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# **Urban Geopolitics**

## **Rethinking Planning in Contested Cities**

**Jonathan Rokem and Camillo Boano**

**editors**

Rokem, J. and Boano (2018) Introduction: Towards Contested Urban Geopolitics on a Global Scale. In Rokem, J. and Boano, C. (Eds.) *Urban Geopolitics: Rethinking Planning in Contested Cities*, Routledge, London and New York, pp. 1-13, ISBN: 978-1-138-96266-8.

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## **Foreword**

Sara Fregonese

*[E]ach man bears in his mind a city made only of differences,  
a city without figures and without form, and  
the individual cities fill it up. (Calvino, 1978, p. 34)*

The heterogeneous corpus of literature known as urban geopolitics has, unsurprisingly for such an interdisciplinary endeavor, encountered extended critique. At least three critical strands are particularly relevant to this book, in terms of how editors and contributors respond to and surpass them – advancing but also regenerating the now more than decennial agenda of urban geopolitics.

The first critiques came mainly from established political geography scholarship (Flint, 2006; Smith, 2006). These question the risk of normalising cities as necessary *loci* of war, by simply shifting – and normalizing – the scale at which geopolitics *happens* from the national to the urban, rather than promoting a deeper understanding of urban conflict. This has not been lost on the advocates of urban geopolitics, who have warned against the peril of crystallizing knowledge about city warfare (and the violence suffered by civilians in cities) into “a technoscientific discipline with its own conference series, research centres, and journals” (Graham, 2005, p. 1).

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The second critique queries urban geopolitics' reliance on a handful of case studies (usually in Israel/Palestine) where militarism and warfare constitute the prism through which the urban is made sense of. Meanwhile, spaces and practices that are not a derivation of militarised conflict, remain under-studied (Adey, 2013; Fregonese, 2012; Harris, 2014). This is ironic, because the first mention of urban geopolitics is in Francophone scholarship within the context of power struggles in Quebec's cities (Hulbert, 1989), far from the extreme case studies that came to dominate the sub-discipline.

The third critique tackles a disembodied and techno-centric approach to urban violence: urban geopolitics tells us all there is to know about how cities can be (re)geared for war and targeted, but also hollows out these spaces of lived experiences and feeling bodies (Harker, 2014). There currently seems to be an overload of information about dramatic events of urban violence. As I write, numerous "final messages" are being posted in real time on social media by the last residents of East Aleppo as the Syrian army and affiliated militias move closer in December 2016. Despite this increased flux of dramatic information *from* cities at war, we somehow know still too little *about* the everyday, domestic and lived experiences and sensitivities of urban residents coping amidst war, division, emergency and crisis.

This regeneration project takes stock of these critiques and tackles them not only conceptually by bringing the everyday, the ordinary, and the affective into the debate, but also by situating them within a contemporary context of global challenges, including protracted urbanized warfare and the resulting unprecedented refugee and humanitarian crises, that are becoming predominantly urban (Rokem and Fregonese, forthcoming).

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Firstly, this book decrystallises urban geopolitical knowledge: it unites heterogeneous case studies and theoretical approaches under the same umbrella-approach, but constantly keeps us on our toes, by seeking out the dense connections between (go)power, space and planning at multiple scales, beyond the territorial categories of national/sub-national, foreign/domestic, state/nonstate, formal/informal. The city, according to Charles Tilly, offers a ‘toolbox’ for researchers to link macro- and micro-scale dynamics. It is the continuous dialogue between the macro- and the micro- that this book mobilizes so well. One of the tenets of urban geopolitics has been *tracing connections* between macro-scale of global politics and phenomena of localized violence (Graham, 2004), but this multi-scalar dialogue somehow has often faded among techno-centric analyses of mainstream urban geopolitics.

Secondly, the many cities, spanning four continents, in this book expand the case study range of urban geopolitics not only territorially, but also methodologically – pausing the exercise of finding similarities, and opening the ground to contrapuntal analysis and learning through distinctive differences. Taking urban geopolitics on a more intellectually refined and methodologically ambitious level, this book explores multiscale connections, along a wide range of locations, looking at the everyday and ordinary beyond the militaristic, and filling the city fabric with bodies, communities, resistances and quotidian practices.

