable to fully capture all perspectives from the corpus of relevant urban literature. Nonetheless, it is our intention that in selecting these contributions we are able to provide a flavour of the main areas of debate and different dimensions of scholarship that have characterised research on the planning and governance of cities in globalization.

This volume

In considering the antecedent work on the urban planning and governance challenge of global cities our approach has been different to that adopted in Volumes I, II and III in that rather than take the 1960s as our starting point, we begin by considering the work of the founding fathers of modern urban and regional planning. Lest we forget, Ebenezer Howard’s utopian vision for London in To-morrow: a Peaceful Path to Real Reform (1898) which was to be reprinted as Garden Cities of Tomorrow in 1902, has inspired city planning across the
world and is the model being adopted today in the emergent Western Chinese global city, Chengdu, on account of its sustainable design principles. Prior to state intervention in UK urban planning, chaotic expanding development and dire, socially unequal living conditions, led Howard to propose the reconstruction of its “largest and most unwieldy” city, London. His vision for the new “Social City” was intended to create new relationships between the economy, environment, society and governance, with local populations having political control of their cities. In practice, Howard’s influence has been largely restricted to land use planning for new development but his concerns for more utopian forms of reconstruction are reflected in the contemporary resurgence of academic debate concerning sustainable spatial relations and democratic accountability.

In *The Culture of Cities* (1938) Lewis Mumford drew on Howard’s thinking in turning to consider the challenges presented by ‘the region’. He saw the region as a scale which can provide the “framework for civilization”. Like Howard, Mumford sought to bring all the elements of the city and its region, economy, society, culture and environment, into harmony. He saw planning as necessary to “grasp firmly all the elements necessary to bring geographical and economic facts in harmony with human purposes”. His insights into the critical importance of appropriate political and economic agencies and democratic engagement in the regional planning process, remain apposite today, “failing intelligent participation and understanding at every stage in the process, from the smallest unit on up, regional plans must remain inert” and so they have proved, not least in the UK.

Yet it was Patrick Geddes, a pioneering Scottish planner, who was to perhaps make the most telling breakthrough. The first to coin the term city-region – along with conurbation and megalopolis – Geddes’ studies of Glasgow at the turn of the twentieth century revealed how an outpouring of population beyond the bounded city saw the city devouring small towns and boroughs as it went, an observation which led him to argue in his 1915 book *Cities in Evolution* – before Christaller and others – that the city should be studied in the context of its regional relations. Yet Geddes did not overlook the “spirit of cities”, and his attention to “world-cities and their opening competition” in Chapter 3 of the book is where Peter Hall much later acquired the term ‘world city’ from (Hall, 1966). For this volume, however, we have chosen to include the preceding chapter 2 entitled ‘The population-map and its meaning’. Despite its unexpected title for this volume, not only does this chapter provide a unique insight into the pioneering regional thinking of Geddes which was to influence so many later prominent scholars, including Mumford and Dickinson, but it shows why we must never forget that regions of cities in globalization are an outcome of an unequivocally urban process.

Having said that we begin with the early part of the twentieth century, we do also include two contributions from the 1960s. Peter Hall’s major work, *The World Cities*, is included in Volume I and so we have selected two contributions here which have received different levels of attention in the fifty years since their publication. Jane Jacobs’ *The Death and Life
of Great American Cities is in the first instance a powerful critique of 1950s urban renewal policies in the United States. But the legacy from this her first book, along with her later works, continues to effect the way that planning practices are perceived, by fighting dominant professional planning trends (e.g. urban interventions that lead to gentrification) and principles, especially those she regards as “process reducing” transactions (1984). Moreover, her work continues to have profound effects on those researching global cities, for it is Jacobs’ who first considered the ramifications of cities, not nation-states, being the primary drivers of economic development beyond the city (Jacobs, 1969, 1984). From Jacobs’ classic chapter, our second contribution comes from Robert Dickinson. Inspired by Geddes and Christaller, Dickinson’s (1964) discussion of the regional relations of the city established the conceptual foundations for the city-region to be considered a distinct concept. What stands out from his chapter is how 25 years before Allen et al (1998) wrote what many consider to be the foundational study conceptualising cities and regions as relational spaces challenging settled urban planning and governance conventions, Dickinson was making the almost exact same observations. Like Jacobs, Dickinson challenged the planning consensus of the 1950s and 1960s – often making explicit that “this book [...] is not about planning’ (Dickinson, 1967, p. xv) – but despite what we would argue amounts to making a landmark contribution to the literature, unlike Jacobs, Dickinson’s early writing has been somewhat overlooked in subsequent debates.

In selecting our three foundation studies, we have chosen three classic articles which in their own way have played an especially prominent role in explaining the planning and governance of cities in globalization. Molotch’s 1976 conceptualisation of the city as a ‘growth machine’ was to provide a foundation for the new urban politics of the late-1980s (see Molotch, 1993; Logan and Molotch, 1987). Focusing on urban land use, Molotch’s contribution (like Jacobs’) revolves around unsettling and dislodging conventional thinking that has informed urban planning. Disturbing the urban economics notion that cities are like containers where actors compete for the most strategic parcels of land, Molotch observed that urban growth and its effect on land values actually unites otherwise pluralistic interests in the city in order to compete nationally and internationally for scarce footloose capital investment with growth machines in other cities, while all the time attempting to gain public support locally for urban growth.

