

10 Imaginaries of the urban future

In this the final chapter allow me to look at the urban future. In Chapter 1 I discussed three imaginaries of the Urban Now. They were the global city, the profitable city and the humane city. Here I look at urban imaginaries that are taking shape. Some are more fully formed than others as they change and shift into greater coherence. They are as much future possibilities as current realities. And like all imaginaries they are as much material as spectral and as much vague possibility as solid destination. In the previous chapter I considered the imaginary of the green and resilient city. Here I will discuss three others: the securitized city, the smart city and the cosmopolitan city. I will, as a postscript, raise the possibility of the compassionate city.

The securitized city

The close connection between the city and social order is of long standing. The earliest cities were walled communities, with people locked in and others locked out, every night. The rise of a chaotic urbanism in the modern era saw the emergence of organized police forces.

For those in power, there is always something unruly about the city. It is the place of the crowd, the social protest that can get out of hand, the stage of uprisings and a platform for overturning the established order.

The city is also the setting for the moral economy. E. P. Thompson introduced the idea of the moral economy of the crowd. He was referring to the food riots which occurred every ten years or so or so in late eighteenth-century England. He demolished the old belief that they were spasms of hunger, suggesting instead that they were a 'highly complex form of direct popular opinion'. They were about establishing the moral price of food rather than the going market rate. The moral economy is experienced and expressed most forcefully in the city.¹

Cities are the settings for moral panics and folk devils.² Moral panics are widespread feelings of fear that crystallize social anxiety onto folk devils, those responsible for the social unrest. The nature of the panic and the designation of the folk devil changes over time, from Teddy Boys in 1950s UK to

young black males in inner-city USA, and even more recently to the hate-filled Islamic terrorist.

In recent years the moral panic has morphed into an all-embracing 'security threat'. It is both real and inflated. It is real in that a misogynistic death cult citing Muslim ideology has attacked innocents in cities across the world. The large cosmopolitan cities of the global North are particularly attractive targets. Brussels, New York City, London, Madrid and Paris have all witnessed acts of savagery. Ordinary people in public spaces in cities are soft targets and bloody terrorist attacks have a theatrical quality that guarantees perpetrators the vital oxygen of publicity. It is inflated because the escalation of security threats is vital for the long-term growth of the powerful military-security order and a recurring trope of politicians eager to stir up fear in order to gain and maintain power. The threat is exaggerated and inflated as much as addressed and contained.

The threat is not restricted to the global North. The 2008 attack by the Islamic militant group in Mumbai killed 164 people and wounded over 300.

Cities are also places of everyday madness and mayhem, crime and the violence. We can consider the example of one city in the global urban South, Cali in Colombia.³

Crime in Cali

Serious crime rates in the city rose rapidly from the early 1980s, peaking in 1994, and have subsequently declined. In 1994 there were 124 murders per 100,000 inhabitants. By 2013 this rate had declined to 89. The high rate was a function of gang violence and the easy availability of guns and alcohol. A more interventionist policy from 1994 to the late 1990s had an impact. Restrictions on gun carrying and alcohol reduced rates by a third. More specifically, banning guns on selected weekends (holiday weekends and the weekends following paydays and election days), imposing curfews for under 18s during weekends and limiting the hours that alcohol could be sold effectively reduced the murder rate (per 100,000) from 124 in 1994 to 86 in 1997.

Despite this reduction, the figures are still high by international standards. The comparative figure for Washington DC is 24 and only 4 for Amsterdam, which is the highest figure for any major European city.

In more recent years, the picture on the crime rate has been mixed. Murder rates are down from the highs of the 1990s but have shown a light uptick, while the incidence of reported rape and extortion has increased. There were 67 homicides per 100,000 in 2006 but this increased to 89 in 2013. According to official police statistics, close to 2,000 people were murdered in the city in 2013. While murder rates have picked up, rape figures and vehicle thefts have doubled and extortions have increased fivefold. To some extent the increase may be due to more people reporting the crime. Murder is such a serious crime that it is generally always reported, whereas for both rape and extortion victims often fail to report the crime to the police.

Crime rates vary dramatically by neighborhood. Serious crime rates in the poor neighborhood of Agua Blanca, for example, are almost double what they are in the rest of the city. If we take the case of murder, in 2013 there were 215 murders in District 13, part of the poor neighborhood of Agua Blanca, while there were only 8 in the richer neighborhood of District 22 (South Ciudad Jardin). In the poor neighborhoods, criminal gangs such as Los Urabeños, Los Rastrojos and La Ocho run criminal conspiracies underwritten by violence and murder.

The intervention of the 1990s clearly had an impact on the murder rates. More recently, a variety of tactics have been used. There are enforced arms restrictions in sixteen of the city's twenty-two neighborhoods. The military, not the Cali police, are responsible for this plan and early estimates suggest that it has led to a reduction in murder rates of around 25 percent.

