

## BOOK REVIEWS

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### REVIEW ESSAY: HOUSING ESTATES IN WESTERN EUROPE AND THE BALTIC COUNTRIES

HOUSING ESTATES IN EUROPE: POVERTY, ETHNIC SEGREGATION AND POLICY CHALLENGES, Edited by Daniel Baldwin Hess, Tiit Tammaru, and Maarten van Ham, New York: Springer Open, 2018

HOUSING ESTATES IN THE BALTIC COUNTRIES: THE LEGACY OF CENTRAL PLANNING IN ESTONIA, LATVIA, AND LITHUANIA, Edited by Daniel Baldwin Hess and Tiit Tammaru, New York: Springer Open, 2019.

Fifteen years ago, a large EU funded project called Restate (Van Kempenet.al., 2005) viewed social mixing as crucial for stabilizing these estates both physically and socially. In reality, mixing is not the panacea that project Restate researchers thought it would be. In Europe, some modest successes have occurred with respect to tenure and income mixing, but governments have been reluctant to address ethnic mixing. Consequently, continuing levels of immigration (and high rates of immigrant fertility) are leading to ethnic succession at many large estates, which is threatening the success of regeneration programs. Even in Central and Eastern Europe—the post-Soviet societies—segregation, between Russians, on the one hand and Estonians, Latvians, and Lithuanians on the other, remains widespread.

Together, *Housing Estates in Europe* and *Housing Estates in the Baltic Countries* do a great job in highlighting trajectories of change in housing estates across Europe. Unfortunately, they offer few fresh new insights on how to implement social mixing as a solution to the problems of social and physical decay in public housing.

*Housing Estates in Europe* consists of three parts. Following Part I presents the 10 main takeaways from the book; Frank Wassenberg and Gideon Bolt (Part II) provide separate overviews of the scholarly literature on European large housing estates; and the remainder of the book, (Part III) documents case studies of large housing estates in 13 countries: three in Southern Europe—Athens, Madrid, and Milan, where social housing is a small part of the housing stock; six in Northern Europe—Berlin, Birmingham, Brussels, Helsinki, Paris, and Stockholm, where social housing constitutes a small, but meaningful, part of the housing stock; and five in post-Soviet Eastern Europe—Bucharest, Budapest, Moscow, Prague and Tallinn, where virtually all of the social housing has been privatized.

The evolution of large European housing estates, (Part II), should be helpful to novices in the field of European housing in that much of the material has been presented before. The 1960s and 1970s were the growth period for large housing estates across Europe. Mid- and high-rise structures were built using industrial technology and Modernist and Brutalist principles. Their decline, beginning in the late 1970s, was due not only to the physical and social characteristics of the estates, but also to macro-level factors such as immigration and unemployment. Housing scholars have debated whether developments can be stabilized once they decline beyond some hard-to-identify threshold point, and have argued over the merits of different strategies (defensible space design, social mixing, resident involvement, in situ upward social mobility programs). This book does not resolve these debates.

The Madrid case study (Uceda et al.) is of interest, because large housing estates were first produced during the Franco regime and continue with the current democracy. Madrid's large housing estates have experienced three types of trajectories: private home-ownership estates that remain in good condition; inferior public housing built during the Franco period and remodeled with public funding serving native Spaniards also in good condition; and public estates untouched by the remodeling program and currently house large immigrant populations that continue to decay.

Helsinki's spatial social mixing was introduced to limit low-income rental concentrations occur at the block level (Vaataavaara et al.) These blocks contain identically designed buildings, but with different types of tenure: "the aim being to produce an urban structure in which everyone lives together in the same reality" (p.221). Despite the policy, poverty and immigrant concentrations in public housing have grown in East Helsinki's suburbs, because middle-class Finns have moved to high-status suburbs in West Helsinki. The city's current approach to spatial mixing: "complementary construction"—low-rise and dense townhouse type private building for middle-income families in the green belt that surrounds large old housing estates—offers some modest basis for optimism. The strategy is supporting viable shopping areas and social services, but has led to micro-segregation with little social interaction between low- and middle-income people.

Like other Eastern European countries, Estonia has experienced the privatization of its social housing stock. However, Tallinn is distinctive because of the ethnic mixing of Russians and Estonians (Leetmaa et al.). Overall, housing estates have experienced social decline, but trajectories vary; the estates with low skilled industrial populations have declined most rapidly. New housing and related strategies differentiate Tallinn from other Eastern European cities: municipal funding to improve housing estate facades and yards; national residential energy-efficiency policies; new municipal social housing projects (e.g. housing for teachers and nurses who otherwise would be unable to afford decent housing); new private housing construction at the edge of large estates that is similar to "complementary construction" in Helsinki; and community based projects to bring Russians and Estonians together. The success of these efforts in halting decline is uncertain in part because middle-

income families have other alternatives, but “these undertakings could diversify the housing types and improve the reputation of these estates and increase the satisfaction of residents” (p. 410).

Whereas *Housing Estates in Europe* uses a horizontal approach to research (a wide geographic coverage but limited substantive scope), *Housing Estates in the Baltic Countries* utilizes a vertical approach with a “deep dive” into housing design, housing finance, social mixing and many more housing issues. Hess and Tammaru aim to examine the “forces affecting the shaping of housing estates [in the Baltic countries] and how the housing estates were themselves the main influencers (p.vii).

Following Part I, which presents the book’s seven major takeaways, Part II focuses on the uniqueness of Baltic housing estates. Part III looks at how socialist-modernist housing estates in the Baltic countries were developed and how they have changed. Part IV helps us to understand how and why the socio-economic and ethnic characteristics of Baltic housing estates have been changing. Part V examines two complexities of the built environment on Baltic housing estates. Finally, Part VI addresses the issue of whether the three Baltic countries should rebuild or refurbish their aging housing stock.

