

210–212) and similarly, the views of Dahiya's residents outside the interlocutors' community are unclear. Conclusions on the relation of the suburb to the rest of the city remain open to further research and interpretation. Further research is required on whether the emerging leisure activities are a sign of gentrification within Dahiya, and whether its young people's 'intellectual emancipation' (p. 218) could lead to an exchange where other Beirutees would also include these cafés in their everyday lives. One interesting research question is whether this café culture could persist without the cultivation of morality and religion through unspoken rules, leading to conformity in the behaviour of these young people. Drawing parallels with the Shi'ite diaspora of similar political belonging and religious affiliations living in Western countries, and a comparison in their moral city mapping (see for example Ajroush and Kusow, 2007 on Lebanese Shi'ites and shifting identities) could also inform this subject. Also, as the authors rightly emphasise, the Lebanese 'long-standing enmeshment of sectarian groups' (p. 148), who lived in harmony prior to the civil war, studying Dahiya's leisure activities and expanding it to cover other areas in Beirut could be the beginning towards re-establishing this harmony, bridging class and sectarian divides, or what the authors term the class-sect nexus (p. 210). Finally, with demographic changes and rising urban population density following the influx of Syrians, an epilogue to portray the Dahiya café dynamics would be very useful.

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Neil Brenner (ed.), *Implosions/Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization*, Jovis Verlag: Berlin, 2014; 576 pp.: 978 3 86859 317 4, US\$49.95/£42.00 (pbk)

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The back cover of this paradigm-shifting collection is adorned with a capitalised quote from Henri Lefebvre's *La Révolution Urbaine* (1970) –'I'LL BEGIN WITH THE FOLLOWING HYPOTHESIS: SOCIETY HAS BEEN COMPLETELY URBANIZED'. This is interpreted to mean that we should stop privileging cities in urban studies and start thinking critically about planetary urbanisation, of which the city is but one form and in the opinion of some an ideological construct. The book strongly suggests that to do this properly, we have to take Marx and his analysis of capitalism seriously. Indeed, several authors argue that the roots of the planetary urbanisation thesis (hereafter PlanUrb) are already in Marx, if you look closely enough. Interrogating the work of Lefebvre, Raymond Williams, Manuel Castells and David Harvey among others, this collection presents a very powerful case for paradigm shift. Even those scholars, teachers and practitioners who are entirely wedded to the current idea of the city, some of whom having spent their whole careers on one or a few cities, will have to respond to the ideas presented here sooner or later.

The book is organised in seven sections but most of these overlap. What the text loses in coherence and repetition (particularly going over and over the same ideas of Lefebvre) through the 34 chapters (of which nine are original contributions), it gains in other ways: hammering home key points, providing extended substantive illustrations of difficult concepts and demonstrating the inadequacies of the current city-centrist paradigm.

The Introduction chapter by Brenner, tellingly titled 'Urban Theory without an Outside', summarises ongoing collaboration between Brenner's Urban Theory Lab at the Harvard Graduate School of Design and Christian Schmid and his collaborators in the ETH Studio Basel/Contemporary City Institute. PlanUrb preserves the city, but 'as only one dimension and morphological expression of the capitalist form of urbanization' (p. 16). The question is: 'have the sociospatial relations of urbanism [once contained within cities] now exploded haphazardly beyond them, via the ever-thickening commodity chains, infrastructural circuits, migration streams and circulatory-logistical networks that today crisscross the planet?' (p. 16). The inspiration is Lefebvre's argument that the urban is everywhere, in everything, thus the implosion/explosion of the book title, traced back to Marx on original accumulation and enclosures and through Harvey's accumulation by dispossession. Tables 1.1, 1.2 and 1.3 provide excellent summaries of the new paradigm and its origins. Brenner highlights the importance of images, and he is right to do so. Striking photos throughout the book of the Tar Sands of Alberta by Garth Lenz contrast with the covers of French and English language editions of *The Urban Revolution* adorned with 'collage of large iconic buildings' (p. 27).

The first section – 'Foundations – The Urbanization Question' reprints material

from Lefebvre, Harvey and Schmid; the second section 'Complete Urbanization – Experience, Site, Process' reprints papers by Gandy and by two Swiss scholars (Schmid and Meili) who introduce the case of Switzerland, the first real test of the PlanUrb thesis. Meili argues: 'The Alps are marketed as a variation of the city within a different context but also as icons of compensation ... the mountains are just another piece of athletic equipment' (pp. 105–106). I think this is a very stimulating and important idea – those who do not will probably find much to annoy them in this book. The section concludes with two papers on the theme of extended urbanisation (by Monte-Mar on Brazil, and Terry McGee on the *Desokota* regions in Asia). Methodological cityists might consider that this idea runs against the PlanUrb thesis to some extent. The same issue might also arise for the opening chapter in section three 'Planetary Urbanization – Openings'. 'The Urbanization of the World' by Soja and Kanai summarises the mountains of literature on the changing global profile of big cities and the rise of massive cities. The following chapter by Brenner and Schmid reiterates that the changes that make the conceptual framework of PlanUrb necessary are the new scales of urbanisation (notably city regions); blurring and rearticulation of urban territories; the disintegration of the hinterland; and the end of the wilderness. Concluding this section is a sparkling intellectual survey by Andy Merrifield, another elaboration of central themes by Brenner, and Schmid, and an original essay by Goonewardena that brings Raymond Williams into the equation.