There are also curfews for teenagers in some communities. In January 2012 a curfew was imposed on weekends for teenagers, from 11.00 pm until 5.00 am in Districts 13 and 15. The plan was extended to Districts 14, 16, 18 and 21. Often gangs use teenagers as hired gunmen, and the use of curfews reduced crime rates by 25 percent, according to local police commanders. The curfews also reduce fights between teenagers in gangs vying for territory.

Elite police groups are also deployed. In 2012 the national government created an elite force, Unipol, for cities with high crime rates. By 2013 1,000 members of this group were permanently deployed in Cali working with a city task force targeting major criminals. In 2013 Cali's Unipol group arrested 2,023 people, seized over 200 arms and jailed a leading criminal, Choco, known to provide hitmen for criminal gangs.

The national government launched a scheme in 2010 to place more police officers at the local level. This was introduced in Cali in 2011 and there are now 329 local police stations, each assigned six police officers, two of whom are on duty at any one time. The officers visit all the people in the neighborhood and leave a cell phone number for them to report any criminal activity or suspicious behavior. An internal assessment of the policy in 2012 suggested that criminal arrests increased by 28 percent. This policy is making the police more of an integral part of local communities.

More resources have also been allocated. The number of police officers was increased by a 1,000 to 5,440 in 2015. The mayor is also seeking funding to use 1,000 CCTVs in the city equipped with face recognition.

It is clear that resources are being allocated to combating criminal activity. To what extent these tactics are leading to a decrease in crime is difficult to assess, but there is a feeling that crime is such an important issue that money should be spent and strategies constantly evolve to meet the challenge.

To the first-time visitor one of the most distinctive features of Cali's domestic architecture is the number of gated communities and the pervasive use of walls, fences, gates and bars: these provide the façade of security but also by their presence indicate a sense of insecurity.



Figure 10.1 Security landscape in Cali, Colombia
(Photo: John Rennie Short)

The higher socio-economic status groups consistently rate themselves more satisfied with security than do lower-income groups. In some respects this reflects lived experience. Living in gated communities, in better-policed and safer areas, their satisfaction records a different objective experience. Crime rates are highest in the poorer areas: almost a third more than the city average and double the rate in the richer areas. Understandably, therefore,

dissatisfaction with security is most pronounced amongst lower socio-economic status groups.

The revanchist city

At the punitive end of the securitized city is what Neil Smith termed the revanchist city, a city that embraces the criminalization of poverty, social difference and political opponents. The rise of the revanchist city can be seen in the shift towards right-wing, ethno-nationalist governments in countries across the world. Kata Amnon, for example, writes about the spatial and political transformation of Budapest since 2010. She describes three revanchist practices: the humiliation of the poor; the rewriting of history, such as the renaming of public streets and squares; and the spatial isolation of protests. The revanchist city is the urban face of illiberal societies.⁴

Riots

The most dramatic resistance to the revanchist city is the urban riot. Consider the Baltimore riots in 2015.⁵

The policing of cities in the USA is dominated by what amounts to a war against low-income minority neighborhoods. In 1980 the US had a prison population of 500,000, but by 2013 this increased to 2.5 million as more young men, especially young men of color, were caught up in an expanding web of criminal incarceration. The narratives of tough on crime, broken windows theory and the war on drugs, along with the militarization of urban policing, have all escalated into an aggressive policing and a fractured trust between residents and police.

To compound the problems, these neighborhoods also suffer from multiple deprivations that include unhealthy environments. Elevated lead levels in inner-city Baltimore make it difficult for children to learn and concentrate. There is an entangling web of multiple deprivations that effectively traps people.

Any event such as a riot has multiple causes, but there are at least three background factors to the 2015 riots that we should bear in mind.

The first was the mounting momentum of the police brutality narrative. In August 2014 a white officer shot a young black man in Ferguson, Missouri, where a police department routinely violated civil rights and pursued a pronounced racial bias. In April 2015 in North Charleston, South Carolina, a white police officer shot an unarmed black man eight times in the back, killing him for a minor traffic violation. The images of police violence and community perceptions of cover-up were increasingly common, with each case reinforcing the sense of injustice.

The second was the lack of trust between police and minority black populations. Despite there being more black officers and more blacks in senior positions, there is still a gulf between blacks and police departments that community policing measures have failed to bridge. This turns into a chasm

between poor blacks and the police because of the active military-style policing of low-income areas.

The legacy of policies of 'tough on crime' and the war on drugs and the militarization of police constitute a police insurgency against low-income black communities. Young black men are stopped more frequently and jailed more often and for longer than their white counterparts for similar activities. In Baltimore, one in three young men can expect to spend some time in jail during their lifetime.

The third element underlying the 2015 riots was the stifled economic opportunities and limited social mobility of many inner-city residents. Rising inequality in the US has meant a small minority has done well, the middle class is squeezed and those on the lowest income are trapped in funnels of failure. For young people caught in a web of multiple deprivations, street violence is commonplace.