First, a bit of context. After Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania were incorporated into the Soviet Union during World War II, the three experienced substantial labor migration from other parts of the Soviet Union. Estonians and Latvians were transformed into minority groups in capital cities and construction of large housing estates continued from the 1960s to the late Soviet period. When the three countries regained their independence in 1991, social housing became privatized. Gentile’s case study of Daugavpils (Latvia’s second city) illustrates some of the changes. During the 1950s and 1960s, the city experienced a housing shortage but more recently, its urbanization related housing crisis has become an urban shrinkage crisis with the population falling from 128,000 in 1992 to less than 85,000.

Although Baltic housing estates appear monotonous and boring, compared to the other post-Soviet societies, their design is exceptional especially the relation between the buildings and the surrounding landscape. Although Baltic architects were heavily regulated by soviet standardization and the economy, they benefitted from Finnish housing estate models, particularly Tapiola, the “estate in the pine forest.” Visits by Finnish colleagues, the close political collaboration between Finland and the Soviet Union and exposure to Helsinki television helped to spread Finnish modernist design ideas to Estonia and the other Baltic countries.

Currently, Baltic housing estates are experiencing some serious challenges although not as great as those experienced by housing estates in Western and Northern Europe. For example, the large housing estates in Riga are doing well in terms of levels of demand, but they are facing tests including “shared responsibility for maintenance of the buildings and common areas” (Treija & Bratuškins, p.162). According to an unusually rich ethnographic study of Lithuanian social housing, residents view the large housing estates as good places to live, but over time, the residents have be-

come more critical toward design and construction quality. One thing that did not change were their attitudes toward neighbors: "Intentional social diversity has never worked as a socially unifying tool ..." (p.198)

Throughout my career, I have studied the relation between race/ethnicity and neighborhood decline. I, therefore, found the chapters dealing with the mix between Russians with Estonians, Latvians and Lithuanians to be fascinating. That there is a link between estate decline and the presence of ethnic concentrations (Russian) likely reflects the fact that Russians have fewer resources, that Estonians shy away from the densest developments on the periphery (the ones that had Russian concentrations), and the unwillingness of Estonians to live in developments where they are the minority or in areas served by schools relying on the Russian language. I wonder whether a pro-integration policy aimed at achieving a stable mix of middle-class Estonians and Russians would be legal in Estonia. In 1988, an American Federal Appeals court ruled that the Starrett City housing complex in Brooklyn had to end its use of "rigid racial quotas" even if they were intended to promote integration (Lubasch, 1988).

Forecasting the future of Baltic housing estates is difficult, because of their heterogeneity. "Some [at the periphery] are at risk of physical decay and social exclusion while others [near the center and close to gentrifying neighborhoods] are more stable in terms of residential composition" (Krišjāne et al., 242). Although it would be desirable to attract young singles and couples to aging housing estates, it is unclear how this can be done.

Faulty planning has hurt Baltic housing estates. In general, Soviet housing estate commercial services (stores) as well as recreational and cultural facilities were not provided at planned levels because the focus was on building housing as quickly as possible along with the belief that services could be added later. An additional factor was the abandonment of Clarence Perry's neighborhood unit concept as an organizing basis for many Soviet housing estates. Väike-Õismäe, a housing estate in Tallinn, Estonia, originally utilized the neighborhood unit (mikrorayons, i.e. stores within walking distance of residents). However, in 1967, the housing estate planning team called for a new solution that formed a single large integrated makrorayon rather than three separate mikrorayons. The separate shops [in the mikrorayons] were too small and so it was hard to provide a full range of products which left customers with a limited choice." (Siupsinskas et al., p.309) This shift away from the neighborhood unit increased dependency on the automobile.

The planning and governance system has not responded well to automobile usage since the estates were not designed to accommodate them. Because of privatization, flat owner associations (FOAs) have become the primary actors in dealing with the living environment including parking. However, FOAs have little incentive to think beyond the interest of particular buildings to the interests of the larger community. Clearly, there is need for governing entities beyond the individual apartment for the management of housing estates.

Baltic officials are grappling with how to deal with the aging housing stock. Should they follow a refurbishment approach, the default strategy today, because it is cheaper, creates less inconvenience for private owners, and creates less of an environmental impact? Alternatively, should they pursue a demolish-and-rebuild approach (as in America's HOPE VI program)? As it turns out, rebuilding sometimes is cheaper when the job is complicated. Furthermore, physical upgrading can be combined with environmental sustainability (e.g. the SmartEnCity program in Tartu, Ahas et al.), thereby making rebuilding a part of a larger program for reversing social and economic decline. I am convinced that a rebuilding strategy would be preferable. Whether the Baltic countries will have the resources and will to make this radical change is an open question.

Overall, the two books offer surprisingly few insights into how social mixing—particularly ethnic mixing—can play a role in housing estate renewal. First, with the exception of Russian/Baltic segregation, the books do not go into specifics about the ethnic component of mixing. What are the specific nationality groups on Western and Northern European estates? Are they Turks, Moroccans, Somalis or some other groups, and what integration challenges do the different groups pose? Second, implementation issues connected to mixing receive scant attention. How does the local political environment affect implementation? Will it be possible to disperse ethnic concentrations given preferences to self-segregate? Third, what are the impacts of social mixing? Does social mixing help the poor achieve social mobility? Does mixing increase tolerance toward members of the other group(s)?

Almost all of the research reported on in the case studies is quantitative rather than qualitative so we learn what is happening but not why it is happening. The exception is Vilte Janusauškaitė's ethnographic study of three mikrorayons in Vilnius. Two recent American books (Chaskin & Joseph, 2015; Vale, 2019) provide a more fine-grained analysis of the practicality and desirability of social mixing as part of HOPE VI public housing regeneration.

Despite these weaknesses, I strongly recommend these books to housing scholars and practitioners on both sides of the Atlantic. The editors and the publisher, Springer Open, deserve credit for publishing two attractive and useful books that address the breadth and depth of issues related to housing estate revitalization across Europe. The numerous photographs (color as well as black-white) throughout the book helped me to understand changes in the design of European housing estates—the good as well as the bad. At a little over \$100, the two-book set provides good value for the money.

