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Introduction

The Modern Metropolis and the Eclipse of Modernist City Building

Cast in bold strokes, the birth of the modern metropolis can trace its origins to the dawn of the industrial capitalist age in the mid- to late-nineteenth century. Animated by the modernist ethos that shaped thinking at the time, a new generation of city builders embarked on a far-reaching strategy to reshape urban landscapes in conformity with the machine-age principles of rational ordering of urban space, functional specialization of land use, spatial differentiation of the built environment, and efficient circulation of people and commodities. In seeking to break free from the strictures of jumbled (and allegedly chaotic) urban form that characterized the preindustrial city, sometimes tight and sometimes loose alliances of real-estate developers and city officials joined forces to adopt the *tabula rasa* approach of erasure and reinscription, clearing away old buildings, streetscapes, and entire neighborhoods that stood in the way of anticipated progress.[1] In a kind of proleptic projection, modernist city builders imagined a future in conformity with their planned interventions to create it.[2] Like industrial production itself in the "machine-age," city building was subjected to the modernist principles of standardization of building typologies, the speed of movement, and top-down organization of municipal administration.[3] This modernizing impulse involving the creative destruction of existing urban

[1] James Holston, *The Modernist City: An Anthropological Critique of Brasília* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), pp. 7–11; and David Pinder, *Visions of the City: Utopianism, Power and Politics in Twentieth-Century Urbanism* (New York: Routledge, 2013), pp. 89–126. See also Dietrich Neumann, "The Unbuilt City of Modernity," in Thorsten Scheer, Josef-Paul Kleihues, and Paul Kahlfeldt (eds.), *City of Architecture/Architecture of the City/Berlin 1900–2000* (Berlin: Nicolaische Verlagsbuchhandlung, 2000), pp. 161–173.

[2] See Anthony Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny: Essays in the Modern Unhomely* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1992), pp. 182, 199.

[3] See Shawn Natrasony and Don Alexander, "The Rise of Modernism and the Decline of Place: The Case of Surrey City Centre, Canada," *Planning Perspectives* 20, 4 (2005), pp. 413–433.

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fabrics to clear the way for rebuilding spilled out of the core areas at the center of the world economy, as a new kind of dependent urbanism emerged in the European colonial territories and elsewhere at "the margins of modernity." Despite the persistence of enduring socioeconomic inequalities and the distortion of urban form brought about by the implantation of rules governing racial segregation, these new cities in the peripheral zones of the world economy looked strikingly similar to modernist prototypes from which they were so blatantly copied.[4]

Classical understandings of the modern metropolis have long rested on theories, fears, and hopes associated with the conjoined processes of historical transformation and progress ("modernization") and the sociocultural practices of innovation and novelty ("modernity"). As a general rule, early scholarly contributions to the field of urban studies traced the origins of the modern metropolis as a distinctive and evolving spatial form to the historical specificity of particular urban experiences, particularly mid-nineteenth century London, late nineteenth-century Berlin, Vienna, and Paris, or early twentieth-century New York and Chicago. In other words, these core theoretical currents in urban studies "drew on a specific (western) version of urban modernity" to identify those universalizing (and homogenizing) impulses that were seen to define the pathways of urbanism everywhere. The singular urban experiences of leading "western" cities of North America and Europe became the universal standard through which to evaluate progress toward "development" in cities around the world as they moved along evolutionary, linear pathways already forged by those which came before.[5]

