Urban Social Geography - Summarised Notes

Carla Hyenne

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Urban Geographical Traditions

Globalised urbanisation: urbanisation is a global phenomenon. It is also unequal across the world (eg. Asia dominates economic growth and urbanisation). The 'urban age' frame can be criticised: measurements depend on diverging national definitions, and it is a chaotic abstraction that does not neatly overlay cities in a spatial sense.

Brenner and Schmid, 2014

Urban vs. Rural

The urban: a distinctive way of life, which can take place in the city but also outside (suburbs, rural, slums). It epitomises a particular society (capitalist, industrial, fordist, modern, classist, etc.). It projects symbolic power, notably by means of its built environment.

The city: the material built environment. Has a complex division of labour, with increasing efficiency and surplus, but also inequalities. It projects symbolic power , and has physical and administrative boundaries. The 'non-city' is hard to define, because it's hard to know where the city ends: the 'rural', the peripheries, can have elements of the city.

Skyscrapers (Dubai, NYC); CCTV tower (Beijing)

Urbanisation: the process of becoming urban. It is a demographic process, whereby cities gain more and varied residents, with increasing density. It entails a globalisation of urban economic, political and cultural influence. It considers how space is organised through processes of uneven development.

Geography: the social and physical processes within the context of space. There are multiple concepts of space: **territory**, the boundaries and sovereignty of a space ; **scale**, the sensitivity of processes; **network**, hubs and leaks beyond the territory, towards micro-networks; and **place**, the attachement of meaning and sentiment to a space.
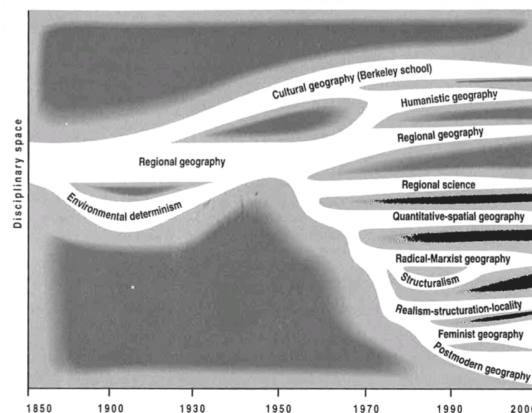
Brussels capital

Critical geography: epistemological rules of thumb include: acknowledging that there is no universal theory of anything; knowing every theory has birthmarks, ie. is situated in time and space, and reflecting on the birthmarks is necessary to be critical ; asking whether theories can be used across contexts; engaging in pluralism to allow inter-theoretical conversation and comparison.

Jonas et al., Sayer, Brenner and Schmid provincialisation

Materialist approaches to geography: concerned with the distribution and social-justice, and agenda-setting.

Humanist approaches to geography: about the experienced city, issues of representation and discourse, uses qualitative methods, gives a voice.

Theories of World-City Formation

Measuring centrality of cities/city-regions: there are multiple ways to measure the power of cities or regions, like the weight of the area in the national context (regarding GRP, density...), the number of patents, the level of education, the proportion of employment per sector (higher in the service sector than industry or agriculture).

Deltametropolis, Flemish Diamond, RheinRuhr, Ile-de-France, Greater London
Friedmann

World cities: world cities are points of functional centrality, serving command and control functions in a global urban system, where processes cross national borders. The world economy is restructured, there is a new international division of labour (offshoring), TNCs and MNCs dominate the global supply chain that is highly integrated. This creates uneven socio, economic and spatial developments because of a hierarchy connecting the core (absorbing the surplus) and the periphery.

Global cities: path dependencies concentrate Advanced Producer Services in select cities. The path dependencies include the extensive services market providing access for firm/client relations, the labour market and associated culture, the APS complex and the cross-border connections offered by its network. APS have control capabilities and **polarise the labour market** (high and low-skilled labour required). This results in the **peripheralisation** of the core.

Sassen

Global city regions: a complex assemble of cities, settlements, hinterlands that are interconnected by production networks, themselves oriented towards the global economy. An urban core is not always required for a region to be central in the post-Fordist industry (ie. service and knowledge industries). APS can still be an indicator for global city regions.

Scott
Silicon Valley, Pearl River Delta

GaWC heuristic: used to map the world-city network. Assumption is that the presence of international APS firms can be used to indicate the presence of command-and-control functions of cities.

Post-colonial critique: the western bias in urban knowledge production leaves places off the map of urban studies. Off the geographical map (global South), and off the conceptual map (limited economic processes, ignores inter-urban connections). World cities research ignores 'ordinary' cities in the global economy.