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SOCIAL IMAGINARIES OF SPACE: CONCEPTS AND CASES, by Bernard Debarbieux, translated from French by Sheila Malovany Chevallier. Cheltenham, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019.

From a methodological standpoint, contemporary cultural geography relies on defining and explaining the basic ontological models capable to explain how space and culture are interwoven in the sense of not only describing the world "as is" but also on how space is imagined, and hence, constantly widening the horizons, techniques and the ability to represent and study that space. That should lead effectively to pertinent questions such as: who occupies space, what are the central cultural, economic and social byproducts of this occupation, and what could be a potential drive to new ideas, paradigms and fresh scientific thinking, not only in geography but in economy and the social sciences.

In that sense, one should look at spatial imaginary not only as a pragmatic, physical "real" space or a set of coordinates in which events take place, but as a subjectively narrated world populated by emotions, feelings, imaginative forces and so forth. The imaginary also gives birth to a multifaceted vocabulary involving a scalar or scaled representations of political, social and economic relationship, tensions among groups of various kinds and so forth. This idiosyncratic vocabulary will be able to identify the contact zones among social, cultural and political geographical narratives, visualize out new realities, such as local or regional dissociations, miscommunications, or in the contrary, cultural and social coexistence.

Debarbieux engages himself in his book in the diverse forms of spatiality which shed light on what imaginaries are: space being the sociological, cultural and the political facet of the connections and bonds among individuals, social groups and

societies, a subject matter relevant to the modern debate on space, territoriality, politics and culturalism. Following an introductory chapter being the backbone and an explanatory exposé and guidelines for a correct reading and understanding the ideas Debarbieux proposes in the book, four main concepts divided into six cases follow. The first concept (chapter 2) concentrates on the institutional side and characteristics of the term Imaginary and focuses itself on the interconnection between social imaginary and space, looking, as an example, through magnifying glass, on the human portrait of two football teams, one in Soweto, the other in Marseilles, portraying a clear differentiation attached to self-imagining skills, personal abilities and the like. Further examples are presented enriching the debate.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> concept (chapter 4) deals with state & territory imaginaries, emphasizing the crucial role and the various scientific contributions by the intellectuals from the 16th century in shaping national imagery. Two debates retained my attention: Moore's "Utopia" from 1516 and Hobbe's "Leviathan" from 1651 raise interesting questions regarding national realities (far from being timeless), the presence or absence of exploitation, hegemony and domination, and the questions about power which are conferred to.

In the 3<sup>rd</sup> concept (chapter 7) the author epitomizes the role and importance of national imaginary, which according to Debarbieux: 'lies in the special manifestations seen in the ways individuals conceive together, in particular in an intersubjective way, the singularity of the nation based on ordinary practices, beliefs and places that are connected to them' (p.12). Debarbieux assumes that the 'national' is different from 'state' imaginaries but raises later the question if such statement can be challenged. Interesting deliberations on this question are presented and the reader is offered to believe that 'national' imaginary can be looked in a subjective and under phenomenological optics (not aiming to objectify territory and space as 'state' imaginary does). 'National' imaginary implies, in other words, that spatial singularities are not 'neutralized' and lights are shed in this chapter on questions of 'individual identifications and moments of communication' (p. 110).

The 4<sup>th</sup> concept (chapter 9) entitled Post-national political imaginaries of space, maybe the most methodologically vast and challenging one, aiming to understand and sketch the timeline and the dynamics of the processes and reasons standing behind historical changes of social imaginaries, emergence of new ones, creation of new realities and even imaginaries challenging antiquated moral meanings, hence contesting state hegemony. The four concepts are complemented by six case studies which develop, illuminate and raise questions on the dimensionality and sympathetic sides of imaginaries and imagination, constructed and reproduced by everyday routines which in their turn shape the social realities Debarbieux cleverly proposes. Cases include a vast list of examples, going from Yosemite Park in California, via the cartographic representations of Indochina, to the cosmopolitan forces re-shaping and 'revolutionizing', as I would call it, "Little Italy" in New-York City.

The trajectory of this book crosses brilliantly major phenomena of cultural and social geography, emphasizing the importance of social, political, mental and imaginative cartographies constantly proliferating and giving birth to new definitions for urbanism and non-urban settlements. Debarbieux examines with ease and clarity the radical historical and rhetorical narratives leading to the formation of solid imaginary concepts, without neglecting the fact that despite rhetorical changes along national and state history, imaginaries did not lose their constitutive place in the nation agenda.

Debarbieux proposes an original, informative and unique position regarding the binding of space to societal transformations, developing an idiosyncratic vocabulary including almost all the facets of effervescent spatial manifestation of the visual and the imaginative socially constructed world. The book, I sincerely hope, will ring the bell for the need to expand the boundaries of humanistic geography, emphasizing the urge to shape new imaginative models and debates having in common the dialectical relationships between the and reality reflection. The rich bibliography offered is of high interest to those who wish to relieve their thirst for additional information.

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WATER SUPPLY IN A MEGA-CITY: A POLITICAL ECOLOGY ANALYSIS OF SHANGHAI, by Michael Webber, Jon Barnett, Brian Finlayson, and Mark Wang (2018), Cheltenham, UK: Edward Elgar Publishing.

The book *Water Supply in a Mega-City: A Political Ecology Analysis of Shanghai* is a very detailed, well documented, and clearly written analysis of the many factors and contexts in which water play part in forming a mega city, as well as being transformed by it. Vying for world city recognition, while already a local and international economic powerhouse, Shanghai faces a unique dilemma of how to reconcile its growing attractiveness (it has topped the Forbes China's 2018 list for best cities for living in China) with its water supply problem - "I dare not drink cold tap water" a Shanghai women is quoted in the opening sentence of the book.