[4] This phrase is borrowed from Daniel Herwitz, "Modernism at the Margins," in Hilton Judin and Ivan Vladislavić (eds.), *Blank___: Architecture, Apartheid and After* (Rotterdam: NAi, 1999), pp. 405–421. See also Anthony King, *Colonial Urban Development: Culture, Social Power and Environment* (London and Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1976); Anthony King, *Urbanism, Colonialism, and the World-Economy: Cultural and Spatial Foundations of the World Urban System* (London and Boston: Routledge Kegan & Paul, 1990); and Robert Home, *Of Planting and Planning: The Making of British Colonial Cities* [Second Edition] (New York: Routledge, 2013). See also David Simon, "Colonial Cities, Postcolonial Africa and the World Economy: A Reinterpretation," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 13, 1 (1989), pp. 68–91; Anthony King, "The Times and Spaces of Modernity (or who needs Postmodernism?)," in Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash, and Roland Robertson (eds.), *Global Modernities* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 1995), pp. 108–123; Mauro Guillén, "Modernism without Modernity: The Rise of Modernist Architecture in Mexico, Brazil, and Argentina, 1890–1940," *Latin American Research Review* 39, 2 (2004), pp. 6–34; Uğur Ümit Üngör, "Creative Destruction: Shaping a High-Modernist City in Interwar Turkey," *Journal of Urban History* 39, 2 (2012), pp. 297–314; Manish Chalana and Tyler Sprague, "Beyond Le Corbusier and the Modernist City: Reframing Chandigarh's 'World Heritage' Legacy," *Planning Perspectives* 28, 2 (2013), pp. 199–222; and Mia Fuller, *Moderns Abroad: Architecture, Cities, and Italian Imperialism* (New York: Routledge, 2007).

[5] These ideas are derived from Jennifer Robinson, "The Urban Now: Theorising Cities beyond the New," *European Journal of Cultural Studies* 16, 6 (2013), pp. 659–677 (esp. p. 659; quotation p. 660).

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Thinking about the modern metropolis has always careened back and forth between imaginings of urban futures that are either romantically utopian or catastrophically dystopian.[6] This new kind of city – at once vibrant and ever-changing, and sinister and unforgiving – triggered an outpouring of social commentary captured in the much celebrated writings of Charles Baudelaire (the aimless anonymity of the peripatetic *flaneur*), Georg Simmel (overstimulation, the money economy, and the *blasé* attitude), Louis Wirth ("urbanism as a way of life"), and Walter Benjamin (the phantasmagoria of the arcades as the central organizing metaphor for the meteoric rise of commodity capitalism).[7] This scholarly work focused a great deal of attention on the emergence of new modes of urban living, particularly the dynamics of social mingling with strangers and heterogeneous crowds in urban public space and the *anomie* brought about by the superficial, anonymous, and fleeting interactions characteristic of the transitory nature of urban relationships. Originating out of the anxiety provoked by the encounter with strangeness, the urban uncanny operated alongside (and sometimes in contradiction with) the modernist ethos that praised the virtues of an open and distinctive civic public culture and the positive values fostered by a vibrant public realm.[8]

Starting in the 1920s, a group of urban scholars associated with the so-called "Chicago School" of urban sociology codified what they regarded as the defining characteristics of the modern metropolis into an elaborate theorization of urban evolution and transformation. The Chicago School developed a set of standard assumptions and cohesive themes guiding their work. For the Chicago School, the modern metropolis was the archetypical prototype for understanding urbanization on a world scale. In the view of scholars affiliated with this school of thought, what they found in studying Chicago amounted to virtually universal principles that could be applied to cities everywhere.[9]

6 See Gyan Prakash, "Introduction: Imagining the Modern City, Darkly," in Gyan Prakash (ed.), *Noir Urbanism: Dystopic Images of the Modern City* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2010), pp. 1–14.

7 Walter Benjamin [edited by Michael Jennings], *The Writer of Modern Life: Essays on Charles Baudelaire* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006). See David Frisby, *Cityscapes of Modernity: Critical Explorations* (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2001); and Steve Baker, "The Sign of the Self in the Metropolis," *Journal of Design History* 3, 4 (1990), pp. 227–234.

8 For a broad treatment of some of these issues, see Marshall Berman, *All That is Solid Melts into Air: The Experience of Modernity* (New York: Penguin, 1998). For the uncanny, see Vidler, *The Architectural Uncanny*, pp. 4–8. For the idea of publics, see Sophie Watson, *City Publics* (London: Routledge, 2006); Nancy Fraser, "Rethinking the Public Sphere: A Contribution to the Critique of Actually Existing Democracy," in Craig Calhoun (ed.), *Habermas and the Public Sphere* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1991), pp. 109–142; and Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1989).