One of the sites of the rioting in Baltimore is in the blighted neighborhood of Sandtown-Winchester, which was also the scene of rioting in 1968. Almost forty years later little progress has been made in a community that is 96 percent black and where 47 percent of children live below the poverty level, more than double the national average. Some have moved out and some have moved on, but for those left, Martin Luther King's Dream is still just a dream. Baltimore's of economic neglect, aggressive policing and multiple deprivations are found across the globe. They are the places of despair.

Securing the city

There is a new military urbanism built around the urbanization of military-sector doctrine, the link between military control and urban digital life and the prompting of the security-based industries.⁶ The security agenda is urbanized while urbanity is securitized.⁷

Military technologies that were once used to make a nation safe are now also used to control domestic urban spaces. The national security state today has its urban equivalency. There is an imperative of security, undergirded by the apparatus of the military state, increasingly applied to urban life. Cities with large, heterogeneous populations holding a variety of political opinions are seen as constituting a security threat to the state.

Surveillance through CCTV is now an integral part of city life. In cities such as London there is now no expectation of privacy in the public arena. Hardened and schooled by decades of IRA terrorist bombing campaigns, police and state intelligence services in London used surveillance and security well before the most recent round of Islamo-fascist terrorism rocked the cities of the world.

Securitization is now part of the global circulation of urban practices. Rudy Giuliani, former mayor of New York City, turned his experience of promoting aggressive policing and responding to 9/11 into a lucrative international consultancy dispensing advice to cities around the world. Similar sets of

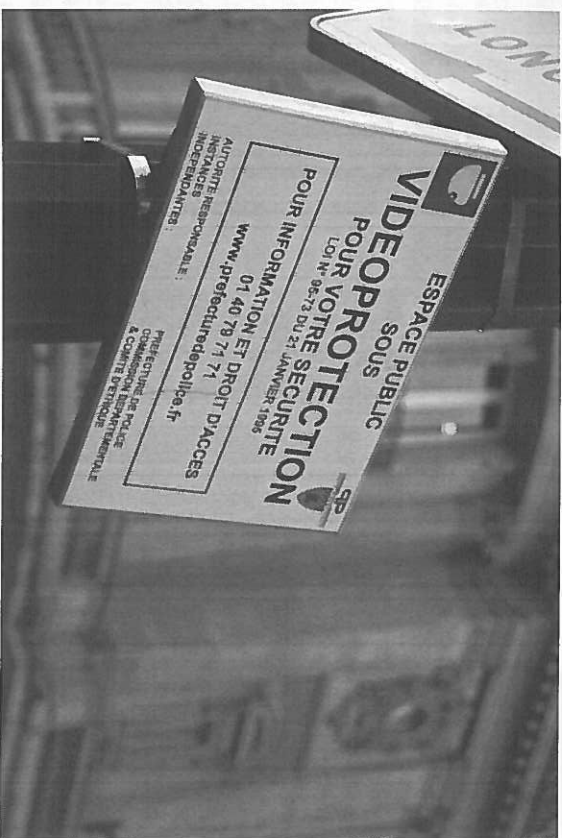


Figure 10.2 Video surveillance in Paris
(Photo: John Rennie Short)

technologies, equipment, tactics and strategy for the 'urban theater' are now employed and copied by military and police forces around the world. Urban riot police have an eerie similarity whether they are on the streets of New York City, Beijing or Bangkok. The riot gear, the military-style police trucks, the armed SWAT teams, the riot squads and the batons and shields of armed officers marching in choreographed unison against the public are now an urban phenomenon witnessed across the world.

The viewing of the city through CCTV is so common it is regularly employed as the dominant gaze in movies, a sure sign that it is now part of the urban zeitgeist.

There is a hardening of urban public spaces. Concrete bollards and steel fences necklace our most symbolic urban spaces. Lisa Benton Short describes the hardening of the Mall in Washington DC, now an anxious location situated between a celebratory site of democracy and a heavily guarded site of constant surveillance.⁸ The target-rich environment of global cities in open societies, and even in closed societies, now invites attacks. In 2013 a car crashed in Tiananmen Square in Beijing killing five people in a terrorist suicide attack by members of the East Turkestan Islamic Movement.

The open nature of city life, the connections with things and other peoples and what we can term 'the Urbanity of Things', the networked infrastructures so vital to urban life and one of the wonders of city living, also make cities more vulnerable. The military and terrorist targeting of urban infrastructure, and the transformation of the military from fighting for surfaces to the targeting of key sites in a network, now make cities prime sites in this urbanization of security.

Sometimes the securitization is piecemeal and fractured. Mona Fawaz and colleagues describe the securitization of Beirut, which is less of a coherent centralized system than one marked by fragmentation and division between different and overlapping authorities.⁹ Security systems involve barbed wire, material boundaries and prohibitions on movement in the city. Their deployment varies according to general security threats and more specific threats to political figures, public buildings and neighborhoods. The experience of security is determined in part by gender and class. An upper-class woman driving an expensive car through Beirut experiences less hassle traversing the city than does a 17-year-old Palestinian male refugee.

