DOING GLOBAL URBAN RESEARCH

Sara Miller McCune founded SAGE Publishing in 1965 to support the dissemination of usable knowledge and educate a global community. SAGE publishes more than 1000 journals and over 800 new books each year, spanning a wide range of subject areas. Our growing selection of library products includes archives, data, case studies and video. SAGE remains majority owned by our founder and after her lifetime will become owned by a charitable trust that secures the company's continued independence.

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi | Singapore | Washington DC | Melbourne

DOING GLOBAL URBAN RESEARCH

EDITED BY

JOHN HARRISON & MICHAEL HOYLER

$SAGE

Los Angeles | London | New Delhi
Singapore | Washington DC | Melbourne

1

MAKING SENSE OF THE GLOBAL URBAN

John Harrison and Michael Hoyler

It goes without saying that urban research has become increasingly global in its outlook. Irrespective of whether you are an urban geographer, urban sociologist, urban political scientist, urban historian, urban economist, favouring a qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods approach, the challenge that confronts researchers as they attempt to participate in and engage with our increasingly 'globalized' urban studies remains fundamentally the same – how to make sense of urban complexity.

One quick and easy observation is that the quest to understand our globalizing and urbanizing modern world has seen urban scholars leave no stone unturned in the pursuit of new theory production. From Ananya Roy's (2009) call for new geographies of urban theory to understand the 21st-century metropolis through to the emergence of a new critical urban theory (Brenner, 2009; Marcuse, 2009) and a more internationalized urban theory (Parnell and Oldfield, 2014; Robinson, 2011a) it is impossible to ignore how urban studies has been experiencing its own globalizing tendencies of late.

One reflection of this is how the prefix 'global' has been attached to all manner of different urban ideas, concepts and processes. We can reflect how in the 1990s cities research, which traditionally focused on cities as part of national urban systems, gave way to a new wave of 'global cities' research examining how cities are connected into international circuits of capital accumulation and political decision-making in globalization (Sassen, 1991; Taylor and Derudder, Chapter 3; Neal, Chapter 4; Acuto, Chapter 7). We can see how in the 2000s erstwhile spatial concepts such as the 'city-region' became reimagined and rejuvenated as 'global city-regions' (Scott, 2001),

while classic urban processes such as gentrification and suburbanization were recast as global urban processes through the lenses of 'global gentrifications' (Lees et al., 2015; Smith, 2002) and 'global suburbanisms' (Keil, Chapter 12). The transition from 'cities' through 'globalizing cities' to 'globalized urbanization' is today being extended as urbanization is increasingly reframed as a planetary process through notions of 'planetary urbanization' (Brenner, 2014; Katsikis, Chapter 2) and 'planetary gentrification' (Lees et al., 2016; Shin, Chapter 10).

But what, we ask, can be said about the current state of empirical research and the methodological approaches we possess for *doing* global urban research? And what does it actually mean to *do* global urban research?

Now you might be thinking that this is a somewhat peculiar set of questions to ask at this point. If we are all part of the globalization of urban research then intuitively we must know when we are doing it, where we are doing it, how we are doing it, why we are doing it and what it means to be doing it. Surely the current state of urban studies guarantees we are all doing global urban research and, by virtue of this, becoming global urban researchers? We may well be but these are some of the seemingly straightforward questions we are often guilty of overlooking as researchers.

For all of the talk surrounding the move towards more globally oriented urban studies there has been a notable silence regarding the practice of doing global urban research. Attaching the prefix 'global' to established theories and processes is an easy, often neat, conceptual move, yet translating this into the practice of actually doing urban research presents many more challenges. Indeed, if you are reading these words then it is a challenge that you are most likely facing. The problem as we see it is that the practice of doing global urban research is often implied, lurking in the background, or largely hidden from view. This is our point of departure: in this book we aim to put the practice of doing global urban research centre stage.

Our beginnings

How do you research planetary urbanization? This seems to be another one of those simple questions. But as we discovered a few years ago, it can be rather more difficult to answer. Picture this:

- The question 'How do you research planetary urbanization?' comes from a group of final-year undergraduate students, many of whom are also doing their undergraduate research project at the time.

