TRANSFORMING CITIES

CONTESTED GOVERNANCE AND NEW SPATIA DIVISION

EDITED BY

NICK JEWSON AND

SUSANNE MACGREGOR

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contested governance and new spatial divisions

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TRANSFORMING CITIES

Social exclusion and the reinvention of partnership

Nick Jewson and Susanne MacGregor

THE THEMES OF THE VOLUME

This collection of essays focuses on aspects of the profound transformations that have characterised cities of the advanced capitalist societies in the final decades of the twentieth century. It analyses ways in which relationships of contest, conflict and co-operation are realised in and through the social and spatial forms of contemporary urban life. These processes, it is contended, are creating new patterns of social division and new forms of regulation and control. More specifically, contributors analyse innovative strategies of urban regeneration, the shift from Fordist to post-Fordist cities, new patterns of possession and dispossession in urban spaces, the production of cultural representations and city images, the evolution of novel forms of political power, emerging patterns of policing and surveillance, the development of partnerships between public and private agencies, the mobilisation of resistance by urban residents and implications for the empowerment of communities and individuals. Taken together, the essays give an account of the impact of economic restructuring and changing forms of urban governance on patterns of urban deprivation and social exclusion.

The chapters are all derived from papers delivered at the British Sociological Association Annual Conference for 1995, which was organised around the theme 'Contested Cities: Social Process and Spatial Forms'. The study of urban sociology has recently undergone its own revival – rescued from, on the one hand, overspecialisation and mundane description and, on the other, theoretical paradigms that denied sociological significance to the city as a social form. Renewed vigour and conviction among scholars are evidenced in the liveliness of the BSA conference on which this volume is based, increased publications in the field and moves towards new overarching theoretical syntheses. The chapters that follow offer, then, a distinctive approach, seeing change through the critical eye of sociology.

The ways urban spaces are generated in social relationships, and the ways social relations take distinct spatial forms in cities, are key processes which it is the task of urban sociology to analyse. In this perspective, cities are conceived not merely as sites or arenas of social interaction but as built spatial entities

which incorporate and constitute the constraints and opportunities of a wide range of social relationships. This theme is introduced by David Harvey in the first chapter in this volume – expressed in the notion of 'framing cities' – and is sustained in the chapters which follow.

The chapters offer remarkably topical discussions of cities and urban policies in the 1990s whilst, at the same time, locating current trends in a broader context. They reflect the more sceptical approach which now characterises academic and policy debates about cities, as the after-effects of the excesses of the 1980s become only too apparent. They also link macro and micro level analyses. Middle range and grand theorisations are complemented by careful investigations of particular cities. They also bring together writing and research which have tended to be compartmentalised; for example, discussions of local government have been separated from discussions of leisure and pleasure, crime and policing and other social processes. When the sociological imagination focuses on the city itself as a social and spatial form, more holistic analyses emerge.

A FRAMEWORK OF ISSUES

The renewal of theoretical and empirical work in urban sociology has been brought about by a recognition of the significance of cities within the forms and dynamics of western capitalism. A transformation of capitalism – and, thus, simultaneously a transformation of cities – has been taking place in the second half of the twentieth century. These changes have generated a series of crises and conflicts, including the decline of manufacturing and the growth of unemployment, polarisation between the socially excluded and the better-off (although increasingly insecure) middle classes, increasing disillusion and dissatisfaction with traditional political parties and political classes, the deleterious environmental impacts of current systems of production and distribution, and the failure of available ideologies (both welfare statism and neo-liberalism) to come up with effective policy solutions (Jacobs 1992: 8). The interrelated processes entailed in these changes, and their associated social divisions, provide a framework of issues for the investigation of urban forms and relationships – and, hence, for the chapters in this volume.

Restructuring employment and restructuring cities

An increasingly flexible and deregulated labour market characterises the 1990s as companies have responded to technological innovation and global competitiveness. There has been a significant decline in the proportion of people employed in full-time and permanent jobs whilst the numbers of those working part-time, on short-term contracts and in self-employment have grown. Women now make up nearly half of the employed workforce. Subcontracting, out-sourcing and so-called 'non-standard' forms of employment have become integral features of labour markets. The services sector has waxed while manufacturing has waned. Pursuit of economies of scale has been replaced by an emphasis on small-batch production and

niche marketing of goods and services. In many contexts large-scale, hierarchical organisations have given way to small and medium-sized enterprises with flatter managerial structures. 'The demand for workers in skilled high technology based occupations as well as in low paid and labour intensive sectors such as hotels, catering and retail distribution looks set to grow' (Taylor 1996: 208). The impact on urban forms of such transformations in labour markets and labour processes has given rise to the notion of a post-Fordist city. Such a city is characterised by a regime of flexible accumulation that creates new spatial and social relationships (cf. Harvey 1989a; Savage and Warde 1993).