The first chapter brings forward the main framework used by the authors to explore the question of water usage and supply in Shanghai. It begins by introducing the concept of assemblage, bringing together the interacting actors that comprise the natural, social, and political networks, that by their individual agency and their interconnectedness can explain the current and future trajectories of water supply, demand, and management in Shanghai, as well as to "tell the role of water in assembling Shanghai as it is today" (p.7). In the second chapter the book provides a clear and detailed description of Shanghai's demand for water, and how it is expected to

increase under different future projection of its economic and population growth. Exploring the intake system, the different water sources and the myriad pollution problems that affect them, the chapter concludes that Shanghai has no water supply problem, but rather needs to modernize its water supply system, as well as address water quality. For these reasons the Shanghai government has decided to change its main water source and rely more on the Changjiang for the main part of its water supply. The changing environment of the Changjiang, mainly as a result of man-made endeavors, such as deforestation, growing agriculture, urbanization, and dam building, is described in Chapter 3, and then in greater detail, especially in regard to the effect of the three gorges dam, in Chapter 5.

In Chapter 4 the book turns to examine one of the most important issues in regard not only to water management in Shanghai, but rather to a wide range of ecological and social problems in China, that of the inherent discrepancy between the spatial scale of the problem and the political structures that govern it. The formal administrative hierarchy is rarely in tune with the complexity of the emerging social and ecological problems, and thus somewhat ill-suited to provide adequate solutions. This quandary is aggravated by other ills that plague the political system in China, such as gaps in relevant legislation, corruption, discrepancy between assigned national goals and local implementation, fiscal austerity, lack of public participation and knowledge, and the subjection of environmental issues to economic development goals that are crucial to local government evaluation. Yet, the authors also describe the emergence of innovative legal and administrative solutions that are developing in the Shanghai area, as new forms of more complex governing are needed to address the management of water resources and water governance more broadly.

These developments also play an important role in the discussion of massive water infrastructure projects that are discussed in Chapters 5 and 6, especially the Three Gorges Dam and the South-North Water Transfer Project. The in-depth discussion of the political maneuvering, the perceived benefits, and the social, economic and environmental costs of these projects show how they represent what the authors describe as a “engineering-heavy approach” (p.124) to water management. This approach stems from cultural and historical notions of human subjection of the natural environment, as well as being a result of political power struggle and personal preferences of national leadership figures. This regime “privileges concrete rather than management, capital-intense over small scale projects, and targets shortages rather than pollution” (p.124). While enhancing the need for innovative governance solutions (as described in Chapter 4), due to their complexity and multi-local effect, they also expose the inability of the current water management system to provide more efficient solutions, such as controlling water usage. Instead, these projects approach the national water problem through enhancing supply, an approach whose long term effects, on both water source regions as well as on destination regions, is unclear at best. The problems these projects create, such as salt intrusion that is

described in chapter 6, show that much more than providing cost-benefit effective solutions to water problems, these projects have larger national goals, such as projecting power and modernization, unifying and standardizing local governance and infrastructures, or enhancing economic activity.

Chapter 7 examines yet another component of the assemblage, the people of Shanghai, and their attitudes toward water supplied in the city. While describing earlier in the book (Chapter 4) how the lack of public participation hampers water governance, this chapter is based on a wide scale survey of Shanghai residents that examined questions of trust, habits, and perceptions in correlation to different demographic, socio-economic, residential status, and location variables. The survey shows how changes in city demography, such as growing urbanization, migration, and raising education levels, will further hamper the trust of people in the city's water as well as generate more pressure for transparency and professionalism of water management and governance. While the level of trust is relatively low, about half of the respondents, somewhat paradoxically, have a positive view of water quality, yet almost everybody in Shanghai devises methods through which to cope, do different degree, with their perception of risk of consuming tap water – boiling, bottled water, and pre-installed purifiers, are some of the main methods at work. The discussion ends with a short paragraph of the price incurred by these coping strategies, a point which, especially from a political ecology perspective, should have been given a more in-depth examination as to the gaps and divisions that such solution creates.

In the final chapter the authors return to the concept of assemblage, with which the book has originated, wishing to “examine the properties and capacities of the entire assemblage, as the result of the interaction of the properties and capacities of all its members” (p.195). Employing a Bayesian Belief Network (BBN) model, the chapter, after conceptualizing the linkage between the different components of the assemblage, provides different scenarios that aim to explain the probability of Shanghai people drinking tap water under changing circumstances in and of each of the various assemblage components. The results are somewhat expected, indicating that slowing growth and more inclusive forms of governance, will benefit water quantity, quality, and trust in water supply. However, the static nature of the model cannot include new emerging actors, nor does the discussion look at the probability of such an outcome, and what will be the changes to the assemblage actors, in the course of time. For example, how would slow growth (or technological innovation) change the government, cooperation, and people positions and power towards water supply, demand, and governance, along the time as the changes take place, and whether these changes can then still result in the final outcome the model predicted,

Overall this is a very insightful book with a very rich coverage of the complex environment that comprises Shanghai's water system. Few minor questions that still remain after reading the book include the relative absence of attention to social discourse on social media as well as in more traditional media regarding water in Shanghai, or the somewhat scarce examination of the historical perspective as it im-

pacts the current players of the assemblage, such as in regard to the colonial heritage or the Mao regime's attitude toward the environment and infrastructure.

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DIGITAL GEOGRAPHIES, edited by James Ash., Rob Kitchen., and Agnieszka Leszczynski., (2019) London: Sage, ISBN 978-1-5264-4726-6, 301pp

Digital Geographies is not a paradox or a contradiction in terms. The name includes two important trends in spatial discourse and theory. First, there is no such thing as a single or objective representation of space. Hence the plural use of the term Geographies. Usually this acknowledges that the writer relates to the Cultural or Critical school of geographical thought. Second, the term "Digital" implies the connection between space and technology and understanding of spatial processes as a complex production that also involves software, hardware, code, end devices, algorithms, data, technology providers, citizens, governments, infrastructures and more. Generally the term Information and Communication Technologies or ICT attempts to wrap these into a common architecture where inputs and outputs are translated into binary numeric structures of 1s and 0s – ON/OFF - the fundamental language of machines – and then stored, transferred or manipulated at the level of digits. Digital Technologies both changes how we experience, produce and consume space (e.g. via the internet) as well as how geographers engage in researching them (e.g. GPS and GIS). This implies they are both the subjects and the methods of scholarly inquiry, moving target circularities in time and space.