- The students asking the question are in the last week of the two semester-long modules we teach: 'Globalized Urbanization' and 'Regional Worlds'.

- The final part of both modules sees students exposed to current research agendas and new frontiers in urban and regional studies respectively.

At the time 'planetary urbanization' was just emerging to be one of the hottest topics in urban studies. Unbeknown to us, but perhaps not too surprisingly in hindsight, we each changed our lectures that year to talk about the emerging recent trends in urban and regional studies, as they are embodied in concepts such as 'planetary urbanization', 'global suburbanisms' and 'megaregions'. So here were a group of students being taught about the latest big 'global' ideas in urban and regional studies and logically they wanted to know how they could do it. This left us faced with a question which should be relatively straightforward to respond to but in many ways it does not avail an easy answer.

Part of the challenge is that neither of us had done actual research on planetary urbanization – or, for that matter, many of the topics covered in this book. This means we cannot fall back on an answer reflecting our own research experience. Part has to do with the globalization of urban studies and whether it is feasible to do primary research on urban concepts and processes prefixed with the words 'global', 'planetary' or 'mega'. Here is a challenge. Ask yourself the question 'How do you research gentrification?', 'How do you research urbanization?' or 'How do you research regions?'. The answers you come up with will most likely arrive quickly and afford you with a range of options. Now ask yourself the same questions but add the aforementioned prefixes ('How do you research *global* gentrifications?', 'How do you research *planetary* urbanization?', 'How do you research *mega*regions?') to see if you can come up with a similar range of options. We suspect not. The challenge is that new theories and concepts for framing the global urban have developed at a far faster rate than the empirical tools and techniques necessary to provide the evidence. The final part of the challenge is that there is no book or collection of articles on how to do this. While we do not set out to provide you with a manual for doing global urban research, we do aim to provide you – the reader – with insights into the opportunities and challenges, the tools and techniques, the theories and the empirical case studies that can enable you to do global urban research.

Our vantage point

It is not lost on us how our vantage point impacts on how we perceive the field of global urban studies: after all, we think from where we are, are influenced by where we have been and where we are heading, and our thoughts are constantly shaped by the encounters we have along the way. We have already discussed one such encounter with a group of students on the modules we teach, but for us there is more to it than this.

Our vantage point is Loughborough, a relatively small university town (c. 60,000 population) in England, located some 150 kilometres north of London and 75 kilometres east of Birmingham. It is not exactly the global urban, but its prominent place on the global urban studies map is its legacy

as the birthplace of the Globalization and World Cities (GaWC) research network (www.lboro.ac.uk/gawc) of which we are both part.

Back in 1998, Peter Taylor together with Jon Beaverstock founded GaWC to contribute to solving the empirical/methodological problem of doing global urban research. His prompt was the dearth of accessible inter-city data to analyse what was being variously conceptualized as a 'global network of cities' (King, 1990), 'transnational urban system' (Sassen, 1994) or, as Castells (1996) famously framed it, a global 'space of flows', with cities as the nodes in the network. In one of the formative GaWC research articles, Taylor notes:

> I doubt whether social scientists as a body of practitioners have fully appreciated the implications of globalization for their research practices. Despite the plethora of recent writings on globalization themes, it is by no means clear that a concomitant proportion of social science research projects address global-level processes. I suspect that this is an important topic where theory has progressed much further than the evidence actually warrants. (Taylor, 1997: 323)

In his own words 'a plea is made for readers to join in the proposed global study' (Taylor, 1997: 323). It was a plea that has been followed by two decades of global urban study.

For Peter Taylor himself, the challenge of creating a set of global data to enable better conceptualizations of the complexity of worldwide inter-city networks resulted in the 'interlocking network model' (Taylor, 2001), which was then applied to 315 cities worldwide and a 'world city network' derived including measures of network connectivity between cities (Taylor, 2004). What is often referred to as the 'GaWC methodology' has since been applied widely in global urban studies and inspired significant critical engagement and debate (Derudder and Parnreiter, 2014).