The architecture of security entrenches social and spatial division within a city, reinforces existing inequalities, undermines economic efficiency and transforms urban public spaces into less congenial places.

Securitization of the city also involves the designation of certain groups as a security threat. The securitization of the city leads to growing inequality between low-threat, law-abiding citizens and those deemed a threat. There are social and political implications to the growing reliance on technologies of security and surveillance. And the line between non-violent political dissent and security threat is often crossed by over-eager military-security systems and those in power threatened by criticism. In many cities the securitization of the city transforms political dissidents into security threats and critical citizens into folk devils.

There is resistance to this securitization of the urban, and the citywide regimes of surveillance. Easier and cheaper access to systems of recording and distribution democratizes the surveillance trend. There is now always, it seems, a cell phone photographer on hand to record any public event. The democratization of surveillance allows urban residents to more easily document acts of police brutality and state violence. The citizen with a cell phone can shine a bright light on the illegal and violent use of force by the state and government functionaries. Whether it is Chinese bloggers highlighting the expensive watches worn by city officials, a signifier of obvious corruption, or passersby documenting acts of police violence on the streets of US cities, surveillance now also extends to the governed looking at the governing. Citizens can survey the government just as governments can survey the citizenry. There is not a complete counterweight to state power, but an active citizenry is now an important element of an active and engaged citizenry.

The smart city

Cities are complex places. In recent years the idea of a smart city has taken hold in the world of urban planning and management.¹⁰ It offers the promise of a more sophisticated management of assets and a more efficient delivery of services, a smart city using big data and computers to craft and tweak policies and practices driven by real-time data. The smart city is the technological utopia of urban managers.

The adopted metaphor is the city as a network of flows of information and data that provide the basis for the more efficient allocation of resources: for example, putting police officers in places when and where there are the greatest crime rates. Using the Cloud allows multiple sharing of multiple sources: the city is reimagined as a network of intelligent connected devices, the Internet of Things, that sense the environment using both devices and crowd-sourced data to transmit information in real time.

The smart city holds out the promise of better public safety, more efficient electricity and water usage and the smoother flow of traffic data. There are technical problems in building easily accessible interfaces that allow collaboration. Making the platform secure yet accessible is a daunting task. But big data and smart cities are now the watchwords for current urban management.

The dream is of a rational city, driven by metrics and data to squeeze out inefficiencies and improve productivity, including better land use, beefed-up infrastructure and smarter technology. Even small-scale policy changes have rolling consequences. Improving traffic light sequencing, for example, reduces travel times, emissions, fuel consumption and road accidents.¹¹

Improving productivity has a cold-blooded sound to it, as if cities are imagined just to increase efficiencies. But there is a meshing of economic and social concerns. A more efficient land-use and transportation system, for example, means people spend less time and money commuting. I was reminded of this when seeing the route map of a low-income worker in Atlanta, Georgia,

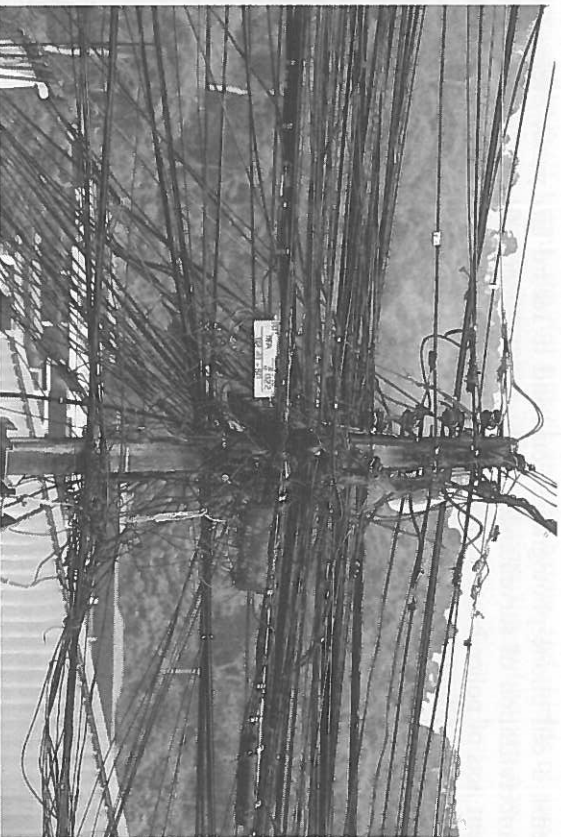


Figure 10.3 The networked city: Phuket, Thailand
(Photo: John Rennie Short)

whose two-hour journey to work involves 118 bus stops and a nine-minute train ride.¹²

Can technology make a difference? We now have lots of data on the flows of energy, people, goods, capital and ideas. While big data on its own does not provide the solution, the intelligent use of these data can provide us with a real-time handle on urban productivity to provide benchmarks of performance and measures of progress. And once urban productivity is measured, it can be improved.

