Introduction

Worlding Cities, or the Art of Being Global

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> … the skyline rises in the East.
> Rem Koolhaas

Cities rise and fall, but the vagaries of urban fate cannot be reduced to the workings of universal laws established by capitalism or colonial history. Caught in the vectors of particular histories, national aspirations, and flows of cultures, cities have always been the principal sites for launching world-conjuring projects. Today, urban dreams and schemes play with accelerating opportunities and accidents that circulate in ever-widening spirals across the planet. Emerging nations exercise their new power by assembling glass and steel towers to project particular visions of the world. Once again, as Rem Koolhaas (2004) notes, "the skyline rises in the East," as cities vie with one another, and regional aspirations are superseded by new horizons of the global.

In the 1970s, New York City was celebrated for its architectural constellation, which fostered a "delirious" culture of congestion. Koolhaas (1997) called New York "The City of the Captive Global," one that unites the modern with perpetual motion.

But by the early twenty-first century, the financial meltdown in the fall of 2008 (called the Great Recession) dealt a reversal of fortune for New York, London, and Tokyo. As these mighty cities struggle to retain their lead as financial powerhouses, Singapore and Dubai are emerging as centers of global finance. Meanwhile, China's role as the banker of the world has made Shanghai and Hong Kong the shares-selling capitals of the world. While capitals of big economies remain crucial players, Asian economies have skyrocketed, and the Asian world has witnessed the stunning emergence

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of cities of international consequence. The 2010 Shanghai Expo has been the most explicit demonstration yet of a can-do determination to experiment with cutting-edge innovations in urban architecture, industry, and design. Indeed, if nothing else, the 2008 economic recession vividly invalidates magisterial views of how cities, their functions, and publics will change according to some master law of European experience. Today, Asian cities are fertile sites, not for following an established pathway or master blueprint, but for a plethora of situated experiments that reinvent what urban norms can count as "global."

Aspiring cities in the so-called global South challenge disciplinary controls that map cities according to a global division of global capitalist and post-colonial regions.

Hegemonic theories of globalization and postcoloniality have long inspired a conceptual terra firma of generalizable global spaces, including cities and their destinies.

As is the case with early modern nations, cities in the emerging world today have come to embody nationalist ambitions of wealth, power, and recognition. Major cities in the developing world have become centers of enormous political investment, economic growth, and cultural vitality, and thus have become sites for instantiating their countries' claims to global significance.

A recognition of the changing skylines of the world not only directs our gaze to emerging metropolitan centers, but also points to the fallacies of some key assumptions in metropolitan studies. In the social sciences, two major approaches have been dominant in defining the parameters and perspectives for investigating contemporary cities and urban conditions: (a) the political economy of globalization; and (b) the postcolonial focus on subaltern agency. Both models bear a Marxist pedigree and are thus overdetermined in their privileging of capitalism as the only mechanism and class struggle as the only resolution to urban problems. The political economy approach constructs the great metropolis as a site of capital accumulation and as the battleground for remaking citizenship and civil society. The postcolonial perspective views cities outside the Euro-American region as settings animated solely by subaltern resistances to different modes of domination. While there are many excellent studies that illuminate aspects of urban change through the prism of global confrontations between capitalism and democracy, the larger lesson seems to be that two universal principles of globalization – capitalism and postcolonialism – are each associated with a unified set of economic effects or political outcomes for shaping global spaces. By positing a singular causality (global capitalism) or a special category of actors (postcolonial agents), such universal principles tend to view significantly different sites as instantiations of either a singular economic system or the same political form of globalization. By studying situated

phenomena through a lens that understands them as singular moments in a unified and integrated global process, analysts lose sight of complex urban situations as particular engagements with the global. We should account for the complexity of these particular engagements rather than subject them to economistic or political reductionism.

Indeed, such conceptual blind spots also overlook the unexpected effects of historical shifts, events, and crises. As the 2008 economic crisis quickly revealed, the political economic focus on city functions cannot account for the sudden economic collapse of heretofore global cities, or for the rapid rise of major Asian cities of global significance. Meanwhile Beijing, and by proxy, China, have emerged as the pollution capital of the world. In other words, besides the volatility of global markets, emerging nations and planetary threats variously exert influences on the roles, rankings, and achievements of particular metropolises.