Following the establishment of a global cities thesis, a growing body of literature has emerged focusing on reviewing existing strategies for comparing cities. Amongst others, Jennifer Robinson's advancement of a postcolonial approach has led her to speculate on what potential 'comparative methodologies' exist for researchers who wish for an urban studies 'conducted "on a world scale"' (Robinson, 2011b: 2; 2016; Parnell, 2016). Allied to this we have seen a focus on ethnography as an approach for doing urban research which is 'global' or 'comparative', such as AbdouMaliq Simone's ethnographies of African and South East Asian cities (Simone, 2001), Colin McFarlane's idea of 'translocal assemblage' developed from ethnographic research into the relations between informality, infrastructure and knowledge in informal settlements in urban India (McFarlane, 2011), or Tim Bunnell's multi-sited collaborative ethnographic research project investigating the remaking of Asian cities (Bunnell, Chapter 13; see also Goh et al., 2015).

Urban geographers have also become increasingly interested in researching the geographies of policy mobility – specifically how knowledge (of complex urban processes, models, concepts) circulates globally and how it

crystallizes on the ground in different urban contexts (Ward, 2010; Temenos and Ward, Chapter 5). Central to this urban research is understanding how the increasing interconnectedness of policy regimes between places and across scales vis-à-vis the extant power of state territoriality results in '(im)mobile urbanism' globally and in place (McCann and Ward, 2011). Most useful in reinforcing our aim with this book, Jamie Peck and Nik Theodore observe how:

> If processes of policy mobilization have indeed become increasingly transnational in reach and cross-scalar in constitution, if they are manifest in ever more complex relational combinations, *then there is an inescapable need to confront new methodological challenges*. Spatially demarcated forms of policy evaluation certainly will not do. *New methodological strategies must be developed* to expose and critically interrogate the interconnectedness of policy regimes between places and across scales. (Peck and Theodore, 2010: 171, emphasis added)

Then there is the question of doing urban research on a global scale. This is the challenge currently facing the 'Global Suburbanisms' project team led by Roger Keil at York University in Toronto (Keil, Chapter 12). The first major research project to systematically take stock of worldwide suburban developments, this major collaborative research initiative comprises a team of 50 researchers and 18 partner organizations. Their aim is to systematically understand suburbanization in the Americas, Europe, Africa and Asia, with objectives to (i) 'document and evaluate the diversity of global suburbanisms in their various contexts'; (ii) 'explore the mutual and co-constructive elements of environmental or financial crisis with the production and governance of global suburban space'; and, perhaps most significant in the current context, (iii) 'use [their] wide-ranging empirical data and analysis to intervene in urban theory' (Keil, 2017).

Of course at this point we could go on mentioning many more emergent themes that have given rise to global urban studies research agendas (indeed, many more are covered by the chapters in this book) but the point we are trying to make here is that two decades on from Peter Taylor's plea from Loughborough for a global study, today we have a plethora of global studies responding (directly or indirectly) to his call to appreciate the implications of globalization for their research practices. However, from our vantage point in Loughborough, we are struck by the lack of actual discussion about these research practices. It was this that prompted us to begin the journey towards this book.

Our approach

Our journey began in 2013. This is when we were faced with groups of students asking us how they could go about doing global urban research. It was also a time when we had been having discussions about the nature of global

urban studies. One observation was how we were finding ourselves listening to an increasing number of conference presentations, and reading more and more papers, where authors were engaging with theories and concepts relating to the global urban, but in many cases their research did not appear to have a global dimension. This led us to ask of ourselves the question, are we doing global urban research?

For two researchers working in Loughborough as part of the Globalization and World Cities research network you might reasonably expect the answer to be a simple yes. In fact, we found it to be a deeply challenging question. In trying to answer it we found ourselves coming up with a whole series of other questions: What is global urban research? How do we know global urban research when we see it? How can we do global urban research? When and where are people doing global urban research? Is global urban research even possible? The list goes on. We suspected that if we were challenged by this question, many others researching the global urban might be facing a similar challenge. We also came to realize that one problem is that the industry-standard 8000-word journal article or 20-minute conference presentation does not allow researchers the scope to discuss the practice of doing global urban research.

