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Studying Urban Policies in Cities of the Global Souths

Ente di afferenza:
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by Paola Pasquali

Global urban trends and gaps in urban theory

UN forecasts predict that over the next 30 years virtually all population growth in the world will take place in cities of the Global Souths. While in just a generation South America has become the world's most urbanized region[1], the majority of urban population growth is expected to take place in the Asian and African continents, which are projected to become 64% and 56% urban respectively, by 2050[2]. This trend also pertains to city sizes. For example, by 2025, China will have 8 megacities with over 10 million citizens and more than 220 cities with a population over 1 million[3]. These trends and projections appear at odds with the current state of urban theory scholarship, whose theories and taxonomies are predominantly rooted on case studies of European and American cities, the traditional heartlands of urban theory.

The notion of Southern cities being in a condition of «underdevelopment» has been largely responsible for the binary thinking about «Western» developed cities and «Third World» cities

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[1] South America's urban population grew from 30% to more than 85%, https://www.weforum.org/agenda/2018/06/latin-america-cities-urbanization-infrastructure-failing-robert-muggah/, accessed 10 October 2019.

[2] Mo Ibrahim Foundation, 2015, http://static.moibrahim-foundation.org/u/2015/11/19115202/2015-Facts-Figures-African-Urban-Dynamics.pdf, accessed 16 July 2020.

[3] https://ec.europa.eu/knowledge4policy/foresight/topic/continuing-urbanisation/growth-asia-africa-urban-population_en, accessed 10 October 2019.

as hierarchically less important to urban theorists[4]. This gap in knowledge goes beyond the problem of an underrepresentation of cities of the Global Souths in urban studies. As some argued, the problem with this is that European and American cities have been functioning as the model of what a city is or should be, while cities of the Global Souths are presented as anomalies to the norm[5]. Differences to the norm are also problematically perceived as a distance in time: Global North metropoles would be at the forefront of global urban transformations, Global Souths cities would be simply following in their steps[6].

Over the last decades several scholars writing from postcolonial perspectives have called for a rebalancing of the weight and impact of case studies from the Global Souths in urban theorizing[7]. This urge has led many to reject *a priori* theoretical generalizations typical of traditional urban theories and to emphasize the particularism of Global South specificities[8]. Some have further advocated for a systematic use of comparisons between cities as the most apt method to open conversations about the nature of the urban around the world and to formulate more provisional and balanced theories and taxonomies which are also representative of Southern experiences[9]. Critics of these approaches have questioned the theory-generating

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[4] J. Robinson, *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development*, London, Routledge, 2006.

[5] A. Roy, *The 21st Century Metropolis: New Geographies of Theory*, in «Regional Studies», vol. 43, n. 6, 2009, pp. 819-830, p. 820.

[6] G.A. Myers, *African Cities: Alternative Visions of Urban Theory and Practice*, London, Zed Books, 2011.

[7] See among others: A. Roy, *The 21st Century Metropolis...*, cit.; J. Robinson, *Ordinary Cities...*, cit.; S. Parnell, E. Pieterse and V. Watson, *Planning for Cities in the Global South: An African Research Agenda for Sustainable Human Settlements*, in «Progress in Planning», vol. 72, 2009, pp. 233-240; X. Chen and A. Kanna, *Rethinking Global Urbanism: Comparative Insights from Secondary Cities*, London, Routledge, 2012; G. Myers, *The Africa Problem of Global Urban Theory: Re-conceptualising Planetary Urbanisation*, in «International Development Policy», vol. 10, 2018, pp. 231-253.

[8] An example for this is the notion of «*worlding* cities» by Roy and Ong, see A. Roy and A. Ong (eds.), *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, NJ US, Wiley Blackwell publishing, 2011.

[9] J. Robinson, *Comparative Urbanism: New Geographies and Cultures of Theorizing the Urban*, in «International Journal of Urban and Regional Research», vol. 40, n. 1, 2016, pp. 187-199.

capacities of these accounts, insofar as they are prone to privilege particularities in urban outcomes rather than universally applicable taxonomies or conceptual abstractions[10].

A globally applicable taxonomy is that employed by the Globalization and World Cities index (GaWC), a global urban ranking system which classifies cities according to a city's integration into the world city network and includes Southern cities[11]. The network focuses on the study of interconnections between cities in the world economy and operates a bi-annual categorization of world cities, based upon their international connectedness. Although such ranking represents a remarkable effort of inclusion of «the Souths» in urban theorizations, scholars writing from Southern perspectives have warned of GaWC's narrowly economistic and Euro-America-centric understanding of globalization as the presence of international office networks for finance, advertising, accounting and legal services (Southern cities, unsurprisingly, do not score high in such a ranking system)[12].