9 See Dennis Judd, Dick Simpson, and Janet Abu-Lughod (eds.), *The City Revisited: Urban Theory from Chicago, Los Angeles, and New York* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2011); and Michael Dear (ed.), *From Chicago to LA: Making Sense of Urban Theory* (Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 2001).

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As a general rule, the Chicago School looked at cities as complex yet predictable social worlds operated in ways analogous to natural processes, where urban growth and development conformed to expected and orderly patterns that could be observed and measured with the application of objective scientific principles.[10] In seeking to understand why redevelopment and land use varied over the urban landscape, the Chicago School relied upon organic metaphors and ecological models as appropriate and useful framing devices for the investigation of urban social relations. The use of such concepts as "ecological niche" ("or natural areas") crystallized into a theory of ever-expanding, or maturing, concentric circles of land use extending outward from the high-density core to the surrounding low-density periphery. For the most part, urban theorists associated with the Chicago School viewed urban social structures as complex webs of dynamic processes, somewhat akin to components of an eco-system, progressing through various stages of growth toward maturity. The resulting ecological models, thus, emerged from the examination of the parallels between natural and social systems. A preoccupation that permeated the investigations of the Chicago School was the search for the rules – or law-like regularities – that governed the growth of the city-system. As the dominant paradigm in urban studies for close to half a century, the Chicago School left its mark on mainstream approaches to urban studies: the uncritical use of naturalistic and organic metaphors, and the widespread deployment of such key framing ideas as stages of urban growth, linear pathways of urbanization, functional specialization, the invasion-succession ecological model, and concentric rings became embedded in the accepted canon of mainstream urban studies.[11]

In the waning decades of the twentieth century, theoretical challenges put forward by such alternative perspectives as the Los Angeles (LA) School exposed the limitations in the foundational principles that guided the researching and writing of the Chicago School.[12] More generally, scholarly inquiry over the past several decades has amounted to a sustained critique of the mainstream canon of conventional urban studies. These critiques have focused the uncritical dependence upon (so-called) Western models of urban development as the basic template for understanding the trajectories of global urbanism.[13] A

[10] Andrew Abbott, "Of Time and Space: The Contemporary Relevance of the Chicago School," *Social Forces* 75, 4 (1997), pp. 1149–1182; and James Short, *The Social Fabric of the Metropolis: Contributions of the Chicago School of Urban Sociology* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1971).

[11] Simon Parker, *Urban Theory and the Urban Experience: Encountering the City* [2nd edition] (New York: Routledge, 2015). See also David Wachsmuth, "City as Ideology: Reconciling the Explosion of the City Form with the Tenacity of the City Concept," *Environment and Planning D* 32, 1 (2014), pp. 75–90.

[12] See Judd, Simpson, and Abu-Lughod, The City Revisited; and Dear, *From Chicago to LA: Making Sense of Urban Theory*.

[13] Jennifer Robinson, *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development* (New York: Routledge, 2003); Ananya Roy, "Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 35, 2 (2011), pp. 223–238; Ryan Bishop, John Phillips,

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variety of alternative framing devices – most notably postmodernist, poststructuralist, and postcolonialist perspectives – have provided spirited critiques of modernist orthodoxies.[14] Yet none of these theoretical orientations have offered sufficiently coherent road maps for understanding the evolving trajectories of global urbanism at the start of the twenty-first century.[15]