Robinson

Social-constructivist critique: the world-cities are politically constructed, and their consequences are un-debated and hide other realities . World cities are not a given but a product of local and global forces, mediated by acts of representation (financial and political elites, or policies that promote the city).

Massey
London's financial centre vs. low-skilled labour

Political-economy critique: there is a rescaling of the state due to globalisation, which changes the political and economic scales to supra and sub-national levels. There are new governance structures, a shift from managerialism to entrepreneurialism , global accumulation regimes are centred on (global) cities, their importance reinforced by global city building agendas.

Brenner

inter-urban competition

Financialisation critique: the deregulation of financial markets has financialised firms who are mostly present in APS complexes. Unfortunately this leads to global financial crises, and tax evasions.

Bassens & van Meeteren

Polarisation in World/Global Cities

Polarisation: a class division that is reproduced through space, and is stronger in global cities. Polarisation is explained by an **economic restructuring** . Productivity has increased, but wages have not because profit is invested elsewhere (eg. financialisation)

Friedmann and Wolf, citadel vs. ghetto

North-Atlantic

Economic restructuring: post-Fordism restructured the economy. Production was relocated (globalisation, NIDL); deindustrialisation declined activity in the city; structural unemployment; shift towards fiscal austerity ; market rationality and privatisation ; shift from state to market control over multinational capital; inter-urban competition.

declining tax base
neoliberalism

Harvey's entrepreneurial strategies: **Production**: policy makers create/exploit certain advantages for the production of goods and services; forms clusters and edge cities. **Consumption**: improving the city's position in the spatial division of consumption; affects socio-spatial structure. **Redistribution**: competition for (supra)nationally redistributed surplus from the economy. **Command and control**: investing in high finance, government, and information economy; forms monopoly spaces in global/world cities.

Polarisation thesis: the change in economic base led to a decline of well-paid manufacturing job (exodus) and a growth in service jobs (formal & informal) with an influx of high-salaried workers (professional and managerial jobs) and low-skilled workers to support their lifestyle and routine service jobs. Creates an "hourglass" of "upper circuit"/"underclass".

Friedmann & Wolff; Sassen

urban elite networks

Labour market globalisation: global cities have high-paid and low-paid migrants, often divided ethnically. Growing supply of low-skilled migrant labour for typically 3D jobs (dirty, demanding/difficult, dangerous) drives wages down. There is growing informality and a **"peripheralisation at the core"** , where exploitation not only takes place in the global South but also global North where the 'peripheralised' live. **New forms of industrial exploitation** in global cities are made possible by the absence of regulation in the (global) periphery.

expat vs. immigrant
Sassen-Koob

sweatshops

Criticism of polarisation in global cities: universalising and generalising tendencies, but does the logic apply elsewhere than NY-LON-TOK? Simplistic theory that reduces complexity of occupational and spatial structures, and professionalisation and mobility can also impact socio-spatial inequalities.

Occupational structure: professionalisation means high-income jobs are growing, and doesn't necessarily mean growth of low-paid jobs. There is an 'upgrading' of the labour market, and better welfare states prevent extreme polarisation. Labour inequalities emerge because of market exclusion based on gender and ethnicity.

Hamnett

minimum wage

Spatial structure: statistics could exaggerate polarisation. Suburbanisation of the middle class could mean that middle-incomes are not disappearing but moving outside of the city. High-end housing demand drives super-gentrification . Influence of pre-existing spatial forms and path dependencies.

Lees, 2003
Brussels, Brooklyn

Three-layer model: for analysing inequality in cities: macro-level (global change, economic restructuring, increasing mobility of capital, people, commodities, information); micro-level (individual level, change in labour opportunities in a specific local context); medium-level (connects global and local, national institution differences, different urban trajectories)

Burgers and Musterd, 2000

Charleroi/Detroit

Future: income polarisation is expected to expand due to austerity, the flexibilisation of the labour market, migration labour, and political wealth.

Urban Segregation: Patterns and Causes

Land-use model: an ideal type of 5 concentric circles shaped by the **bid rent theory**, whereby groups are able to pay different amount of rents (commerce/industry/residents). Density (and rent) decreases as one goes from the city centre towards suburbs. The model is of a growing city, in terms of population and built environment.

Burgess, 1925
Chicago

Assumptions of land-use model: assumes a cultural and social heterogeneity, a commercial and industrial economy, private ownership of property and economic competition for space, city expansion and population growth, equal mobility opportunities, CBD is the most valuable and the main centre for employment, attractiveness of districts is not based on terrain, no concentration of heavy industry, and not history survival of earlier land-use patterns in any district.