Conceptual architectures that leave little room for empirical heterogeneity and changeability are thus of course invested in a given global status quo. Claims about city ranking and power, whether by urban analysts and city champions, are political statements that are inseparable from the processes of urban development. Metropolitan scholars need to treat identifiable urban achievements, and the global metrics that apply to them, as contingent measures subject to potential challenges, whether in the realms of academic theorizing or the contexts of inter-city rivalries. Codes of city norms and accomplishments circulating in the world at large are never detachable from situated politics. They must be understood as ambitious gestures as urban champions engage in an inter-city game of catch-up in metropolitan image and standard.

The contributors in this volume tend to bypass overarching principles of globalization, and are all sensitive to the geopolitical shifts and spectacular rise of cities throughout Asia. The city is viewed not as an exclusive site of capitalism or postcolonial activism, but as a milieu that is in constant formation, drawing on disparate connections, and subject to the play of national and global forces. Authors pursue, in more or less intensity, an analytics of urban practices, tracking a variety of projects engaged in remaking a city's fortunes despite, or perhaps because of, an awareness of the uncertainty of urban claims on the future. We thus focus not on established criteria of city achievements, but on the ongoing art of being global. We pay attention to an array of often overlooked urban initiatives that compete for world recognition in the midst of inter-city rivalry and globalized contingency. While contributors in the book take different analytical angles, there are some shared elements that favor situated investigations of urban phenomena in highly dynamic circumstances, and without the predetermining of social outcomes.

First, there is emphasis on the city as a field of intervention for solving an array of problems associated with modern life and national interests.

For instance, specific urban issues – city infrastructure, investments, sustainable standards, political life, or aesthetic value, among others – are variously problematized as a sphere of action is called into question, and a set of difficulties are transformed into problems to which diverse solutions are possible (Foucault 1984). Second, the metropolis tends to be viewed not as a fixed locality but as a particular nexus of situated and transnational ideas, institutions, actors, and practices that may be variously drawn together for solving particular problems. In the shift from an analytics of structure to an analytics of assemblage, analysts stay close to the practices that rearticulate and reassemble material, technical, and discursive elements in the process of remaking particular contexts (Collier and Ong 2005). It follows that modes of interventions, at different scales, promiscuously draw upon ideas and objects, and find allies in multiple sources that are recontextualized for resolving urban problems. Third, city ambitions are reimagined in relation to shifting "forms and norms" (Rabinow 1991) of being global. Different chapters note that a striking aspect of Asian urban transformations involves seemingly unavoidable practices of inter-city comparison, referencing, or modeling.

Such discursive and non-discursive activities are spatializing practices that drive the flow of distinctive urban codes that gives the region a buoyant sense of being on the cusp of an urban revolution.

These urban interventions are viewed as worlding practices; that is, projects that attempt to establish or break established horizons of urban standards in and beyond a particular city. World-aspiring projects are experiments in that they put forth questions, initiatives, and procedures in the midst of uncertainty, without guarantees about successful outcomes (Jacob 1998). Contemporary experiments to remedy an urban situation that has been assessed as problematic – aging infrastructure, underinvestment, neglect of the urban poor, lack of international profile, and so on – draw on global forms that are recontextualized in the city matrix, and then dispersed to other places seeking solutions. In such globalizing circumstances, the neoliberal as a global form comes to articulate situated experimentations with an art of being global.

