



Afterword

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As scholars in urban studies have explored diverse perspectives to make sense of cities, urban phenomena, and their impact on individuals' everyday lives. One should first state that the complexities relating to space and its production go beyond binaries (public versus private, urban versus rural, global versus local). The overall challenge has been to develop a theoretical repertoire that can provide a broad range of perspectives for questioning urban space in different ways. As Doreen Massey reminds us, it has become common place among scholars that the terms space and place “bear with them a multiplicity of meanings and connotations which reverberate with each other debates and many aspects of life” (1). A space is thus not a pre-given or a simple landscape to be enjoyed, admired, or photographed, but it constructs complex ways of knowing, as well as various forms of positionality and entanglements of power. For this reason, Henri Lefebvre claims that the meanings attributed to urban space are the result of an intricate interplay of various factors: the physical structure of the urban space as well as the different perceptions and uses of the city by its planners and inhabitants (37–40). Lefebvre insists on the centrality of daily life in the reproduction of capitalism, not only at the macro-institutional level but also by means of the circulation of social conventions, images, everyday practices, and common-sense notions and beliefs (143–49). Michel de Certeau also correlates daily life routines to a process of territorialization and appropriation of the city (97–98). For de Certeau, everyday life practices produce and transform spaces, opening the possibility for counterhegemonic ways of interpreting and appropriating the urban space.

These debates have prompted scholars to employ different methodologies, resources, and contexts to understand changes in our cities. Over the past decades, these changes include, but are not restricted to, waves of gentrification, suburban sprawl, the physical and symbolic fragmentation of cities,

the militarization of cities, immigration issues, and cultural diversity. Various works have analyzed the relations between urban policies and some of the problems faced by marginalized groups, the interplay between global and local economic forces and the urbanization process, the spread of violence in urban spaces, and how neighborhood associations and communities may have an impact on urban policies. One line of reflection on cities is David Harvey's discussion of the economic role of cities as units of economic production. By aggregating the geographical-spatial dimension to the historical and temporal domains of Marxist materialist thought, Harvey reinforces the interconnectedness between space, place, and capital. Similarly, an interest in people's emotional attachments to the urban environment and to objects and monuments has revealed more complex ways of experiencing and appropriating the city. Although belonging remains a rather vague term, Nira Yuval-Davis associates it with two interconnected dimensions: belonging as a personal, intimate feeling of being at home and feeling safe and belonging as a discursive resource (politics of belonging) that constructs and justifies modes of socio-spatial inclusion and exclusion. Finally, Saskia Sassen and other authors describe global cities as major actors in the new global economy, intensifying social polarity and inequality.

Many significant works have questioned the meanings and uses traditionally attributed to public spaces. In *City of Quartz*, Mike Davis describes what he calls "a process of recolonization of public areas" via private security and changes to the built environment. One such example is using barrel-shaped bus benches, installing overhead sprinkler systems, and closing parks and restrooms after dark as a strategy to relocate homeless people to less affluent areas. Others have examined the impact of urban development plans on the design of new cultural activities and a process of commodification. One such case is Sharon Zukin's research, which examines the correlation between cultural symbols and entrepreneurial capital in the shape of public space (49). As the author reminds us, culture should be perceived as a powerful technology that seeks to impose social rules, practices, and norms based on the logic of consumption and profitability. In all these cases, the perception of the city goes beyond the study of built forms (e.g., color, architectural design, textures), bringing new insights to the field.

Feminist scholars have been an integral part of these debates. In *Space, Place, and Gender*, Doreen Massey traces a link between the construction of space and place and the ways gender is implicated in those constructions. As Massey states, "From the symbolic meaning of spaces/places and the clearly gendered messages which they transmit . . . they both reflect and affect the ways in which gender is constructed and understood" (179). The author refers to spatial constructions of gender that limit the possibilities for women to join the

labor work and public life. In so doing, Massey proposes, among other things, new insights on the separation of the private (the domestic space) and public (the space of work, politics, the economy, and culture) spheres. To cite just one case, works on domestic space help illuminate how and why gender structures within the family can generate unequal power relations and restrict women's insertion in the labor force (Bondi and Domosh; McDowell). As Gillian Rose rightly asserts, "domestic space is produced by the processes of capitalist and patriarchal reproduction. Ideologically idealized as haven in a heartless world, it is actually a space in which women are expected to work, cooking, cleaning and caring, without wages or privacy" (5). It is important to keep in mind however that the domestic space "should be considered as the product of relations that extend beyond the home" and beyond the present time (Rose 5).