Sector model: a model for cities hit by socio-economic factors that slow population growth, in a society where cars play an increasingly important role. Sectors are organised around a core and grow outwards. Focus on social class rather than migrant groups.

Hoyt, 1939

Multi-nuclei model: a model where cities have a CBD, but also other strong areas with businesses and institutions.

Harris & Ulman, 1945

Alternative models: the British city, the Chinese city, the African city (market zone, traditional CBD, colonial CBD), enclave urbanism (LA's skid row vs. gated suburbs), the post-socialist city.

Provincialisation: urban differentiation is characteristic of all cities. Urban form is impacted by local features (topology, weather, socio-economic basis, migration patterns...) and local policies (transport systems, state interventions in housing, mobility restrictions, strategies to counter inequalities...). All land use models have birthmarks (time and place), and there is a need for provincialised (specific) theories about urban form and growth.

Dimensions of (residential) segregation: the degree to which two or more groups live apart from each other in the urban environment. Dimensions are **evenness** (differential distribution of two social groups across space) , **residential exposure** (degree of interaction opportunities between minority and majority groups in space), **concentration** (amount of physical space occupied by minority groups), **centralisation** (spatial distance from urban centre), **clustering** (extent to which minority-occupied areas adjoin one another in space). Scale matters!

Massey & Denton, 1988
index of dissimilarity

Causes of segregation: different schools of thoughts on why different population groups occupy different parts of the city. **Quantitative spatial geography** uses ecological models of the city considered a natural area with homogeneous character, based on a pattern of expansion/competition/invasion/succession. **Radical-Marxist geography** uses flows of capital to understand where segregation fits. **Neo-Weberian geography** uses socio-economic constraints like financial, cognitive, political, social resources. **Behavioural geography** uses people's reasoning and preferences around living conditions and environments. **Post-modern geography** uses the meaning attached to home, and how it affects personal experiences.

Neighbourhood Effects and Living with Diversity

Ideal of social mix: popular amongst policy makers across the political spectrum. It supposes that where you live affects your life chances, such that residential segregation has a negative effect on the socio-economically disadvantaged, social mobility and cultural integration.

Belgian cities, UK's HMR, USA, South Africa

Social mix feasibility: social mix policies don't resolve poverty, but displace people and move poverty elsewhere . Social mix that integrates different populations and helps rather than displaces is feasible, but hard to achieve in a market-dominant situation.

Slater, Van Kempen & Bolt
Brussels→Charleroi

Neighbourhood effects research: bears birthmarks and needs to be **provincialised and contextualised** . Different researchers (ethno-cultural vs. socio-economic) have different approaches (qualitative vs. quantitative)

America vs. Europe

Social network argument: social capital is the connections and social networks that create reciprocity and trustworthiness between individuals. Living together creates bonding capital in socially homogeneous groups, and bridging capital between socially heterogeneous groups. BUT risks to disrupt existing bonding capital, and human extensibility creates networks outside of neighbourhood

Strong & weak ties
Parallel lives

Underclass argument: poverty exists because of structural forces in a declining economic base, or because of a culture of poverty. Socialisation factors (peer groups, lack of role models) and institutional networks keep people in poverty. BUT are neighbourhoods really the cause? Mobility and internet allow for socialisation outside the neighbourhood.

Structuralists vs. Culturalists

Uneven policing

Social cohesion argument: living with natives creates opportunities for foreigners to integrate better. Using arguments of ethnic segregation and socio-economic mobility for social cohesion. BUT mobility means people can integrate outside neighbourhood, and local culture provides protective (arrival) spaces.

Local services argument: mixed neighbourhoods attract diverse shops and services. BUT differentiation creates differentiated demand that displaces specialised (ethnic) shops and services in arrival neighbourhoods, overshadows ethnic entrepreneurship which creates social mobility, and some may not find what they want.

Political argument: mixed neighbourhoods will be higher on political agendas. BUT why don't politicians listen to low-income populations instead?

Environmental racism

Spatial mismatch argument: disconnect between where people live (where poverty is concentrated) and low-skilled job opportunities. BUT is the problem social mix? Public transport gives people spatial mobility, and barriers like language prevent people from getting a job.

Stigmatisation argument: services and businesses hold stigmas and biases, and don't give as good a service or equal chances to poor residents.

Conclusions: social mix is not convincing. Instead of helping poor, ethnic minorities out of poverty, it displaces people and pushes gentrification. We need to ask: for whom is social mix? where and on what *scale*? and what is the goal, and are there more effective alternatives?

Cultures of Urban Research

Urban Cultures

Transport and Cities: a Historical Hegemony

Critical Perspective on Urban Transport