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**INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH
ON METROPOLISES**

Milestones and Frontiers

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Preface: International Research on Metropolises – Milestones and Frontiers

Metropolises play a crucial role in processes of globalisation. Transnational corporations and banks are headquartered in so-called global cities, and stock markets as well as advanced producer service providers are located there. In a similar vein, cultural globalisation is both seen and shaped in the big cities. Information is produced and interpreted mainly in global cities, and fashion and taste are created there. In addition, mass immigration from all over the world changes character, language and identity in metropolises.

The transition of the metropolis caused by globalisation processes poses new challenges for urban studies. An extensive body of literature shows that global economic restructuring has fundamentally changed the relations between economy, society and space. This is particularly true for cities. They are strongly influenced by globalisation and economic restructuring, and often take on a leading role in these processes. Because globalisation has created a different environment for urbanization, conventional research paradigms in urban studies are being challenged as a result. Subjects matters such as land use and value (as defined by the “Chicago School” of the 1920s and 1930s), the growth machine, urban primacy, and the “counter-urbanization” of the 1960s and 1970s built on a set of assumptions that are undermined by globalisation processes.

New approaches suggest that cities can no longer be analysed as entities, nor can they be seen as “containers” for “national” economic processes. Rather, metropolises develop in overlapping dynamics and flows – sometimes competing, sometimes complementary – which are located on different spatial scales, ranging from local to national to global. These dynamics and flows and their spatiality can neither be captured by the kind of data traditionally used (because these tend to be state-centric and/or static) nor by focussing exclusively on the national embeddedness of cities.

The objective of the current issue of the “ISR-Forschungsberichte” is to contribute to the ongoing debate about innovative research practices in urban studies. For that purpose, the issue contains both articles that can be considered as “milestones” in recent urban studies and articles that deal in very specific ways with “frontiers” of urban research.

To begin with, Saskia Sassen argues that globalisation has brought about a new geography of centrality and marginality. Within this geography, certain cities – the *global cities* – emerge as places where economic power and control centres are concentrated. The global city is therefore a site for new claims: by global capital which uses the city as an “organizational commodity”, but also by disadvantaged sectors of the urban population, frequently as internationalised presence in large cities.

Since the publication of her book “The Global City” in 1991, Sassen’s work has strongly influenced urban studies, but also attracted criticism. Several authors have argued that the network of global cities, depicted by Sassen and others, or the “space of flows”, analysed by Castells, are based on poor empirical research. This methodological debate gave rise to one of the most innovative and compelling steps in urban

studies. In order to overcome the limitations of the study of relations between cities as undertaken by world cities researchers, Peter Taylor and his colleagues at Loughborough University set up the "Globalisation and World Cities Study Group and Network" (GaWC). Since 1997, the GaWC has produced an enormous amount of data that actually portray the global network of cities. In his contribution to this issue, Peter Taylor introduces the methodology of how the GaWC is generating data for research on cities in globalisation.

One of the shortcomings of global city research has been that it concentrated too strongly on metropolises such as New York, London, Tokyo, Frankfurt, Los Angeles etc. Nevertheless, researchers who focus on "Third World" cities have shown that some aspects of global cities research are indeed helpful in understanding recent urban dynamics in, for example, Latin America. In his contribution to the present issue of the "ISR-Forschungsberichte", Bryan Roberts shows that the impact of globalisation on Latin American cities is ambiguous and contradictory. While globalisation accentuates economic insecurity and urban inequalities (processes that can also be observed in "First World" cities), it also promotes a greater awareness on the part of governments, international organizations, and citizens of the need for innovation in social policy. As a consequence, the local level is now, according to Roberts, a dynamic interface where state, international organizations, NGOs and the poor interrelate.

In his article, Pierre Frankhauser analyses the location of service centers in European cities. Their spatial spread leads the author to argue that a "ville fractale" is developing, which is distinguished by a shrinking separation of the city and the region where it is embedded. According to Frankhauser, the tendency towards a "fractalization" of cities is found in monocentric cities such as Dijon as well as in polycentric agglomerations such as Lille.

The second part of the current issue of the "ISR-Forschungsberichte" is dedicated to ongoing research projects at the "Institute of Urban and Regional Studies" at the Austrian Academy of Sciences (www.oeaw.ac.at/isr). Despite their different theoretical, methodological and regional focus, the three projects presented here share a common concern on how to study the metropolis appropriately in an era of globalisation. They are, therefore, dealing with challenges or "frontiers" in current urban studies.