This book, divided into five sections, provides a broad perspective on Digital Geographies to the reader. It encompasses space, methods, cultures, economies and politics to the myriad ways in which digital technologies feed into, alter and are altered by a range of activities, practices, objects and aesthetics. The main premise of the book is that the Digital goes far beyond just technology, signaling a paradigm shift in geographical praxis, yet without decontextualizing from spatial sub-domains such as urban geography or geographies of development. Instead understanding cities and development are viewed critically through the engagement with the Digital e.g. smart city developments are evaluated relative to urbanization processes rather than separately within a new field of digital geography. I think this was a wise choice that has greatly enriched the collection. As noted in the introduction (Chapter 1, Ash, Kitchen & Leszczynski), the five sections are organized along five themes: spaces, methods, cultures, economies and politics. Within each section, each chapter attempts to capture a key concept distilled through the lenses of the Digital ontology. I will briefly touch upon each section and chapter.

Section 1 is devoted to spaces. Chapter 2 (Leszczynski) contextualizes the concept of Spatiality – socio-spatial relationships - and its relation to digital technologies.

Several ideas are raised: critical cartographies and the role of geographic information technology in the production and representation of space; Hybrid Spaces where space and digital media interact moving from distinct to blended spaces with the rise of mobile and location-aware (geocode) technologies; spaces and cities, molded by their digital shadows becoming augmented layers of data open to exploitation and manipulation; the rivalrous concepts of coded spaces vs. code/space; spaces where analogue means can still replace software compared to spatial failure without code and diffractive technospace where humans and machines intersect; digital atmospheres where machines interact (e.g. the way the mobile devices register and connect to telecommunication network leaving location traces without human knowledge or consent, or the issues of Dead Zones without connectivity). Chapter 3 (Luque-Ayala) chronologically examines Urban Geography and the role of cybernetics in shaping the city into a communication system: CyberCity as a hybrid space involving digitally transferred social practices (e.g. internet cafes), surveillance and sources of social exclusion; Smart Urbanism and the power/knowledge engaging role of technology suppliers marketing the smart city to governments and institutions as a normative means for competitiveness while masking neoliberal and private interests, displacing citizens and generating inequalities; Urban Computation as a metaphor, method and organizing frame where algorithms and big data play a project of futuring, defying scientific causality. Chapter 4 (Dodge) emphasizes the role of digital technologies in shaping rural spaces and especially agricultural production and practices into industries (precision agriculture, bio-digital livestock and robotic milking). Chapter 5 (Wilson) discusses mapping, map-making and the role of location-aware digital culture. "We have already mapped the world - why bother studying geography?" (p.55). This question is answered by discussing the GIS wars of the 1990's followed by plotting critical futures of GISciences for understanding discourse and materialities of a location-aware society. Embodiment of movement is the focus of Chapter 6 (Schwanen) overviewing how the digital mediates and co-constitutes physical mobility, dwelling loosely on three themes: digital technologies with specific functions – the famous debate surrounding the substitution vs. complementarity between physical and digital activities and the consequences for travel. Interconnected technologies - continuous connectivity and the so called "smarter" mobility shifting ownership to services but mainly serving to entrench existing inequalities and support already advantaged groups; automation – of vehicles and drones envisioned to radically reconfigure mobility practices. In terms of original contribution this section is probably the best in the book.

Part 2 of the book dwells on methods – how to make sense of digital spaces and questions geographical methodologies in five short chapters. Chapter 7 (Thatcher) opens with the epistemological aspects of digital geographies from three perspectives. History of epistemologies engaging geography with digital technologies (critical GIS and the fallacy of impartiality); Critical Data Science recognizing the over-privileged status of scopic regimes and visual representations – the data

spectacle - encompassed in capitalist regimes (e.g. data accumulated and analyzed from mobile devices are those that technology firms consider of excess value); future epistemologies staying with the "trouble" and its effects on the world (biases of "neutral" technology and remaining unrepresentability of some subjects and ideas). Chapter 8 (Kitchin & Lauriault) is concerned with the access and production of digital data consisting of three parts. Digital data and geographical research – the data revolution from limited analogue datasets to the volume, velocity, variety and veracity (the 4V's) characterizing big data and improved access to traditional historic archives through digitization; data infrastructures, open data and API's – the vast creation of digital catalogues, directories, repositories and portals and the problem of unequal and restricted access by governments, agencies and corporations; Critical Data Studies that takes the politics and praxes as a central concern and the leading role of geographers in unpacking, exposing and examining data regimes. Chapter 9 (Cope) deals with qualitative methods or Geohumanities under two central themes: practice and meanings. Practice relates to how digital technologies open new frontiers by the expansion of user-friendly tools such as qualitative GIS blending contradictory displays of qualitative and quantitative data and the emergence of exploratory cartographies. Meanings relates to understanding of digital lives within new socio-spatial engagements and the spatial turn of humanities considering place and space as primary rather than backdrop. Participatory methods and citizen science are explored in Chapter 10 (Geoghegan). Participatory research involves co-producing knowledge in collaboration with a community. Digital participatory methods include the development of participatory GIS (PGIS) through digitized community-based mapping e.g. place attachment and sentiment. Web 2.0 allows user generation and sharing of spatial content framed as geospatial web and neogeography. Geoweb offers platforms for non-expert public mapping practices while neogeography includes production of volunteered geographic information (VGI) through public contributions to OpenStreetMap or to social media geotagging. Chapter 11 (O'Sullivan) explains cartography and GIS in light that maps today are mostly digital. Following a historical background it discusses the emergence of volunteered bottom-up cartography and the relation between geographic and code based knowledge as these become more blended in the future. Chapter 12 (Arribas-Bel) dwells on statistics, models and data science. Data science is developing rapidly in conjunction with the explosion of native data and leading to the evolution of computational social science sometimes replacing traditional statistics and posing a new horizon for geography with high resolution cartography. These trends bring the need for stronger computation literacy rather than better mathematical prowess on geographical training and education. This section provides the reader with more of a critique of methods rather than a description of how to use them. There are quite a lot of overlaps and some themes cut across chapters such as the evolution of GIS. I thought that two important digital methods that seem to have been overlooked are

the increasing appeal of virtual reality for spatial representation and engagement and the second, proliferation of serious games and the gamification of space.