Big data could also help improve our infrastructure, which would aid productivity and reduce economic losses. Many bridges need renovation and replacement. But if we were to use good-quality data on how much repair they need as well as how much traffic they support, we would be in a better position to prioritize our infrastructure funds so that the most dangerous and the most frequented were targeted first.

We are still at a very early stage of using big urban data to provide smarter, safer, more efficient and more socially just cities. An important start is that we realize that more of our economic activity takes place in cities and improving urban economic performance is the road to economic growth and social justice.

To be sure, the project could be coopted by business interests to support their revenue streams, and there is always the danger that techno-based policy becomes insensitive to social difference. The talk of big data and smart cities could become a gloss over ongoing inequities. As a caution, remember that the Internet has amazing liberating qualities but it was grafted onto and exacerbates rather than replaces social inequalities.

There is a more democratic version of the smart city that imagines a city of open data. Real-time open data can allow citizens as well as managers the ability to access, visualize and analyze government performance, the distribution of resources, the very workings of the city. Transparent data empower citizens and residents to hold government to account. The smart city can also be an accessible open-data city.

The smart cities movement is a response to poorly designed cities. The movement holds out the promise of real-time monitoring that could improve efficiency, environmental sustainability and citizen engagement.¹³ But notice that the word is 'could' not 'will'. The smart cities movement is driven by technology rather than by the needs of citizens and could reinforce and widen inequalities. Smart city innovation is a political process not an unbiased, value-free, socially indeterminate technological process.

The cosmopolitan city

A cosmopolitan city is emerging from two sources: as a positive product of the global flows that are passing through the bigger, more connected cities in the global urban network; and as a contrast and resistance to the national anti-globalization backlash in much of the global North.

Global flows

Throughout this book I have drawn attention to global cities as sites of flows of capital, people, policies and practices. The more cosmopolitan cities have a multiplicity of flows. Thus Seoul is more cosmopolitan than it ever was, although its ethnic homogeneity gives it a very nationalist feel. Cities such as New York, London, Paris or Sydney, in contrast, combine economic, political and cultural globalization with heterogeneous populations.

The contemporary cosmopolitan city is a place where there is an openness towards, indeed an embrace of, the foreign, the other, the different. Varieties of urban cool combine with a promiscuous cultural sampling from around the world to produce a cosmopolitan urbanity marked by an international sensibility.

The backlash against economic globalization

There is a backlash against globalization and the very idea of the cosmopolitan city.¹⁴ Globalization is under attack. The electoral victory of Donald Trump, the Brexit vote and the rise of an aggressive nationalism in mainland Europe and around the world are all part of this tendency.

The foundations of global economic integration, such as the creation of the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and a precursor to the World Trade Organization in 1945, were laid after World War II as an alternative to economic nationalism and as a means to promote peace and prosperity. Initially, it was more a promise than a reality. Communism still controlled large swathes of territory. And there were fiscal tensions as the new trade system relied on fixed exchange rates, with currencies pegged to the US dollar, which was tied to gold at the time. It was only with the collapse of fixed



Figure 10.4 Street scene in Sydney
(Photo: John Rennie Short)

exchange rates and the unmooring of the dollar from the gold standard in the late 1960s that capital could be moved around the world.

And it worked: dollars generated in Europe by US multinationals could be invested through London in suburban housing projects in Asia, mines in Australia and factories in the Philippines. With China's entry onto the world trading system in 1978 and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989, the world of global capital mobility widened further.

While capital could now survey the world to ensure the best returns, labor was fixed in place. This meant there was a profound change in the relative bargaining power between the two – away from organized labor and towards a footloose capital. When a company such as General Motors moved a factory from Michigan to Mexico or China, it made economic sense for the corporation and its shareholders, but it did not help workers in the USA. The industrial base shifted from the high-wage areas of North America and Western Europe to the cheaper-wage areas of East Asia: first Japan, then South Korea, and more recently Bangladesh, China and Vietnam.

The USA and Western Europe saw a rapid deindustrialization as China and other countries ramped up manufacturing, offering lower production and labor costs to multinational corporations. There was a global redistribution of wealth. Working-class living standards declined in the North while a new middle class emerged in the South, especially in East and South Asia. Political and economic elites in the West argued that free trade, global markets and production chains that snaked across national borders would eventually raise all living standards. But as no alternative vision was offered, a chasm grew between these elites and the mass of blue-collar workers.

The backlash against economic globalization is most marked in those countries such as the USA where economic dislocation unfolds with weak safety nets and limited government investment in job retraining or continuing and lifetime education. And it is most marked in those towns and regions where the loss of manufacturing employment has not been offset by alternative forms of employment. In the deindustrializing regions good-paying jobs have disappeared, replaced by lower-paying jobs with fewer benefits.

There is distinct geography to this redistribution: the older industrial cities and regions have seen net economic loss, while the global cities, centers of new employment growth, have seen rising incomes. The big global cities are the winners while the older industrial cities and regions are the losers.