Finally, the cities that this book takes its readers to are not only and not merely ‘strategic urban networks’ gaining some sort of geopolitical significance from their strength as financial and investment hubs (Sassen, in Knight Frank Research, 2012). Neither are they autonomous and bounded entities analysed solely through a specific range of technologies



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(Graham, 2016). Here are instead cities full of noises and bodies, their analysis resulting from in-depth ethnography; where the ordinary and not only the military becomes geopolitical; “relational sites” (Rokem and Boano, Introduction) where micro- and macro-discourses and practices are continuously reworked and contested.

Readers should not expect to contemplate these cities comfortably from afar, nor being dropped into them vertically from above. These cities ‘made of differences’ offer instead multiple access points, from which to explore the ever-expanding range of conflicts, contestations and cultural formations shaping our global urban future.

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## **Introduction: Towards Contested Urban Geopolitics on a Global Scale**

*Jonathan Rokem and Camillo Boano*

The main focus of this collective book project is how different contested urbanisms' function in diverse political contexts and geographical settings, and, what we can learn from unique characteristics across different spatial social and political scales. This introduction ties the different chapter contributions together conveying some common patterns related to planning and contestation of urban ideas and form in relation to the main overarching theme of the book: *Urban Geopolitics*. One of the growing fields of research within urban studies and political geography in the last decades is the spatio-politics of ethnically contested urban space, especially in relation to the role of planning in such sites (see for example: Hepburn, 2004; Bollens, 2012; Allegra, et al, 2012). This interest should not surprise the reader, since several urbanisms' and post-colonial regimes are witnessing ongoing ethnic conflicts, often violent and long lasting. However most of the literature published in widely influential urban circles apparently stems solely from cases in North American and European cities with limited examples from other parts of the world (Roy, 2009; Sheppard et al, 2013; Peck, 2015). This book aims to fill this gap offering a different vision of what has been labelled the *global south* or the *developing world* or in other words

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what has been regarded in Urban Studies and planning literature as a marginal *Urban Geopolitics*.

This is one of the first edited volumes covering the cross-disciplinary emerging theme of *Urban Geopolitics* from a post-colonial comparative perspective. It brings together a selected group of young and established scholars within the fields of planning, urbanism, architecture, political geography and urban sociology. Engaging with a selected group of relatively under-researched international case studies in urban studies and planning literature. Spanning, Latin America, East Asia, The Middle East, Africa and Europe.



**Positioning the 15 case study cities (source: authors 2016)**

The fifteen local urban narratives in this volume comprise a wide range of settings, from; Sarajevo, Karachi, Jakarta, Khulna, Famagusta, Beirut, Jerusalem, Acre, Cairo, Nairobi,

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Cape Town, Santiago, Medellín, Foz do Iguaçu and Stockholm. Each city uncovers urban geopolitics and planning at various trans-disciplinary global intersections and local scales. It is impossible to understand the history of urban politics in cities with ethnic diversity that have been at one time or another under European control without relating to the colonial foundations of modern urbanism. In this sense colonial power relations remain an integral part of the contemporary urban condition that still resonate spatially and geopolitically in the present (King, 1990; Jacobs, 1996; Rokem, 2016a). Critically focusing on what has traditionally been labelled as part of the ‘Global South-East’ (Yiftachel, 2006; Watson, 2013), this edited volume’s underling argument is that on the surface different kinds of contested cities share and are developing growing similarities stemming from ethnic, racial and class conflicts revolving around issues of housing, infrastructure, participation and identity, amongst others.

The different contributions in this book are composed of a wide range of cities and engage with a wide range of trans-disciplinary qualitative and quantitative methods. The chapters share a joint critical reading of urban geopolitics (Graham, 2004; 2010; Sidaway, 2009; Fregonese, 2009; 2012) from different urban settings with the aim of learning through differences, rather than seeking out similarities (Robinson, 2006; 2011; 2016) as part of a general call to investigate differences re-framing the potential and limits of comparative urban research (McFarlane and Robinson, 2012).

In the last decade a new wave of urban research has emerged putting comparison back on the urban studies agenda (Nijman, 2007; Ward, 2008, 2010; Robinson, 2011; 2014; Peck, 2015). However, most usual forms of comparison conventionally derive from comparing similar cases (McFarlane and Robinson, 2012) and are commonly based on a few selected

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cities in America and Europe (Roy, 2014) all too often focusing on the abstract city level with marginal attention given to particular local contexts (Gough, 2012). Most of this debate has been about the ontological status of the urban/city, the basis for comparing them and the consequences of different starting points in doing so (Sidaway et al 2016: 784-785) running the risk of producing yet another wave of armchair research agenda setting lacking substantial empirical inquiry (Nijman, 2015).