Part 3 focuses on digital cultures and is comprised of three short chapters. Chapter 13 (Ash) discusses media and popular culture in the scope of the development of digital platforms allowing the production of co-value and emergence of micro-cultures, in particular the strong affective impacts of GIFS, memes and avatars. Chapter 14 (Kinsley) explores subjects and subjectivities in the scope of digital geographies and the ongoing challenges for discerning who counts as a subject and subjective experience. Chapter 15 (Rose) discusses the concept of representation and mediation. Representation is a process as well as objects of meaningful symbolization that is distinct from human biology and hence cultural by definition. Digital technologies have enhanced these possibilities: online videos, computer generated images, uploaded multimedia, Wikipedia pages etc., have become subjects of geographical study and critique. Mediation relates to materiality of specific media - non-human forms of agency and considers cultural objects not as simple representations but as multisite productions. Both trends in cultural theory are a wide landscape for geographers to explore and the proliferation of augmented, virtual and interactive realities make this even more important.

Part 4 of the book examines the digital economies and is divided into four chapters. Chapter 16 (Graham and Anwar) discusses labor. Digital economies weaken the traditional links between place and paid work, theoretically anyplace anytime. However, new forms of labor exploitation and atomization arise, brought about by migration of non-core production to low wage locations and the rise of cloud work, especially due to spatial functional divisions and local-geographical stickiness of employment. Chapter 17 (Zook) focuses on digital industries, the ensembles of hardware, infrastructure and software applications that comprise the internet, running on digital platforms and producing information. While these industries are important for the shaping of spatialities, they are hidden from sight and suffer from restricted access to data controlled by large digital corporations. Thus, democratization, negotiation and even resistance are key issues while code is heavily involved in the production of space and its control. The sharing economy is the focus of Chapter 18 (Richardson), a mode of production that has risen alongside changing norms of consumption. A key example is mobility (e.g. Uber) and housing (Airbnb) where digital technologies have enabled reconfiguration of shared goods. Shared economy transcended from e-commerce that changed the geographies of retail and storage (e.g. Amazon) and the internet enabling p2p exchange and introduction of new geographies of distribution. Sharing economy is closely dependent on the geographies of digital platforms as a capitalist production model, and digital corporations exploit this to consumption through the guise of crowd-based wisdom, social inclusion and participatory culture but at a cost of greater data concentration. Chapter 19 (Moriset) concludes this section with an analysis of traditional industries and how they are transformed by digitization. A main issue is blurring

of economic sector boundaries, almost all experienced some kind of digital convergence. Globalization and IT driven value chains based on outsourcing and offshoring have become common place in just-in-time production operations. The spatial evolution of three industries--retail, finance and manufacturing is discussed with the conclusion that digitization favors metropolization rather than dispersion. Readers in economic geography will find this section inspiring albeit I found the chapters somewhat short for the rich content they contain.

The 5<sup>th</sup> and last part of the book is about digital politics and is divided into 5 chapters. Chapter 20 (Kleine) deals with the impact of digitization and ICT on the politics of development in the Global South. Several key debates are elaborated: immanent vs. intentional development effects; dimensions of uneven access (availability, affordability, skills, gender) to the internet; design of development projects; the environmental unsustainability of digital development (e-waste) and data ethics (traceability and cybersecurity). Chapter 21 (Kitchin) discusses governance and how ubiquitous cloud computing, big data and machine learning are transforming how people and places are spatially governed (e.g. CCTV, smartcards, transponders) in an indiscriminate, distributed and continuous manner. Chapter 22 (Shelton) looks at the emergence of digitized and data driven civic engagement and public participation and their impact on the practice of citizenship. In particular, the shift from a legal-formal citizenship defined by place-based identities to one based on function and expertise. Chapter 23 (Taylor) explores ethics in the age of datafication in the scope of the smart city concept. Three themes are discussed: The commercialization of public space through datafication (e.g. Google Flow traffic management tool); privacy and identification in the pool of "anonymous" big data; and the ethics of geographical data-driven research. Digital knowledge politics of geospatial technologies are the foci of Chapter 24 (Young). The chapter is divided into three key areas: material accessibility of ICT software and hardware and the social inclusion of marginalized groups; mechanisms and practices that shape who's knowledge comes to count; the broader political and material effects of digital knowledge (between empowerment and discrimination). Chapter 25 (Crampton) concludes the section and book with a discussion of geopolitics and digital geographies, in essence the story of computers. Three debates are developed: connections between military, commercial and academic practices (the weaponization of geographic data and exploitation of private/corporate data by government); loss of privacy and mass surveillance; and the power of automated and algorithmic regimes to govern life.

Although a concluding epilogue would have been an added value addition to wrap up the cross cutting themes, I found the book eye-opening and inspiring. I believe it will be a useful informative reference for students and researchers from a wide range of geographical discourses.

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A RESEARCH AGENDA FOR SHRINKING CITIES, by Justin B. Hollander  
Cheltenham & Northampton: Edward Elgar Pub., 2019

Our history and our planning have given us a sense that the U.S. population is on a permanent roll, that it will inevitably continue to increase nearly everywhere. This belief has in it a strong element of myth (Popper & Popper, 2002, 1).