The perception of place as a location where multiple networks of power intersect has been central to scholars interested in the relation of place and space with issues of race, ethnicity, sexuality, and class.¹ As discussed by various scholars, the differences socially constructed in and across space give rise to different forms of exploitation, inequality, discrimination, and invisibility. One such case is the racialization of space, which has long posed problems for Black communities, who have experienced and continue to experience displacement, dispossession, violence, and segregation. Scholars have challenged not only who is included and who is excluded from the imagined and physical city but also who speaks on whose behalf. Taking as a point of departure her personal experiences and stories, bell hooks focuses on how space shaped her identity and affected her feelings of belonging and displacement. Her stories invite us to reflect on the complexities of everyday life as a starting point to better understand the different dynamics of power carried out in otherwise "innocent," "harmless" encounters. More particularly, various scholars have studied the relation between public spaces, protest, and race. For example, Eugene McCann discusses how the killing of an African American teenager by a White police officer relates to the role played by racialized representations of space in the production of exclusionary spaces in US cities. McCann offers insights into protests over racialized police brutality and how these clashes have influenced how urban spaces are controlled and used by different groups. In dialogue with Don Mitchell's notion of public spaces as "material places, sites from which political activities flow," McCann affirms that only when marginalized groups can articulate their differences and demand their right to the city will we have a more inclusive society (181).

Building a more inclusive society is also an issue central to scholars who consider the invisibility of LGBTQ+ individuals in cultural and social geography. As Jon Binnie and Gill Valentine insist, despite the growing number

of works on sexuality in social and cultural geography, there are still some areas that are absent. Binnie and Valentine call attention to the need to study “less visible aspects of lesbian and gay communities,” exploring not only the similarities (the common experiences) but also the diversity and tensions within and among these groups and society in general (177). For example, Valentine examines the ways lesbians can feel “out of place” in a society organized around heterosexual practices/spaces. The author notes that

for lesbians the parental or matrimonial home is devoid of many of the shared meanings, experiences, and values which are simultaneously taken for granted by heterosexuals but which also serve to shape or reinforce the asymmetrical identity of the family. In this way, heterosexual power is invested in and expressed through so-called private spaces. (399)

As Valentine attests, (hetero)sexing spaces forces lesbians to conceal their identity to avoid discrimination and violence. More than that, the perpetuation of antilebian discourse and practices by heterosexual women helps perpetuate their own oppression, as “such antilebianism is also used to police heterosexual women’s dress, behaviour, and activities” (411).

Studies on data-driven governance in urban geography expose how public policies have played a key role in reshaping cities. These studies explore the relations between city administrators, populations, and space in a time characterized by the processes of capitalist accumulation and expansion. That is the case of cities like São Paulo. Despite the existence of several regulations that aim to create guidelines on the use of space and the occupation of urban soil as an instrument to guarantee the right to the city for all citizens, public spaces have become central areas for capital accumulation and real estate speculation. Gustavo F. T. Prieto and Patrícia Lacznski examine the social, economic, and political effects of the recent privatization process in the city of São Paulo. Drawing on David Harvey’s and Saad Filho’s discussion on neoliberalism, the authors trace out more recent public concession programs created by municipal authorities to ensure market-based growth. Prieto and Lacznski argue that, among other things, the priority given to the “private sector has strengthened and brought great opportunities for the financial, real estate, services, and information sectors,” much to the detriment of the well-being of the community at large (16, my translation). At the same time, instead of investing in social projects and services, the emphasis is on the criminalization of poor communities and

the adoption of law enforcement policies that contribute to social unrest and further violence against these communities.

The question that remains is how to give voice and visibility to those kept in the margins of society. As various scholars point out, paying attention to marginalized voices is particularly crucial for understanding how certain groups are negatively impacted by different forms of exclusion and violence, as well as the strategies employed by them to negotiate a more inclusive, equalitarian society. That is the case of Bezerra, who examines how cultural productions coming from the peripheries enable a more complex and inclusive map of the city. The same can be said of Beal, who investigates how various genres of art coming from the *ciudades satélites* generate counternarratives that reclaim the right to the city.² A last example would be Wieser and Prata, who address various literary and cultural representations of cities, including Lisbon, Luanda, Maputo, Porto Alegre, and São Paulo. These scholars explore how the city is shaped and shapes memories and identities and how people at the margins create discourses of resistance by disrupting cultural and social borders. In all these cases, the emphasis is on how new cultural producers reorient codes of difference and belonging, challenging preconceived notions, uses of space, and regimes of visibility.