With the aim of moving away from such loosely defined urban theories and contexts the book responds to McFarlane and Robinson's (2012: 766) call to place more emphasis on difference in comparative research. As such, the book questions urban studies and planning research long standing Euro-centric academic knowledge production, methodological regionalism and incommensurability. To start establishing such a comparative conversation of what we can learn from different contested cities, we suggest that there is an increasing need to re-think current theoretical 'categories' and 'labels' attributed to cities, based on empirical research in a wide range of urban areas representing radically different visions and division patterns. Such a step could contribute to one of the long-standing question at the core of urban theoretical inquiry concerning the validity of singular cases (cities) in the creation of a general urban theory (Scott and Storper, 2014).

The book's emphasis on diverse regional settings resonates with the somewhat overlooked Area Studies discipline, which has historically (mainly during the European Imperial era and later during the Cold War years) engaged with similar geographical re-positioning's of regional territories. Drawing on Benedict Anderson's (2016) arguments on studying intersections or making comparisons, Sidaway et al (2016: 785) advocate staging comparisons in terms of four problematics; difference/similarity, expectancy/ surprise, present/past and familiarity/strangeness these pairs are neither reducible solely to methods

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nor simply academic techniques, but are a discursive strategy embodying an approach of encounter and narration. Sidaway et al (2016: 786) propose “there might be something gained by plunging into new areas, leaving a disciplinary comfort zone, with familiar literatures, paradigms and people, to think, present and publish comparatively, venturing into reconfigured area studies communities or across disciplines, where we are in less secure territory”

Our deliberation is much in line with Sidaway et al (2016) propositions and are also infused by McFarlane et al (2016) recent interest in Intra-Urban Comparison (IUC), advocating new perspectives that reveal the multiple ways in which similarity and difference need to be reworked within both the context of one city, and in its componentary relationality to other cities. Indicating cities are not bounded territorial containers but relational sites and processes. The comparative urbanism project should be focusing less on the city as a bond formation and more as a multiple space of many urban worlds (McFarlane et al 2016: 2).

Recognising this growing interest in the world of comparative urbanisms the chapters in this book fuse this with a myriad of contested relationships between urban space and how it structures and is structured by social life, understanding the multiplicity of urbanisms, reinforces the need to also understand the local political, economic and social dynamics at play within urban fabrics (Boano, 2016a).

“The compositional, messy, uncontrollable and recombinant nature of the present urbanism, and the differential knowledge at play in the construction of the urban, is anything but straightforward. A renewed anti essentialist shift in urban studies and practice is welcome as is ‘shaking up old explanatory hierarchies and pushing aside stale concepts [...] making space for a much richer plurality of voices, in a way that some have likened to a democratization of urban theory. In the critical literature, special places have been reserved

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for insurgent, rogue, subaltern and alt-urbanisms, as a premium has been newly attached to the disputation of generalized theory claims through disruptive or exceptional case studies” (Peck, 2015:161).

The first generative concept we wish to put forward is: *contested*. Which in its very basic interpretation signifies that it contain some form of dispute, conflict and violence. Indeed, urban contestation has been taking place over centuries, in cities divided by ethnicity and race (Nightingale, 2012; Tonkiss, 2013). Presently, as a result of mounting global urban protest there are significant debates as to the role of the welfare state, urban planning, and urban space as such, in addressing the challenges of social inequalities and contested spaces in Western cities (Musterd and Ostendorf 2013; Lloyd et al, 2014; Sampson, 2013; Wacquant, 2014) and in the value of learning from other non-Western contexts (Maloutas and Fujita, 2012). Attempts to tackle stigmatized urban areas, suffering from spatial and social exclusion have been well documented in the academic literature (See: Marcuse and van Kempen, 2002; Andersson, 1999; Arbaci, 2007; Peach, 2009; Vaughan and Arbaci, 2011). In other words seeing the *urban* as “a de facto process oriented, contingent and contested condition” (Boano, 2016a: 52). However we do wish to add an emphasis to the word *contestation*; the one that emerge from the Latin etymological origin of *contestari (litem)* from *com-* "together" and *testari* "to bear witness," from *testis* "a witness", calling somehow each case and each narrative as material as witnesses as if we were in a legal combat, to contrast basic theoretical paradigmatic assumptions about the contested nature of cities.