Starting in the latter half of the nineteenth century, the dominant mode of urbanization that characterized the era of the modern metropolis produced a dual structure consisting of a dense central core surrounded by expansive rings of suburban dependencies tied umbilically to the center via various networks of circulation. At the risk of oversimplification, this crude structure of high-density "urban core" versus low-density "suburban periphery" has long dominated the public imagination as well as the scholarly literature on cities. With some variation, the prevailing view of the urbanization process – what stands as the ideal typical model – looks at urban growth and development as a process fueled by migration to the dense inner city, where the clustering of employment opportunities and the agglomeration of services produced a particular kind of concentrated urban realm. In this formulation, expansion has generally taken place through roughly concentric waves of sprawling suburbanization, thereby "pushing the outer edge of the metropolis into a rural or nonurban countryside."[16]

For close to a century, this core-centric, centripetal model of hierarchical urban growth and development has dominated analytical thinking about cities.[17] Yet the processes of urbanization that began to take shape in the late twentieth century were significantly different from what came before. At this time, a distinctive mode of worldwide urbanization put into motion the geographical concentration of "the world's population, primarily through rural to urban migration, not just in cities *per se*, but in larger and often sprawling metropolitan regions."[18] The sheer scale and scope of the growing population size of cities on a world scale has led to claims that we have entered a new Urban Age, where for the first time in history, more than half the world's

Wei Yeo (eds.), *Postcolonial Urbanism: Southeast Asian Cities and Global Processes* (New York: Routledge, 2003); and Ananya Roy and Aihwa Ong (eds.), *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global* (Malden, MA: Wiley-Blackwell, 2011).

[14] See, for example, Colin Rowe and Fred Koetter, *Collage City* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1975).

[15] Matthew Gandy, *Concrete and Clay: Reworking Nature in New York City* (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 2003), pp. 15–17; and Robert Beauregard, "Without a Net: Modernist Planning and the Postmodern Abyss," *Journal of Planning Education and Research* 10, 3 (1991), pp. 189–194.

[16] Edward Soja, "Regional Urbanization and the Future of Megacities," in Steef Bujijs, Wendy Tan, and Devisari Tunas (eds.), *Megacities: Exploring a Sustainable Future* (Rotterdam: 010 Publishers, 2010), pp. 56–75 (esp. p. 58).

[17] See, for example, Sebastian Dembski, "Structure and Imagination of Changing Cities: Manchester, Liverpool and the Spatial In-between," *Urban Studies* 52, 9 (2015), pp. 1647–1664.

[18] Soja, "Regional Urbanization and the Future of Megacities," pp. 57–58 (quotation from p. 57).

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population lives within cities.[19] The trope of this new Urban Age has spawned its own vocabulary: megacities, hypergrowth, planetary urbanism, posturbanism, exopolis, and the postmetropolis. Yet to view urbanization simply through the narrow lens of expanding population size – which has resulted in ever-larger numbers of megacities of hypergrowth on a world scale – tends to ignore how contemporary modes of urbanization have not only eroded "inherited morphologies of urbanism at all spatial scales" but also produced "new, rescaled formulations of urbanized territorial organization."[20]

The modes of urbanization that have unfolded at the start of the twenty-first century have produced highly uneven urban fabrics that have assumed "extremely complex polycentric forms that no longer remotely approximate the concentric rings and linear density gradients associated with the relatively bounded industrial city of the nineteenth century," nor "the metropolitan forms of urban development that were consolidated during the opening decades of the twentieth century."[21] The steady accretion of differences and discontinuities with past waves of urban growth and development have marked a qualitative shift in the dominant modes of urbanization, thereby resulting in what some scholars have called "extended regional urbanization" or "a polycentric and networked city region."[22]

Challenging Foundational Principles: the Modern Metropolis and the Modernist Imagination

Scholarly challenges to the iconic status of the classic modern metropolis as the prototype for understanding global urbanism have emerged in fits and starts, and have yet to gain a fully developed and coherent footing in mainstream urban studies. Old ideas (and paradigms) die slowly. It is often the case that they live on – in the form of a ghostly afterlife – well beyond the time of their analytic and epistemological usefulness. Paradigmatic scaffolding inherited from earlier efforts to understand cities and urbanization has continued to maintain a tight grip over conceptual frameworks, classification schemes, and modes of analysis that are no longer fully capable of making sense of urbanism on a global scale.