Many have viewed "the neoliberal" as a set of market conditions that scale back the state, but in a more careful formulation, Neil Brenner and Nik Theodore (2002) have argued that that there is great variability in geographies of "actually existing neoliberalism." But the neoliberal as a logic of optimization (Rose 1999) refers not to a space or a form of state, but a set of maximizing rationalities that articulates particular assemblages of governing. The neoliberal as a mobile technology can be taken up by a government or any other institution to recast problems as non-ideological and non-political issues that need technical solutions to maximize intended outcomes (Ong 2006). As a logic of entrepreneurialism, neoliberal reason

has even infiltrated domains that have been and are ideologically cast, by observers and by practitioners, as resolutely anti-market, such as NGOs, workers' organizations, and aesthetic/cultural production. If we recognize urban movements as ongoing experiments to expand social power, we should not be surprised at the apparently paradoxical interdependence of calculative practices of political entrepreneurialism and the progressive language of "anti-neoliberalism." The proliferation of neoliberal techniques thus contributes to the blossoming of an urban terrain of unanticipated borrowings, appropriations, and alliances that cut across class, ideological, and national lines even as it depends on the continual meta-practical discursive resedimentation of these boundaries. Even what appear to be opposed ideological positions are constituted in relation to each other; they are mutually imbricated and also linked through a set of semi-shared norms. This would make the judgment of "right" or "wrong" quite detrimental to an analytical practice aimed at probing the singularity and complexity of the phenomena in question. By circumventing normative ideological judgments on the "right" or "wrong" side of power, we can analyze a range of urban initiatives, large and small, as they struggle to move forward and also experience setbacks in the techniques of urban transformation.

Situating our inquiries in a region previously known as the "third world," we pay attention to urban efforts that experiment with visions of the global alternative to those where cities in the West are taken as an unproblematized benchmark of an apparently unsituated urban ideal. The critical mass and vitality of urban projects in Asian centers, especially, are destabilizing established criteria of global urban modernity. The following chapters will highlight distinctive practices of urban modeling, inter-referencing, and the forming of new solidarities that collectively seem to raise an *inter*-Asian horizon of metropolitan and global aspirations. This would mean the constitution of a set of distinctive visions of the global that exist without essential reference to the West, which is made sometimes conspicuously absent in practices of inter-Asian self-reference that spell the effective and often emphatic formation of an ex-Western urban referential space. Current methodological thinking, however, has both overdetermined and limited a serious engagement with actually existing metropolitan complexities and ambitions.

Singular Logics in Urban Change

Urban geography has been dominated by theories of globalization that have centered on finding a universal law – social, political, economic, and so on – that characterizes the current epoch, either in a singular form of global capitalism or in the pronouncement of an epoch defined by a universal

condition of postcoloniality. This reliance on frameworks that depend on global generalization has shaped metropolitan studies to such an extent that empirical heterogeneity, flux, and uncertainty tend to be subsumed under a minimal set of explanatory conditions.

One hegemonic approach views a diffuse and abstract capitalism as the master driver of globalization; as capitalist operations roam the world, they busily determine the ranking of big cities, subdivide urban space, and thus paradoxically both dismantle political authority and undermine the public sphere. Under the "globalization" rubric, cities are largely viewed as functioning nodes in an integrated planetary capitalism, giving rise to the impression that great cities are more functionally integral to the workings of global capitalism than to that of their homelands. Building on the world-systems model, Saskia Sassen's concept of "global cities" (2001 [1991]) – paradigmatically embodied in New York, London, and Tokyo – identifies the material processes, activities, and infrastructures that these provide for the implementation of economic globalization. At the city scale, capitalist mechanisms subdivide the great city into a hierarchy of zones and labor categories according to their economic value. Sassen's paradigm is refined by Stephen Graham and Simon Marvin (2001), who use the term "splintering urbanism" to characterize the shattering effects of transnational infrastructural networks on urban environments and political conditions. This account depends on the fractal replication of the segmenting effect of Sassen's economic globalization at ever-finer spatial scales; just as the capitalist world-system splits the planet into core and periphery regions, global cities and second-tier cities, so capitalist operations fragment urban landscapes into precincts of value and limited value, high-tech and low-tech, rich and poor – into differentiated urban spaces that as an disarticulated aggregate splinter the public good in the service of the "corporate good" (Graham and Marvin 2001: 33). Such analyses aim to provide a generalizable rendering of corporate machinations, the avatars of capitalism *cum* globalization, as they come to shape urban functions, landscapes, and fortunes in the interests of a global capitalist machinery.