Urban studies and planning research itself, is associated with disagreement about theoretical and methodological issues, reflected in widely different readings across countries, cultures and contexts (Smets and Salman, 2008). One such approach, attesting to



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the array of different interpretations, is the growing body of literature focusing particularly on extreme 'divided' or 'contested' cities. The same cities are repeatedly cited as purportedly manifesting extreme, ethno-national divisions emanating from "the contestation of the nation state" (Anderson, 2010; Gaffikin and Morrissey, 2011). To mention but a few, these include Belfast, Jerusalem, Johannesburg, Sarajevo, Baghdad, Beirut, Kirkuk and Mostar. These so-called 'extreme ethno-nationally divided cities' are claimed to contain distinctive attributes and tensions position within an exclusive category distinguishing them from other urban areas (Hepburn, 2004; Bollens, 2012; Pullan and Baillie, 2013). Moreover, within this selected group, urban transformations are analyzed through western planning perspectives, presupposing its applicability to extreme cities.

Much less attention has been given to 'extreme divided cities' relevance for other more peaceful cities. Following this brief review (to be further developed in each case study) we suggest that nearly all cities that contain ethnic and racial minorities as well as social and economic inequalities are *contested*, but as the book will reveal in its wide geographical range of local cases and conclusion binding them together; *contested urbanism* may have more in common in different world regions than previously perceived in urban studies and planning literature. Hence through a comparative approach focusing on overarching themes in each case as housing, infrastructure, participation and identity, amongst others (Rokem, 2016a) we aimed to illustrate how cities are geopolitical spaces as they are embedded in a web of contested visions where the production of space is an inherently conflictive process, manifesting, producing and reproducing various forms of injustice; as well as alternative forces of transgression and social projects (Boano et al, 2013). At the same time we aim to expose the opportunities and challenges faced by a growing post-colonial understanding (Robinson, 2006; Edensor and Jayne, 2011; Oldfield and Parnell, 2014; Roy, 2016) of

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planning, urban development and urban geopolitics from a broader global contested urbanism comparative perspective.

However we do not only suggest a new urban ontology that moves beyond the ‘West’ or ‘North’ but we wish to add a comparative and relational understanding of the contested nature that the so called *southern cities* are developing; on the one hand, as a result of neo-liberalism and growing inequalities, and, on the other hand, a surge in ethnic identity politics and nationalism. In doing so the book is repositioning contestation at the centre of urban research, addressing the intersection of spatial and temporal aspects of conflicts in the production of the city, where intellectual and spatial categories are able to construct new epistemologies positioning cities and space in a paradoxical tension (Boano, 2016a)

Moreover, this book adds a renewed urban geopolitical dimension pointing at the need to re-think current ‘categories’ and ‘labels’ and as such critically question the enduring ‘North-Western’ / ‘South Eastern’ divide within urban studies and planning research. The book offers an in-depth understating of the worldwide contested nature of cities with a detailed review from a wide range of local contexts peripheral yet pertinent to universalising urban studies and planning theory beyond the prevailing Euro American debate.

The book through its diverse geographical foci suggests that it is time to set a new research agenda to regenerate the emerging sub-field of urban geopolitics bridging the disciplines of political geography, urban studies and planning. Recent adaptations to classic geopolitics (Dalby, 1990; Agnew, 2003) have seen an increasing interest in placing cities beyond the usual geopolitical focus of state power and territorial control scaling down to local sites shaping what we frame here as an emerging ‘urban geopolitical turn’ (Graham, 2004; 2010; Sidaway, 2009; Fregonese, 2009; 2012; Yacobi, 2009). Urban geopolitics has traditionally

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stemmed from two main bodies of research both using it differently as a synonym for an urban political geography in an age of terror. First, engaging with the militarization of urban space, surveillance and security (Graham, 2004; 2010; Gregory, 2006) and asymmetric vertical urban warfare (Weizman, 2007) this has led to a deeper scrutiny of cities and their containment of material damage and targeted violence. Second, in the past two decades, a fast evolving strand within, urban political geography and planning has focused on urban conflicts within ethno-nationally contested cities, especially in relation to the role of planning (Hepburn, 2004; Anderson, 2010; Bollens, 2012; Rokem, 2016a).

