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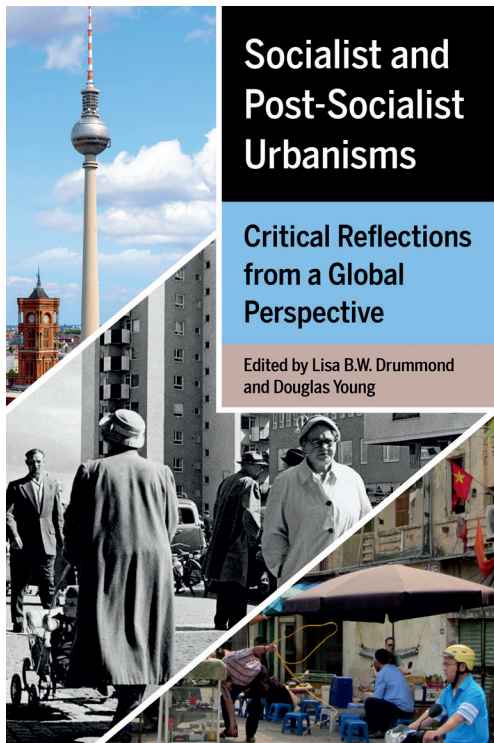
Although it has been circa 30 years since the revolutionary changes that eventually led to the collapse of the Soviet Union and the disintegration of the Eastern Bloc, inducing fundamental reforms in 'actually existing socialist systems' worldwide, research on cities located in former socialist countries still occupies a unique niche within urban studies. On the one hand, although there was a great deal of interest in post-socialist systems in the 1990s and early 2000s from humanities and social sciences, the concept of post-socialism, in contrast to e.g. post-colonialism, has been marginalised within global theoretical discourses and remained attached to regional specialisations (MÜLLER, M. 2019). Furthermore, as some argue, post-socialist cities are subject to double exclusion in global knowledge production, "being positioned outside mainstream urban studies but also playing an insignificant role in recent post-colonial critiques of this field" (TUVIKENE, T. 2016, 133). Therefore, instead of considering these cities as anomalies in the global urban landscape, they should be promoted as unique and valuable sources of local

knowledge, which are still able to significantly contribute to global urbanist discourses.

In this respect, the volume *Socialist and Post-Socialist Urbanisms: Critical Reflections from a Global Perspective* is a remarkable undertaking. The research questions addressed in this book are converged on the following issue: what is socialist about any given urban space, and what are the impacts of such perceived socialist characteristics on the contemporary evolution of these urban spaces? As such, the main aim of the editors is to offer place-specific information about the evolution of former socialist cities, providing a fascinating collection of case studies from all over the world. The volume contains 14 chapters, except the editors' introduction and conclusions, organised into three main thematic sections: housing experiences and life trajectories, planning and architecture, governance and social order. Individual chapters highlight case studies from four continents (Africa, Asia, Europe, Latin America), representing altogether 12 countries (Albania, Cambodia, China, Czechia, Ethiopia, Germany, Nicaragua, Romania, Russia, Sweden, Tajikistan, and Vietnam).

As the introduction and subsequent chapters of the book demonstrate, the contributors share Henri LÉFEBVRE'S (1991 [1974]) idea that (urban) space is a social product, which is not only a manifestation of power relations and political changes, but also an active agent and mediator in facilitating and shaping socio-spatial processes. Thus, urban space is a device to exercise social control and dominance. Not surprisingly, socialist urbanism also considered city form as a direct mode to reshape capitalist social relations and foster a socialist ideal society. As the editors of the volume suggest, socialist urbanism had at least three fundamental principles: the fate in modernist and egalitarian-collectivist ideas, industrialisation, and the education of people to create the ideal 'New Socialist Person'. These principles were conveyed by various spheres of urban life in state-socialist regimes, such as housing, architecture, and governance, as the case studies in the volume show.