The overall effect, however, is to put the variation in and particularity of urban development, as well as metropolitan life, everywhere at the mercy of a universal force called globalization. The assumption is that there is a single system of capitalist domination, and a set of unified effects of regular causal factors that can foment nearly identical problems and responses in different global sites. An extension of the generalizable laws of capitalism culminates in Mike Davis's characterization of mega-cities in the global South in his apocalyptic "planets of slums" (Davis 2006). By piling on extreme statistics of density, migrant flows, and garbage production, Davis argues that the lack of industrialization in the "third world" has spawned giant shantytowns, creating global conditions that may lead to a great upheaval of urban

proletarians. In this conceptual cul-de-sac, big cities in Africa owe their rapid growth to high concentrations of working poor, and inevitable urban revolution seems a foregone conclusion. In short, these singular theories of globalization are fundamentally interested in the homogenizing effects of capitalism. This singular capitalist process-force is presumed to account for engineering urban status and fate throughout the world.

Such schematic perspectives fail to enrich our understanding of particular challenges and solutions on the ground. The planet-of-slums approach, for instance, does not mention that Ibadan (Nigeria) and Nairobi (Kenya), for instance, have urban facilities and well-educated residents. Furthermore, the rapid demographic growth of cities in the former "third world" is resulting in more than the explosion of shantytowns. For instance, over the last decade, the world's ten fastest-growing cities of more than a million people are found in greater Asian region. Four are located in China – Guangzhou, Chongqing, Nanjing, and Wuhan – and, together with Dubai, have become centers of turbocharged middle-class growth (*Wall Street Journal*, 2009). Thus, accelerated urban population growth may be attributed to the influx of dispossessed peasants and/or the rise of the middle classes – as, for example, in Mumbai (see Ananya Roy, Conclusion, this volume). Variations in class composition mean that one cannot attribute urban expansion to a single collectivity or homogenized demographic, such as slum-dwellers, nor can one characterize the great city as the paradigmatic site of a global revolutionary multitude (Hardt and Negri 2000). By the mid-century, over half of the population in Asia will be urbanized. Perhaps the one sure claim that can be made about the staggering weight of this phenomenon is the equally huge size of their carbon footprints, and the urgent need for all cities to reverse this planet of pollution (Shannon May, this volume).

Anthropologists and humanists working in cities have a more subtle analysis of class interrelationships and practices, but the binary oppositions of globalization frameworks are reproduced in ethnographic accounts of life in the city. The city as the universal or promised space of citizenship and universal human rights remains a resonant political economic theme. The study of cities outside the Euro-American setting tends to focus on the class-driven fragmentation and the uneven distribution of urban privileges and rights to citizens and migrants alike. Teresa Caldeira (2000) examines São Paulo as a "city of walls," providing a rich ethnographic account of how the rich increasingly barricade themselves against the poor. In another study, Caldeira and Holston (2005) note that migrants in Brazil stream into the cities to claim citizenship rights by staking out land and putting pressure on municipal governments to deliver urban facilities. In a similar vein, Arjun Appadurai (2002) identifies a form of "deep democracy" in demands by Mumbai slum-dwellers for basic infrastructural services. These are rich and valuable accounts of political struggles, but so much of what progressive

theory has to say about non-Western cities gives the impression that class and politics of outright resistance are the only significant urban events and activities in the developing world.

Postcolonial theory is another hegemonic approach for studying cities and urban conditions outside the West. There is the implicit suggestion that outside the West, the Rest is inescapably postcolonial, sharing the same set of global effects of former colonialism. Postcolonial theory is also invested in the idea that regularity in causal factors can instantiate nearly identical responses in different emerging sites, such as cooptation of the elites, or resistance by the exploited and marginalized. Thus, as non-Western cities are brought into metropolitan studies, the tendency has been to approach a spectrum of contemporary phenomena in studies whose form and concerns are overdetermined by the legacies of colonial rule.