As a general rule, mainstream thinking about urbanization as a global process has tried in vain to rationalize the steadily rising numbers of cities on a world scale that do not conform to the classical conception of the modern

[19] Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid, "The 'Urban Age' in Question," in Neil Brenner (ed.), *Implosions/Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanism* (Berlin: Jovis, 2014), pp. 310–337 (esp. p. 310).
[20] Brenner and Schmid, "The 'Urban Age' in Question," p. 324.
[21] Brenner and Schmid, "The 'Urban Age' in Question," pp. 310–337.
[22] See Edward Soja and Miguel Kanai, "The Urbanization of the World," in Ricky Burdett and Deyan Sudjic (eds.), *The Endless City: The Urban Age Project by the London School of Economics and the Deutsche Bank's Alfred Herrhausen Society* (London: Phaidon, 2007), pp. 54–69.

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metropolis. By treating seemingly extreme cases as extraordinary (that is, outside the expected mainstream), conventional theorizing about cities typically classifies the exceptions as inexplicable outliers or curious anomalies, or else dismisses them as unfortunate expressions of failed urbanism, either subjected to the abnormal pressures of super-fast, hypergrowth or suffering from asphyxiating shrinkage and decline. These exceptional cities that do not correspond with expected patterns of urbanization, those that take unexpected detours by expanding too quickly or by seemingly reversing direction through decline and abandonment, either become inconsistent aberrations that require further refinement and elaboration, or they are pushed "off the map" of significance, because they are not forcefully present at the heart of theoretical and paradigmatic expectations.[23]

But the extreme is no longer the exception, but the norm. The failure of existing conceptual frameworks to capture extreme versions of those familiar conditions associated with expected patterns of urbanization on a world scale requires a rethinking of mainstream paradigms that dominate research and writing in urban studies. Beginning with the exception – or what Saskia Sassen has called the "systemic edge" – enables us to question what conventional theorizing about cities and city-making has long regarded as the norm, the expected, and the exemplary.[24]

Rethinking conventional paradigms in contemporary urban studies requires us to challenge, and at least partially dismantle (if not completely discard), the foundational pillars that have guided theory-making for quite some time. While they proved quite useful in assisting us in theorizing about cities and urbanization in earlier times, they seem to have suffered from diminishing capacity to illuminate contemporary processes of urbanization on a global scale. To be sure, this exercise of rethinking does not necessarily mean rejecting every idea inherited from earlier rounds of theorizing about cities and urbanism, and simply starting *de novo*. Yet it does demand that we critically engage with and interrogate the borderlands, or "fuzzy edges," of existing paradigmatic knowledge frameworks, and that we expose largely unquestioned assumptions and examine their continued usefulness.[25]

As a general rule, four key *regulative principles* – that is, taken-for-granted ways of thinking – accompanied the growth and development of the modern metropolis. These ideas have not only animated theories of the "good city" for at least the past half century, but also empowered the practice of city building

[23] See Jennifer Robinson, "Global and World Cities: A View from Off the Map," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 26, 3 (2002), pp. 531–554.

[24] These ideas here and earlier are taken and adapted from Saskia Sassen, "At the Systemic Edge," *Cultural Dynamics* 27, 1 (2015), pp. 173–181.

[25] A good place to start is Saskia Sassen, *Expulsions: Brutality and Complexity in the World Economy* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2014). See also Saskia Sassen, *Territory Authority Rights: From Medieval to Global Assemblages* [Updated Edition] (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2008), pp. 1–23.