The *first section* of the volume deals with housing in formerly socialist cities. The chapters in this part scrutinise how individuals and families navigated in the system of housing allocation in former state-socialist countries, and how the introduction of market reforms affected their housing careers afterwards. These studies are good examples of how general principles of socialist housing provision have been shaped by and adopted to local circumstances. Moreover, it can be learnt from the case studies that post-socialist political and socio-economic changes have made some neighbourhoods become functionally obsolete and unsuccessful, while others have proven to be more successful. This latter



category includes Vällingby, a suburb near Stockholm (LARSSON, B., Chapter 2), which is an exemplar of Swedish social democratic housing policy. From the narratives of Vällingby residents, it is clear that social diversity has increased significantly in the neighbourhood since the 1950s, but the original social democratic principles, such as collectivism and the concept of '*ABC town*' (work, live, centre) are still in line with the expectations and needs of the interviewed local households. Regarding less successful socialist housing developments, the reader of the book can also learn about two Vietnamese cases. The GDR-designed-and-constructed Quang Trung in Vinh City (SCHWENKEL, CH., Chapter 1) and the Nguyễn Công Trứ housing complex in Hanoi (DRUMMOND, L.B.W. and THANH BINH, N., Chapter 3) are both *KTTs* (after the Vietnamese notion *khối tập thể*, which was based on clusters of dense apartment blocks, similar to the Soviet *mikroraiion* model). The construction of these housing complexes and the allocation of their dwellings followed a socialist collectivist ideology, but under the circumstances of current market socialism, they are incompatible to the new conditions (privatisation, individualism, changing lifestyles). This is evident to authorities too, but whereas the building of these housing complexes in the state-socialist era could be carried out without community involvement and public debates, in market socialism conflicting interests among public and private actors significantly hamper any demolition or reconstruction effort. Another lesson from this chapter is that although marketisation of housing apparently created new inequalities in these cities, these can only be understood if the categorisation and differentiation logics (e.g. based on gender or cadre hierarchy) inherent in central-bureaucratic socialist housing allocation are also taken into account. A similar observation is made by BORÉN, T. and GENTILE, M. (Chapter 4) about the Soviet housing system, investigated through the case of Leningrad (currently Sankt Petersburg, Russian Federation). Analysing a Russian woman's housing career during state-socialism, they argue that social institutions based on inhabitants' life worlds, such as housing, are rooted in informal codes rather than in the formal rules of bureaucratic central planning. Thus, even in the Soviet housing system, people could successfully influence central housing allocation to satisfy individual or collective household needs.

Chapters in *section two* (urban planning and architecture) demonstrate that post-socialist transitions are neither all-encompassing nor completed processes. On the contrary, being multi-scalar, multi-dimensional and temporally indefinite, post-socialist transformations resulted in a mixed and overlapping arrangement of socialist and post-socialist elements in the built environment of the studied cities. For example, based on a historical analysis of the spatial structure of Phnom Penh (Chapter 6), FAUVEAUD, G. reveals that post-socialist transitions produced political, economic, social, and territorial changes evolving at different time scales.

To illustrate, transition from a centrally-planned command economy to market capitalism might be relatively fast, whereas the built environment usually changes at a slower pace. This multi-scalar character of the transition led FAUVEAUD to question the relevance of the post-socialist city as a coherent and universally applicable analytical concept. Similar conclusions are made by the other authors in this section. In her case study from Bucharest, VISAN, L. (Chapter 8) investigates the history of the iconic buildings of the Ceausescu regime from their construction to nowadays, focusing on the Casa Republicii, later renamed to Palatul Parlamentului, and on the so-called hunger circuses, which buildings were originally intended for rationalised centrally-allocated consumption. KIP, M. and YOUNG, D. (Chapter 9) describe the recent debates between preservationists and present-day modernisers about the regeneration of Alexanderplatz (Berlin), the epitome of East German socialist urban planning. LOGAN, S. (Chapter 5) takes the reader to Jižní Město ('South City'), a massive prefabricated apartment complex in Prague, good example to 1960s socialist urbanism. In all of these cases, the survival of the testimonies of socialist architecture can be observed but their development trajectories are different from each other. Some of them have become attractive targets of real estate speculation and retail capital (e.g. South City), others have been almost totally neglected by investors (e.g. Casa Radio in Bucharest), whereas in some cases new investments pose the risk to hinder the original modernist conceptions and the social purpose of these urban spaces (e.g. Alexanderplatz). To sum up, the chapters in this section well illustrate how the elements of the built environment reflect as well as facilitate ideology and societal power relations, and how these constructions are being re-evaluated, converted, or disregarded at times of transitions. Furthermore, urban space and its symbolic places are not only mediators of ideology, but also sites of resistance against dominant power relations, as can be seen at the example of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia (McCLELLAND, J., Chapter 7).