Many insist, with some justification, that urbanization across the developing world should be viewed through the lens of distinctive histories and "postcolonial" experiences. Postcolonial cities must be understood through different paths of modernization that have roots in colonial experiences and postcolonial national liberation and transformations. For instance, anti-colonial struggles were shadowed by what Benedict Anderson calls "the specter of comparison" (1998: 2), a kind of psychological vertigo induced in Asian leaders by the distance to be traveled in order to catch up with the development benchmarks and metropolitan ideals established by and in the West. For a short while, newly independent countries came to view modernist architecture as a universal utopian form, and sought to build new capitals as literalizations of models of rational government and democratic aspirations (Holston 1999).

When it comes to urban studies, the logic of postcolonial globalization can be divided into two orientations. One kind of postcolonial formulation emphasizes urban features and norms that register colonial experiences but have since transcended the colonial. Under the rubric of "postcolonial urbanism," the continuation of the colonial past into the present urban culture and order is emphasized. Some note the historically and regionally specific urban features that make Southeast Asian cities a "supplementary" category to Western global centers (Bishop, Philips, and Yeo 2003). There is also attention to the historical continuities of regional flows and particular cosmopolitanisms that collectively endow a special character to those "other global cities" outside advanced capitalist countries (Marayam 2009). The approaches of scholars based in Asian cities tend therefore to emphasize the distance traveled since their brief engagements with colonialism, and the ongoing process of 'catching up' to modern or even civilizational measures of metropolitan greatness.

A second postcolonial approach, inspired by postcolonial scholars, focuses on giving primacy to the agency of subaltern groups – for instance, racial,

ethnic, class, and gender populations – that have been subjugated by a variety of colonial, neocolonial, and capitalist forces. When it comes to studying urban transformations in India since colonialism, the emphasis has not been on studying how cities attempt to "catch up," as is the case in Southeast and East Asian Studies, but rather has focused on the political agency of a special category of postcolonial subjects. Postcolonial theory is thus as much about how contemporary urban situations have been shaped by colonial legacies of injustice as by contemporary problems of urban underdevelopment.

The generalizable claims of postcolonial theory have been applied to other former sites of European colonialism. AbdouMaliq Simone (2008) famously celebrates the aspirational politics of African migrants whose everyday agency shapes emergent conditions of everyday life in the face of daunting urban inequalities. Such studies have much to recommend themselves in challenging the urban diacritics of the global North by recuperating the distinctiveness of postcolonial urban history, character, and the authenticity of subaltern subjects who inhabit and produce the ever-shifting landscapes of urban experience. However, the conceptual binarism of postcolonial studies seems to privilege postcolonial subjectivity and agency as the primary driving force in vastly different global sites that have been greatly transformed, through heterogeneous processes, colonial encounters, and postcolonial histories, in infrastructure, politics, and culture. In her modification of the postcolonial approach, Gayatri Spivak (1999) employs a concept of "worlding" that rejects the recuperation of subaltern subjects, thus moving postcolonial analysis away from the emphasis on subaltern subjects, political society, and street politics. Nevertheless, universal capitalist and postcolonial variants of neo-Marxism rely on singular logics of global change, focusing on homogenizing effects of capitalism and colonialism that are presumed to account for uniform conditions in a huge swath of cities throughout the world.

As will soon become clear, we take the vantage point of an Asian region that cannot be reduced to the uniform expectations, logics, and prescriptions of structural Marxism or postcolonial theory. Collectively, our chapters tend to be open-ended rather than delimited by rich–poor, metropolitan–postcolonial frameworks. Urban environments are animated by a variety of transnational and local institutions, actors and practices that cannot be neatly mapped out in advance as being on the side of power or on the side of resistance, as if positions could be so unproblematically delineated. Only by liberating the city as a conceptual container of capitalism and subaltern agency can different analytical approaches explore methods for explaining how an urban situation can be at once heterogeneously particular and yet irreducibly global (Ong and Collier 2005). Any hope we have to grasp the particularity and variability of the great urban transformation demands

situated accounts of how urban environments are formed through specific combinations of the past and the future, the postcolonial and the metropolitan, the global and the situated, but is not dominated by any single mechanism or principle.

