



Edited by Gregory Bracken, Paul Rabé,
R. Parthasarathy, Neha Sami, and Bing Zhang

Future Challenges of Cities in Asia

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About the Three UKNA Volumes

This book is part of a series of three edited volumes published in the Asian Cities series of Amsterdam University Press and the International Institute for Asian Studies (IIAS), and coordinated by editors from the Urban Knowledge Network Asia (UKNA):

- Volume 1: Ideas of the City in Asian Settings;
- Volume 2: Cities in Asia by and for the People;
- Volume 3: Future Challenges of Cities in Asia.

The UKNA was established in 2012 with a grant from the European Union's Marie Curie Actions International Research Staff Exchange Scheme (IRSES) mobility scheme to bring together scholars from thirteen universities and planning institutions in greater China, India, Europe and the United States around collaborative research on urbanization in Asia.¹ Since then the network has expanded to include also other partners in Northeast Asia, South Asia and Southeast Asia, and today represents a broad coalition of scholars and practitioners united by a common objective of promoting "human flourishing and the creative production of urban space." The focus is on cities across Asia, as well as cities beyond Asia in comparative perspective.

UKNA seeks to influence scholarship on cities as well as on policy by contributing insights that put people at the center of urban governance and development strategies. The emphasis is on immediate problem solving as well as the identification of long-term, transformative processes that increase

¹ The original UKNA partners that participated in the research staff exchanges covered by the IRSES grant comprised: Ambedkar University Delhi (India); College of Architecture and Urban Planning, Beijing University of Technology (China); China Academy of Urban Planning and Design (China); CEPT University (India); Centre for Urban and Regional Studies, Shanghai Academy of Social Sciences (China); Development Planning Unit, University College London (UK); École Nationale Supérieure d'Architecture de Paris-Belleville (France); Department of Architecture, Hong Kong University (Hong Kong SAR); International Institute for Asian Studies, Leiden (the Netherlands); Indian Institute for Human Settlements (India); School of Architecture, Tianjin University (China); Faculty of Architecture, Delft University of Technology (the Netherlands); and the Sol Price School of Public Policy, University of Southern California (USA).

the scope for the active engagement of people in the creative production and shaping of their cities – particularly in the realm of knowledge. UKNA seeks to develop a new, multidisciplinary body of knowledge on cities, one that goes beyond the “scientific” approaches transmitted in the curricula of classic urban studies programs. It seeks to encompass alternative epistemologies of the city rooted in everyday urban life. These epistemologies seek to embrace non-Western knowledge and traditions and the contributions of a wide range of methods of investigation in the humanities, social sciences, and natural sciences.

These three edited volumes represent the output of urban scholars who participated in the UKNA mobility schemes from 2012 to 2016, as well as other scholars who were invited to contribute to the series through separate calls for papers.

The diversity of essays in these volumes represents the diversity of the UKNA itself, which brings together young scholars, including PhD candidates and postdoctoral researchers, as well as established contributors from over 20 countries and from a multiplicity of backgrounds and interests. The wide range of topics covered in these three volumes, reflecting cross-disciplinary perspectives and different kinds of expertise, embodies the “diversity of ways to read the city” that UKNA propagates.

The three volumes would not have been possible without the generous support of the European Union in making possible the exchanges of scholars that were at the basis of the collaborative research that led to many of the book chapters. In addition, UKNA wishes to acknowledge the following institutions and UKNA partners for their financial support and initiatives in bringing together the chapter authors and editors: the Rockefeller Foundation’s Bellagio Center; the Asia Research Institute of the National University of Singapore; the Development Planning Unit of the University College London; and the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden.

Paul Rabé, D.P.P.D.

UKNA Coordinator and Editor, Asian Cities book series

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1 Future Challenges of Cities in Asia

An Introduction

*Gregory Bracken, Paul Rabé, R. Parthasarathy, Neha Sami,
and Bing Zhang*

Sometime in the next year or two, a woman will give birth in the Lagos slum of Ajegunle, a young man will flee his village in west Java for the bright lights of Jakarta, or a farmer will move his impoverished family into one of Lima's innumerable *pueblos jóvenes*. The exact event is unimportant, and it will pass entirely unnoticed. Nonetheless it will constitute a watershed in human history, comparable to the Neolithic or Industrial revolutions. For the first time, the urban population of the world will outnumber the rural.

