

Urban Inclusiveness In Theory and (Global Policy) Practice

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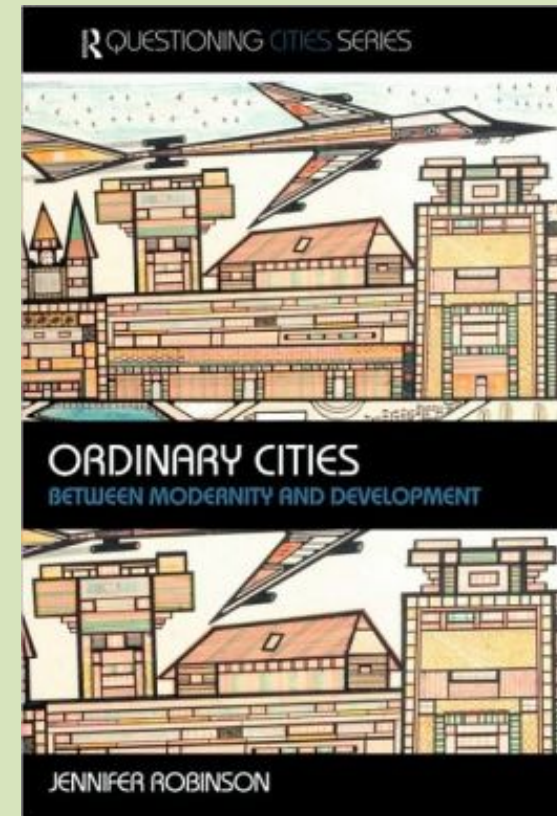
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Urban Inclusiveness In Theory and (Global Policy) Practice

1. More inclusive geographies of theory:
postcolonializing urban studies
2. Inclusion in international policy: UN-Habitat's
global urban agendas
3. Towards a critical urban geography of
inclusiveness

1. More inclusive geographies of theory: postcolonializing urban studies

- Urban theory based upon a small set of “great” cities in “EuroAmerica” (Roy, 2009)
- Cities in EuroAmerica have been cast in terms of innovation and progress while others are imagined in terms of developmental lacks and the need to “catch up” (Robinson, 2006)
- Hence the need for an more inclusive urban studies, through:
 - i. “New geographies of theory” (Roy, 2009)
 - ii. Learning and comparisons across conventional categorical and-spatial divides



2. Inclusion in international policy: UN-Habitat's global urban agendas

- i. Economic inclusion/exclusion may be differentiated from civic/social/cultural dimensions although in policy practice they are often entangled
- ii. Even in economic-focussed work “exclusion” relates to “inequality” in complex ways
- iii. It is helpful to distinguish between *procedural* and *(re)distributive* justice

UN-Habitat's global urban agendas

- Schindler (2017: 351) has positioned the New Urban Agenda (NUA) in an historical middle ground: “between the [1976] Vancouver Declaration’s call for a regulated land market and state-led urban planning and the [1996] Istanbul Declaration’s affirmation of the virtues of free markets”.
- Since the Istanbul Declaration, it is specifically *inclusion* that has assumed rhetorical centrality the UN conceptions of better urban futures
- “Inclusive”, “inclusion” or “inclusivity” appear dozens of times in the NUA, referring variously to:
 - Provision of public services and/or social protection to all
 - Accessibility of public spaces
 - Economic opportunity (e.g. “inclusive economic growth”)
 - Participatory governance

So what does this have to do with postcolonial urban theory?

- Procedural inclusiveness: regional geographical balance in the selection of experts for preparatory issue papers.
- Two further points of intersection:
 - i. Recognition of contextual variegation beyond the “developed” v “developing” dichotomy

“...attention should be given to addressing the unique and emerging urban development challenges facing all countries, in particular developing countries, including African countries, least developed countries, landlocked developing countries, and small-island developing States, as well as the specific challenges facing the middle income countries.”

(NUA, point #19)

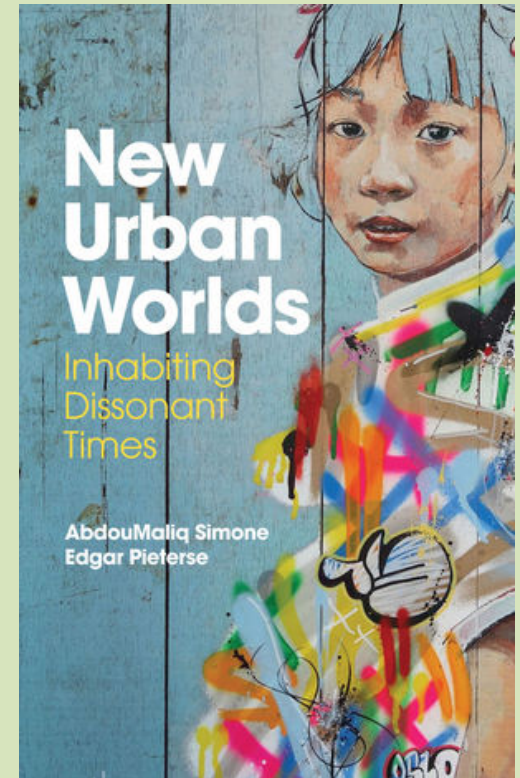
ii. New ways of diagramming the global urban problems (and perhaps solutions)