Milieus of Intervention

Ideally, urban studies should be open to the multiplicity of events, interrelationships, and factors that, in ways both chaotic and strategic, expected and unforeseen, are in play in the formation of particular urban environments. A view of the city as a site of experimentation allows us to integrate qualities of fluidity, interactivity, and interactivity that crystallize the possibilities within which we reimagine, remake, and reexperience urban conditions and the notion of the urban itself.

Foucault counsels us to consider the city as a milieu, or "a field of intervention" in which individuals, populations, and groups put into conjunction of elements and events that circulate beyond the site itself (Foucault 2007: 21). Spatializing practices, in the dual senses of the gathering and the dispersing of circulating ideas, forms, and techniques, are constitutive of emerging globalized spaces. Spatializing practices thus shape the urban as a problem-space in which a cast of disparate actors – the state, capitalists, NGOs, foreign experts, and ordinary people – define what is problematic, uncertain, or in need of mediation, and then go about solving these now-identified problems such as urban planning, class politics, and human capital. The starting point of analysis is thus not how singular principles define a city environment, but rather the array of problem-solving and spatializing practices that are in play in shaping an urban field.

In developing countries, a major player in configuring the urban environment is the state. It seeks to rethink and remake the contemporary world rather than being simply passively "globalized" by it. "Sovereignty capitalizes a territory," Foucault declares (2007: 20), and states in emerging nations have been especially active in drawing resources, methods, and capabilities to their cities, as well as circulating urban and nationalist interests overseas. Entrepreneurial governments from East and Southeast Asia to the United Arab Emirates (UAE) are often initiators of mega-urban projects, drawing sovereign wealth funds for the makeovers of old cities such as Shanghai and Beijing, or building totally new citadels in a desert landscape, as in Dubai. Through the renovation of cities, new political maps are drawn.

Urban planning takes place in conditions of uncertainty, and impressive built forms do not necessarily withstand the risks of market variability. Dubai is an overnight hypercity that emerged out of the confluence of post-9/11 repatriation of capital and Arab elites to the Middle East, and the petrodollar

boom that followed. But the Dubai bubble burst in the 2008–9 financial catastrophe, and the city required a general bailout from oil-rich Abu Dhabi to get on its feet again. While Dubai will survive as the capital of Islamic banking and as a Middle East transportation hub and pleasure dome, its metropolitan flair as a global business hub has been undermined by the shifting sands of volatile capital flows. The building frenzy in brash new cities has been informed by a neoliberal logic of unlimited possibilities and risk-taking embodied in Dubai's vertigo-inducing towers. The entrepreneurial quest to remake the city's fortunes drives the circulation of global knowledge, actors, and talents. These are variously assembled by city officials, planners, activists, and citizens as they seek to shape a new space of governmentality attuned to global competition (Ong 2007). Political leaders view their city as a globalized field of intervention, a national space of problem solving that relies on methods both irrepressibly global and resolutely situated.

Worlding Practices

"Worlding" is employed here not to signal adherence to a world-historical logic of "world making," as in a crude reading of Marx's conception stagist historical development (cf., Marx and Engels 1848), but rather to identify the projects and practices that instantiate some vision of the world in formation. A Marxist view of worlding from above and counter-worlding from below reflects cosmopolitan ideals of emerging world citizenship. Worlding and reworlding were articulated by Spivak (1999) in her postcolonial attempt to recuperate subaltern subjects through a rendering of the Heideggerian concept of "being in the world." Hardt and Negri (2000) provide another structural Marxist view of world transformation through generalized class conflicts. They claim that "multitudes," a globally disenfranchised working-class collectivity produced through the contemporary workings of capitalism, are milling in the world's cities to confront Empire. In a follow-up to Hardt and Negri, Rob Wilson (2004) proposes that a variety of counter-worlding tactics, including art, can challenge the universalizing ideology and materiality of planetary capitalism. He calls the aggregate of these tactics "worldings against Empire." Such Marxist conceptualizations of worlding thus define a unified logic (class wars), set of agents (subalterns, working-class subjects, multitudes), and target (global capitalism) of world transformation. The everyday struggles of these special categories of historical actors are construed as coalescing, sooner or later, into a single counter-worlding movement against capital's Empire.