There can be no doubt that the emergence of new political actors coming from the margins has helped to elaborate and encourage critical positionings that unveil and denaturalize the very terms that define the city. The importance of these inquiries lies in the fact that all spaces are produced by and reproduce social relations and hierarchies embedded within the social structure (Lefebvre 26). The attempt to re-frame the meanings attached to space is a crucial step in the ongoing negotiation over questions of identity, belonging, and citizenship. Certainly, the potential to create differential spaces offers the possibility of denaturalizing a spatial order that has legitimated and justified regimes of exclusion and inequalities (Lefebvre 27). No doubt a crucial step because, as the Nigerian writer Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie reminds us in her TED Talk titled “The Danger of a Single Story,” the single story “creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but that they are incomplete . . . They make the one story become the only story.”

One could go on and on and refer to equally important strands and works in urban studies, explaining their unique contribution to the field. But this is unquestionably not an easy task, given the large number of sophisticated analytical studies published over the last decades. It might suffice to acknowledge that, despite referring to important strands and works of urban studies, this summary is incomplete and extremely basic. The research in the field is much more complex and complicated than these few pages would suggest.

Cities in the Global Stage: The Brazilian Case

With the rise of cities as important hubs in the global economy, urban development plans have prioritized economic growth over the improvement of living conditions, privileging the needs and interests of economic and political elites at the expense of the large majority of the population. As James Holston and Arjun Appadurai argue, cities are the arena where individuals engage in practices that can lead to changes in both the meaning and boundaries of citizenship itself. This happens because the streets “conflate identities of territory and contract with those of race, religion, class, culture, and gender to produce the reactive ingredients of both progressive and reactionary political movements” (Holston and Appadurai 11). The fact is that alarming social and spatial stratification has transformed our cities into sites of intensive and fierce negotiations, violence, and conflicts. In the case of Brazil, it is estimated that 84.72% of the population live in urban areas (PNAD). The rush to the cities can be explained in part by the search for better job and educational opportunities and quality of life. As a result, administrators are usually confronted with a multitude of issues, such as high urban densities, traffic congestion, unplanned development, informal settlements, environmental degradation, pollution, public transportation, housing shortage, and lack of basic services. Because the decisions taken by committees and boards are without public participation or scrutiny, the coalitions between public sectors, the elite, and private investors have further exacerbated structural, social, and economic forms of inequality, poverty, and exclusion. In different instances, the adoption of a discourse that purports and justifies their decisions based on the wellbeing of the community is used as a strategy to avoid pressures and criticism and, consequently, to silence dissenting voices.

The present volume *Contemporary Brazilian Cities, Culture, and Resistance* offers a renewed understanding of our cities. It engages in a much-needed exploration of how marginalized voices appropriate and re-signify the city. Central to the various essays is the emphasis on the right to the city—a concept developed by Henri Lefebvre and reclaimed more recently by different street movements and virtual social networks. As the editors Sophia Beal and Gustavo Prieto clearly define, the right to the city here means the right to the possibility of putting “the local community interests ahead of consumer–capitalist planning strategies” (2). To put it differently, it is the right to have a more active role in urban governance, which has traditionally been driven by the elite and by the market. In the case of the present collection, the authors place particular emphasis on socio-cultural spatial practices that reclaim the return of the city-*oeuvre*, an essentially collective and creative act that produces the city as a space for encounters among differences and where egalitarian

appropriations prevail over commodification. As Beal and Prieto state, the volume proposes the analysis of art and social activism as “performances of every individual’s right to the city” (3). The city is thus perceived in its diversity, characterized by the presence of a multiplicity of bodies, symbols, spaces, objects, built environments, subjectivities, sounds, and smells—the city is a landscape of power, violence, and resilience. It becomes a public stage for political demonstrations, socialization, surveillance, and control, and is part of the consumer market.