Trump's victory in 2016 was due to his success in Pennsylvania, Michigan and Wisconsin, which in turn was based on the discontent of white blue-collar workers whose wages have been declining since at least 1970, and more rapidly so since 2000. Many factories are at work, but one of the most visible is deindustrialization. Manufacturing jobs provided the platform into the middle class for non-college educated workers. But manufacturing jobs have declined dramatically. There were more than 18 million manufacturing jobs in

the USA in 1984. By 2012 the total was a little over 12 million. This was a dramatic decline in good-paying jobs that depressed regional and urban economies outside of the two coasts.

A new middle class was created in South Korea and China while a middle class was undermined in the USA with low wage growth for non-college-educated workers and a decline in industrial cities and regions across the country. This discontent was not given political articulation by the two mainstream parties. The Republican Party used its working-class base as electoral cannon fodder to promote an agenda that aided its big donors. The base was fed rhetoric while the business wing received all the benefits from free trade and the disciplining of the unions. Meanwhile, the Democratic Administrations of Clinton and Obama pursued an economic agenda that promoted globalization. If the Republicans had a trickle-down theory that claimed that, despite evidence to the contrary, making the rich richer would benefit everyone, the Democratic equivalent was that the benefits of globalization would eventually raise all boats. Many blue-collar workers felt ignored by Democrats who promoted economic globalization that undercut their jobs and a cultural relativism that undermined their values.

Shamelessly used by the Republicans and shabbily treated by the Democrats, many turned to Trump. His outsider status and maverick campaign resonated with a substantial mass of Americans harboring a sense of alienation from the mainstream political parties.

The cozy relationship between the main parties and the money of Wall Street was also a matter of public scorn. Both Democrats and Republicans worked to undercut the regulations in place since the New Deal that limited power of finance. And as the shackles were loosened, the concentration of power continued and even more money flowed from the bankers to the politicians. There was a revolving door between Wall Street and the political establishment. It was a totally non-partisan affair as Hank Paulson, Robert Rubin, Timothy Geithner and Larry Summers moved from key government posts to lucrative gigs with banks and hedge funds, and sometimes back again. The 2008 bailout of a corrupt financial system signaled the extent of the Wall Street hijacking of government. In an act of political deafness or perhaps donor demand, the Obama Administration appointed Geithner, directly involved in this deal when he was the Director of the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, to become Treasury Secretary in 2009. After four years in the job he moved back to New York to become president of a private equity firm. Public discontent, exemplified in the rise of the Tea Party, soon hardened to a cynicism that is now baked into the present legitimization crisis. Hillary Clinton's candidacy was undermined by her Wall Street connections.

Trump's stunning electoral win demonstrates not so much the strength of his candidacy as the depth of despair felt by about the country's direction. His win is the equivalent of a scream of resentment, an articulation of alienation and a symbol of a deep crisis of legitimization.

The backlash against political globalization

Over the decades, politicians enabled globalization through trade organizations and pacts such as the North American Free Trade Agreement, passed in 1994. The most prominent, though, was the European Union, an economic and political alliance of most European countries and a good example of an unfolding political globalization.

It started with a small, tight core of Belgium, France, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands and West Germany. They signed the Treaty of Rome in 1957 to tie former combatants into an alliance that would preclude further conflicts – and form a common market to compete against the USA.

Over the years, more countries joined, and in 1993 the European Union (EU) was created as a single market with the free movement of goods, people and capital and common policies for agriculture, transport and trade. Access to this large common market attracted former communist bloc and Soviet countries, to the point where the EU now extends as far as Cyprus and Bulgaria in the east, Malta in the south and Finland in the north.

With this expansion has come the movement of people – almost a million Poles have moved to the UK, for instance – and some challenges.

The EU is now at a point of inflexion where the previous decades of continual growth are coming up against popular resistance to EU enlargement into poorer and more peripheral countries. Newer entrants often have weaker economies and lower social welfare payments, prompting immigration to richer members such as France and the UK.

The backlash against cultural globalization

The flattening of the world allowed for a more diverse ensemble of cultural forms in cuisine, movies, values and lifestyles. Cosmopolitanism was embraced by many, especially in the big, successful cities, but feared by others, especially in the declining city regions. In Europe the foreign other became an object of fear and resentment, whether in the form of immigrants or in imported culture and new ways.

But evidence of this backlash against cultural globalization also exists around the world. There is a religious fundamentalism in religions as varied as Buddhism, Christianity, Hinduism, Islam and Judaism. The ruling Bharatiya Janata Party in India, for example, combines religious fundamentalism and political exclusionism.

Old-time religion, it seems, has become a refuge from the ache of modernity. Religious fundamentalism holds out the promise of eternal verities in the rapidly changing world of cultural globalization. And the big, bustling cosmopolitan city is once again seen as a threat to the national body politic.