The first project to be presented is the EU-sponsored project "Competitive Metropolises". Taking Vienna as a case study, Anita Pöckl, Edgar Hagspiel and Monika Kuffer introduce their methodology to draw up the boundaries of urban agglomerations. In a second step, the authors discuss key features of urban development such as environmental concerns, infrastructure, and planning. Presenting the project "Outskirts of European Cities", Axel Borsdorf and Vera Mayer discuss spatial patterns of commerce in European cities. They take issue with Christaller's theory of central places, which has been challenged by the decentralization and suburbanisation of shopping malls. They conclude that new locational factors outperform the ones that led Christaller to his theory of "central functions" in "central places". Finally, Christof Parnreiter, Karin Fischer, Johannes Jäger and Petra Kohler introduce the research project "Transformation and Urban Processes in Latin America". They argue that

new dynamics of urbanization, which can be observed in Latin America due to globalisation, differ from one country to another. While in Mexico urban primacy of the capital city is declining, Santiago de Chile has strengthened its central position in recent years. In addition, the transformation of both cities to global cities has contributed to a deeper fragmentation of urban spaces and societies.

As always, the production of the “ISR-Forschungsberichte” was carried out by Josef Kohlbacher and Ursula Reeger. We want to thank them for their efficiency and precision. As editors we hope that the mix of “milestones” in recent urban studies and articles tackling frontiers might contribute to stimulating future research.

Vienna, April 2003

Christof Parnreiter
Axel Borsdorf

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THE GLOBAL CITY: STRATEGIC SITE/NEW FRONTIER¹

Saskia Sassen

Economic globalization and the new network technologies have contributed to produce a spatiality for the urban which pivots on de-territorialized cross-border networks and territorial locations with massive concentrations of resources. This is not a completely new feature. Over the centuries cities have been at the intersection of processes with supra-urban and even intercontinental scalings. What is different today is the intensity, complexity and global span of these networks, and the extent to which significant portions of economies are now dematerialized and digitized and hence can travel at great speeds through these networks. Also new is the growing use of digital networks by a broad range of often resource-poor organizations to pursue a variety of cross-border initiatives. All of this has raised the number of cities that are part of cross-border networks operating at often vast geographic scales. Under these conditions, much of what we experience and represent as the local turns out to be a microenvironment with global span.

This new geography of centrality constituted by the worldwide grid of global cities, marked by sharp imbrications of digital and non-digital conditions, is perhaps one of the most strategic spaces for the formation of new types of political actors and politics. Global cities concentrate key sectors of global corporate capital and of a vast mix of people and organizations from around the world. This is a cross-border geography characterized by increasing density and diversity of transactions and actors. It is a space with new economic and political potentialities that is both place-centered because embedded in particular and strategic cities; and it is transterritorial because it connects sites that are not geographically proximate yet intensely connected to each other. It is not only the transmigration of capital that takes place in this cross-border geography, but also that of people, both rich, i.e. the new transnational professional workforce, and poor, i.e. most migrant workers; and it is a space for the transmigration of cultural forms, for the reterritorialization of "local" subcultures. While these types of developments do not necessarily neutralize attachments to a country or national cause, they do shift this attachment to include translocal communities of practice and/or membership, whether they are the new transnational professionals of global finance or activist organizations.

Globalization is a contradictory space; it is characterized by contestation, internal differentiation, continuous border crossings. The global city is emblematic of this condition. Global cities concentrate a disproportionate share of global corporate power and are one of the key sites for its overvalorization. But they also concentrate a

¹ The first half of this article is a revised version of an article originally published in the *Journal of American Studies*.

disproportionate share of the disadvantaged and are one of the key sites for their devalorization. This joint presence happens in a context where (1) the globalization of the economy has grown sharply and cities have become increasingly strategic for global capital; and (2) marginalized people have found their voice and are making claims on the city as well. This joint presence is further brought into focus by the sharpening of the distance between the two. The center now concentrates immense power, a power that rests on the capability for global control and the capability to produce superprofits. And marginality, notwithstanding little economic and political power, has become an increasingly strong presence through a proliferation of new types of politics and an emergent transnational politics embedded in the new geography of economic globalization. Both actors, increasingly transnational and in contestation find in the global city the strategic terrain for their operations.

GENERATING DATA FOR RESEARCH ON CITIES IN GLOBALIZATION

Peter J. Taylor

THE AMBIGUITIES OF GLOBALIZATION AND LATIN AMERICAN CITIES

Bryan R. Roberts

The impact of globalization on Latin American cities is ambiguous and contradictory. The impact of economic globalization on labor markets and on the configuration of urban space accentuates economic insecurity and urban inequalities. Indirectly, it isolates low-income populations, reducing the public spaces in which they interact with the better-off population as private facilities for health, education and recreation spring up around the city. At the same time, globalization has promoted a greater awareness on the part of governments, international organizations, and citizens of the need for innovation in social policy. It has also promoted the spread of information of their rights among low-income populations. Whereas economic policy is bereft of new ideas, social policy has become the forum for discussing alternative ways forward. The fiscal austerity imposed by economic policy make these something of an illusion, but they are illusions that generate much debate and much activity at the local level. The local level is now, much more than in the past, a dynamic interface

where state, international organizations, NGOs and the poor interrelate. It is thus likely to alter the nature of urban government. Authoritarian bureaucracy combined with clientelism might have been sufficient to order the Latin American cities of the past. Now control is more likely to depend on managerial administration combined with at least the appearance of citizen participation.