Another attempt at making urban theory more inclusive of Global Souths experiences is the notion of «planetary urbanization»[13]. According to its promoters, worldwide geo-historical developments point towards a new state of the urban as an increasingly global condition, in which political-economic relations are entangled[14]. Examples of these transformations would include: the formation of new scales of urbanization; sprawling urban clusters that stretch beyond a metropolitan region and at times even

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[10] A. Scott and M. Storper, *The Nature of Cities: The Scope and Limits of Urban Theory*, in «International Journal of Urban and Regional Research», vol. 39, n. 1, 2014, pp. 1-16.

[11] The Globalisation and World Cities Network is a research group founded in 1998 by Peter Taylor together with scholars such as Manuel Castells, Peter Hall, Saskia Sassen and Nigel Thrift.

[12] G. Myers, *The Africa Problem of Global Urban Theory: Re-conceptualising Planetary Urbanisation*, in «International Development Policy», vol. 10, 2018, pp. 231-253, p. 232.

[13] «Planetary urbanization» is an expression and concept that originally comes from the work of Henri Lefebvre, see H. Lefebvre, *La Révolution Urbaine*, Paris, Gallimard, 1970.

[14] N. Brenner and C. Schmid, *Towards a New Epistemology of the Urban?*, in «City», vol. 19, nn. 2-3, 2015, pp. 151-182; N. Brenner and C. Schmid, *The «Urban Age» in Question*, in «International Journal of Urban and Regional Research», vol. 38, n. 3, 2014, pp. 731-755.

multiple national borders; the continued expansion of industrial urbanization and its associated planetary urban networks, and the transformation of wilderness spaces through the growing socio-ecological consequences of unregulated worldwide urbanization[15]. A central analytical concept of this framework is the nexus between forms of urbanization and the global pervasiveness of neoliberal capitalism, impacting on urbanization across the North/South divide. As in the case of the GaWC network, scholars writing from Southern perspectives have noted that in spite of its «planetary» validity claim, scholarship on planetary urbanization remains dominated by voices and perspectives from Northern cities and is not concerned with rethinking concepts from the privileged viewpoint of Global Souths cities[16].

Similar to the notion of planetary urbanization, notions of public policies and urban policies, now being discussed globally, have been historically theorized based on the experiences in the Global North. As a result, they present similar limitations when applied to the context of Global Souths cities, which will be enunciated and discussed in the following sections.

Defining policies in a global context: The case of social policies in the Souths

Traditionally defined as «anything a government chooses to do or not to do»[17] policies have been categorised in a number of ways. A classic categorization of policies distinguishes between regulatory, distributive, redistributive and constituent policies[18]. According to such account, the aim of public poli-

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[15] N. Brenner and C. Schmid, *Planetary Urbanization*, in M. Gandy (ed.), *Urban Constellations*, Berlin, Jovis, 2011, pp. 10-13.

[16] G. Myers, *The Africa Problem of Global Urban Theory: Re-conceptualising Planetary Urbanisation*, in «International Development Policy», vol. 10, 2018, pp. 231-253.

[17] T. Dye, *Understanding Public Policy*, Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice Hall, 1972, p. 2.

[18] The first provides the rules of the game to the players, the second distributes resources to the public, the third redistributes resources according to criteria of equity, the fourth establishes new institutions, agencies, etc. In Lowi's typology, distribution policies take on a primary role: they act on individuals according to the patron-client relationship. T. Lowi, *Four Systems of Policy, Politics, and Choice*, in «Public Administration Review», vol. 33, n. 3, 1969, pp. 298-310.

cies and their implementing agencies is to respond to political conflicts by disaggregating them: treating each decision or benefit, each unit of output, as separate and distinct from all the others[19]. Another widely used reference in policy studies is the exit, voice and loyalty model, exploring the connection between policies and those affected by them[20]. According to this model, members of a human grouping detain two possible responses to what they perceive as a decrease in quality or membership: exit (withdrawal from the relationship) or voice (attempt to mend the relationship through voicing grievance and/or proposing changes)[21]. According to some, the macro-variables proposed by these accounts (such as the distribution of costs and benefits and the possibility of the use of coercion) appear to be apt to analyse any context of public policy[22]. However, as shall be seen below in the case of social policies, the use of such notions in Southern contexts compels one too many qualifications, challenging their seemingly universal applicability.

Scholars noted that the development of social policies in the West has relied on features that are mostly absent in developing contexts, such as an independent, legitimised and capacitated state, a widespread labour market, strong financial markets and an effective legal and judicial system – that is, a capitalist economic and a democratic political type of regime[23]. In newly born post-colonial states, the prevailing recipe promoted by international development agencies and scholars for a long time has been one of

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[19] *Ibidem*.