In an era of growing neo-liberalization, ethno nationalism and international migration, there is a growing need to critically examine *urban geopolitics* as significant lens to encapsulate recent shifts in the global urban present. Violence, disaster, and division can no longer be ignored in a century where the majority of the world population is urban (Fregonese, 2012: 298). In this context, Newman (2006) proposes that the impact of borders and territoriality is not diminishing; rather, new scales of territorial affiliations and borders are recognizable that may be flexible but that are still selective on different geographical scales. In other words, while traditionally the national affiliation of cities has tended to be attached to the nation state the question now arises if this still remains the case. This is echoed by rising claims for urban recognition and sovereignty from a growing number immigrants and refugees living in cities and camps far away from their original homeland. In this process cities are re-shaping both spatially and socially creating new forms of *urban geo-political* actors and scales across distant national and cultural conflicts pivoted at the urban scale.

Specifically important for us and for the cases we selected in the book is that conflicts and political violence alike have not only direct spatial implication visible to all in the form of destruction, seclusion, control, but unfold at various interconnected scales: global,

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territorial, state, urban, human. Their geographical scopes stretch from the localized sites of citizen contestation and micro-struggles to the global networks of terror with different mode of visibility and intelligibility. Conflicts transform land uses, territorial arrangements, urban processes and human settlement patterns according to temporalities that range from short-lived states of emergency to the *longue durée* of chronic violence, permanent occupations and predatory urbanisms (Boano, 2016a). The present international geopolitical conditions with large scale forced migration and lack of local integration is having a substantial impact on the urban geopolitical condition, with relatively limited attention given to the ‘planning politics nexus’: the relation between planning and politics, as a non-hierarchical set of interactions, negotiated within the specific historical, geographical, legal and cultural context (Rokem and Allegra, 2016) and its impact across different supranational, national and local scales.

The very question that remains open is whether one should challenge the canonical differentiation between causal categories of spatial segregation, division and conflict (i.e. driven by market gentrification, state led or social dynamics, with the latter perhaps encompassing some form of societal *othering* of individuals and communities) (Rokem, 2016b: 406). We suggest there is a need to move beyond the focus on cities as direct targets of terror and violence by different state and non-state actors. As such we need to re-engage in a critical reading of different contestation patterns in cities and towards a closer assessment of political geography with a new understating of the *postcolonial, ordinary, domestic, embodied and vertical dimensions* to better comprehend recent shifts in *urban geopolitics* thinking (Rokem and Fregonese, forthcoming 2017).

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The book brings together a selected group of international empirically grounded cases engaging with urban planning and geopolitics from a set of different cities worldwide. In doing so, this edited volume seeks to argue that it is timely to start learning from, and compare across different urban case studies (Abu Lughod, 2007) utilising Intra-Urban Comparisons (McFarlane et al 2016) and advocating staging comparisons in terms of problematics (Sidaway et al 2016) exposing one urban context's relational and contrastive relevance to other cities (Rokem, 2016a). Suggesting there is a growing need to re-think 'labels' and 'concepts' attributed to cities and neighbourhoods, to better conceptualize and adapt policy and practice to ethnic minorities and migrants in an ever more fractured urban geopolitical present. In so doing, we question what we can learn from clutching the universal complexities of different contestation patterns in cities not traditionally part of the dominant theory building cases - to advance our understanding of urban studies, development studies and planning in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century contested urban reality.

The volume is structured across five parts. The Forward by **Sara Fregonese**, Concluding Conversation with **Michal Safier** and Afterward by **James D Sidaway** frame some of the central past, present and future lineages of the urban geopolitical debate. The three chapters in the opening section **Comparative Urban Geopolitics** engage with a relational and contrastive conceptualisation of the value of urban comparisons learning from: (Sarajevo and Beirut; Stockholm and Jerusalem; and, Nairobi and Cape Town). This opening section operates dual urban comparisons setting the tone for the next three regional sections, all with a more particular focus on cities from the **Far East** (Karachi, Jakarta and Khulna) **Middle East** (Cairo, Famagusta and Acre) and **Latin America** (Santiago, Medellín and Foz do Iguacu). While authors have diverse trans-disciplinary backgrounds spanning Geography, Planning, Architecture, Development Studies and Urban Sociology among

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others. The 12 chapters relate to local empirical manifestations of *contested urbanisms*' employing different methodological techniques and theoretical frameworks. With the overall aim of advancing the cross-disciplinary field of *urban geopolitics* bringing *geopolitics* into the mainstream agenda of *urban studies*, to enhance our understanding of cities as contested nexus points of social, spatial and political change across different geographical scales.