This quote brings to the fore what has been considered so far by planners, researchers, and politicians a temporary stage in cities. The term “shrinking cities” is virtually international and used at first nearly 25 years ago by Häussermann and Siebel in a commentary on Germany’s deindustrializing Ruhr area. In his book, Hollander notes that many research institutes has been founded in order to define, explain and understand the process of shrinkage over the world, what he characterizes as a transdisciplinary, and addresses complex issues. However, the shrinking-city discourse has not fully emerged until quite recently (Olsen, 2013; Grobmann et.al, 2013; Popper & Popper, 2002).

Therefore, the major problem is that no matter how the topic is well developed empirically, grounded theory is not available, despite an enormous amount of literature that has already been well documented. The research lacks a comparative perspective on the policies and strategies that were implemented to tackle this issue. Both for academia and for planning practice, urban and regional shrinkage still poses many challenges for the next decades. We need to see shrinkage as a multi-faceted phenomenon; some relate to globalization and others to demographic processes, but all to a process of economic and geographic restructuring. To understand the process, and how it varies in time and space, we need to conceptualize it. Otherwise, it is unintelligible, chaotic, and unpredictable (Kim, 2019; Martinez-Fernandez et al., 2012; Wiechmann & Bontje, 2015).

Within this framework, Hollander claims that the aim of his book *A Research Agenda for Shrinking Cities* is to contribute to broader and larger knowledge about why cities shrink, how they shrink, who is involved, what policies effectively address shrinkage, and what cities should do. He wishes to give a comprehensive picture of the subject, and to argue that shrinking cities message today is salient and holds the potential to transform disaster into hope and promise.

The book offers the author's experiences mixed with a review of other literature published on the topic. The result is a guide to do research in this field. In eight chapters, he portrays briefly the different facets of that urban regime and highlights interesting shifts in the planning approach. All chapters follow a similar format: overview of the subdomain, key research questions, methods, and a comment on a research article on the topic.

The book introduces shortly what shrinking cities are and how they are researched, highlighting both the opportunities and challenges that arise in this field. The next six chapters are each devoted to a different sub-domain within shrinking

cities, mainly along scale division. The author concludes with a review of the major themes and, most importantly, predicting and foreseeing the significant future research trends related to shrinking cities.

The introduction highlights the book's approach, which argues that not all cities must grow back to their former size. Instead of chasing industry with incentives and the other standard economic development tools, for some cities it might be to focus on improving the quality of life for its citizens while the goal is to transform disaster into hope. Before that, many questions are rising up: What is the right scale to study shrinkage? What are the right ways for the inhabitants of shrinking cities to be involved in the research process? What are the appropriate units of analysis for this type of research?

In the rest of this chapter, Hollander offers what he calls "intellectual map of the field". A summary that offers main points to connect with some key ideas presented later in the book, especially "the smart shrinkage" approach (Hollander, 2011; Hollander et al., 2009;), which is defined as follows: planning for less—fewer people, fewer buildings, fewer land uses – rightsizing (Popper and Popper, 2002, 23).

Chapter 2 represents the regional perspective of the shrinking cities. It offers a review of two bodies of literature: the demographic analyses and projections, and urban-sub-urban-rural dynamics. Hollander suggests key research questions for the regional perspective (p. 28) debating the definition of "decline", the kind of method to operate in urban planning and policy practice, and how residents understand it.

Chapter 3 focuses on the local perspective that matters most in the eyes of the author: where are decisions made, and policies and plans are implemented. The political aspect of city affairs can be a major factor. Therefore, the chapter examines the issue of local-government. The questions that Hollander offers are around the influences of depopulation on local government and the solutions to manage the process.

Chapter 4 proceeds to the scale of the neighborhood. The author focuses on three key paradoxes of shrinkage: design, historic preservation, and neighborhood stabilization. It raises questions such as: how planning should be done? What does it mean to effectively rightsize? what impact do various policy approaches have on stability of neighborhood?

Chapter 5 analyses the needs, problems, and planning vis-à-vis the shrinkage phenomenon of the political, cultural and economic center - the downtown. Understanding the approach raises three topics: business improvement district; "town-gown" – finding the way to interact the district with major institution like church or college; and the idea of creative cities. Hollander asks which way should be taken in order to achieve collaboration between the actors and solve problems in the face of decline.

Chapter 6 - Social equity, aims to elevate some issues of justice, race and equity within the broader discussion on shrinking cities. It describes the ways that community action research can enhance and amplify the community benefits of such research.

Chapter 7 measures success in a shrinking city. Hollander writes (p. 104): "I have found that attention to process alone feels empty...I feel that examination of outcomes maybe preferable." He raises a huge question by asking: "does decline equal failure?" we should keep it in mind while researching if we want our research to show more complexity, validity and reliability. Chapter 8 Conclusion: A look to the future sums all the chapters of the book through the lens of a specific shrinking city - Rutland, Vermont.

Students seems to be the major clients of this book, since it opens a gate to the domain of shrinking cities, giving an overview of the topic, the main and newest approaches, and its methodological orientation. Moreover, it suits planners as well while presenting important, not answered yet, questions.

Nonetheless, the parts of definitions and reasons for urban decline are too short. This is insufficient to beginners' exposure to the topic. It is left unexplained why Hollander made a choice to analyze the topic via scale as a base of the book and how scale is connected to social justice. That chapter (6) seems to be somehow shallow in light of the vast amount of literature on segregation, gentrification, Ghettoes, and the just city, within the political power relations connected to the topic of shrinking city.

Scholars claim apparently that shrinking cities are an international phenomenon; however, the book is concentrated around USA experience almost exclusively. Most of the world had been excluded from the book, and exposes the reader to a narrow picture in any possible perspective of this issue.

Numerous images are scattered all over this small book. Images are an important tool in geography and planning. They help the explanations to be visual and understandable. Nevertheless, images do not stand alone; they must have clear connection to specific text and should add a value. There is no such connection to the text in the book, and some of the images do not meet the quality and the goal of being presented.