Awareness of these trends has been added to prior concerns about the decline of cities which dominated the 1970s. The symptoms of decline noted then were loss of population, loss of employment, fiscal problems resulting from the erosion of the tax base, disproportionate numbers of poor households concentrated in poor areas (characterised especially in the USA by housing abandonment, arson, vandalism, high crime rates, drug dealing, and dependence on welfare), and a concentration of minority ethnic groups in separate areas of the city. The gloomy prognoses which derive from these accounts were challenged in the 1980s by views which heralded the revival of city centres, sometimes focused around cultural institutions, the arts, leisure and consumption activities (Bianchini 1989 and 1990). Yet alongside these booming developments, in other areas there has remained decline, distress, disparity of income and lifestyle and divergence of values and opportunities. New kinds of low-paid, insecure and low-status jobs are generated by the demands of tourists, gentrifiers, concert-goers, conference delegates and other affluent urban consumers. Landscapes of consumption and of devastation exist side by side, and in intimate relation with one another (Zukin 1991).

Globalisation, post-Fordist cities and social exclusion

The restructuring of urban employment relations has been a global process, generating new international divisions and connections between capital, labour and resources. Of central importance has been, as a result of financial deregulation and the explosive growth of electronic communications, the speedy movement of money within and between world markets. There has been a world-wide social and spatial reorganisation of economic activities and a restructuring of capital, resulting in new functions for financial markets and challenges to established political institutional 'containers', such as the nation-state (Sassen 1994). This has led to a reordering of the significance and influence of cities across the face of the planet. New patterns of wealth and poverty, dispersal and centralisation, control and subordination have been created. Profound shocks have been felt in all parts of the world and many human lives disrupted, posing particular difficulties of adaptation for western societies, coming as they did after a uniquely stable period of steady economic growth in the decades following the Second World War.

A key characteristic of this transformation is its pattern of uneven development. Massey insists that the concept of uneven development refers 'to more than the fact that there are more jobs in some places than others, or even that there are better jobs in some places than others' (Massey 1994: 86). She stresses that an important element of uneven development is the spatial structuring of the relations of production in capitalist societies – unequal relationships which imply positions of dominance and subordination (ibid.: 87) – and that analysis is incomplete without recognition of this spatial ordering. On the ground, this results in some regions/countries/cities monopolising control functions, while other regions/countries/cities are locked into subordinate roles. The key point is that 'the overlapping and interweaving of all these spatial structures is the basis for a spatial division of labour' (ibid.: 90). Thus, for example, the picture of Britain described by Massey is one where the North remains dominated by branch-plant structures, with an increasing proportion of these being responsible to headquarters outside the UK. Along with this have gone other changes which impact on local economies and local social relations, especially increasing subcontracting, casualisation and contracting out (hollowing out of core functions). These transformations, she argues, have exacerbated the north–south divide: '[n]orth and south are locked in very different ways into *international* spatial structures and the international division of labour' (ibid.: 97). She continues:

> The economy of London and the south-east is in many ways more in competition with and linked to other international metropolitan regions and world cities than it is with the rest of the UK ... In contrast, the factories of the north are linked into, and in competition with, similar factories in similar regions in Europe, and also to some extent in the Third World.
>
> (Massey 1994: 97)

Within cities, polarisation of the labour market is also evidenced in increasing spatial segregation.

It has become commonplace to describe these transformations in terms of processes conveniently, if misleadingly, labelled as 'globalisation'. More sceptical writers have challenged the sweeping nature of this analysis – and the pessimistic conclusions that seem to follow for political action. Authors such as Will Hutton (1995) and Paul Hirst and Grahame Thompson (1996) have argued that the role of the nation-state, while altered, has not been eroded to the extent that the globalisation argument would imply. Hirst and Thompson argue that '[g]lobalisation has become a fashionable concept in the social sciences, a core dictum in the prescriptions of management gurus and a catchphrase for journalists and politicians of every stripe' (Hirst and Thompson 1996: 1). They offer instead a 'scepticism about global economic processes and optimism about the possibilities of control of the international economy and of the viability of national political strategies' (ibid.). The term 'international' is used deliberately by these writers rather than 'global' to indicate that 'most companies trade from their bases in distinct national economies' (ibid.: 185).