We do not make our case by invoking such singular laws of inevitable worlding planetary scale. An anthropological focus on mid-range theorizing

(Collier and Ong 2005) dives below high abstraction to hover over actual human projects and goals unfolding in myriad circumstances of possibility and contingency. We stay close to heterogeneous practices of worlding that do not fall tidily into opposite sides of class, political, or cultural divides. Rather, a non-ideological formulation of worlding as situated everyday practices identifies ambitious practices that creatively imagine and shape alternative social visions and configurations – that is, "worlds" – than what already exists in a given context. Wording in this sense is linked to the idea of emergence, to the claims that global situations are always in formation. Worlding projects remap relationships of power at different scales and localities, but they seem to form a critical mass in urban centers, making cities both critical sites in which to inquire into worlding projects, as well as the ongoing result and target of specific worldings.

Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987) have suggested that in a world of flows, social formations emerge from the "rhizomatic" connections that cross-cut vertical integrated hierarchies (328–9). In this sense, worlding exercises are those lateralizing microprocesses that remap power by opening up new channels or reconfigure new social universes. In an echo of Foucault's notion of milieu or social field (2007: 22–3), this notion of the production of emergent spaces from the flows of ideas, actions, and objects is a radical departure from a conventional view of the world as formed in stabilized binary orders. In a related argument, Bruno Latour (2005) notes that a social system is formed through "a provisional movement of new associations" that effects a continual change in its topography. Extrapolating from these theorists, worlding refers not to a single unified political process, but to diverse spatializing practices that mix and match different components that go into building an emergent system. If the city is a living, shifting network, then worlding practices are those activities that gather in some outside elements and dispatch others back into the world.

Indeed, the very act of reimagining or redesigning an urban milieu – whether in changing material infrastructure, political possibilities, or aesthetic styles – is by definition aspirational, experimental, and even speculative. Donna Haraway (2008) notes that scientific experiments open "up to speculative and so possible material, affective, practical reworlding" in concrete and detailed situations (92–3). There is a mix of speculative fiction and speculative fact in worlding exercises as practitioners aim to build something they believe is for the better. It seems important to register that such creative and contingent activities are at the core of urban innovation, and that tinkering with a spectrum of urban ideas and forms is an art of being global.

It is therefore not surprising to observe that there is no singular or fixed standard of urban globality; there are many forms of "the global" in play. The very contested nature of what counts as global in a shifting inter-urban

field of power requires urban analysis to capture the reflexive dimension in many urban initiatives that go beyond local improvements to participate, however implicitly, in a bigger game of winning some kind of world recognition. Today, residents of Asian cities large and small like to think of their hometown as having some degree of global significance, or having attained some level of "world-class" standing. Indeed, as we shall see in the chapters that follow, major urban projects are invariably caught up in an inter-city competition over the "global" stature of hometowns.

Furthermore, in this emerging region, the tendency is no longer simply to turn to Western prototypes, but rather to develop from homegrown solutions to Asian metropolitan challenges, distinctive urban profiles, political styles, and aesthetic forms.

Urban initiatives of all kinds are thus experiments with metropolitan futures, and they draw on disparate styles, actors, and forms that circulate in and through Asian metropolitan centers. In sum, worlding practices are constitutive, spatializing, and signifying gestures that variously conjure up worlds beyond current conditions of urban living. They articulate disparate elements from near and far; and symbolically re-situate the city in the world. By eschewing singular concepts of worlding, single standards of urban ranking that take for granted the terms in and through which cities can be ranked, and unified ways of achieving an already given future, we open up academic inquiries into a diversity of urban activities engaged in the transformation of contemporary urban living. In urban Asia, we encounter an art of being global that is invariably caught up in a political game that is allusive, contrastive, comparative, and contested, with cities in the region, but also beyond.