[20] A. Hirschman, *Exit, Voice, and Loyalty*, Harvard, Harvard University Press, 1970.

[21] Exit and voice represent a union between economic and political action and are reminiscent of Adam Smith's idea of an invisible hand guiding buyers and sellers «freely» auto-regulating through the market. According to Paolo Perulli, Hirschman's fruitful distinction between exit, voice and loyalty is no longer remembered in the Global North: «only the economic behaviour of the exit is now contemplated, like that of any dissatisfied consumer who passes from one product to another, while the use of the voice (protest) is no longer part of the language of politics. It is reduced to the domain of consumer objects». See Paolo Perulli, «methodological framework» available online at http://www.southsoftheworld.com/the-methodological-framework/, accessed 4 April 2020.

[22] M. Allulli and W. Tortorella, *Cities in Search of Policy*, in «Métropoles», vol. 12, 2013.

[23] I. Gough and G. Woods. (eds.), *Insecurity and Welfare Regimes in Asia, Africa and Latin America*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2004.

«growth first» and «welfare after»[24]. The prioritization of economic growth over social spending, generally seen as a wasteful diversion[25], contributed to the constitution of weak and incapacitated social systems.

On the one hand, social policies in the Global South often only provide welfare to workers in public sectors and in the formal economy. On the other hand, the informal economy, which in many cases represents the largest part of the economy[26], largely escapes state regulation and tends to be regulated by individuals' private social statuses[27]. In contexts where a large part of the population lives in informal settlements and gains its livelihood from the informal economy (i.e. street petty trading, vehicle repairing, rag picking, agricultural work and so on)[28], the informal economy is crucially the only source of welfare for most households in the Global South, not the state[29]. This matter further relates to the question of lack of trust in developing countries' state institutions, especially among those living in conditions of poverty, seen as tools for pursuing the interests of the dominant groups[30]. The lack of trust in official policies in turn strengthens reliance on strategies to secure welfare through informal channels such as family, kinship, communities and other «civil society» systems of welfare as well as those intermediated by global actors[31].

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[24] T. Mkandawire, *Social Policy in a Development Context*, London, Palgrave Macmillan, 2004.

[25] R. Surender, *The Role of Historical Contexts in Shaping Social Policy in the Developing World*, in R. Surender and R. Walker (eds.), *Social Policy in a Developing World*, Chelthenham, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2013, pp. 14-35, p. 20.

[26] I.e. in Accra the informal economy accounts for as much as 74% of the economy, statement by the mayor of Accra, Mohammed Adjei Sowah at 2019 Urban Age Developing Urban Futures – Delivering inclusivity Accra, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Qsesm4kDivs.

[27] A. Appadurai, *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization*, Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 1996.

[28] S. Pellissery, *Informal' Global Social Policy?*, in «Global Social Policy», vol. 13, n. 1, 2013, pp. 87-89.

[29] S. Pellissery, *The Informal Economy: Dilemmas and Policy Responses*, in R. Surender and R. Walker (eds.), *Social Policy in a Developing…*, cit., pp. 81-100, p. 81.

[30] P. Collier, *The Bottom Billion: Why the Poorest Countries Are Failing and What Can Be Done About It*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2007.

[31] P.R. Davis, *Rethinking the Welfare Regime Approach: The Case of Bangladesh*, in «Global Social Policy», vol. 1, n. 1, 2001, pp. 79-107.

Within such a context, supposedly general theorizations of policies such as the quadripartite categorization of policies, or the voice and exit model mentioned above, prove ill-equipped. Based on the presumption of well-resourced and capacitated institutions, predominantly formal economies and low levels of poverty, these theorizations are unable to adequately account for the wider range of actors and the multiple mechanisms and instruments, many of them informal, at play in the delivery of social security nets and livelihood in many Global Souths contexts. As some have further noted, this general lack of institutional capacities as compared to Northern contexts entails that civil society groups (ethnicity-based networks, hometown associations, youth associations, savings groups and so on) often perform roles that are typically undertaken by the state in Northern cities (provision of basic services, distribution of land, guarantee of safety and so on) and are thus more important than in the Global North[32]. The next section investigates more specific *urban* policies, that is, public policies aimed at the development of cities.

Urban policies and urban planning: Perspectives from the Global Souths

In spite of the fact that most national policies have important urban implications, few policies are explicitly labelled as urban. According to a classic definition, an *urban* policy is to be understood as an action adopted and pursued «by government, business or some other organization» which aims to improve or develop cities by way of land use planning, water resource management, central city development, policing and criminal justice, pollution control and so on[33]. The implementation of urban policies by urban governments and local authorities follows ground rules established by the central government. The implementation of urban policies happens at various levels and varies according to the government structure of each country. It also crucially varies according to a state's governing capacities. As

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[32] W. Smit, *Urban Governance in Africa: An Overview*, in «International Development Policy/Revue internationale de politique de développement», vol. 10, 2018.

