



Emerging urban spaces: a planetary perspective

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BOOK REVIEW

Emerging urban spaces: a planetary perspective, edited by P. Horn., P. Alfaro d'Alençon and A. C. Cardoso, Berlin, Springer, 2018, 219 pp., € 124,79 (hardcover), ISBN: 970-3-319-57815-6

Driving forces of contemporary urbanization processes are too complex to be captured through one mode of analysis, and a variety of interwoven factors must be considered to understand the multifaceted features of different emerging urban spaces, locally and globally. This is the problem statement that steers *Emerging Urban Spaces: A Planetary Perspective*, a collection of manifold inquiries revolving around the understanding of new worldwide urban spaces, edited by Philipp Horn, Paola Alfaro d'Alençon and Ana Claudia Cardoso. The book is the result of a collective effort initiated by two panel sessions which took place in 2016, at the World Planning School's Congress and the Annual Royal Geography Society Conference. Moving from a Lefebvrian approach, the book combines several conceptualizations and researches with the aim of supporting and inspiring the new epistemology of the urban. In so doing, the authors respond to the call for an 'engaged pluralism' in the usage of 'planetary urbanization' (see Brenner 2018), posited by the very authors of this theory, within a recent debate the places this contemporary view of the urban in other visions, by also criticizing it of being a heteronormative universalization of urban world (see Peake et al. 2018). This book considers the *oeuvre* of Henri Lefebvre as a key starting point to mobilize what today refers to (a) the right to the urban, (b) difference and pluralism in urban studies, and (c) the naturalization of the urban. The volume highlights the array of urban struggles by illustrating different analyses that reveal the complexity of the present urban realm. The structure of the book is not organized on a geographical basis, but rather it follows a *fil rouge* built upon a theoretical criterion that firstly involves the combination of theories belonging to the legacy of Henri Lefebvre.

The first insight, in chapter two, addresses the 'right to the city' as an 'ecumenical' expression of collective grassroots reactions to global neoliberal policies. This link is investigated through a focus on *Aganaktismenoi* (Indignados) movement in Syntagma Square (Athens), and the Taksim Square-Gezi Park social uprising in Istanbul. In this respect, squares are framed by the author Charalampos Tsavardoglou as commonplaces of struggle for a fluid community, hence raising novel understandings of the Lefebvrian 'right to the city'. In chapter three, by combining planetary urbanization and postcolonial perspectives, Philip Horne devises an interesting focus on the emerging urban indigenous spaces in Bolivia, uncovering how neoliberal urban governance affects the socio-economic exclusion of indigenous people. Attention on governance characterizes also the twofold comparison carried out by Alfaro d'Alençon and López Morales between Chile and Germany (chapter four), to trans-nationally tackle the private-public local governance and co-production practices as aspects of a space transformation that shape twenty-first century capitalism and reframe the contemporary usage of 'right to the city' as a claim to centrality in urban governance. Chapter five, by David Mountain, addresses the historical development of London Docklands Development Corporation (LDDC) through the theoretical combination of planetary urbanization and assemblage urbanism with the aim of employing contemporary urban theory to unpack frictions and grey areas of decentralist urbanization processes.

Chapter six serves as a watershed in the narration. Elena Trubina focuses on the intersection between comparative urbanism and the academic research on Central Asia cities, by pointing out the inadequateness of divisive and spatially blind categories, such as 'post-

socialist cities' (see Robinson, 2006), and hence exploring a regionally oriented analysis from a Central Asian perspective to look into new methodologies of comparison. The contribution also represents a literature review of research on the urban Central Asia. Within the book structures, it moves the analytical direction towards the urgent debate on the naturalization of the urban.

Such outlook begins with the interplay between the concept of 'planetary urbanization' and the 'tourism urbanization' that is taking place in the north coastline of Jamaica (chapter seven). Here, Sheere Brooks enhances the relevance of a planetary perspective to study land exploitation and the consequent societal changes in the Caribbean region, grounding the reflection on Jamaica and its dependence on tourism for local development trajectories. Equally, the critical reflection of planetary urbanization is deeply acknowledged in chapter eight, where Nancy Couling reveals how ocean spaces unfold new urban formats resulting in channels of infrastructure delivery energy, waste, goods that cross oceans, with a focus on Barents and Baltic Seas. The analysis literally pushes the limits of urban research (Kipfer 2018) by offering a spatial composition of the urbanization of the ocean, seen as a planetary system of vessels, shipping routes, harbors and pipelines that raise a diverse format of the urban. This strand is completed by an insight in the extensive urbanization process of the Eastern Amazon (chapter nine) that illustrates how a comprehensive understanding of contemporary urbanization of the nature may shed light on the key role played by human agency, in a coexistence of urban and natural that harmonize relationship with the nature through new 'emancipatory' forms of urban citizenships. A coda by Roberto Luis Monte-Mór reflects on the need to nurture an approach that moves beyond the urban-industrial society, by encompassing a reframe of the word 'sustainability', a higher visibility to the less-explored urbanized spaces, and a deeper understanding of contemporary capitalism in a complex urban world spread out beyond cities, across oceans and natural fragments.

Emerging Urban Spaces: A Planetary Perspective grasps the interest on the bulk of massive worldwide urbanization process through the challenging engagement of planetary urbanization as a theory of our time. The geographical heterogeneity of the book builds up a relationship between planetary and particular, context-bounded processes of urban spaces production. Each chapter bolsters innovative theoretical perspectives of the contemporary urban through the analysis of the multiplicity of urban struggles. Due to its composite usage of critical theories, the book will thus be of interest to mostly academic readers that welcome critical reflections aimed at unfolding the 'empty shell' (see Keil 2018) of twenty-first century urbanities, towards the adoption of contemporary theories in search of scholar legitimization, such as that of planetary urbanization by Brenner and Schmid.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author.

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