There is also a rising nationalism as native purity is cast as a contrast to the profane foreign. Across Europe, from Bulgaria to Poland and the UK, new nationalisms have a distinct xenophobia. Politicians such as Marine Le Pen in

France recall an idealized past as a cure for the cultural chaos of modernity. Politicians can often gain political traction by describing national cultural traditions as under attack from the outside.

Indeed, the fear of immigration has resulted in the most dramatic backlash against the effects of globalization, heightening national and racial identities. In the USA white native-born Americans have moved from being the default category to a source of identity clearly mobilized in the Trump campaign.

Consider the Brexit vote in 2016 and in particular the case of England. (The pro-EU vote in Scotland and Northern Ireland raises other issues outside the scope of this discussion.) A majority in the UK voted to leave the EU, thus laying bare a seldom-acknowledged political and economic imbalance within the country. It has also raised the chances of dissolving a more than three-centuries-old union between England and Scotland.

A major area of support for remaining in the EU was centered on London. So-called Greater London comprises 7.5 million people and the greater metropolitan region has a population of approximately 21 million. The reach of the city extends into most of the South East and beyond. The city and its extended metropolitan dominate the nation. The wealthy, the influential, the movers and shakers live in the city; it is home to royalty, the political elites, those who control much of the making and moving of money. It is by far the most affluent part of Britain. London has emerged as a global financial center attracting expertise and investment from across the globe and around Europe. The city is hard-wired into the financial circuits of the EU and global economy.

Since the 1980s the principal aim of government economic policy has been, arguably, to protect London's position, particularly as a financial center, while leaving the rest of the country largely ignored. In the UK version of trickle-down economics, London is the golden goose whose droppings fertilize the rest of the country. In reality there was not much trickle and the UK, like the USA, is becoming a more unequal society.

There is a spatial dimension to this social inequality. The UK has the most marked regional inequality in Europe. The rich and wealthy are concentrated in London and the South East, where household incomes are higher than the rest of the country. As the UK became a more unequal and divided society, the cleavage between London and the South East compared to the rest of the country became more marked.

Now let's look at the rest of England and Wales, where the majority voted to leave. The people here, especially the lower-income groups, were bypassed by the emphasis on the London money machine. Class conflict was often framed as the South East versus the rest of the country, although in reality the divisions were as much social as spatial. The exit vote in England in Wales was prompted by many things, especially a disquiet over immigration, but it was also a vote against the dominance of London and the political establishment. The exit vote managed to capture popular resentment against the status quo just as Trump and Sanders did in the USA.

Reclaiming globalization

Globalization has now become the catchword to encompass the rapid social and economic transformation of the past twenty-five years. No wonder there is a significant backlash against the constant change – much of it destabilizing economically and socially disruptive. When traditional categories of identity evaporate quickly, there is a profound political and cultural unease.

The globalization project contains much that was desirable: improvements in living conditions through trade, reducing conflict and threat of war through political integration and encouraging cultural diversity.

The question now, in my view, is not whether we should accept or reject globalization but how we shape and guide it to meet these more progressive goals. We need to point the project towards creating more just and fair outcomes, open to difference but sensitive to cultural connections and social traditions.

A globalization project of creating a more connected, sustainable, just and peaceful world is too important to be left to the bankers and the political elites. And a progressive globalization is centered in the big global cities. Benjamin Barber forcefully makes the case that cities are more functional and trusted than national government, at least in the USA.¹⁵ He cites their pragmatics, participatory quality, concern with problem solving rather than political posturing and indifference to borders. We can also cite the global circulation of best practices that are creating a shared learning experience as cities learn from each other often more than from their national governments. The creation of the global parliament of mayors in 2016 is an important step.¹⁶ Although the impulse is stronger in some global cities than others, the cosmopolitan cities especially are islands of progressivism in a sea of right-wing xenophobic ethno-nationalism.

In the USA new coalitions are fashioning progressive agendas that include raising the minimum wage, family leave, universal early education and green infrastructure projects. Cities are 'incubating the future of liberalism'.¹⁷ The contrast in the USA between big cities and the national government is perhaps the starkest, but the cosmopolitan city across the world is a place of greater tolerance and a defense against the forces of nihilism and regression. Cities are our best hope and brightest light in a darkening world.

The compassionate city

I want to end by raising the idea of the compassionate city. It is neither a technical term nor one subject to rigorous empirical analysis. I want to raise a general debate rather than provide a focused analysis.

Cities are places where we interact with other people. This interaction is the topic of much discussion. There is the economic view that focuses on utility maximization, promotion of interests and market mechanisms. At their best, markets provide an organizing principle for economy activity. But, as Michael Sandel suggests, there is a profound difference between a market economy

and a market society.¹⁸ A market society is the neoliberal dream actualized. And while markets are really good for organizing economic activity, they are impoverished means to structure a society.