[33] McGraw-Hill Dictionary of Modern Economics, 3rd edition, 1983.

some have noticed, in contexts where societal forces are stronger than state capacities, policy can be perfectly stated on paper but in practice might be «hugely distant or contradictory to what is promised in the policy»[34].

Implementation is also very much a matter of financial availability. As it has been noted in the case of Indi, while the Indian constitution enables city governments to translate urban development agendas into action, Indian cities are not sufficiently empowered financially by Indian states to take on the challenges of providing public services and managing the process of urbanization[35]. Financial constraints also represent a huge implementation setback in the African context, where very few African countries allow subnational authorities to control 5% or more of the national budget[36]. Municipal authorities in rapidly urbanizing Southern regions typically also have the smallest per capita budgets compared with affluent Northern cities. It has been shown, for example, that for the period between 2010 and 2016, the municipal budget of a city such as Accra, Ghana, was just $ 12.50 per person per year as compared to the $ 9,500 per capita of New York City[37]. In the African context, the budgetary issue is particularly severe in secondary cities due to their smaller economies and less capacitated local governments compared to capital cities[38].

The divergence between urban planning strategies – modelled on urban planning which arose in Europe and the US in the early XXth century (such as master planning and zoning, removal of informal settlements and so on) and local realities – place urban planners in the Global South in the middle

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[34] S. Pellissery and F. Zhao, *Challenges of Teaching Public Policy in Global South*, 2016, available online at https://ssrn.com/abstract=2780859 or http://dx.doi.org/10.2139/ssrn.2780859, p. 10.

[35] I.J. Ahluwalia, *Urban Governance in India*, in «Journal of Urban Affairs», vol. 41, n. 1, 2019, pp. 83-102.

[36] Mo Ibrahim Foundation, African Urban Dynamics forum, facts and figures, 2015, p. 58, available online at http://static.moibrahimfoundation.org/u/2015/11/19115202/2015-Facts-Figures-African-Urban-Dynamics.pdf, accessed 9 April 2020.

[37] V.A. Beard *et al.*, *Towards a More Equal City: Framing the Challenges and Opportunities,* Working Paper, Washington, DC, World Resources Institute, 2016, available online at www.citiesforall.org.

[38] W. Smit, *Urban Governance in Africa: An Overview*, cit.

of two concomitant and clashing rationalities[39]. On the one hand, these planners have been trained by formation to promote a «governing rationality», including techno-managerial and marketized systems of government administration, service provision and planning. On the other, a striding «survival rationality» permeates their everyday experience of the city and their interaction with populations living largely under conditions of informality[40]. The resolution of this dilemma has traditionally required urban planners in Southern cities to tap into other disciplines, such as development studies, which has long dealt with themes such as informal settlements, for example[41]. More fundamentally, this dilemma appears to call for a radical departure from the approaches to urban planning currently in use in cities of the Global Souths[42].

Last but not least, another key dimension of urban policies worth mentioning has to do with how inhabitants of urban centres relate to each other and to governments. Scholars in the Global North have emphasised the emancipatory role of the urban and have theorized the urban as a principal source of emancipatory political trends and movements[43]. The cases of mass mobilization in Southern cities such as Santiago or Hong Kong appear to confirm the theory that cities worldwide are particularly fertile terrains for mobilizations and the voicing of politics and political changes. This in turn relates to notions of a «right to the city», its foundations and the political effects of its recognition. In this respect, while the Europe-based notion of a right to the city – originally formulated by Lefebvre and advocated by many others – prioritizes the question of value and private property, calls for a right to the city in the Global South appear to be more oriented towards issues of access to basic social and economic rights, urban inclusion, participation

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[39] V. Watson, *Seeing from the South: Refocusing Urban Planning on the Globe's Central Urban Issues*, in «Urban Studies», vol. 46, n. 11, 2009, pp. 2259-2275.

[40] *Ibidem*, p. 2259.

[41] *Ibidem*, p. 2273.

[42] *Ibidem*.

[43] E. Soja, *Seeking Spatial Justice. University of Minnesota Press*, Minneapolis, 2010; D. Harvey, *Rebel Cities: From the Right to the City to the Urban Revolution,* London, Verso, 2012.

and local democracy[44]. Differences and similarities notwithstanding, it appears that in both Norths and Souths, urban policies are an exemplary field in which to observe the interactions between bottom-up and top-down requests: each necessary to the other, neither can stand on their own.