All of which laid the foundation for a new political geography of cities; a new urban politics perhaps most famously encapsulated by David Harvey in his account portraying how neoliberal urban governance favours entrepreneurs, that is, the pursuit of mobile capital investment by improving the attractiveness of a place/city to the detriment of its inhabitants. His concern for the social - urban inequality, welfare, justice and redistribution not only of resources but of rights to space – is a theme which runs through other notable contributions to this urban literature (for example Castells, 1983; Fainstein, 2001; MacLeod and Jones, 2011). For Harvey the injustices of entrepreneurial urbanism are directly attributable to the actions of urban policy elites exploiting their place- and territory-specific
location advantages by (re)producing new and/or modifying existing sociospatial infrastructures at the urban scale. This new ‘spatial fix’ in Harvey’s words, thereby creates the conditions necessary for capital accumulation in today’s quicksilver global economy. Part and parcel of this discourse is the conception that cities are drifting away from national urban systems to the orbit or gravity pull of international systems and global circuits of capital accumulation (see Volumes I, II and III), a theme picked up and developed in the work of Neil Brenner. Through the lens of global city formation and state territorial restructuring in Europe, Brenner alerts us to how the changing role of cities in globalization can only be explained, in part, by those economic factors (crisis-induced industrial restructuring, the rise of flexible production systems, new spatial divisions of labour) which have resulted in the rescaling of capital. Of equal importance is a series of political factors (national state strategies to attract mobile capital investment in their major urban regions, governmentalized remappings of state space, the political-construction of new ‘elite’ cities and urbanized regions within national and international circuits of capital) which have resulted in the rescaling of statehood.

By selecting these three articles we seek to emphasise the main transformative processes which have shaped urban change in globalization. By implication these transformative processes have defined the urban governance and planning challenge, and it is the outcomes of this which the contributions in the next three sections all seek to address. In the first instance, Kris Olds and Henry Yeung consider the ‘pathways’ to global city formation. Drawing heavily on the work of Brenner in accounting for the role of the state in devising these pathways, they emphasise the need to consider differential and dynamic developmental pathways to global city formation. By tracing the pathway of Singapore as a city-state they distinguish between planning and governance strategy urban process outcomes - hyper global cities, emerging global cities, and global city-states. Similarly, Anne Haila is concerned to examine the process through which cities try to achieve the status of a global city, considering this to be the neglected ‘builder’ of global cities. But in Haila’s account there is another neglected builder of global cities: real estate investment flows (see also Lizieri, 2009). Connecting to the foundational work of Molotch and Harvey, Haila is at pains to stress the interconnected nature of real estate investment flows and the politics of the global city. A third strand to planning the global city can be seen in the recent work of Douglas Young and Roger Keil. In an extension to debates on the new urban politics, their contribution is focused on what they see as the new urban landscape of the global/globalizing city - the ‘in-between city’. We chose this article in particular because while there is equally significant work on other aspects of urban infrastructure design in global cities (particularly in the current era of state under-investment in infrastructure relative to the period of Keynesianism), Young and Keil’s account of accessibility issues relating to transport infrastructure in Toronto points towards the important lens for the future advancement of research on the planning and governance of cities in globalization, that is, the urban zones between the perceived winners (new industrial spaces) and losers
The changing urban landscape is central to accounts outlining the scale of the urban planning and governance challenge in globalization. Allen Scott’s (2001) *Global City Regions – Trends, Theory, Policy* provides arguably the most definitive collection of essays on this, but it is the work of Jean Gottmann, and his seminal study of the “megalopolis”, the urban area stretching from Boston to Washington on the North-eastern seaboard of the United States, which was to provide a fascinating insight into the future of urban research. What Gottmann observed was the first signs of a trend which was later to dominate urban geography and planning, the process of city expansion into larger city-regions comprising multiple functionally interlinked urban settlements. Yet it was not until after the dominant localization economy discourses of the ‘global city’ and ‘new regionalism’ in the 1990s that a new city-regionalism really began to emerge around city-regions as representing a new scale of urbanisation and city-regionalism, in short a new phase in capitalist territorial development associated with processes of globalization best encapsulated by Scott’s ‘global city-region’ concept. In his contribution to this volume Scott extends the logic which saw global cities being defined by their external linkages to consider both the external and internal linkages of these rapidly expanding increasingly multi-clustered metropolitan areas. The antecedent to a resurgent interest in city-regions in globalization among academics and policy elites alike, Scott’s analysis provided the basis for a diverse array of scholarship, like that on their role in a development context (Segbers, 2007) and on planning for polycentric mega-city regions (Hall and Pain, 2006), as well as critiques of the foundations upon which the new city-regionalism orthodoxy has been constructed (Harrison, 2007; Jonas and Ward, 2007). The planning and governance challenge posed by the extraordinary pace of urban expansion in China is perhaps not surprisingly the focus of much current and future research, but in George Lin’s contribution we see that it is not only questions of infrastructure, planning and governance which should be to the forefront of our attention as researchers, but the need to develop deeper theoretical positions with regard to how the trend in service industry growth (see Volume II) is connected to these urban transformations.

