

Editorial: Dislocating Urban Studies

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Since the turn of the millennium, debates within Anglophone critical urban studies have given rise to intellectually rich discussions that force us to rethink *the location, theories, and practices* of the field. While attending to the fundamental question of exploring what “the urban” is, theorisations have also expanded to reflect where and how we should understand the urban condition (cf. Brenner, 2013; Jazeel, 2014; Lawhon et al., 2020; Parnell and Pieterse, 2016; Randolph and Storper, 2022; Robinson, 2003, 2016; Roy, 2009). A number of interventions have sought to question not only the location of knowledge production and the need to develop novel methodological strategies of comparison, but also to emphasise the importance of difference, identity, the everyday, and more-than-human actors when studying urban processes (Leitner et al., 2020). These developments are welcomed at a time when significant urban transformations are underway. However, more work needs to be done to create a field of critical urban studies that engages with anti-colonial, anti-racist, anti-capitalist, and anti-patriarchal struggles in more global ways, while addressing the urgent challenges of 21st-century urbanisation such as social inequality and environmental injustice. Empirical and theoretical contributions from the periphery—places “off the map” of urban theory (Robinson, 2002), invisible locations of urbanization (Fonseca Alfaro, forthcoming) or “overlooked” cities (Ruszczyk et al., 2021)—are necessary for understanding global processes of urbanisation and debunking the practices of Eurocentrism within the field. In other words, the geographical and epistemological margins of critical urban scholarship need to be explored much more in-depth in order to create openings towards what Escobar (2007) would refer to as “worlds and knowledges otherwise” across multiple scales, time frames, and social, economic and political contexts.

A crucial project, as we see it, is to *dislocate urban studies* by rethinking theory and shifting practice. We embarked on this journey last year through a series of four digital workshops where we invited early-career scholars working on/in/out different margins across the global North and South, and who carried out empirical, methodological or theoretical interventions that helped expand the boundaries of critical urban studies. In conversation with renowned senior scholars, the presenters (a) engaged with forgotten or little-known anti-colonial and anti-capitalist urban concepts or theorists, (b) presented interesting cases from “off the map” of urban studies, and (c) introduced us to novel methodological approaches, and (d) challenged us to rethink the usefulness of certain key concepts from the field.

In this Special Issue, we would like to offer a glimpse of the topics and rich discussions that arose during the workshop series to continue reflecting on how to dislocate urban studies. Clara Rivas Alonso reflects on her research journey through the “symbolic peripheries” of Istanbul, pondering on the challenges of a shifting positionality within a marginalised community. Josefa Maria Stiegler picks a similar train of thought, when she discusses the intricacies of building connections from afar with residents of a Brazilian favela, when the COVID-19 global pandemic forced many researchers into rethinking their methods.

Also having Rio de Janeiro’s favela as her research location, Bruna Ferreira Montuori proposes a “cartography of hidden narratives” that are suppressed by state official

discourses and practices. She uncovers counternarrative as a site of resistance and critical reflection. Travelling to the Northeast of the country, Laura Belik brings an ethnographic account on uncovering “little-known memories” of a long tucked away past of a former concentration camp in the Brazilian semi-arid. The “not-so-empty lot”, as she calls it, is overburdened with a heavy past which inspires us reflect on the “permanence of the impermanent” in urban research.

Going eastwards, Li Fan, Uwe Altrock, and Nadine Appelhans engage with the temporalities of urban regeneration in Shanghai. Leaning on the concept of conceded informality, they discuss state strategies relating to informal practices in the context of an urban growth agenda.

Burcu Yiğit Turan and Mia Ågren discuss the often-detracted persistence of racialised planning practices in Uppsala by exploring the differential conceptualisations of green space in predominantly white and immigrant-dense communities. Constantina Theodorou explores the “planetary spatiality of climate change”, arguing that climate justice can only be achieved by considering planetary spatial relations in their conceptual and material aspects.

Engaging with the right to the city in Philadelphia, Karen Paiva Henrique and Aparna Parikh, in their photo essay, share with us experiences from a visual project in which students used digital tools to explore and uncover how urban injustices materialise and are resisted in the city.

In our last contribution to this issue, Johan Pries reviews a retrospective exhibition on Sigurd Lewerentz, a controversial Swedish architect whose “‘creative resistance’ in the face of technocratic conformity” produces designs that challenge the conventions of life and death.

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