Urban policies themes to be explored by the school of the «Souths of the world»

The aim of the following section is to sketch an open list of policy themes that could intersect and function as a platform for comparisons across the cities examined within the framework of the «Souths of the world» project. The main themes include: urban growth; population management; land use management; housing and provision of basic infrastructure/services; resource management; environmental plans and sustainability; urban mobility; urban heritage; identification of a competitive role for the city in the global space; the creation of networks of cities and urban corridors between cities and relations among different levels of governance.

a) Urban growth

A key overarching concern of urban policies in many cities of the Global South – particularly in Africa and Asia – is urban growth. Development literature has for a long time depicted urban sprawl in Southern cities as a «chronic factor of underdevelopment» and even an obstacle to development[45]. Although such a negative view gave way in the 1990s to a different paradigm, which conceives of urban growth in the Global South as an engine for development[46], classifications in this field remain heavily reliant

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[44] M. Morange and A. Spire, *The Right to the City in the Global South. African Appropriations and Adaptation*, in «Cybergeo: European Journal of Geography [Online], Space, Society, Territory», 2019, document 895.

[45] É. Denis, *Depicting Strongly Growing Urban Areas in the Global South*, in «L'Espace géographique», vol. 44, 2015, pp. 307-324.

[46] This is exemplified by the 2009 World Bank Development Report which posits that «growing cities [...] are integral to development» (2009, p. XIX), World Bank, *World Development Report 2009:*

upon the development model of industrial western democracies[47]. As a result, phenomena such as growing informal economies and informal settlements are perceived by many as temporary shortcomings that would disappear once Southern cities «catch up» with Northern cities, seen as the paragon of urban development[48]. Against these classifications, postcolonial scholars have argued that the poverty, informality, marginalization and extensive slums that characterise Southern cities should be seen as a «*mode of urbanization*» rather than anomalies to a norm[49]. The assumption that development can only be achieved following in the steps of Global North experiences is increasingly invalidated by the emergence of alternative paths to development, as exemplified by the case of China. On the one hand, urban sprawl is largely a phenomenon from below, the result of people spontaneously settling in the city and peri-urban areas. On the other hand, urban growth is also a phenomenon which national and local governments have been increasingly attempting to regulate through policies such as national urban policies, metropolitan plans, agglomeration schemes, the creation of urban regions. All these policy initiatives leverage, with mixed outcomes, the central role that cities undergoing rapid urbanization have in accelerating growth and creating economic growth for the whole national economy[50].

b) *Population management*

Strictly related to the question of urban growth is that of population management to manage issues of population growth and/or population

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Reshaping Economic Geography, 2009, available online at https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/5991, accessed 15 October 2019.

[47] É. Denis, *Depicting Strongly Growing...*, cit.; G. Myers, *The Africa Problem of Global Urban Theory...*, cit.

[48] J. Beall, *Social Policy and Urban Development*, in J. Midgley *et al.*, *Handbook of Social Policy and Development*, Cheltenham, Edward Elgar Publishing, 2019, pp. 147-168.

[49] A. Roy, *Slumdog Cities: Rethinking Subaltern Urbanism*, in «International Journal of Urban and Regional Research», vol. 35, n. 2, 2011, pp. 223-238, p. 224, emphasis in the original.

[50] As observed in the Indian case «planned urbanisation offers a colossal opportunity for India's development in the coming decades. ...the nation endeavouring to come out of the riddle of underdevelopment will crucially depend on the national policy to harness urbanisation as a resource», P.K. Mohanty, *Urban Policy and Cities: An Urban Agenda for India*, New Delhi, Sage, 2014, p. 1.

decline. Rural-to-urban migration is one of the main forces driving urbanization in many Southern cities, especially in the African and Asian contexts. As statistics show, rural-to-urban migration and reclassification of what is considered urban often account for more than half of urban population growth. In some countries, however, rural-to-urban migration and reclassification together accounted for more than half of the urban growth: for example in China and Thailand (80%), Rwanda (79%), Indonesia (68%) and Namibia (59%)[51]. The management of internal migration flows has crucial implications for urban planning and policy development. Few countries have traditionally controlled population movements from rural to urban areas through specific policies, China with its *hukou* system being the main example of this[52]. Although secondary in Southern cities as compared to internal migration, international migration from neighbouring countries – whether or not related to humanitarian disasters and displacement – is a widespread phenomenon in many Southern cities. Analyses of how national and urban policies legalise/illegalise certain segments of the population based on their migrant status relate to the thorny question of the selective granting of rights to the urban population.

c) Land use management

Land is a key lever of urban policy in cities of the Global South. The control and valorization of land by local governments is an important resource

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[51] UN Economic and Social Council, Commission on Population and Development, *Sustainable Cities, Human Mobility and International Migration Report of the Secretary-General*, January 26th 2018, p. 7, available online at https://undocs.org/en/E/CN.9/2018/2, accessed 15 October 2019.