Two years later, in 2015, Loughborough was the destination for a three-day international conference on 'Doing Global Urban Research', supported by the Urban Studies Foundation, that set out to ask these questions, and to try and find answers. Breaking with the traditional conference format we allowed each presenter 40 minutes. Our aim was to bring together researchers working across the diversity of global urban studies, and to allow them time to present their research ideas and findings, but crucially to openly discuss how they do global urban research – what they understand by it, the opportunities and challenges afforded by it, and how they see the practice of it as it links to the new geographies and internationalization of urban theory. In addition to an open call from which we selected 45 presentations, the conference was structured around five keynote presentations from Roger Keil, Susan Parnell, Christian Schmid, Peter Taylor and Kevin Ward about their experience of doing global urban research in relation to global suburbanisms, southern urbanism, planetary urbanization, world cities and policy mobilities respectively.

This context is important because it is out of this conference that this book has emerged. As with any edited collection, the final outcome is necessarily selective. We know the book will not cover all approaches, themes and topics within global urban research. We also know that our book will overlap and fit alongside others within the field of (global) urban studies. It is to these we now turn.

The first group of books are those which aim to mark out the terrain for urban research. Central to each is an attempt to entice readers into the field of urban research by showcasing the dynamism, plurality and explanatory power of urban theory in contemporary urban research (Harding and Blokland,

2014; Jayne and Ward, 2017; Parker, 2015; Short, 2014). They do this by exploring the state-of-the-art thinking to outline the important conceptual advances that identify the field of urban studies, and the process of urban theory making, as offering a critical take on 21st-century urbanism. We can also include in this group a number of books tailored to particular disciplinary approaches: for example, on urban politics (Davidson and Martin, 2013) or urban geography (Jonas et al., 2015). Nevertheless, what is interesting to us is that while all of them are implicitly global given the nature of urban studies today, none are explicitly global (but see McNeill, 2017), nor do they have any sustained engagement with methods or the practicalities of doing urban research.

The second set of books explicitly focuses on the increasingly global nature of urban studies. In these the emphasis once again tends towards presenting readers with state-of-the-art research findings, alongside arguments pertaining to the explanatory power of new conceptual approaches or analytical frameworks (Brenner, 2014; Harrison and Hoyler, 2015; Keil, 2018a; Lees et al., 2015; McCann and Ward, 2011; Pacione, 2009). Once more there is little or no mention of methods or the practicalities of doing this type of globally oriented urban research.

A third set of publications are the various handbooks and surveys produced of late. Consisting of a large number of often shorter entries these books provide a useful starting point if you are looking to gain an initial overview of a particular field or topic. Nevertheless, while there are a series of urban handbooks and surveys which are global in scope (Derudder et al., 2012; Hannigan and Richards, 2017; Taylor et al., 2011), they are not particularly instructive for researchers looking to find their way in understanding how to go about doing global urban research. In part this is due to the all-encompassing nature of these collections. But part is also due to the sheer scale of putting together these volumes. Both are tasks somewhat removed from the more grounded reality of day-to-day urban research.

The fourth and final set of works which have become more prominent in the past two decades are those dedicated to the actual research methods employed by urban scholars. Very clearly aligned to the expansion of the higher education sector, and the increasing numbers of undergraduate and graduate students doing research projects, methods books range from the generic, to the disciplinary, all the way through to the topic based. In the field of urban studies, we can look to Kevin Ward's 2014 book, *Researching the City*, as an exemplar for guiding researchers through the process of designing, executing and writing up urban research. Often missing from these works, however, is the clear connection to theory and concepts.

All have their merits and offer much to advance research and teaching in urban studies, but the focus of this book is squarely on the practice of doing global urban research. This does not mean that urban theory drops out, nor does it see methods relegated from the collection. Likewise it is not a zero-sum argument for theory over methods or methods over theory. We very clearly see

this book sitting between theory and practice, or, perhaps more accurately, we position this book as a bridge between them.

We are also conscious that many readers will be in the formative stages of undertaking urban research and, as Ward (2014: 5) notes, both undergraduate and graduate dissertations 'tend to consist of a mix of theory, methods and empirics and both require analytical and management skills'. It is in this spirit that this collection brings together contributions discussing theory, methods and empirics. But it also does something else. From the outset we were keen that contributors reflect on their practice. As well as having a consistent approach across the chapters to allow you to easily compare, it was for these reasons that contributors were asked in their chapters to follow a similar structure.