Nevertheless, competition between localities for inward investment has increased, with cities and regions seeking to project themselves on a global stage in order to attract capital investment. This, in turn, often entails creating a distinctive civic image that, it is hoped, will establish the city as an attractive niche for some aspect of transnational economic operations. Such images may emphasise environmental features, educational and cultural institutions, scientific prowess, historical heritage, attitudes of residents, and so on. City boosters may feel that investment in prestige projects, cultural spectacles or international events will help foster a positive image, resulting in competition between urban localities to build conference centres, sponsor tourist attractions and host sporting contests (cf. Harvey 1989a; Biancini 1991; Mulgan 1990). In these circumstances the ambience and style of the city become economic assets. Some cities have long established advantages in this regard; others have to be more creative in inventing, or re-presenting (King 1996), their charms.

In post-Fordist cities there is at the same time a growing concern with a phenomenon now labelled 'social exclusion' – a new name for the old problem of poverty. This concern has, to a significant degree, been stimulated by fear of rebellion and disorder. The dominant discourse in contemporary politics now focuses on issues of social integration and disintegration. The upbeat account of transformation has been challenged by those who draw attention to increasing inequality and poverty in contemporary societies. Post-Fordism has been accompanied by de-industrialisation, the growth of unemployment (particularly long-term unemployment), and social exclusion. Social exclusion involves detachment from social and political participation and from the labour market. These tensions are crystallised in contemporary cities, as social divisions are compounded by spatial segregation. Sociology's traditional task, of employing careful investigation to draw attention to the dark side of progress, becomes of renewed importance.

There is growing concern that policy responses to these enormous challenges are inadequate. One in three children in Britain lives in poverty, 14 million people are on low incomes (4.5 million of whom are in work) and welfare expenditure itself is at a historic high point. Across Europe some 20 million people are unemployed. Yet there is marked reluctance among political parties to talk of redistributive social policies. In many countries – including Germany, France and the UK – there is growing uncertainty about the possibility of retaining welfare state arrangements. Indeed, social exclusion may itself be the result of the restructuring and dismantling of the welfare state, reflecting transformations in forms of urban and national governance. According to Lord Dahrendorf, there should be three principal objectives of current policies: prosperity, civility and liberty. The challenge for contemporary cities is whether they will be able to square the circle – attain all three in equal measure. In particular, with regard to social exclusion, the urgent tasks are to retrieve the excluded and to prevent future exclusion.

The development of appropriate policies requires better understanding of the social processes which lead to social exclusion – and here social

scientists may make a contribution. Research is needed that demonstrates the dynamics through which people gain access to opportunities, or are denied them. A structural analysis would show how poverty is inherent in cities rather than being accidental or self-inflicted. The revival of interest in social networks is welcome here in helping to analyse these social processes and showing how different processes operate in different arenas. Profiling and mapping techniques can give publicity to social trends, and give a picture of the landscape of social exclusion, but these techniques are only as good as the data they utilise and need to be approached with care. Poverty is a socio-spatial phenomenon and research and theory must make this central to their accounts.

Governance, control and urban policies

Governance can be defined as 'the control of an activity by some means such that a range of defined outcomes is attained' (Hirst and Thompson 1996: 184). As such, governance is not just the province of the state and may include a wide range of activities. It has been argued, however, that there is now an urgent need to redesign public policy and social provision in the light of the massive transformations characterising late twentieth-century capitalism:

> Today ... [w]e live in an era of breathtaking change. We live in a global marketplace, which puts enormous competitive pressure on our economic institutions. We live in an information society, in which people get access to information almost as fast as their leaders do. We live in a knowledge-based economy, in which educated workers bridle at commands and demand autonomy. We live in an age of niche markets, in which customers have become accustomed to high quality and extensive choice. In this environment, bureaucratic institutions developed during the industrial era – public *and* private – increasingly fail us.
>
> (Osborne and Gaebler 1993: 15)

In the context of social change and the fear of disintegration, the dominant questions surround the possibility of coherent and integrated governance, the knitting together of the myriad of agencies involved in the governing process and the salience of democratic processes. A distinctive and central element in modern politics remains the claim of the state to exclusive control of a definite territory (Hirst and Thompson 1996: 170). However, transformations in international economic relationships and enhanced vigour of locally based social movements have, to some degree, challenged this claim. Hirst and Thompson hint that in the post-Fordist age, governance may come to parallel features of the former shape of politics in the Middle Ages, where 'political authorities and other forms of functionally specific governance (religious communities and guilds for example) had existed in complex and overlapping forms that made parallel and often competing claims to the same area' (ibid.: 171). The new political