

The City in Urban Poverty. Charlotte Lemanski and Colin Marx (eds.). 2015. Basingstoke and New York: Palgrave Macmillan. 239 pages. Hardback: £65.00, ISBN: 978-1-137-36742-6.

This is an important book with a strong conceptual discussion linking urban poverty as an object of analysis of poverty and development studies, and the city as the object of examination of human geography, planning and urban studies. The book argues that ‘a city-spatial analysis is crucial to contemporary interpretations of, and policy responses to, urban poverty’ (p. 1). Following the ideas of David Harvey (1973) and Neil Smith (1984), the main idea of the book is that the city is not only a container of urban poverty, but it also reproduces and perpetuates inequality and exploitation. Additionally, ‘the book also brings into visibility the ways in which the spaces of cities – particularly in the Global South – are contributing new insights into the dynamics of urban poverty more generally’ (p. 2).

The book is organised into 12 chapters including the introduction and conclusion written by the editors, and the foreword written by Jenny Robinson. The nine main chapters of the book are a compilation of conceptual discussions related to urban poverty in the context of the Global South, examining different angles of urban poverty: structural elements (chapter by Parnell), gender (Chant and Datu), capabilities (Frediani), informality (Lombard), governance (Baud), refugees’ challenges (Sanyal), finances (Levy), legality and spatiality of vending (Goswami) and violence (Jones and Rodgers). All chapters have strong conceptual discussions, which are (in some chapters) combined with empirical evidence from case studies. There is a strong prevalence of India, which is analysed in four chapters. Only two out of the thirteen authors are based in the Global South. This shows that the production of knowledge of

what is happening and how it is happening in the South is still dominated by the theoretical discourses produced in the North.

The Introduction to the book, written by Charlotte Lemanski and Colin Marx, defines urban poverty and sets out the main argument of the book of examining the spatiality of urban poverty. The latter is defined based on the work of Wratten (1995), Satterthwaite (2001) and Satterthwaite and Mitlin (2014). The authors argue that urban poverty is multidimensional, including other characteristics (power, assets, time, and so on) in addition to income, and multi-sited as people experience deprivation and impoverishment in many different spaces of their lives: workplace, dwelling, educational space, among others. The discussion on multi-dimensional and multi-sited views of urban poverty appears in several of the book chapters.

Chapter 1 written by Susan Parnell continues the discussion between poverty *and* the city (and not *in* the city). She argues that the later emphasis on examining poverty from a micro perspective (human agency, livelihoods and community mobilisation) has resulted in overlooking the structural and institutional role of the city in shaping the experiences of poverty and the responses to poverty. Parnell then calls for 'bring(ing) 'the city' back into poverty studies' (p.17). This chapter is the overarching theoretical discussion of the book and the one that stands out in this compilation as a contribution to the new insights on urban poverty and the city that can inform discussions on the Global South and also on the Global North.

Chapter 2 written by Sylvia Chant and Kerwin Datu discusses gender and urbanization and goes deeper into the discussion of poverty as a multidimensional and multi-sited concept. Chant and Datu discuss the contrast between poverty and prosperity since women contribute to the wealth and prosperity of cities but usually remain in poverty.

Alexandre Frediani (Chapter 3) analyses urban poverty following Amartya Sen's capability approach. His contribution is to include 'space' as another dimension of people's capabilities in the analysis of housing upgrading initiatives. Frediani calls for a recognition of local spatial practices as a key component in the reduction of poverty.

In her chapter (Chapter 4), Melanie Lombard 'seeks to explore the linkages between social and spatial elements of marginalisation, through a focus on the socio-spatial construction of urban informal settlements as places' (p. 86). She uses 'place-making' as an analytical lens to understand informal settlements. The chapter considers urban informality as a dimension of urban poverty and in particular 'shelter informality' to understand the spatial dynamics of urban poverty.

Chapter 5, by Isa Baud, discusses the need to construct spatialised knowledge on urban poverty to get a better understanding of its multi-dimensional and multi-sited characteristics, and to use knowledge generated by communities as a 'resource for claim-making, when state actors in urban governance networks are willing to recognise and engage with such claims' (p. 115). According to Baud, 'spatialising and visualising information on urban deprivations, recognising the reasons behind them, improves understanding of the multi-dimensional character of poverty and the diversity of the power relations maintaining poverty' (p. 131). She recognises the importance of the spatial dimension of poverty as well as its political dimension.

Romola Sanyal (Chapter 6) takes a historical perspective to analyse poverty and the situation of refugees in Calcutta, India, which she calls 'a refugee city'. She argues that refugees should not be considered a homogeneous group since identity strongly influences how displacement is experienced. Sanyal also calls for a broader understanding of urban poverty that should include the problem of refugees as a central discussion linked to urbanisation.

In Chapter 7, Caren Levy examines the case of CLIFF (Community-Led Infrastructure Finance Facility) used in India by poor communities to get access to commercial and public sector finance for medium to large-scale infrastructure and housing projects. CLIFF understands poverty as a multi-dimensional concept and emphasises the need to get the voices of poor communities heard. Levy uses ‘the notion of “room for manoeuvre” to implement purposeful collective action which contributes to socio-spatial justice in the city’ (p. 159). This notion has three main dimensions: redistribution, inclusive recognition and parity political participation.

The chapter by Amlanjyoti Goswami (Chapter 8) discusses the legality and spatiality of vending in India and provides a detailed analysis of street life. The author examines how vendors negotiate their space to escape poverty. Finally, Chapter 9 written by Gareth Jones and Dennis Rodgers looks at the city and its role in promoting violence and the need ‘to resituate the city into studies of violence’ to be more effective in addressing urban poverty (p. 206). The authors argue that ‘cities have become key sites for contemporary innovations in “security governance” by both public and private agencies’ (p. 220).

Overall, the book is a coherent compilation of articles emphasising the importance of examining the city (spatial dimension) when examining urban poverty. The chapters are nicely linked through the discussion of similar concepts and ideas, some times from different perspectives supported by different case studies. There are two ‘weak’ points of the book: First, it could have offered more diversity in relation to the case studies analysed, however it is clear that the focus of the book is the theoretical discussion and it is not the intention to cover all regions of the Global South. Second, it could have included more voices of authors based in the Global South, emphasising the importance of having concepts and theoretical arguments *on* the South originated *in* the South. This is connected to the ‘positionality’ of the authors, which is discussed by the editors in relation to scholars who work and write on poverty but do not experience

poverty themselves (this would be applied to both scholars in the North and the South). Despite these two minor weaknesses, the book is an essential reading for scholars working on development planning and for both undergraduate and postgraduate students.

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