In the opening chapter of the volume, **Gruia Bădescu** provides an historical comparative interpretation of Beirut and Sarajevo's shared antagonistic urban imaginaries of cosmopolitanism and contestation, as well as experience of urban warfare, segregation, and post-war reconstruction. Scrutinizing how, despite these similarities, the process of urban reconstruction after the Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) and the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina (1992-1995) respectively, produced very different outcomes resulting from contrasting post-war planning frameworks and political settlements. **Bădescu**, argues that in these particular contexts, the city does not emerge as an autonomous body circumventing national politics, and becoming instead an arena of conflicting urban geopolitical articulations of state-level politics and local ethnic and religious dynamics.

The second chapter moves us to a different regional focus on two of the fast growing African Metropolises comparing Nairobi and Cape Town. **Liza Rose Cirolia**, explains in her chapter, that in many large African cities, there has been no central entity effectively controlling development or upholding a 'public mandate' to invest in infrastructure. Non-delivery of infrastructure has become the norm, rather than the exception. **Cirolia** maintains Nairobi's urban development story highlights the multi-dimensional nature of informality in the city. While in Cape Town, there is a shift from apartheid planning that included the

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creation of zones for White, Coloured and Black African households, to a more neoliberal-planning regime. More generally the chapter calls for a need to move beyond the continued focus on racial segregation that still dominates the South African cities academic urban planning literature.

In the third chapter **Jonathan Rokem** closes the first comparative section with a contrastive and relational assessment of ethnic minority segregation in two radically different ethnically contested cities. The central proposition put forward is there is much to learn from a comparative investigation of spatial and social policies towards ethnic minorities in Jerusalem and Stockholm. The chapter facilitates a multi-scalar comparative conversation of urban difference. Considering three crosscutting themes: (1) housing and development, (2) mobility and transport, and, (3) local government and civil society. **Rokem** suggests that it is timely to start comparing across different ethnically contested cities as part of a general call to rethink our understanding of incommensurable cases in the contemporary urban research and practice.

Opening the second section covering three East-Asian cities, **Sadaf Sultan Khan, Kayvan Karimi** and **Laura Vaughan** portray an illuminating in-depth spatial investigation of the changing political fortunes of the *Muhajir* community, Karachi's largest migrant group. Karachi, the capital of Pakistan, is well known for its violent ethnic and sectarian conflict with different communities striving for dominance. This chapter aims to articulate the synergistic relationship between the city's urban planning strategies and the complex ethnopolitics of its many migrant communities. The authors suggest that what appears to have happened in Karachi over the course of the last half-century is a process of inversion of power where a national minority has been able to control and transform the districts, in

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which it constitutes a majority group. This local urban geopolitical dominance has been achieved through the combined impact of legitimate political processes and violent street presence. Next, **Pawda F Tjoa** explores the spatial politics of contested urban space through the lens of ‘marketplace coordination’ in Jakarta by highlighting the roots of social tension and the escalation of internal conflict during the period (1997–1998). **Tjoa** reveals how urban policies geared towards creating order and progress triggered permutations of social categories within local merchant communities. Conflicts within market stalls created social tensions that erupted during the Asian financial crisis. Thus, the ideology of ‘development’ became a catalyst for conflict, which contributed to the persistence of urban geopolitical fragmentation. **Apurba Kumar Podder**, closes the second section with a critical and radical rethinking of one aspect of poverty culture, commonly seen as ‘doing nothing’. While the academic scholarship often explains ‘doing nothing’ as idleness or a response of the poor to societal alienation, **Podder**, offers a novel perspective exploring a case of an illegal bazaar located in Khulna, one of the southern cities in Bangladesh. Through a local ethnographic exploration he argues that ‘doing nothing’ should be understood as an alternative mode of the poor’s occupational urban geopolitics to sustain in a condition of unequal power relations.

Cairo opens the third section focusing on cities from the Middle East and North Africa. The city has held a central position as a pivotal intersection of Africa, Asia and Europe. **Mohamed Saleh** argues that for decades, public space in Egypt has been systematically deprived from its essential symbolic functions. Upon integrating the country into the global model of neoliberalism, the state has adopted public policies on various scales, which resulted in a deep-rooted crisis of participation and identity. **Saleh** utilizes the notions of complexity to explore the roots of this crisis. Perceiving the results as a path-dependent



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structural shift in society, stemming from thresholds that stretch back from the post-colonial condition to the rise of neo-liberalism and social media.