[52] Similar to a system of internal passports, the *hukou* system divides China's 1.3 billion population into different categories according to its birth location. From this administrative fact two types of registration have existed until very recently: agricultural and non-agricultural (namely, urban). Between the 1960s and the 1980s internal mobility from poor rural areas to comparatively better-off urban centres was blocked thanks to this system. While this system has reformed and currently Chinese citizens are free to move and establish themselves in medium and large-sized cities, residence for internal migrants in Chinese megacities (with more than 5 million inhabitants, *de facto* the wealthiest cities in China), is governed through points systems granting urban-welfare rights strictly to few highly educated and wealthy internal migrants.

of revenues for local governments' limited budgets. The question of land in Southern cities is also inseparable from phenomena such as informal settlements and areas of illegal residence, which affect large parts, in some cases the majority, of the urban population. On the one hand, local governments often seek to make the most of land by raising property taxes and the value of public assets. On the other, investigations of land access policies cannot disregard the strategies put in place by urban residents – especially low-income residents – to legitimize their presence in the city and gain recognition of their land rights. The question of land further triggers the issue of the actors involved in its management. An example of an actor of urban governance unusual in the Northern context but common in the African context is traditional leaders, who play a key role in matters of land allocation in urban and peri-urban areas. The ownership of land by tribe chiefs is just an example of how Global North-originated notions of land ownership, usually framed in terms of the binary public/private, may be inadequate to wade through the complexities of land ownership and management in many Southern cities[53]. Research further shows that in many Southern cities the act of turning land into a source of revenue is not the preserve of big institutional actors or large private investors, but is also a common practice for private citizens[54], purchasing land as an investment which is deemed safer and more profitable than financial saving products[55].

d) *Housing and provision and basic infrastructure/services*

Informal housing has been an extensive mode of urban growth in cities of the Global South. Informal settlements («slums») are home to an

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[53] W. Smit, *Urban Governance in Africa...*, cit.

[54] See for example G. Owusu, *Indigenes' and Migrants' Access to Land in Peri-urban Areas of Accra, Ghana*, in «International Development Planning Review», vol. 30, n. 2, 2008, pp. 177-198; É. Denis, *Urban Desires and Lust for Land. The Commodification of Rural Spaces in the Global South*, in «Metropolitics», 20 April 2018.

[55] The prediction that one day the purchased plots of land will be reached by the expanding city relates to another widespread phenomenon, that of unoccupied new high-end housing (built at the expense of housing for lower-income inhabitants) and real estate bubbles.

estimated 828 million people, representing one third of the world's urban population; in some cities the «slum» population can reach up to 80%[56]. The social and environmental effects of this kind of urban growth are challenging both for governments and planners. On the one hand, a measure traditionally adopted to cope with this phenomenon has been to tear slums down and reconstruct them, usually on the city's outskirts, often worsening the already deprived conditions of their inhabitants. Most recently, the approach in many cities has switched to that of slum upgrading, for instance through the creation of street networks, upgraded infrastructure and access to services. A key game changer in this respect has been the involvement of the local communities in the planning, management and governance of these areas. The upgrading of informal settlements – less expensive and more effective than relocation to public housing – has been one way to keep up with exponentially growing demands for affordable housing. These demands are related to endemic gaps in the provision of services such as water, sanitation and waste management, usually catering to limited proportions of urban residents in Southern cities. These gaps are variably filled in different Southern cities and are often at the basis of hybrid configurations alternating public and private suppliers, at times entailing self-organised communities. The provision of public goods and services is critically related to the limited ability for central and local governments to tax citizens and collect fiscal revenues efficiently. Low rates of tax collection in cities of the Global South are the consequence of many issues, including the low fiscal autonomy of urban centres, the large size of the informal economy, lack of investment in tax collection, and so on[57].

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[56] https://www.who.int/sustainable-development/cities/strategies/slum-upgrading/en/, accessed 4 April 2020.

