The 21st Century Urban Landscape: Plus ça change

David Fasenfest
Wayne State University, USA

In his account of the turbulent decade of the 1960s, in which New York City dealt with endemic corruption, racism and economic distress, English begins by telling us "(u)ntold thousands, perhaps millions, have fallen prey to the perils of municipal dysfunction, to the growing pains of a city forced to adjust to violent demographic shifts, internal hostilities, wrenching social changes…(2011: xi)." It is a description that those of us who lived through that decade in that city would find neither unfamiliar nor surprising. It is a description that can still describe urban society in the advanced industrial societies today, half a century later. We are not surprised to learn about administrative dysfunction any more than we are surprised to see graft and corruption at a time when there are fewer and fewer resources in municipal coffers. Xenophobia increasingly is the expressed sentiment among citizens of more advanced industrialized nations, reflecting a rightward shift among European and North American populations resentful of the influx of immigrants that is the result of rapidly expanding globalized patterns of migration from the underdeveloped regions of the world.

As Davis (2006) points out, industrial cities like Chicago, Manchester or Berlin did not end up being the model for globalization the world over, much as the models of "modernization" did not produce emergent industrial countries following the European model of development. Rather, dependent development describes countries under the sway of advanced capitalist countries, and the ravages of poverty and dysfunction in cities of these countries have created the Dickensonian urban disasters causing Davis to anticipate a planet of slums. These cities are attracting a constant stream of rural migrants in the hopeless search for employment bloating already large urban populations in the mega-cities of developing countries. Davis states, "(s)ince 1970, slum growth everywhere in the South has outpaced urbanization *per se* (2006:17)" and suggests that Engel's tome on working class conditions at the middle of the 19th Century is still applicable as a description of urban conditions today (2006:138). Indeed, as reflected in the title of his work, Davis paints a rather dystopic vision of the cities of the near future.

Even as Davis details the patterns of growth and decay in these mega-cities of the world, we might consider that his vision and framework is rooted in an urbanism set against the standard of Western urbanization. Implicit in this understanding of the spread of urbanization in industrial societies is the role globalization plays–not just in the movement of people, but the standardization that comes with globalization leading us assume that there is standard urbanization narrative. Relying on what he calls urban imaginaries, Huyssen (2008) presents a series of essays that combat the idea that globalization, with its McDonaldization and consumerism driven by some global media recreating suburban malls everywhere, is both inevitable and dominant. Urban spaces are

indeed built environments reflecting the dominant social relations of production under capitalism. But they are also the product of city cultures reflecting parochial interests and divergent histories cautioning us against telling singular and overly generalized stories of urbanization.

Nonetheless, there are some disturbing trends and realities that give us reason to pause and be worried. The dynamic of increasing tensions over race and ethnicity can be understood in light contemporary patterns of racial and ethnic change (Fasenfest et al, 2005; Booza and Fasenfest, 2007) as it alters the cultural landscapes of US cities. The recent housing crisis and economic collapse has had significant impacts on state and local governments, and few cities have remained unscathed by the loss of revenues—both as resources from reductions in Federal aid and from the declining local income and property tax receipts. Urban research has long identified patterns of race based inequality, with articles in this journal exploring the consequences of segregation. Beeman, Glasberg and Casey (2011) explore how existing patterns this inequality have informed the impact of the housing collapse while Gowan (2011) turns to the limits of social capital in securing employment (and perpetuating underemployment) in urban ghettos.

Perhaps what is somewhat new over the recent decade has been the form of competition between African-Americans and Latinos as the latter, seeking employment and taking low wage jobs traditionally held by African-Americans, move out of traditional gateway cities (like Chicago, Houston or New York) into smaller cities and towns around the country. At the same time, we can see the influx of Hispanics into predominantly African-American or mixed African-American and white neighborhoods in the major urban centers. The results are mixed as coalitions form to respond to continued discrimination (Markert, 2010; Parker, Mccall and Lane, 2002), and community policing in our cities undergo changes (Lindsey, 2004; Sexton 2010). One change is the increase in racial profiling among Hispanics to accompany that of African-Americans by law enforcement—not the progress around increased inclusion one could hope for—situated around questions of legitimacy and citizenship (Romero, 2006). The old racist cries of "go back where you came from" aimed at new arrivals of African-Americans into northern cities (one assumes back to the South, though in some instances the inference was back to Africa) now have more weight as non-English speakers are seen as undocumented interlopers taking jobs from local residents. Questions about the relationship between housing, finance and racism persists, and they are revisited in the articles by Silverman and Patterson, and by Gotham in this issue of the journal.

The task before us is to expand our analysis of urbanization in the face of globalization, but also to bring new voices to the discussion by at least augmenting our analyses by including other cities in this global economy. That globalization and change in the core has an impact on strategies and actions in the urban periphery is obvious (see Ward, et al 2004). Yet, as Rybczynski (2010) points out, we have to understand that the new cities are not reproductions of the old. We have to develop both an appreciation of different cultural histories and an understanding of how new demands of a different political economy and new technologies invites and demands new patterns of urban space (Rybczynski calls it a shift from the vertical to the horizontal city). So the challenge is three-fold: include narratives from a wider set of cultures and cities; recognize that cities of tomorrow cannot not look like cities of the past; and reconcile the increasing diversity of who lives in these cities and why.

This issue of the journal is devoted to a turn towards critical urban sociology. Mark Gottdiener has assembled a collection (see his essay in this issue) of articles that tries to meet this challenge, bringing us examinations of urban space outside of the traditional focus of "global cities" and offering us new urban imageries to grapple with the changing urban landscape of this new century. It is an old adage that we must understand our past to ensure that we don't reproduce it in the future. It is also true that we must appreciate that there are many paths forward, or we can become blind to innovation and creativity that can point to different outcomes and better futures.

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