Studies in *section three* (governance and social order) investigate the impacts of past and present governance practices on urban life, and whether path dependency or significant differences compared to the previous systems can be observed. From these chapters, one can note how different regimes (pre-socialist, collectivist socialist, market socialist, neoliberal capitalist) and different urbanist concepts and discourses (modern and post-modern, local and global, collectivist and individualist) have influenced the recent development of the selected cities. This is apparent from the case of China's Nationalized City Program (CARTER, C., Chapter 10), from the analysis of socio-natural relations in Managua (SHILLINGTON, L., Chapter 12), and from the governance of urban leisure in Ho Chi Minh City (GIBERT, M. and PEYVEL, E., Chapter 13). It can be seen here how the elements of global urbanist discourses (e.g. sustainability, privatisation, individualised consumption) have been

incorporated into official governance schemes as well as into the space producing practices of various private actors. One of the most important consequences of changing governance practices is the growing distinction between public and private spaces and separation of public and private spheres, once being blurred in many cities in the socialist era. After market reforms in these countries, new property relations and socio-spatial boundaries have been produced and marked out. This process is depicted in the chapters of this section, as an analysis of the tensions around changing territorial structures of suburban governance in Tirana shows (MELE, M. and JONAS, A.E.G., Chapter 11). Impacts of socialist governance techniques on present-day cities are also mirrored by spatial representations, as SGIBNEV, W. (Chapter 14) reveals from the case of Khujand, northern Tajikistan. Analysing official and non-official maps and mapping practices from the pre-Soviet, Soviet and post-Soviet periods, he argues that mapping was always a crucial tool employed by authorities to exercise control, and emancipatory mapping practices are scarce up today. Whereas the summary of section two was ended accentuating the role of space not only as a tool for dominance but also for resistance, this last chapter in section three points to the importance of taking local circumstances and path dependencies into consideration.

According to my subjective evaluation, *Socialist and Post-Socialist Urbanisms: Critical Reflections from a Global Perspective* is a significant contribution to urbanist discourses, and it successfully responds to major challenges of research on post-socialist cities. First, critiques about the use of post-socialist city as a monolithic and totalitarian analytical concept is well documented in the international literature (e.g. HIRT, S. 2013; ILCHENKO, M. and DUSHKOVA, D. 2018). Nevertheless, the authors of the present volume recognise that certain aspects of the studied cities can be explained by the socialist past of these urban settlements, but many others cannot, thus their studies convincingly demonstrate the hybridity of post-socialist cities. Second, several scholars question the relevance of the notion of the 'post-socialist city', as it (re)produces artificial spatial and temporal boundaries, limiting the theoretical capacity of this concept (e.g. GENTILE, M. 2018; MÜLLER, M. 2019). With their strong ethnographic and historical approach, however, the authors of this volume firmly build on situated place-specific knowledge, but they also put taken-for-granted categories (e.g. informality, leisure, suburbanisation) into new perspective. In addition, they place the case-study cities into a historical perspective, instead of trying to apply post-socialism as a temporally fix category. As such, they contribute to the dynamisation and de-territorialisation of the 'post-socialist city' concept (TUVIKENE, T. 2016), increasing its explanatory power in global discourses.

In conclusion, I found this book a very informative and easy-to-read one. It is richly illustrated by maps, tables, and photographs, which well-support the ar-

guments of the authors. Most of the research behind the studies was built on qualitative methods, such as ethnographic research, interviews, participant observation, mental maps, and very powerful story-telling techniques. The research topics and the geographical locations of the case studies make the book being diverse and coherent at the same time. Therefore, I highly recommend this volume to everyone, especially to students and researchers concerned with urban studies, and to those interested in socialist and post-socialist urbanisms. I am sure that it will stimulate further research on post-socialist cities and will be frequently cited by other authors in the future.

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