The editors of the volume invited leading scholars to be part of this debate. Although the papers accepted for publication vary in method and writing style, the various authors focus on the spatial dimensions of human experience. Divided into eleven essays, each of the contributions examines a wide range of cultural practices and social virtual encounters that bring to the fore the demands of new social actors. The essays focus on cultural expressions that give voice to stigmatized groups who are usually invisible, allowing them to address some of the issues that are part of their everyday lives. This is the case of Ana Fani Alessandri Carlos’s discussion on the *sarau* poetry in the peripheries of São Paulo, Annie McNeil Gibson’s careful analysis of Daniel Minchoni’s performances, and Silvia Lopes Raimundo’s focus on the performance of São Paulo cultural groups. As outlined by the authors, the creation of a new poesis that opens new possibilities of being becomes a powerful tool to express dissent and advocate for social changes. The same can be said of the popular college preparatory courses for peripheral youth that, described as sites of “instruction in action,” (Colosso 56) do not restrict themselves to drawing out lesson content but instead help forge a sense of belonging and resistance against oppressive structures. As Paolo Colosso argues, the festive spirit of the streets becomes a political stage where collective performances and demands can take place. Marguerite Itamar Harrison discusses the importance of not-for-profit cultural centers, with a more human-centered architectural approach to public spaces, which promotes encounters that can lead to recognition, individual empowerment, and solidarity ties. As Harrison puts it, these community-service cultural centers have the potential to open space for a more inclusive society.

Literary works and the media in general can also generate insights into the intrinsic logic of cities. Three essays examine the use of narrative strategies to articulate other forms of knowledge. As Ligia Bezerra rightfully argues, Daniel Munduruku’s novel “calls for the forest to influence the city,” proposing a “rethinking of what it means to be civilized and successful” (Beal and Prieto 20). The works of Patricia Melo, Amara Moira, and Atena Beauvoir address how urban spaces (or a transphobic city) threaten, restrain, and enable gendered and sexed subjectivities. Even though Brazil has created a

special legislation (*Lei Maria da Penha*) to tackle violence against women, the high rates of femicide and violence against women, as well as against transgender and transexual individuals, are shocking.³ In the case of Patricia Melo's novel, Ângela Maria Dias addresses the violence that is embedded in the hyper-exposure of social media. The author connects the main character's physical and virtual murder to the process of physical and symbolic violence against women. Ricardo Barberena and Ana Ferrão establish a relationship between the notion of non-place and the definition of transvestites as outcasts. The city is thus described as a territory of violence but is equally marked by moments of solidarity.

Some of the articles focus more specifically on the role played by NGOs in unfolding new forms of activism. Focusing on everyday practices of assédio (street harassment), Rebecca J. Atencio investigates (in)visible forms of gendered urban violence. Taking as a point of departure the work of a non-government periphery group and a documentary film, the author demonstrates how a "web of feminist praxis" (87), conjugating action and discourse, can transform the urban space into a more equitable space. Leila Lehnen examines the life stories of women living in occupied buildings in downtown São Paulo. The essay analyzes more closely the motivating factors behind the occupation and the impact these acts of civil disobedience have on the occupants' everyday lives and on their relationships with the neighborhood and the state. Finally, Derek Pardue proposes an ethnographic fiction of his fieldwork in São Paulo. The author contextualizes the experience of Haitian immigrants in the search for a sense of belonging.

As this summary briefly illustrates, the volume *Contemporary Brazilian Cities, Culture, and Resistance* opens exciting venues for future investigations that will undoubtedly enhance our knowledge of Brazil. Despite the richness and quality of the works, a more nuanced understanding of center-periphery relations, with their own internal and overlapping spaces of exclusion and power relations, would bring more theoretical richness to the discussion. Also, one might say that a more grounded discussion on issues of space could contribute to the discussion on femicide.

Broadly speaking, all the essays provide access to different patterns and structures of feeling, action, and thought, challenging traditional processes of knowledge and sense-making. They speak to the growing attempt to create new pedagogical and political approaches that can allow marginalized groups to re-appropriate the city on their own terms. Because the future of our cities is still in question, studies such as those developed in this volume merit continued attention.

Notes

1. For more on the conceptualization of patriarchy among different groups of feminists in the 1980s and 1990s, see Linda Peake, "'Race' and Sexuality: Challenging the Patriarchal Structuring of Urban Social Space," *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, vol. 11, no. 4 (1993): 415–32.
2. Inaugurated in 1960 to serve as the capital, Brasília was formed by a pilot plan and around 30 satellite urban municipalities, officially called administrative regions. Because poverty and misery were incompatible with the image of a modernist city, the satellite cities were perceived as the cheapest and fastest solution to remove this large low-income population to areas located at least 25 km (15–35 miles) from the capital (Holston).
3. For more on violence against women and the LGBTQIA+ population in Brazil, see IPEA.

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