

CITIES AND SOCIAL CHANGE: ENCOUNTERS WITH CONTEMPORARY URBANISM, Edited by R. Paddison and E. McCann. Los Angeles and London: Sage, 2014

The good city that I'm eager to embrace is this urbanism of bridges and replicants. It is a city of 'egonism and struggle' of fragmented and fractured identities, of precarious and provisional spaces of habitation. It is one where the center itself – of geography and identity – is laid waste (Roy, this volume).

We left with the question of what kind of city do we wish to inhabit? Whose voices will we count? Which activities will we value? We do not and cannot answer those questions in the abstract (de Filipis and Rivero, this volume).

These two paragraphs are quoted from the last chapters, "the just city" and "the good city" of this book. The editors, Paddison and McCann, open and end the book by arguing: "the point then is developing a critical openness to what is already around us: a world of interconnection and difference, where agency, influence and innovation are not naturally and necessarily centered in specific places. This is an analytical and methodological point...this is the point de Filipis and Rivero and Roy make most explicitly...but it is one highlighted by all the essays in this volume" (p. 225).

The editors proceed: "The chapters in this volume are suggestive of ways in which future research into how urban societies work might be conceived and conducted... the strength of contemporary analysis lies in the appreciation of difference and diversity not only within the city but also between cities and in the unpacking of the interconnections – the complex interweavings of global and local, the impress of path dependency and the ruptures to it – that contribute to the making of social spaces, the meanings given to them and of the experiences of urban life" (ibid).

The volume intends to explore theoretically and empirically the characteristics of city life – how cities are imagined and represented, how city life is negotiated, and how social order is maintained. The purpose in the volume is to interrogate social experience of urban living – 'encounters with contemporary urbanism', says the subtitle. It means a variety of meanings, different activities and processes and multiple experiences linked to city living.

Theoretically informed and thematically rich, the book is edited by leading scholars in the field and contains an eminent cast of contributors and contributions. It encounters the reader with a critical analysis of the themes and paradigms dealing with the contemporary social change in the cities. It is pedagogically informed with illustrative case studies, questions for discussion, further reading and web links. It is clearly student and teacher oriented, with boxes that break out of the main text with empirical examples and lists of further resources at the end of most chapters.

The volume is structured into four major sections: theorizing the city; imagining city life; the experience of the city; and the making of livable cities. The contributions are aimed to be framed against contemporary understanding of space and the city as active.

Section 1, *Theorizing the City*, establishes the aims of the volume and introduces different ways of conceptualizing the city. It draws on a key figure in the history of western urban planning, Daniel Burnham, to examine the 'view from above' and the way in which devices such as maps, plans, tables and diagrams have been used to imagine and address particular urban problems. There are two chapters in this section - Chapter 1: *Encountering the City - Multiple Perspectives on Urban Social Change*\ Ronan Paddison and Eugene McCann; Chapter 2: *Representing and Imagining the City*\ Regan Koch and Alan Latham

Section 2 deals with *Experiencing the City*. It draws upon the work of the French urbanist Henri LeFebvre to move to a series of critiques highlighting the limitations and dangers of these dominant ways of representing the city. It contains four chapters and features contributions on class, poverty and encounters with 'difference': Chapter 3: *The 'New' Middle Class, Lifestyle and the 'New' Gentrified City*\ Loretta Lees; Chapter 4: *Being Poor in the City*\ Geoff De Verteuil; Chapter 5: *Living with Difference: Geographies of Encounter*\ Gill Valentine; Chapter 6: *The Everyday City of the Senses*\ Monica Degen.

Section 3, titled *The Livable City*, is an attempt to move beyond the well-established critiques of representation to exploring some ways in which popular representations and imaginations are implicated in the production of urban life. It draws together perspectives from urban planning, design, health and justice. Much of the discussion in this section examines regulation and ways of controlling the movements and activities of city inhabitants. The various chapters are: Chapter 7: *Dis/Order and the Regulation of Urban Space*\ Steven Herbert and Tiffany Grobelski; Chapter 8: *Walling the City*\ Gordon Macleod; Chapter 9: *Health and the City*\ Robin Kearns and Graham Moon; Chapter 10: *Cities, Nature and Sustainability*\ Eric Swngedouw and Ian Cook; Chapter 11: *Just Cities*\ James de Filipis and Juan Rivero.

Section 4, *Reflections on Cities and Social Change*, is the final one, and contains just two chapters: Chapter 12: *The Good City*\ Ananya Roy and Chapter 13: *Conclusions: Engaging the Urban World*\ Ronan Paddison and Eugene McCann. It outlines a range of possible ways in which urban studies might go about engaging more expansively with representations and the work that they do. Most importantly, it puts together the themes developed throughout the book and considers potential urban futures. It turns to the question of the city: how it is constructed through its governance and through policy making? Livability to whom? What would be the contours of the just city?

No edited collection can cover all aspects and issues of the subject, so there is a lacuna, especially in light of the ideas of southern thought and the urban greyness.

Though there is an effort to implicate a southern perspective and approaches (de Sousa Santos, 2007; Mirafab, 2009) into the chapters, this part is asymmetrical in comparison with the western thought and aspects in the volume. Another and more southern-oriented theme is the urban grey space (Roy, 2005; Yiftachel, 2009) which yields lately a fore front literature. The urban greyness research has come to the fore and may be looked upon from below and above; in the global city and in the changing small city by migrants; in the meeting point of traditional governance vs. state formal governance, etc.

Still, the volume creates an interesting experience into the very challenging geographical subject of social change in the city. It begins and ends by debating the 'Chicago school' of urban sociology thought that flourished at the first decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. As the platform of the volume's subject matter it continues to influence as a point of departure, but the urban social space thought and critique changed and became analytical insightful, diverse, multiple, complex and dynamic. It has been developed through representations, imaginaries, scales, perspectives and methodologies, by unpacking creatively the temporal, spatial, social, political, cultural and economic aspects of the urban.

Importantly the authors also show how we must balance a necessary 'inward' and 'downward' gaze with the 'heads up' orientation to the world outside, like Doreen Massey's 'global sense of place' advice (p. 219).

## REFERENCES

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