The second chapter focuses on the mixed Northern Israeli city of Acre, **Nimrod Luz and Nurit Stadler** examine the complex and reflexive relations between urbanity, religion and ethnicity suggesting there is much to learn from minority religious claims and religious spatiality's and the challenges of these claims by hegemonic opposing groups. Focusing on a local urban struggle revolving the reconstruction of a mosque by the Muslim minority, **Luz and Stadler**, critically reflect on the city's transformation in terms of its religious voices, planning processes, everyday life, and contested urban geopolitics.

In the concluding chapter of the third section, **Moriel Ram** exposes theoretically thought-provoking formation processes of urban "spaces of exception" giving the example from the city of Famagusta, in Northern Cyprus, which has been under Turkish military occupation since 1974. Ram, argues that conquest and ensuing Turkish occupation constantly produces an urban threshold between Famagusta and two competing spatial processes of encampment, exclusion and seclusion: the enclosed area of Varosha and the campus of Eastern Mediterranean University. The chapter demonstrates how the threshold between Varosha and Famagusta provides for urban geopolitical legitimacy of the urban space, while the link between the campus and the city economically sustain the later.

The fourth section of the book offers an overview of three Latin American Cities, each with distinct urban processes showcasing the deep social and spatial inequality and the need to diversify the understating of local urban geopolitics. **Camila Cociña and Ernesto López-Morales** explore the role that gentrification processes can potentially have on the emergence of non-violent conflict, allowing local organisations to participate in the encounter of clearly differentiated positions in Santiago, Chile. **Cociña and López-Morales**

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discusses three local urban cases in which spaces of conflict have allowed the development of alternatives in which less affluent groups manage to remain in gentrifying neighbourhoods. The authors argue that exploring the notion of conflict as an essential part of democracy during class-encounters in gentrification processes can be seen as opportunities to shift urban geopolitical power struggles through local mobilisation of active community groups.

Next, **Catalina Ortiz** and **Camillo Boano** put forward a more critical scrutiny of Medellín's aspiration of consolidating as global benchmark of urban innovation. Urging for developing new ways of thinking how this model enables [or inhibits] opportunities for spatial justice. **Ortiz** and **Boano** reflect on the production and rearrangement of urban space driven by an urban geopolitics of informality and the politics of securisation and control. Focusing specifically on Comuna 8, in the central-east area of Medellín, everyday citizens' politics in informal settlements, it is argued that the politics of informality operate as a governmental technology that strategically uses the denial, self-provision or monumentalisation of infrastructure as a means for selectively legitimising or criminalising citizens' claims over space.

In the final chapter of the fourth part **Peter D.A. Wood** offers a methodologically distinctive perspective on how to measure trans-border participation through urban development planning in Foz do Iguaçu, Paraná, Brazil. **Wood** suggests that through use of a Q methodology, opinions on who participates in development, particularly within this Brazilian borderland city can be revealed. These results are then used to establish three key worldviews among those involved with or affected by development planning in the region: local integration optimists, institution skeptics, and nationalists. Through further

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examination of the collected data, the author calls for a more critical attitude and geopolitical approach to urban studies.

In the concluding conversation held throughout a series of meetings in London in 2015-2016, **Jonathan Rokem** and **Camillo Boano** reflect with **Michael Safier**, who dedicated most of his research to conceptualising a *cosmopolitan development* framework as a means of promoting peaceful co-existence and dialogue between cultural groups in urban areas. Starting in the early 1990s - **Safier**, proposed *cosmopolitan urbanisation* as a way forward to capture all the varieties of interaction between different cultural traditions, heritages, identities and practices in urban life (Safier 1993). In this concluding conversation we discuss some of Safier's central ideas, which are much in line with what this collective book projects' aims to offer within the emerging research field of *comparative urban geopolitics*. We especially consider connotations concerning emerging threats from varied and destabilising combinations of global, regional and local urban inequalities. Safier asserts there are two ways to respond to this danger, one based on withdrawal, underlined by exclusionist, intolerant and even aggressive reaction, and the other one based on active engagement, borne by inclusion and coexistence, cities would be central arenas in which these conflicts and reconciliations cumulate.

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