Section Four 'Historical Geographies of Urbanization' begins with an exceptionally interesting and scholarly piece by Sevilla-Buitrage, '*Urbs in Rure*: Historical Enclosure and the Extended Urbanization of the Countryside' tracing the roots of PlanUrb: 'as capitalist urbanization was assuming a

worldwide horizon, enclosure and dispossession were likewise increasingly being globalized as basic elements of the capitalist mode of territorialization' (p. 254). Sevilla-Buitrage also reminds us that Hal Draper exposed the mistranslation of 'isolation' as 'idiocy' of rural life in most editions of Marx. However, in the remaining chapters in this section, it is not entirely clear how they unambiguously support the PlanUrb thesis. For example, Kipfer's chapter 'Worldwide Urbanization and Neocolonial Fractures: Insights from the Literary World' is a stimulating reflection on Chamoiseau's novel *Texaco* set in post-war Martinique. It purports to show how 'creole urbanism refracts the contradictions of worldwide urbanization through racially stratified social mixing' (p. 289). I am not sure how convincing this will be to cityists, who could easily argue that it provides more evidence for the centrality of the city.

Section Five – 'Urban Studies and Urban Ideologies' moves much more directly in the terrain of ideology. Brenner and Schmid critique a variety of 'Urban Age' projects, for example Koolhaas at Harvard, the Deutsche Bank-sponsored programme at the LSE, Castells, McKinsey, the UN and even Mike Davis – all charged with using powerful, accessible branding devices to propagate versions of cityism. The result is that Urban Age is a chaotic concept (324 ff), with a bewildering variety of urban indicators and statistical cognitive maps. Urban Age divides the indivisible, lumps together the unrelated and inessential. Brenner and Schmid cite a paper by Potere et al. (at p. 336, n. 55) in the *International Journal of Remote Sensing* on the accuracy of urban maps. Intrigued by this, I chased up the reference, which informs us that cities take up no more than 1 million km², 0.67% of the total land area of the planet (Potere et al., 2009: 6555). Given the media attention cities attract, this is a remarkable statistic.

Gleeson continues the onslaught on Urban Age ideologues, deconstructing Bettencourt and West's (2010) article on 'unified theory of urban living' in *Nature* as crass scientism, 'urbanology'. Gleeson sees this as reflecting the declining influence of urbanist social science and the increasing influence of urban age commodification of the urban and the city. Wachsmuth then takes up the argument, going back once more to Lefebvre's three tropes (city-countryside, city as self-contained system, city as ideal type) that provide 'the collective unconscious of Anglo-American urban studies' (p. 354). All three tropes are ideological projects. Angelo joins Wachsmuth in the next chapter, providing a detailed critique of the baleful influence of methodological cityism on urban political ecology. Rounding off the section with another broadside against bourgeois urban studies, Merrifield conceptualises the city as both an engine for capital accumulation and a site for social/class struggle.

Section Six – 'Visualizations – Ideologies and Experiments' takes a step back from abstract theorising and attempts to locate PlanUrb in actual places. Schmid supplies a typology of urban Switzerland, a 'Helvetian model of urbanization', again rather repetitive. This chapter raises questions in my mind about whether such path dependency is really compatible with PlanUrb? Brenner and Katsikis ask 'Is the Mediterranean Urban?' The answer is yes. And the Urban Theory Lab-GSD provides a fascinating analysis of 14 maps produced over the last 60 years showing the whole planet as a space of urbanisation.

The last section 'Political Strategies, Struggles and Horizons' takes us back to the activist intent of the book in a variety of ways. Katsikis explains how Doxiadis and Fuller produced separate approaches to 'World Management', paving the way for PlanUrb. Merrifield, in another combative contribution, asks 'what would the rights to

city the look like?’ and finds the answer, once again, in Lefebvre: asking about rights is the wrong question, we must look at the politics of the encounter for answers. In another very challenging chapter, Ajl argues that right and left embrace modernisation narratives, so we must go beyond fossil capitalism: ‘the massive metal-and glass cities of today are not likely to be the cities of tomorrow’ (p. 538). Why not build cities around peasants instead of relocating peasants he asks, citing Friedmann’s agropolitan districts. And Friedmann provides the final chapter, observing that unlike pregnancy, one can be a little bit urban, suggesting that peri-urban zones of encounter are good places to start. He exemplifies this with case studies of Istanbul and the Jaipur Special Economic Zone, showing exactly what is at stake for the rich, the poor and the rest of us.

I have tried in this relatively brief review to convey the paradigm-shifting intention of this important book, and the great variety of its constituent parts, not all of which are entirely on message. I conclude that its real significance may well be as an educational tool as much as a text that scholars consult (apropos of this, the book would be much enhanced by an index). In my view, a revised version of the book would make an excellent

source-book for a postgraduate course in Planetary Urbanism (it may already be in use for this purpose). My suggestions would be as follows: begin with Merrifield’s Chapter 25; edit stringently to eradicate repetition (especially with regard to Lefebvre); be more explicit as to the status of each chapter in terms of providing support for the PlanUrb thesis, questioning the thesis and/or fortifying the centrality of the city. The one serious omission in the book is the almost complete absence of architecture and what cities look like (Ajl’s observation quoted above is one of a very few exceptions). I think this is a serious omission because it exposes an important weakness in the PlanUrb thesis, namely the failure to explain why cityism is so successful. The answer to this is bound up with the iconic architecture that is relentlessly used to sell cities at various scales. But that is another book.

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