– Mike Davis, *Planet of Slums* (2006)

In his book *Planet of Slums*, Mike Davis forecasts a bleak, almost apocalyptic urban future – one where there is widespread inequality and deprivation, where a majority of the urban population lives in squalor with inadequate access to basic services and with precarious employment. Although this future has not yet come to pass, there are large sections of urban populations that are increasingly vulnerable due to growing inequality, poverty, and environmental risk. However, urban regions also offer opportunities to tackle these challenges. Cities have been called “engines of economic growth,” with the ability to foster equitable development, raise the standard of living and provide economic opportunities to a wider population (Anand et al. 2014; Glaeser 2011; Sankhe et al. 2010). Cities are also extremely vulnerable to disasters and where the impacts of climate change will be felt most acutely, but they are also where some of the greatest opportunities to address these environmental challenges are emerging (Revi and Rosenzweig 2013; Revi 2009; Stone 2012).

Globally, we are at the cusp of an urban transition: 54 percent of the world's population now lives in urban centers (UN Population Division

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2014). As a UN Population Division report on world urbanization prospects shows, Africa and Asia are urbanizing faster than any other part of the world: 90 percent of the urban population growth will be concentrated in these regions (*ibid.*). Much of this increase will take place in India and China, especially in small and emerging towns in these regions. As cities expand and push their boundaries, urban peripheries are experiencing rapid growth and development opportunities, but also the challenges that come with largely unplanned growth. The distinction between what is urban and what remains rural, or “not urban” is blurring. There are increasingly fewer spaces that can be characterized as “not urban,” making it critical to understand and begin to cope with the challenges that such a global urban transition will bring. The future of the planet, therefore, is closely tied to the future of the urban.

The bulk of urban studies literature has so far assumed that cities have represented a specific kind of territory or space that was “qualitatively specific” (Brenner and Schmid 2011, 11) and therefore different from nonurban spaces that existed beyond “urban” boundaries. These boundaries were recognized to shift, but the spaces themselves were expected to remain separate. In the last two to three decades however, there has been a radical change in the form, extent and nature of urbanization. This change has challenged the inherent assumptions that have been the foundation of urban theory (Brenner and Schmid 2011). It is increasingly difficult to conceptualize the “urban” as a particular type of settlement. It is no longer possible to differentiate between high-density agglomerations and their less dense peripheries. The “urban” characterizes a global transition in the way we are beginning to think about settlements. Increasingly, academic and policy writing is focusing on urban regions rather than on discrete cities (Hamel and Keil 2015; Brenner 2014; Brenner 2004). Although governments and governance processes remain bounded by administrative and spatial boundaries, we are also beginning to see a shift toward metropolitan and regional governments in rapidly urbanizing regions.

This volume begins to engage with some of these questions. Focusing specifically on Asian cities, the chapters that follow are essays on a range of questions that begin to examine some of the critical urban challenges of the near future. Our cities today are facing complex, wicked problems. These are wide ranging, from issues of social and economic equity to environmental concerns, from transportation and mobility to resource constraints, and from questions of governance and scale to those about economic and human development. The chapters in this book reflect these challenges in specific locations in Asia. This volume also emphasizes the potential that exists for

urban regions across Asia as well as other parts of the world to learn from each other's experiences. Several chapters in this book explicitly highlight both challenges and opportunities that emerge from the particular cases that they examine and that have wider applicability beyond the specifics of their research. This volume is therefore of use to not only researchers interested in comparative and interdisciplinary research, but also to urban practitioners more broadly, illustrating through concrete cases the challenges that urban regions in Asia are facing and the various opportunities that exist for dealing with these.

The collected essays here mirror both existing challenges in particular cities, but also demonstrate the interconnectedness and complexity of these problems. While it is difficult to isolate any of these cases into specific categories, we focus on three large themes in this book: changing urban regions and the socioeconomic and cultural transitions they bring; environmental challenges, especially questions of climate change, natural disasters, and environmental justice; and, finally, urban infrastructure, built form, and new emerging types of urban settlements. These are not phenomena that are specific to any particular urban region, but rather have wide purchase across the Global South and North. We hope that the arguments in this volume will provoke increased scholarship and interest in interdisciplinary comparative research.