- “...*growing inequality and the persistence of multiple forms and dimensions of poverty, including the rising number of slum and informal settlement dwellers, is affecting both developed and developing countries*”. (NUA, point #25)
- A hint at the possibility of inverting conventional geographies of learning

1. More inclusive geographies of theory:
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2. Inclusion in international policy: UN-Habitat's
global urban agendas
3. **Towards a critical urban geography of
inclusiveness: four generative points of
friction between critical urban theory and
the NUA...**

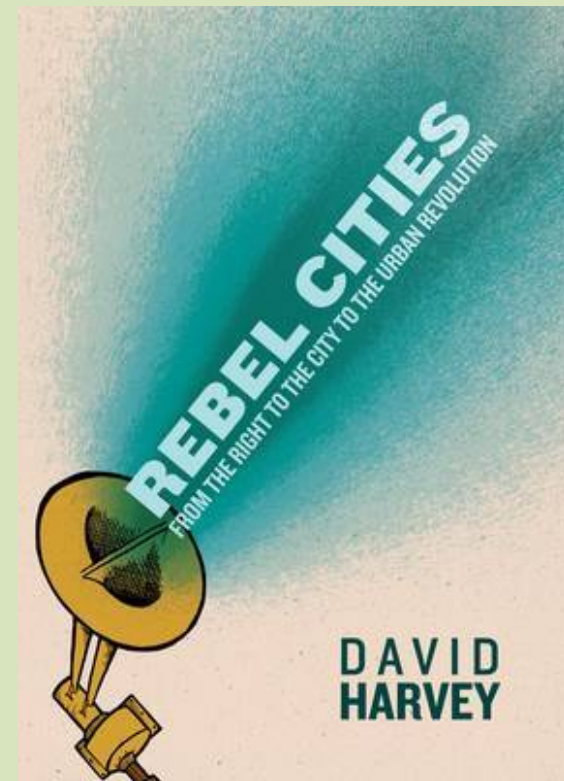
(i). The progressive possibilities of agonistic politics

- Overriding concern of the NUA is to build consensus among “the usual suspects and invited participants”. (Kaika, 2017: 94)
- Even local level articulations of UN urban policy leaves no room for the transformative potential of dissent and agonistic politics (Simone & Pieterse, 2017)
 - May be necessary to disrupt inequitable modes of “inclusion” that only serve to reproduce the status quo
- Important to consider groups that have actively refused to be “included” in planning processes after concluding that “this only legitimized the injustice of existing practices and reproduced fixed roles and power positions” (Kaika, 2017: 96).



(ii). The need to expand the variety of people and places that are acknowledged as legitimate resources for urban future-making

- “Right to the city” limited to claims to the existing (inequitable) city rather than the right to imagine the city otherwise (cf. Purcell, 2002; Harvey, 2012)
- NUA crafted out of existing ideas and methods associated with a global corps of experts whose hope for better futures continues to lie in inherited understandings of techno-managerial “solutions” (Simone & Pieterse, 2017)
 - Alternative “adaptive” possibilities from dense urban neighbourhoods of the urban majority



(iii). What worked in one geographical or historical context may not work so effectively or have entirely different outcomes in other places and times

- Geohistorically-specific presumptions of appropriate or proper ways forward that are implausible when applied elsewhere (or “elsewhen”)
- “Sustainable transition to the formal economy” (NUA, point #13(d)) vs “insurmountable” scale of informality in poorer countries (Simone & Pieterse, 2017: 39)
- Implausibility of modern infrastructural ideal (Graham & Marvin, 2001)
- Pursuit of “city-wide infrastructure networks” leads to...

“...delivery systems that can cater only to the needs of those who are bankable – i.e. formal businesses, government agencies, the middle classes, and the elites”. (Simone & Pieterse, 2017: 42-3)

(iv). “Learning from elsewhere” must proceed critically, including in ways that are attentive to the politics of (inclusive) urban models and indices

- Critiques of “good practice” rankings
NUA “indicators” (Kaika, 2017)
- But such metrics of inter-urban competition are here to stay
 - How can they be oriented to progressive outcomes?
- Singapore strives to be “model” on some measures of inclusion (e.g. accessibility), but:
 - To what extent is becoming (seen as) the model now the goal in itself?
 - Does such competitive image-consciousness shut down criticism and gloss over deficits?
 - Do site-specific models of good practice deflect attention away from other sites and/or ways of evaluating inclusive futures?



The Enabling Village, Singapore



Conclusions

- Transformative potential of incorporating ideas from both “sides” of the “border” between academic urban theory and global urban policy/practice
- Associated “friction” is not merely about implementing the NUA but suggests the need for alternative ways forward in urban theory *and* policy practice