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over the same period.[26] But they may not be as readily self-evident, singularly objective, and blandly unproblematic as they may appear at first glance. The structural dynamics, urban form, and social characteristics of cities have "no pregiven or fixed ontological status, but are socially produced and continually transformed" in accordance with changing pressures and entanglements brought about by the encounter with the contradictory dynamics of globalization.[27]

The breakdown and gradual disappearance of the key elements that characterized the modern metropolis from the mid-nineteenth until the late twentieth century marks the eclipse of a particular historically demarcated phase of urbanization and the start of a new mode of urban transformation on a global scale. Tracing the partial disappearance if not complete disintegration of these four foundational pillars enables us to more fully comprehend the contours and trajectories of global urbanism at the start of the twenty-first century. Looking at the fading dominance of the classic "modern metropolis" as the ideal-typical model for urban life in general and the main paradigmatic template for theorizing about global urbanism allows us to rethink conventional theories, conceptual frameworks, and categorical distinctions that have often assumed the elevated status of universal applicability with general relevance for urbanization on a world scale.[28]

The unraveling of these four key regulative principles provides a platform for a rethinking of conventional urban theories and opens up the possibilities for paradigmatic shifts in theorizing about global urbanism. First, the continued reliance in mainstream urban studies on somewhat static conceptualizations of the city as a bounded territory, or recognizable spatial unit, with recognizable borders and edges (producing a distinctive urban form) has hindered our capacity to understand global urbanism at the start of the twenty-first century.[29] Second, the modernist (and high-modernist) principles that shaped thinking about city building beginning at the end of the nineteenth century and continuing to the end of the twentieth century have largely fallen out of favor.[30] Third, the steady encroachment of new kinds of largely privatized regulatory regimes have undermined, and often replaced, the public administration of urban space.

[26] See, for example, Malcolm Miles and Tim Hall (eds.), *Urban Futures: Critical Commentaries on Shaping the City* (New York: Routledge, 2003); and Robert Fishman, *Urban Utopias in the Twentieth Century* [Revised Edition] (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1982).

[27] See Ash Amin, "Spatialities of Globalization," *Environment and Planning A* 34, 3 (2002), pp. 385–399 (quotation from p. 386).

[28] For a classic statement, see Hans Blumenfeld, *The Modern Metropolis: Its Origins, Growth, Characteristics, and Planning: Selected Essays* [edited by Paul Spreiregen] (Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1967).

[29] See Ryan Bishop and John Phillips, "The Urban Problematic," *Theory, Culture & Society* 30, 7–8 (2013), pp. 221–241.

[30] Nigel Taylor, "Anglo-American Town Planning Theory since 1945: Three Significant Developments but no Paradigm Shifts," *Planning Perspectives* 14, 4 (1999), pp. 327–345.

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Fourth, and finally, the emergence of new kinds of socially accessible yet privately owned and managed space has become the dominant mode of social congregation, casual mixing, and chance encounter in cities today. While city builders in older cities have clung tenaciously to conventional approaches to organizing urban life around classical understandings of accessible public space, dominant stakeholders in newer cities have gradually jettisoned these commitments in favor of new ways of partitioning urban landscapes.[31]

The shifting patterns of extended urbanization on a global scale have destabilized inherited epistemological assumptions, analytic frameworks, and paradigmatic models that have guided urban theorizing and research for quite some time. Conventional ways of thinking about urbanization have become ingrained habits of thought, expressions of "common sense," that are still widely in use. Received ideas about global urbanism have an enduring afterlife long after their universalizing and essentializing impulses have disappeared. To call into question conventional approaches to urban studies is not to suggest that existing interpretive frameworks are completely outmoded and irrelevant. On the contrary, scholars calling for conceptual renewal and realignment are not in agreement regarding the precise limitations of inherited analytic frameworks and models, and, as a consequence, they have not reached consensus about what "updated or reinvented interpretive frameworks that can more effectively orient and animate" urban theory and research.[32]

The Instability of "the City" as Coherent Object of Inquiry

At first glance, "the city" appears as an obvious fact of contemporary life. Yet the closer one inquires into its inner workings, the more difficult it is to comprehend it as a coherent object.[33] In so many ways, cities are somewhat akin to a "disassembled jigsaw puzzle," which from a distance resemble "a confused mass to which it is difficult to apply models constructed from theories of urban order." Without an organizing focus, it is almost as if, as the anthropologist Nestor Garcia Canclini has suggested about Mexico City, cities are "everywhere without really being anywhere,"[34] just like Jorge Luis Borges's *Aleph*.