[57] While the average share of taxes in developed countries is on average 40% of their GDP, in developing countries it is typically between 10% to 20% of GDP. See low tax collection in developing economies has a more devastating impact than we thought, Quartz Africa, 15 March 2019, available online at https://qz.com/africa/1573957/developing-countries-will-benefit-from-better-tax-collection/, accessed 4 April 2020.

e) Natural resources, environmental plans and sustainability

The issue of infrastructural and service gaps is connected to the question of natural resources and their management in urban contexts. Urban development is directly proportional to an increase in the demand for resources such as energy and water in urban areas. On the one hand, resources are key enablers of urbanization, and access to them plays a key role in poverty reduction and economic development. On the other hand, growing demands for consumption of such resources tend to have negative impacts on natural ecosystems and have often brought about environmental degradation. Questions of adequate access to resources and services intertwine with matters of environmental sustainability. While renewable energy resources are an option which is often unaffordable to many, a number of low-cost renewable energy resources and technology solutions are increasingly in use among residents of low-income communities. Sustainability strategies relate to environmental plans and the conflicts and the resolution which may arise from controversial governmental policies. The study of such experiences and initiatives is key to the reshaping of sustainability strategies and notions of urban resilience and adaptation, which are currently defined based on cities of the Global North as inspirations, targets and examples of good practices. This further triggers the question of knowledge production: what counts as knowledge, how is it created and shared in ways that can value local knowledge and empower marginalized actors.

f) Urban heritage

The issue of protection and valorization of urban heritage is first of all a question of what counts as heritage. The issue of urban heritage in many Southern cities is often intertwined with that of colonial legacies: from slave forts to colonial banks, many ancient buildings stand as reminders of the colonial administration and beg the question of what their role and value might be. While in some cases local administrations have preferred to tear down old colonial reminders, the current notion promoted by UNESCO's world heritage projects is that heritage should be maintained to make the

history of the city visible. The valorization of urban heritage intertwines with the issue of tourism. As a matter of fact, in recent decades the arrival of tourism in many urban heritage areas has led to the implementation of at times controversial policies designed to make urban heritage spaces more appealing to tourists (i.e. regeneration projects of public spaces, building rehabilitation, public space management and urban marketing campaigns to promote tourist attractions). While the development of a tourism industry is an important lever of economic growth for Southern cities, the reconfiguration of urban settings by such industry has frequently brought about negative effects, such as gentrification, dispossession and displacement of the local population.

g) *Urban mobilities*

Another key topic of urban governance in Global South cities is urban mobility. Urban mobilities pertain to the way in which people and goods can move from one part of the city to another. Urban mobility is a vital enabler of development insofar as it makes economic activities and labour across the city possible[58]. This is especially the case for low-income residents, often living in peri-urban areas and spending several hours daily commuting to get to the city's business centres, in vehicles or on foot. The reduction of commuting times has economic and livelihood impacts. At a basic level, urban mobility consists of roads and footpaths, while at a higher level there are buses, trains, taxis and so on. Urban mobilities are a domain that is shaped both by local government policies and private operators, as well as commuters' behaviours. In the context of Global South cities, urban mobilities are often enabled by private providers – formal and informal – rather than urban governments, whose finances are limited. The advent of digitalization in this domain – for example in the case of e-hailing services – brings about new forms of urban mobility in Southern cities, as well as challenges and opportunities for more sustainable development.

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[58] W. Smit, *Urban Governance in Africa...*, cit.

h) Identification of a competitive role for the city in the global space

A policy trend in some cities of the Global Souths is the identification of a competitive role for the city in the global space, for example as global financial or technological hubs. This is apparent for instance in the urban plans and policy-making of certain Chinese mega-cities, where city governments have been implementing policies and plans aimed at «upgrading» some urban areas and attracting «talents» and investors through migration policies, start-up incentives and tax exemptions. The purpose of these plans is to requalify the structure of the urban economy and its human capital in the name of security, beautification and global competitivity[59]. The goal of turning cities into attractive hubs for capital, talent and international events has been on the agenda of many urban governments for decades. While previously this was pursued by way of infrastructure development, urban policies in Southern cities are increasingly focusing on other mechanisms to become more attractive, such as attracting human capital or financial investment. Besides Chinese examples, interesting case studies of cities striving to become global hubs for tech include Bangalore and Pune in India, Santiago and Buenos Aires in South America.

i) Creation of networks of cities and urban corridors between cities

Another tool to promote the economic competitiveness and development of Southern cities is urban corridors across regions and countries. The latter are generally described as «a number of large, linear urban areas linked through a well-developed transport network»[60]. Corridors are nor-

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[59] A key concept and principle of urban development policies in the Chinese context is that of «functional dispersal» (*gongneng shujie*) to indicate the removal of functions, sectors, and industries that do not follow the city's development goal. See C. Zhang, *Governing Neoliberal Authoritarian Citizenship: Theorizing Hukou and the Changing Mobility Regime in China*, in «Citizenship Studies», vol. 22, n. 8, 2018, pp. 855-881, p. 872.