Each chapter in this collection is written in the author's own style, meaning there are differences between them; however, authors were asked to structure their contributions around five themes. Each chapter begins with an introduction outlining why people research this topic. Section One of each chapter will help you to identify the key theories, ideas and concepts that are shaping this area of urban research, and an overview of the current state of academic debate in this field. Section Two then highlights some of the challenges facing researchers. In some cases these challenges are more theoretical and conceptual, in others they are more practical and empirical. In Section Three, authors focus on some of the techniques available to you if you are interested in doing this type of urban research. Here again – reflecting each author's own unique style – some chapters focus on methodological approaches while others address the actual methods themselves, and, similarly, some highlight the techniques they have used in their own research while others also identify techniques which have been utilized by others working in their field. Section Four provides a case study – or case studies when there are multiple authors – of how the chapter author has done this in their own work, enabling you to see how they have practised the doing of global urban research. Finally – in Section Five – there are some reflections from each author on their experience of doing global urban research. Taken together, the contributions to this book offer encouragement and guidance for a reflexive engagement with the many ways of doing global urban research (Hoyler and Harrison, Chapter 16).

References

Acuto, M. (2018) 'Engaging with global urban governance', in J. Harrison and M. Hoyler (eds), *Doing Global Urban Research*. London: Sage, pp. 96–109.

Brenner, N. (2009) 'What is critical urban theory?', *City*, 13(2–3): 198–207.

Brenner, N. (ed.) (2014) *Implosions/Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization*. Berlin: Jovis.

Bunnell, T. (2018) 'Comparative ethnographic urban research', in J. Harrison and M. Hoyler (eds), *Doing Global Urban Research*. London: Sage, pp. 182–95.

Castells, M. (1996) *The Rise of the Network Society*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Davidson, M. and Martin, D. (eds) (2013) *Urban Politics: Critical Approaches*. London: Sage.

Derudder, B. and Parnreiter, C. (2014) 'Introduction: The interlocking network model for studying urban networks: Outline, potential, critiques, and ways forward', *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 105(4): 373–86.

Derudder, B., Hoyler, M., Taylor, P.J. and Witlox, F. (eds) (2012) *International Handbook of Globalization and World Cities*. Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Goh, D.P.S., Bunnell, T. and van der Veet, P. (2015) 'Introduction: Doing Asian cities', *Ethnography*, 16(3): 287–94.

Hannigan, J. and Richards, G. (eds) (2017) *The SAGE Handbook of New Urban Studies*. London: Sage.

Harding, A. and Blokland, T. (2014) *Urban Theory: A Critical Introduction to Power, Cities and Urbanism in the 21st Century*. London: Sage.

Harrison, J. and Hoyler, M. (eds) (2015) *Megaregions: Globalization's New Urban Form?* Cheltenham: Edward Elgar.

Hoyler, M. and Harrison, J. (2018) 'Advancing global urban research', in J. Harrison and M. Hoyler (eds), *Doing Global Urban Research*. London: Sage, pp. 225–32.

Jayne, M. and Ward, K. (eds) (2017) *Urban Theory: New Critical Perspectives*. London: Routledge.

Jonas, A.E.G., McCann, E. and Thomas, M. (2015) *Urban Geography: A Critical Introduction*. Oxford: Wiley.

Katsikis, N. (2018) 'Visualizing the planetary urban', in J. Harrison and M. Hoyler (eds), *Doing Global Urban Research*. London: Sage, pp. 12–33.

Keil, R. (2017) 'Global suburbanisms: Our objectives'. http://suburbs.info.yorku.ca/about-us/our-objectives (accessed 31 August 2017).

Keil, R. (2018a) *Suburban Planet: Making the World Urban from the Outside In*. Cambridge: Polity.

Keil, R. (2018b) 'Constructing global suburbia, one critical theory at a time', in J. Harrison and M. Hoyler (eds), *Doing Global Urban Research*. London: Sage, pp. 169–81.

King, A. (1990) *Global Cities: Post-imperialism and the Internationalization of London*. London: Routledge.