The hybrid patterns of global urbanism at the start of the twenty-first century contradict the historicist meta-narrative according to which urban

[31] Anastasia Loukaitou-Sideris, "Privatisation of Public Open Space: The Los Angeles Experience," *Town Planning Review* 64, 2 (1993), pp. 139–168.

[32] Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid, "Combat, Caricature and Critique in the Study of Planetary Urbanization" [Urban Theory Lab, Graduate School of Design, Harvard University, April 2015], pp. 1–11 (quotation from p. 3).

[33] See Hilary Angelo and David Wachmuth, "Urbanizing Urban Political Ecology: A Critique of Methodological Cityism," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39, 1 (2015), pp. 16–27.

[34] Nestor Garcia Canclini, "Mexico City: Cultural Globalization in a Disintegrating City," *American Ethnologist* 22, 4 (1995), pp. 743–755 (quotations from 748).

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transformation takes place in coherent and distinct stages *en route* to a common end point of mature development. The search for internal coherence in the city distorts its most fundamental features and obscures social practices characteristic of the everyday life of the metropolis. The vast extension of urban agglomerations and the actual realities of global connections have together made the boundaries of cities difficult to define. Clarifying the coordinates of object of inquiry is no easy task. When we refer to a city, we generally designate a material object and identify an imagined place. Assuming a unified social whole implies bounded coherence. Yet the force of globalization has undermined both the implied unity of the metropolis and ideal-typical designations of a clear demarcation between "inside" and "outside." If buildings and infrastructure define the city as a place, then multiscaled processes, complex and conflicting relations, and dense interconnections mark the metropolis as a historically specific site. As Henri Lefebvre cautioned a long time ago, neither modernity nor the metropolis have an ontological essence: each is a historically contingent condition located in time as well as in a place.[35]

One of the ironies of modern urban planning – itself the product of circulating ideas originating more than a century ago – is that its practitioners generally assume that cities form unified social wholes with an implied bounded coherence. By operating under the illusory belief in the comprehensiveness, internal logic, and boundedness of urban space, planning practice typically presumes that it is possible to capture the essential characteristics of cities through cartographic representation.[36] The imaginary wholeness of the city acts as a kind of "metaphorical glue," presuming that assembled elements come together as an autochthonous condition and bounded and coherent social system. As Thomas Bender has warned, reification is a real danger, "for it masks as it unifies, thus misleading our understanding of urban processes and [the] lived experience" of urban life.[37]

Conventional urban theories have long been premised on the assumption that cities are more or less self-enclosed, distinctive, discrete, and territorially bounded types of human settlement-space that can be contrasted to putatively "nonurban" zones that lie outside or beyond them (such as suburbs, the countryside, rural hinterlands, and, ultimately, the realm of nature).[38] Yet the accelerated pace of extensive urbanization on a global scale has undermined the once meaningful distinctions between city and country, metropolis and

35 Henri Lefebvre, *Writings on Cities* [edited and translated by Eleonore Kotman and Elizabeth Lebas] (Oxford: Blackwell, 1996), p. 12.

36 Thomas Bender, "History, Theory and the Metropolis" (CMS Working Paper Series, No. 005–2206. Center for Metropolitan Studies, Technical University Berlin D-10587, 2006), pp. 1–15 (esp. pp. 6–7).

37 Bender, "History, Theory and the Metropolis," p. 7.

38 See, for example, Neil Brenner and Christian Schmid, "Towards a New Epistemology of the Urban?" *City* 19, 2–3 (2015), pp. 151–182; Matthew Gandy, "When Does the City End?" in Neil Brenner (ed.), *Implosions/Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization* (Berlin: Jovis, 2014), pp. 86–89; and Wachsmuth, "City as Ideology," pp. 75–90.

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