The first section of this volume focuses on changing urban environments and the socioeconomic and cultural changes that they bring. Four essays focus on different aspects of this change in Asian cities more broadly, and Chinese cities in particular. Shiqiao Li begins by looking at the "Asian" city, raising questions about what makes a city particularly Asian, who shapes it, and who has agency. He makes two important sets of contributions to the understanding of cities in an Asian context. First, he proposes three broad differences in the Asian city in relation to the Western city, including a conception of inclusive land rights, a normative understanding of labor, and an aesthetics of contingency in cultural life. Second, he points out that the need for Asian cities that have typically been portrayed as "fantastical, exotic, informal, chaotic, and overcrowded" to recover their own speech in immanence and equality and "move away from orientalism and *chinoiserie* and toward a model of a more equitable existence in the world."

The next three essays build on these questions and explore them through specific lenses in three Chinese cities: Lei Qu discusses the changing nature of the urban villages of Shenzhen and their relationship with migration, industrial development and urban regeneration. These areas defy easy categorization: they function as "interim spaces" where modern urban identity

and traditional rural identity coexist (Liu et al. 2010). They remain “gray zones” where planning policies and regulations are not functioning effectively, due to complex land and property rights. In China’s dual land tenure system these villages do not qualify as “urban,” yet they cannot be defined as completely “rural” either. Lei Qu suggests that the challenge during current processes of urban redevelopment in Shenzhen is to allow urban villages to retain their role as arrival cities for young starters, including migrants, while addressing spatial fragmentation to enable interaction among various social groups.

Wan Liu and Non Arkaraprasertkul both explore cases of contested urbanism. Focusing on urban regeneration in Beijing, Liu explores the impact of urban renewal and Beijing’s cultural strategy on historic preservation, especially in the spatial context. She also connects these with broader questions on economic development, participatory planning, and urban development. Liu’s essay also critically evaluates municipal policies toward urban heritage. In her analysis of the evolution of Beijing municipality’s approach to urban regeneration, she asks whom does regeneration serve? After an early history of regeneration characterized by a lack of consideration for residents and for social justice, current municipal approaches are improving and gradually incorporating more public participation, but social and economic sustainability of regeneration measures remain elusive.

Arkaraprasertkul examines historic preservation in Shanghai through the lens of housing. Studying the spatial transformation of Shanghai, he attempts to understand the distinct nature of the urban fabric as a manifestation of the relationship between the older socialist approach to development and the more recent economic system that is increasingly capitalist in nature. While the Shanghai municipality officially strives to turn Shanghai into a global city, its actions are leading it in the opposite direction, by actively enabling the redevelopment and disappearance of its living heritage, and therefore, of the very soul of the global city.

In the second section of the book, the four essays on environmental challenges all recognize the inherent fluidity of the urban, if for no other reason because cities exist as part of a wider ecology, and because disasters do not respect artificial boundaries or neat territorializations. The focus is particularly on issues of climate change, natural disasters, and environmental justice. Carmeli Marie C. Chaves looks at Cagayan de Oro in the Philippines, which was ravaged by Tropical Storm Washi and the impact it had on the natural, spatial, and physical nature of the city. She examines the postdisaster reconstruction of the city, outlining lessons learned for disaster risk reduction and urban planning for cities that are vulnerable to natural disasters. She finds that following the disaster, the

city of Cagayan de Oro mainstreamed disaster risk reduction in land use planning, regulated the use of areas around the river, and rehabilitated the city's drainage systems – natural and man-made.

This is a story that repeats itself in other instances as well. Examining climate change and related impacts in Bangkok, Danny Marks highlights how poor urban governance frameworks leads to climate injustice, particularly in the wake of natural disasters – in Bangkok's response to the 2011 floods, for instance, as well as in the city's climate change plans. In doing so, he brings together questions of urban governance, climate justice and urban planning through three distinct but connected case studies: the public transportation sector in Bangkok, the city's response to the 2011 floods, and the coastal erosion in the southern part of Bangkok. Marks argues that the governance of Bangkok's land and water resources has been unjust due to a combination of negligence and calculated policies to protect the elite at the expense of the poor. Marks' frameworks of climate justice and urban political ecology help to reveal distributional injustices and differentiated exposure to climate change.