Lees, L., Shin, H.B. and López-Morales, E. (eds) (2015) *Global Gentrifications: Uneven Development and Displacement*. Bristol: Policy Press.

Lees, L., Shin, H.B. and López-Morales, E. (2016) *Planetary Gentrification*. Cambridge: Polity.

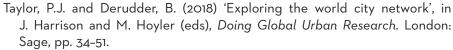Marcuse, P. (2009) 'From critical urban theory to the right to the city', *City*, 13(2–3): 185–97.

McCann, E. and Ward, K. (eds) (2011) *Mobile Urbanism: Cities and Policymaking in the Global Age*. Minnesota, MN: University of Minnesota Press.

McFarlane, C. (2011) 'The city as assemblage: Dwelling and urban space', *Environment and Planning D*, 29(4): 649–71.

McNeill, D. (2017) *Global Cities and Urban Theory*. London: Sage.

Neal, Z. (2018) 'Analysing cities as networks', in J. Harrison and M. Hoyler (eds), *Doing Global Urban Research*. London: Sage, pp. 52–65.

Pacione, M. (2009) *Urban Geography: A Global Perspective*. London: Routledge.

Parker, S. (2015) *Urban Theory and the Urban Experience: Encountering the City*. London: Routledge.

Parnell, S. (2016) 'Defining a global urban development agenda', *World Development*, 78: 529–40.

Parnell, S. and Oldfield, S. (eds) (2014) *The Routledge Handbook on Cities of the Global South*. London: Routledge.

Peck, J. and Theodore, N. (2010) 'Mobilizing policy: Models, methods, and mutations', *Geoforum*, 41(2): 169–74.

Robinson, J. (2011a) 'The travels of urban neoliberalism: Taking stock of the internationalization of urban theory', *Urban Geography*, 32(8): 1087–1109.

Robinson, J. (2011b) 'Cities in a world of cities: The comparative gesture', *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 35(1): 1–23.

Robinson, J. (2016) 'Thinking cities through elsewhere: Comparative tactics for a more global urban studies', *Progress in Human Geography*, 40(1): 3–29.

Roy, A. (2009) 'The 21st-century metropolis: New geographies of theory', *Regional Studies*, 43(6): 819–30.

Sassen, S. (1991) *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Sassen, S. (1994) *Cities in the World Economy*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Pine Forge Press.

Scott, A.J., (ed.) (2001) *Global City-Regions: Trends, Theory, Policy*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Shin, H.B. (2018) 'Studying global gentrifications', in J. Harrison and M. Hoyler (eds), *Doing Global Urban Research*. London: Sage, pp. 138–52.

Short, J.R. (2014) *Urban Theory: A Critical Assessment* (2nd edition). London: Palgrave Macmillan.

Simone, A.M. (2001) 'On the worlding of African cities', *African Studies Review*, 44(2): 15–41.

Smith, N. (2002) 'New globalism, new urbanism: Gentrification as global urban strategy', *Antipode*, 34(3): 427–50.

Taylor, P.J. (1997) 'Hierarchical tendencies amongst world cities: A global research proposal', *Cities*, 14(6): 323–32.

Taylor, P.J. (2001) 'Specification of the world city network', *Geographical Analysis*, 33(2): 181–94.

Taylor, P.J. (2004) *World City Network: A Global Urban Analysis*. London: Routledge.

Taylor, P.J. and Derudder, B. (2018) 'Exploring the world city network', in J. Harrison and M. Hoyler (eds), *Doing Global Urban Research*. London: Sage, pp. 34–51.

Taylor, P.J., Ni, F., Derudder, B., Hoyler, M., Huang, J. and Witlox, F. (eds) (2011) *Global Urban Analysis: A Survey of Cities in Globalization*. London: Earthscan.

Temenos, C. and Ward, K. (2018) 'Examining global urban policy mobilities', in J. Harrison and M. Hoyler (eds), *Doing Global Urban Research*. London: Sage, pp. 66–80.

Ward, K. (2010) 'Towards a relational comparative approach to the study of cities', *Progress in Human Geography*, 34(4): 471–87.

Ward, K. (ed.) (2014) *Researching the City*. London: Sage.