We may also think of the compassionate city as the just city. John Rawls provides a sophisticated account of how to ensure social justice.¹⁹ His thought experiment was to ask: what rules would we draw up assuming a veil of ignorance regarding our characteristics? People tend to draw up rules that favor themselves. But if we do not have this knowledge, what rules would follow? Rawls suggests that ensuring equality while guaranteeing freedom would figure in any notion of social justice. It is a compelling argument. But we could also consider the alternative. That we know exactly who we are and what others are like. And that we draw up rules on the basis of this knowledge, but with compassion; by which I mean a feeling of deep sympathy.

True compassion is grounded in the basic assumption that there is a chance or random element to our life position. There but for the grace of God, or fate, or sheer luck of the socio-economic draw, go your or I. From this perspective our relative socio-economic position is much less due to individual effort. It is the zip code of our birth rather than our genetic code that influences our social outcomes. Differences in the zip code of our childhood are reinforced and exacerbated through life.

Three requirements are needed to achieve a compassionate city: a realization of the seriousness of the problems that people face; an appreciation that these are not self-inflicted; and the ability to imagine ourselves in the lives of others. The problems of rising inequality are serious. And while cultures of poverty do occur they are responses to poverty not the cause. It is the third requirement that prompts an imaginative creativity, a moral economy not just a market economy and a more expansive and empathetic consideration of the city. Above all a compassionate city requires a collective imagination to see the city as a shared community, to realize the shared nature of our fate and to embrace the liberating sense that we can remake the city and indeed the world.

Notes

- 1 Thompson, E. P. (1971) The moral economy of the English crowd in the eighteenth century. *Past & Present* 50: 76–136.
- 2 Cohen, S. (1972) *Folk Devils and Moral Panics*. London: MacGibbon & Kee.
- 3 I draw heavily on Short, J. R. (2015) La inseguridad el descontento de la población en Cali. *Calibrando* 15: 20–24.
- 4 Smith, N. (1996) *The New Urban Frontier: Gentrification and the Revanchist City*. London: Routledge; Arnon, K. (2015) The illiberal democracy and the revanchist city: the spatial and political transformation of Budapest since 2010. *LeftEast*, February 20 (<http://www.criticalculturaltheory.com/2015/02/20/illiberal-democracy-in-budapest/>).
- 5 I draw upon Short, J. R. (2015) There are many more Baltimores: America's legacy of hollowed-out cities. *The Conversation*, May 15 (<https://theconversation.com/there-are-more-baltimores-americas-legacy-of-hollowed-out-cities-41734>).
- 6 Graham, S. (2012) 'When life itself is war': on the urbanization of military and security doctrine. *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 36: 136–155.

- 7 Coward, M. (2009) Network-centric violence, critical infrastructure and the urbanization of security. *Security Dialogue* 40: 399–418.
- 8 Benton-Short, L. (2016) *The National Mall: No Ordinary Space*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press.
- 9 Fawaz, M., Harb, M. and Gharbieh, A. (2012) Living Beirut's security zones: an investigation of the modalities and practice of urban security. *City & Society* 24: 173–195.
- 10 I draw upon Short, J. R. (2016) Want the economy to grow? It's time to look at cities and efficiency. *The Conversation*, February 26 (<https://theconversation.com/want-the-economy-to-grow-its-time-to-look-at-cities-and-efficiency-54517>).
- 11 <http://www.spcregion.org/downloads/ops/Other%20Studies/BenefitsofReturningTrafficSignals.pdf>.
- 12 <http://www.washingtonpost.com/s/business/2015/12/28/deep-south-4/>.
- 13 Smith, K. (2016) How can we make sure smart cities benefit everyone? *The Conversation*, November 1 (<https://theconversation.com/how-to-ensure-smart-cities-benefit-everyone-65447>).
- 14 In this section I draw upon three recent essays: Short, J. R. (2016) Globalization and its discontents. *The Conversation*, November 29 (<https://theconversation.com/globalization-and-its-discontents-why-theres-a-backlash-and-how-it-needs-to-change-68800>); Short, J. R. (2016) The 'legitimation' crisis in the USA: why have Americans lost trust in government? *The Conversation*, October 21 (<https://theconversation.com/the-legitimation-crisis-in-the-us-why-have-americans-lost-trust-in-government-67205>); and Short, J. R. (2016) The geography of Brexit: what the vote reveals about the Disunited Kingdom. *The Conversation*, June 25 (<https://theconversation.com/the-geography-of-brexit-what-the-vote-reveals-about-the-disunited-kingdom-61633>).
- 15 Barber, B. (2014) *If Mayors Ruled the World, Dysfunctional Nations, Rising Cities*. New Haven, CT, and London: Yale University Press.
- 16 <http://www.globalparliamentofmayors.org>.
- 17 Meyerson, H. (2014) Cradles of progressivism. *The Washington Post*, April 24: A15.
- 18 Sandel, M. (2013) *What Money Can't Buy: The Moral Limits of Markets*. New York: Farrar Straus and Giroux.
- 19 Rawls, J. (1999) *A Theory of Justice*. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press.