The third paper in this section focuses on vulnerability to floods through the case of Kampung Muara Baru in Jakarta. Hendricus Andy Simarmata, Anna-Katharina Hornidge, and Christoph Antweiler explore perceptions of *kampung* residents of their own flood-related vulnerability, aiming to understand risk, vulnerability and resilience not from a top-down "expert" perspective, but from the point of view of the concerned stakeholders themselves. Placing flood-affected populations at the center of their study, they examine the capacity to adapt and build resilience to such natural disasters. The results from the case study area of Kampung Muara Baru are perhaps surprising: the residents fully understand that their *kampung* will keep getting flooded. Their coping strategies are based on experience: this form of local wisdom, drawing on experience, is useful in contextualizing the meaning of flood-related vulnerability in flood management, and represents "experiential knowledge" that the authors argue can be the basis for policies toward more resilient cities.

The final chapter in this section bridges the gap between environmental concerns and the built environment, looking particularly at the role of green infrastructure (GI) in building resilience in urban India. In this chapter, Ian Mell looks at the relationship between rapidly urbanizing regions in Asia, and India more specifically, and the role that green infrastructure could play in helping build resilience to social and climatic change. He proposes that green infrastructure planning can be used as a basis for more sustainable approaches to investment in cities in India, with Ahmedabad

and the New Delhi National Capital Region as case studies. However, Mell concludes that the current limitations in green space planning, due among others to limited financial and political support in both cities, illustrate the difficulty of translating broader global discussions of GI into the specific geo-spatial contexts of India.

The final section of this book looks at infrastructure, and new emerging forms of settlements. The cases in this section raise provocative questions about the transferability of urban infrastructure models and approaches across economic, political and cultural contexts in Asia and beyond. Urban contexts are highly heterogeneous, and institutions and governance contexts matter as much, if not more, than “technical” criteria when it comes to complex infrastructure systems. The two papers in this section focus particularly on questions of land, large-scale infrastructure and the impact this has for urban regions.

Clément Musil studies Hong Kong’s “Rail-plus-Property” (R+P) development model as a blueprint for financing public transportation in cities across Southeast Asia. Hong Kong’s mass transit railway is famous all over the world for its successful mode of construction and operation (Tang and Lo 2008) and for being a system that generates profit without direct public subsidies (Cervero and Murakami 2009). Musil argues that the commercial success and efficiency of the urban rail system is the result of the strategic commitment of the Hong Kong government. He concludes that Hong Kong’s R+P model cannot be considered merely as a discrete technical project. Instead, it resembles more of a “learning process” that needs to incorporate long-term solutions as well as financially viable options necessary for the future of Chinese and Southeast Asian developing cities.

Finally, Amogh Arakali and Jyothi Koduganti explore the phenomenon of urban infrastructure corridors emerging across Asia and examine what this means for urban regions, infrastructure development, and economic planning. They use the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor as an illustration, comparing it with other similar examples in Malaysia, China, and Japan. They note that these corridors are becoming ubiquitous across Asia, as they are an integral part of the plans of multilateral development banks, national governments, and regional trade groupings to link national and international regions. The corridors can overrule existing governance structures: they often operate under their own rules, independent of those of local governments, and they impose their own specific economic and business agendas – an example of global capitalist development, transcending boundaries, jurisdictions, and established governance forms, leading to what Arakali and Koduganti suggest is a “blurring of the boundaries

which conventionally existed between economic and urban planning” and in some cases, scenarios of “splintered urbanisms.” They conclude that, in the current macroeconomic environment where an export-led strategy is unlikely to yield benefits as significant as those in earlier decades, it is far from clear that the corridor model still addresses the most important development priorities.

Brenner and Schmid (2014) call for a “new vocabulary of urbanization” to adequately capture the changing nature of urbanization processes and their “intensely variegated expressions across the contemporary world.” While this volume on its own cannot provide a ready-made vocabulary, its chapters do present a set of cases in Asia that illustrate in poignant fashion the “unstable, rapidly changing geographies of early twenty-first century capitalism” (Brenner and Schmid 2014) that necessitate such a vocabulary.

The chapters in this book use particular lenses and locations as ways to examine larger urban challenges in Asian cities and beyond. These challenges include “human flourishing” in cities of the future. This requires – among others – economic well-being, a clean and secure environment, and the right to the city in the areas of access to adequate housing, services, and “life spaces” in the form of culture, urban heritage, public spaces, and associational life. These are challenges that have resonance also beyond cities in Asia. Questions of economic development, resilience to environmental challenges and sociocultural change resonate across urban regions in the world irrespective of their developmental status. This book hopes to further a conversation about the future of the “urban” in all its diverse forms, not just in Asia, but in the larger global context.

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Biographies

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