[60] I. Georg, T. Blaschke and H. Taubenböck, *A Global Inventory of Urban Corridors Based on Perceptions and Night-time Light Imagery*, in «International Journal of Geo-information», vol. 5, 2016, pp. 1-19, p. 2.

mally classified according to trade type: domestic, transit (transporting the shipments of another country), foreign (transporting mainly imports and exports of a country), and hybrids, which depend on its service catchment area[61]. The concept of economic corridors became popular in the late 1990s through an Asian Development Bank (ADB) project to develop the Greater Mekong Subregion (GMS) in Southeast Asia[62]. Corridors typically include three complementary elements: cities, a transport corridor and industrial production centres. The transport corridor defines the geographical space of the corridor and enables the flow of goods and services, while the urban centres along the corridor provide a key source of labour and local development. Some countries have issued specific development policies for urban corridors, as in the case of the Delhi-Mumbai Industrial Corridor (DMIC)[63], aimed at doubling up employment capacity, tripling up industrial outputs and quadrupling exports from the region through the creation of industrial infrastructure and clusters[64]. Corridors as a development strategy are also gaining increasing importance in the Sub-saharan Africa context, the leading example in this respect is the Maputo Development Corridor. The governance structure of policies instituting or strengthening corridors normally involves several domestic and international stakeholders from the private and public sectors, across different scales.

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[61] D. Fraser and T. Notteboom, *A Strategic Appraisal of the Attractiveness of Seaport-based Transport Corridors: The Southern African Case*, in «Journal of Transport Geography», vol. 36, 2014, pp. 53-68.

[62] M. Ishida and I. Isono, *Old, New and Potential Economic Corridors in the Mekong Region*, in M. Ishida (ed.), *Emerging Economic Corridors in the Mekong Region*, BRC Research Report N. 8, Bangkok Research Centre, IDE-JETRO, Bangkok, 2012.

[63] The latter represent an attempt by the Indian central government – in cooperation with various stakeholders – to openly connect economic and industrial development to urbanization, see S. Anand and N. Sami, *Scaling up: Land Use and Economic Development in India's Urban Corridors,* Philadelphia, Association of Collegiate Schools of Planning, 2014.

[64] Indian Institute for Human Settlements, *Urban Corridors*, working paper September 2015 C-35117-INC1, p. 6, available online at https://www.theigc.org/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/IIHS-2015-Working-paper-1.pdf, accessed 10 October 2019.

j) Relations among different levels of governance

Governance can be defined in different ways. In contrast to the hierarchy and clear separation between state and society typical of traditional government, the notion of governance indicates a blurring of the boundaries between public and private and an increased role of different actors other than local governments in the realization of public goals[65]. For instance, as mentioned earlier, in the context of Sub-saharan Africa cities, traditional leaders play a fundamental role in urban governance – particularly as far as land use management is concerned – and have been incorporated into formal governance structures. Other key actors of urban governance in the African context would include large private sector organizations (i.e. property development or food production companies), international agencies and civil society[66]. The regulation among different levels of governance can be investigated from the perspective of different levels of government, from urban to national to federal government[67]. The regulation of different actors and levels involved in urban governance has been the object of initiatives such as covenants and agreements between cities, and these groups and cities and central governments.

Conclusion

This paper began with the consideration that although Southern cities are the primary sites of urban growth worldwide and this trend is projected to be even more important in the near future, such trends are not represented within most urban theories, which are still predominantly centred on examples from Global North cities. I then discussed some classic categorizations of policies and sifted them through the example of social policies

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[65] J. Pierre, *Comparative Urban Governance: Uncovering Complex Causalities*, in «Urban Affairs Review», vol. 40, n. 4, 2005, pp. 446-462.

[66] W. Smit, *Urban Governance in Africa...*, cit.

[67] It was mentioned earlier the Indian case, where at the federal level the Indian constitution endows city governments to translate the urban development agenda into action, yet Indian cities are not sufficiently empowered by Indian states to take on such task.

in Global Souths contexts. This led me to challenge the seemingly universal applicability of these categorizations. The following section examined more specifically the topic of urban policies. It was highlighted that issues such as limited financial resources, lack of political autonomy and predominantly informal economies affect the extent and implementation of urban policies in Southern contexts. I also noted that urban policy planners in such contexts are often faced with the dilemma that the planning prescriptions they are trained to pursue are often in contradiction to with the realities characterising Global Souths cities. In order to contribute to the creation of an alternative body of literature on urban policy focused on Global Souths experiences, the final section sketched an open list of policy themes. It is hoped that the latter can function as a compass to help situate and develop new urban policy theories and categorizations based on empirical studies and comparisons based on Southern cities' experiences.

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