LA « VILLE FRACTALE » ET LA FRACTALITE DES VILLES

Pierre Frankhauser

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PLANNING CONDITIONS FOR THE VIENNA METROPOLITAN REGION

Anita Pöckl, Edgar Hagspiel and Monika Kuffer

Prospects

In order to protect and enhance the position of the metropolitan region within the competitive European urban system, specialisation and an innovative economic development policy are being pursued. Projects like Tech-Gate Vienna in the north of the city were realised. The Biotech Centre Vienna will be built as a public-private-partnership, revitalising the semi-derelict slaughterhouse quarter of "St. Marx" over the coming years (Seethaler 2000b).

The projected entry of the states in Central and Eastern Europe into the EU will strengthen the economy in the Vienna metropolitan region further, according to scientific studies of the Austrian Institute of Economic Research about the effects of the EU enlargement for Austria. Generally, the trading relations with the Eastern European countries have intensified in recent years. There are positive foreign trade balances with these countries and Hungary became Austria's fifth important trading partner in 2001 (Statistik Austria 2003). Since the fall of the "Iron Curtain", numerous businesses in the agglomeration of Vienna have acquired an extended and specialised knowledge. They are familiar with the state of the market in these Newly Associated States and possess excellent personal networks as well as face-to-face contacts and location advantages.

A further increase in the volume of cross-border traffic in particular by commuters and also in freight traffic is forecast. Experts calculate that the traffic volume will treble. The mounting road traffic to the Newly Accession Countries is becoming a serious problem. The whole traffic agenda in respect of EU enlargement has so far not been solved for the eastern region of Austria, especially in the agglomeration area of Vienna and Bratislava. The city of Bratislava has concrete visions and has developed numerous plans for synergy effects in infrastructure investments e.g. train and airport terminals, motorways etc. But which strategies and policies will Vienna pursue?

OBSERVATIONS ON COMMERCIAL AREAS ON THE OUTSKIRTS OF EUROPEAN CITIES

Axel Borsdorf and Vera Mayer

The role of commercial districts for the structure and dynamic of the outskirts

In this paper, we looked at commercial districts from the perspective of their supply and consumption functions. In addition, they have an important function as places of employment, as attraction points for leisure activities and for communication, for regional identity and for the perception of the population.

In many European agglomerations, commerce ranks highest among the job creators. As commerce tends towards the same locations as the residential population, the highest growth rates of both commerce and inhabitants are found on the outskirts, distances between homes and places of employment become shorter, and over time less traffic is being generated. The same can be observed with regard to the places of residence and of supply. Without the shopping districts on the periphery, the population in the suburbs and the outskirts would have to overcome long distances to the central supply centres.

Shopping malls not only satisfy the needs of good supply, by staging daily events they also serve as entertainment centres, their restaurants and cafés act as meeting places for people and are important communication centres.

The role of some fancy shopping malls for personal identification (“I shop at ...”), regional identity (“this is my world”) and perception of the population (“I’m proud to live near ...”) becomes more and more important in a world of increasing standardisation and levelling.

So commercial districts, shopping centres or malls may be seen as focal points of the outskirts, as dynamic forces for the future development and nodes of identity for the local population.

TRANSFORMATION AND URBAN PROCESSES IN LATIN AMERICA

Christof Parnreiter, Karin Fischer, Johannes Jäger and Petra Kohler

Preliminary conclusions and outlook

If evidence clearly shows that urban systems and the socio-spatial structure of cities in Latin America are being reshaped in the process of transformation (which consists of export production (and its management) and deregulation of crucial aspects), then the key question arises who are the main actors involved in the process of restructuring the urban landscape. While during ISI the state, private sector firms operating along similar assumptions as state institutions, and urban dwellers themselves were the key actors producing the Latin-American city, the transformation towards an open, export-driven and deregulated socio-economic strategy of development altered the role of these actors and the scope of their activities. The results obtained in the first part of the project suggest that the modified and deepened involvement of Mexico and Chile in the world economy and the shift from a state-centred to a market-centred mode of regulation largely enhanced the scope for action for private sector firms, namely transnational corporations, national companies with global reach, and real estate firms. While the first two are supposed to be crucial in reshaping the urban systems, the latter are seen to be important in the reordering of the socio-spatial structure of the capital cities. Thus, a new key question arises: what is the concrete role of these main actors in the process of restructuring and how do they contribute to the “production” of urban landscapes and urban systems? We have therefore prepared an extension of the project in order to analyse the role of transnational corporations, national companies with global reach, and real estate firms and their respective strategies in the “production” of urban geography today.