Finally, in the spirit of the book, it may be said: "Above all, planners must consider the people who are still there" (**Popper & popper 2002, 1**). Moreover, in the optimistic lens of the author: "decline is an opportunity, a chance to re-envision cities and to explore nontraditional approaches" (Hollander, Justin, Pallagst, Schwarz, and Popper, 2009, 5).

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KEY THINKERS ON CITIES, edited by Rogan Koch and Alan Latham, London: Sage, 2018.

This book left me in two minds – at once fulfilling and frustrating. It offers substantive and timely contribution to urban studies and related fields, and is definitely recommended to students and teachers dealing with the fascinating attempt to 'think' and theorise cities. Yet, this recommendation comes with serious reservation regarding the inexcusable absence of scholarship from the global south and east, as if none of the scholars working in the vast majority of the world can be considered 'key thinkers'.

The book follows the 'tried and true' concept of assembling 'top thinkers', following previous volumes such as *Key Thinkers in Space and Place* (Hubbard and Kitchin, 2004), or similar genre such as *Fifty Philosophy Classics* (Butler-Brown, 2014), or *The Sage Companion to the City* (Hall et al, 2015), to name but a few. Our age is marked by mass production of scholarly material, typical of the capitalist and overly productive academia, where quantity far outstrips quality in the conduct of research and writing. In such a time, such edited collections are indeed necessary if one is to have organized command over diversifying and ever-expanding bases of knowledge.

This book also offers a different format to most similar endeavors. Instead of a collection of articles of excerpts from 'must read' books written by the 'key thinkers', the editors opted for a series of 40 short essays written by other scholars, mostly from a younger generation. Hence, in a way, the readers get "two for the price of

one" – a taste of the 'big name' and the writing of a well-informed reviewer. The 40 entries are all identical in structure, holding precisely six pages each, as they summarize the key thinker's personal background and major research, practical and intellectual projects.

The chapters feature most of the well-known writers on cities – such as Saskia Sassen, Neil Brenner, David Harvey, Mike Davis, Henry Lefebvre, Ram Koolhaas, Jennifer Robinson, Ananya Roy, Michael Storper, and many others, mainly from elite Western universities. The chapters are organized alphabetically, giving the book the feel of a mini encyclopedia, which invites readers to skip and jump between their favorite scholars. It is particularly useful for students and new comers to the field, providing a different style of an annotated introduction to the diverse approaches of studying cities. However, given this format, it is puzzling that the book is not available in a digital format, which would allow searches and high connectivity to the excellent reference list accompanying each chapter. Here is a call to the publishers to release a fully digitized open access second edition.

But beyond the praise there are some problems. Koch and Lathan (the editors) are aware that a key question for such a collection, naturally, regards the criteria of who to include in the project. But while claiming, strangely, that the book "is not a who is who' list" (p. 10), they are actually buttressing the making of a scholarly canon, or in their own words describing the book as a collection of "some of the most influential and inspiring" contemporary urban scholars". (p. 10).

There is nothing wrong in that endeavor, but the question is then -- who was selected for the elite group of 'key thinkers'? On one level, the selection appears to have been guided, as explained in a lengthy introduction, by adhering to a thematic framework of the various ways of 'thinking' about cities – economic, social, institutional, ecological, complexity and infrastructure. On another level, however, and more critically, the selection of 'key thinkers' undoubtedly relates to the uneven regime of academic knowledge production, and the powers of discourse shapers and gate-keepers.

This, in my eyes, is the book's weakest point. A glance at the list of authors and their affiliations reveals a startling domination of Anglo-American and to a lesser extent European institutions, with only two contributors (!) hailing from the global south, one of them being the non-scholar mayor of Bogota. For the ambitious title of the book, with its universalist claims, this is highly inappropriate, and echoes the colonial domination that has brought scholars to demand over a decade ago the decolonization of urban theories (Robinson 2006; Yiftachel, 2006).

A closer look would reveal that even within the Anglo-American academy, the distribution is skewed, with more than half (!) the 'key thinkers' emerge from institutions working in just three cities – London, New York and Los Angeles. Over 80 percent of the 'key thinkers' in the book work in the US and the UK. It is natural for editors to select writers whose work is familiar to them on the grounds of proximity, language and 'prestige' although on this high level of academic production, it

is imperative on editors of such projects to seek beyond the known and the familiar. This is particularly so when a book carries an ambitious global title, but represents the work done mainly in two regions – North America and Western Europe.

Most serious is the total overlooking of scholars working in the global South and East. This, in my eyes, is a major shortcoming. In an era where post-colonial thinking and 'southern turns' have influenced many of the social sciences (Bahn et al, 2017; Connell, 2008, Watson, 2014; Yiftachel, 2006), the group selected for this book is devoid of any voice truly embedded in the vast diversity of urban contexts outside the (relatively small) global northwest.

There are, to be sure, several excellent scholars who work on cities of the southeast from the global northwest, such as Ananya Roy, Maliq Simone or Teresa Caldeira who are included in this book, but the value of embedded positionality for 'thinking' and theorizing about cities from the global southeast is regrettably ignored. As shown repeatedly in urban studies (see Bhan et al, 2017; Robinson, 2006; Watson, 2014) theories 'from nowhere' possess certain profound flaws. Positionality (spatial, and more importantly status in the hierarchy of knowledge production) does matter. Location and identity, needless to say, do not stand alone and do not guarantee quality, but they do contribute to a fuller, more credible and eye-opening endeavor of theorizing urbanism (see Yiftachel, 2015).

This critical comment does not emerge from a moral position, but rather from the need to look at serious empirical and conceptual thinking about cities, performed by increasingly visible scholars in Asia, the Middle East, Australia, Africa and South America, from Indigenous peoples and other minority groups. Their direct voices and 'thinking' about the majority of the world's cities, is however not waiting for approval from the disciplinary canon. It is already thrusting its way into the main debates about urban society, while rethinking the city from the global southeast (see: Bhan et al, 2017; Parnell and Oldfield, 2014; Yiftachel, 2015).

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