In the penultimate section, we focus on three contributions which provide different takes on the contemporary urban and regional governance challenge. Looking at the impacts of the Pacific Asia economic crisis of 1997, Mike Douglass provides a fascinating account of how, even in a period of economic downturn, governments remain under pressure to create the conditions necessary to attract global investment and are forced to enter into even more vicious intercity competition to achieve world city status. This account is particularly pertinent given the current focus on the aftermath of the 2008 global economic crisis and searching questions arising from it for urban planners and policy elites. Returning to a theme identified earlier in the volume, Kevin Ward and Andy Jonas pick up this theme of city competition to offer a different perspective to the dominant discourse which suggests that
an understanding of state spatial restructuring and rescaling is derived from a geo-economic logic whereby state intervention at the city-regions scale is solely determined by a capitalist imperative to position cities and regions in international circuits of capital accumulation, reflecting the logic around new spaces of flows. Taking issue with this, Ward and Jonas have demonstrated how focusing on flow and exchange relations has encouraged scholars to detach and disembodied city-regions from their national social formations, thereby ignoring the underlying social relations of production and reproduction which are evident in the day-to-day struggles and conflict within urban-regional space, and between cities, regions and state formations. In our final contribution to this section, we have selected a less well-known work from Saskia Sassen. Hidden among the corpus of more her familiar writing, here Sassen provides a revealing insight into how a focus on practices is key to advancing our analyses of economic globalization because it draws attention to the role of place and production, as well as hypermobility and power. Recognition that many of the resources necessary for globalized capital accumulation are not hypermobile, but deeply embedded in place, this contribution sheds new light on the role of global cities as strategic sites in economic globalization and draws attention to the shifting nature of the urban planning and governance challenge going forward.

In the final section we have selected contributions which are currently shaping debates on the sustainability and resilience of cities in globalization. It is significant that they demonstrate the ongoing issue of spatial (in)equalities surrounding the ethics of consumption - which includes access to basic, essential human resources and environmental conditions - against a now more global backdrop of prevalent commercial and political interests/gain, as stressed particularly by Ebenezer Howard and David Harvey previously. But what is new about these contributions is their attempt to understand the complex issues now presenting in a way that is relational. They reflect Doreen Massey’s (2007) attempt to bring the relationality of cities to attention in order to inform a more progressive and inclusive politics of space. Kevin Morgan and Roberta Sonnino address the issue of food security. With reference to what they term the ‘new food equation’, Morgan and Sonnino pinpoint how and why food security is now a major issue for cities, with global cities in the South and North recognising their exposure to these new pressures. This is illustrated from the perspective of public policy discourse and the evolution of urban political strategies in London and New York. But more than this, the authors develop a key theme running through this volume by drawing particular attention to how cities are crucibles of political protest, increasingly combustible places due to ever increasing inequalities, and depriving people of basic, essential human resources (e.g. food and water) is one sure way to fan the flames of protest. In contrast, Mike Hodson and Simon Marvin concentrate on urban ecological security issues more generally: climate change, resource constraints. Identifying both the opportunities and the challenges this poses for cities, of particular relevance in the current context is in the way they draw attention to how some cities are better positioned to capitalise on the opportunities provided by new infrastructure requirements and how
newly emerging strategies are likely to privilege particular urban areas and social interests. Finally, Erik Swyngedouw provides a rich account of how nature becomes urbanized through metabolic socio-ecological processes. What marks Swyngedouw’s contribution out is not only the historical-geographical approach adopted, but that his account of metabolic urbanization is essentially conceived in and through the insistence of ‘circulation’ as the key social metaphor/theory by which emerging urban geographies are articulated, embodying what modernity has, is, and will be about in the future. These contributions shine a light on what is a new and emerging area of research for global cities scholars, with other noteworthy contributions providing empirical studies of resilience planning in global cities (see Raco and Street, 2012), arguments towards a process of depoliticisation leading to the emergence of a post-political condition in cities (Swyngedouw, 2009), while some are suggesting the emergence of a new metropolitan politics (Cox, 2011), or the need to renature urban theory to inspire urban politics new beginnings (Kaika and Swyngedouw 2010).

Concluding remarks

In focusing attention on theoretical and conceptual developments in key literatures we have wanted to not only identify recent signature contributions that also point to new directions where debates are heading, but to avoid forgetting significant understandings from the past that remain relevant today and, perhaps, into the future. Perhaps it is apt then that we finish our introduction where the volume begins, our first contributor, Patrick Geddes, and his choice of book title – the “evolution of cities” which suggests that now more than ever before (as the pace of change accelerates), governance and planning for cities in globalization must be reflexive and agile, reflecting on/incorporating new knowledges/understandings, wide ideas/debate. It is in this spirit that this volume seeks to invigorate debate around by whom and for what, present and future urban form is planned and governed.

References


