

Urban Transformations: Centres, Peripheries and Systems. Daniel O'Donoghue. 2014. Farnham: Ashgate. 209 pages. £70.00. ISBN: 978-1.4094-6851-6.

The transformations that have affected the world economy since the mid-1970s have given way to a new geography in the spatial distribution of activities, employment and residence, mostly in Western societies. The post-industrial period and globalization have brought together the dissolution of boundaries between urban and rural, where a growing regionalization of the productive structure and mobility have given rise to important changes in spatial and functional structures. Since then, new relations have been structured by flows and connectivity, where new logics and new limits have been established. In this context some authors argue that we are facing a beginning of a new urban cycle, with an emergence of a new kind of city, more decentralized and reflective of diverse social, economic, technological and cultural processes.

The book *Urban Transformations: Centres, Suburbs and Systems*, edited by Daniel P. O'Donoghue, is about the most recent urban transformation processes. It brings together 18 essays, each one as a chapter, representing different case studies, where the common theme of 'urban transformation' is addressed through various aspects, considering approaches at different scales.

This book brings to the public articles from academics, most of them distinguished names in urban geography scholarship, with interesting and diverse academic backgrounds, and members of the International Geographical Union (IGU) Urban Commission who belong to different academic institutions from around the world. The subjects and the essays presented are the result of the IGU Urban Commission Meeting, carried out in 2011 at Canterbury, in the United Kingdom.

This book is defined by diversity, mostly due to its presentation of a wide range of different case studies representing situations that also cover different countries — Spain, Portugal, France, United Kingdom, Denmark, Australia, Japan, United States of America, Canada, South of Africa and India. Interestingly, this geographic diversity is the perfect illustration of the global dimension of urban transformations, somehow more common and with more points of convergence between them. The up-to-date perspective taken on this subject, bringing cases with such distinctive realities, makes this book indispensable for many scholars with interest in urban issues.

Among all the treated aspects, the discussion about topics like the urban restructuring can be highlighted (with Jun Tsutsumi, in chapter 11), as well as the engagement with urban regeneration (by Pedro Chamusca, in chapter 2, Jose Vazquez, in chapter 5 and Markus Hess, in chapter 14). In this list, we must include the discussion about the anatomy of urban sprawl (by Juli Valdunciel-Coll, in chapter 1) and, of course, the housing market dynamics (by Alejandro López-González and Maria J. Piñeira-Mantiñan, in chapter 4). A very interesting essay about the recent spatial development and its morphological trends in South Africa, by H.S. Geyer, H.S. Geyer Jr., D.J. du Plessis and A. van Eeden has been included as chapter 16. The topic of policentricity is a main issue discussed by Daniel P.O'Donoghue, in chapter 9, as well as by Tony Champion and Mike Coombes, in chapter 7, and by Adrian Aguilar and Josephina Hernandez-Lozano, in chapter 17; and finally also by Debnath Mookherjee, H.S.Geyer and Eugene Hoerauf, in chapter 18). With an emphasis on social matters, the paper of Wayne K.D. Davies stands out (chapter 8), a text which focuses on the origins and interpretations of the recent riots. Gentrification is also addressed (by Mikoto Kukimoto, Ryo Koyzumi, Tomoko Kubo, Hiroyasu Nishiyama and Taro Kawaguchi, in chapter 12, and by Simphiwe Mini, in chapter 15).

For this book, as for others of its kind, a previous reading of the introduction is essential to contextualize and, in this case, to recognize the structure of the book and find the different parts of its contents. As explain in the introduction, the book has been organized into four sections, all of them grouping different essays organized by their geographical position. The first section is the biggest one, with 6 papers. All the others have 4 papers each. However, such clear thematic distinctions between the chapters cannot be drawn in practice. As a matter of fact the usefulness of any division might even be questioned and the uncertainty of what should be the best choice for the organization of the chapters can demonstrate that the geographical location - the chosen solution - may or may not be the most unanimous and neutral organisational criteria for the arranging the book. Even so, the chosen subtitles - 'Centres, Peripheries and Systems' - could have been an interesting way to organize the book, as they could accommodate, by scale and corresponding territorial dynamics, situations where similarities between the different urban transformations presented could be traced more easily.

The first section groups cases from the most peripheral region of Europe - the Iberian Peninsula (including cases from Spain and Portugal), mainly presenting examples on how recent economic changes have transformed the consolidated and peripheral urban areas. The second section groups cases from Northwest Europe (that include case studies from the United Kingdom and Denmark), investigating issues such as the interconnectivity between global cities and their surrounding systems, regional inequalities (imbalances), and the concept of polycentrism. The third and fourth sections explore a variety of urban issues on case studies from countries outside Europe (namely from Australia, Japan, Canada and United States), and from

countries belonging to the 'global South', with case studies from South Africa and Mexico.

At a time when several recent publications have been focussing on urban transformation in Asia, and mostly case studies in China, this book can be highlighted as a more comprehensive reading on the subject, as it gathers situations from across a wider geographical range. In spite of the obvious diversity of each chapter's urban case studies, and their respective theoretical perspectives (some more vague, others more detailed), and methodologies, common subjects are recognisable. One of these cross-cutting themes is the currently prominent topic of 'urban resilience', explored throughout the book at different scales, albeit not always in great critical detail.

As a whole this collection of studies can indeed provide a deeper understanding of the increasing complexity of the most recent processes of urban transformations, considering the many distinct contexts which they belong to, their outcomes, and the differentiated spatial scales they entail. The diversity achieved by all the distinctive case studies presented, the variety of urban experiences shown and the spatial scale analysis chosen for each, can allow, through the common features, an exercise of a comparative view, which is not all that usual.

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