Modeling, Inter-Referencing, New Solidarities

Drawing on new research presented in the chapters, we identify three styles of being global that, while not exclusive to Asia, seem to be distinctive practices associated with urban development in the region. Worldwide, aspirant cities vie with one another in to leave some mark on the world stage. Different attempts to burnish city images, shape skylines, or push through innovative urban agendas can be found in many domains and scales of renovation. Besides mega-projects supported by politicians, planners, and boosters, there are also a variety of political, cultural, and economic projects pursued by activists, migrants, and artists to improve the condition and standing of their hometowns *vis-à-vis* others that are experienced as being in *de facto* competition in the game of urban ranking. All too schematically, for the sake of argument and organization, shared urban forms and norms in Asian metropolitan transformation seem to fall into three distinctive

styles – modeling, inter-referencing, and association – that will be subtitles for different sections of this book.

Modeling

In recent decades, the renovation of cities in the non-Western world has given rise to the circulation of urban models that have become established values understood as desirable and achievable throughout the developing world. A number of Asian cities have come to stand as replicable models of an urban futurity that does not find its ultimate reference in the West. Here, Singapore, Shanghai, and Hong Kong, instead of New York, London, or Paris have become centers to be invoked, envied, and emulated as exemplary sites of a new urban normativity. Through the years of the tiger economies, city-states such as Singapore and Hong Kong led the way in solving urban problems – public housing, downtown development, clean industries, upscale districts, cultural and tourist attractions – that transformed them into world-class cities. Furthermore, the cultivation of transnational links with corporations, banks, and cultural institutions made them the centers of global networks. While Hong Kong sees itself as "Asia's World City," Singapore presents itself as the knowledge hub of a far-flung "effervescent" business ecosystem (Ong 2005).

Specifically, the mix of state entrepreneurialism on the one hand, and the development of "sustainable" infrastructure on the other, has generated a range of urban innovation models that promote "successful" urban conditions and lifestyles.

Urban innovations such as the "garden city," subsidized housing, industrial estates, upscale residential enclaves, and even water resource management developed in Asian cities have become packaged as "models" that can be detached from the originary city and exported to other aspiring cities. "The Singapore model," in actuality a set of normative and technical urban plans, has come to inspire city innovation projects across Asia and beyond.

Urban modeling can be conceptualized as a global technology that is disembedded from its hometown and adopted in other sites (Collier and Ong 2005). As a condensed set of desirable and achievable urban forms, the "Singapore model" has been raised in the imagination of planners and developers, and materialized in built forms throughout Asia and the developing world. The modeling process sets a symbolic watermark of urban aspirations on the one hand, and provides achievable blueprints for urban renovations on the other. Modeling involves discursive and material activities that are inspired by particular models of urban achievements in other cities. Modeling refers to actual urban projects that have been dubbed "garden," "sustainable," "livable," or "world-class," that planners hope to reproduce elsewhere in a bid to rebrand their home cities.

The use of blueprints, plans, or built forms as a guide does not mean that modeling is a faithful copy of the original, but rather a practice that tries to capture some aspect, style, or essence of that original. The modeling trend thus raises the question of whether one city can truly replicate a particular "model" of say, industrial zones, or financial districts, or sustainable infrastructure. After all, an urban model exported by Singapore has to be inserted into a different set of material and political conditions elsewhere. Furthermore, in Asia, city-modeling has complex political implications that ripple beyond improved urban infrastructure and livability. The import of an urban model can include its associated disciplinary effects such as the introduction of new governing norms or the incorporation of unwilling or skeptical subjects into a new scheme. Urban modeling is thus not only a technology for building garden cities and knowledge hubs elsewhere; it can become a political tool for changing the built form and social spirit of another urban environment.

In Part I of this book, chapters explore how urban planning in the form of modeling technologies come to define standard-setting forms and norms for cities aspiring to move up on some global scale of urban achievement. In the opening chapter, "Singapore as Model," **Chua Beng Huat** makes a case for how the urban planning innovations of the city-state are packaged as a marketing brand to be exported overseas, as yet one more category of commodities produced by the developing world. Chua maintains that while the Singapore brand had become a global technology, it is a composite technical and symbolic cluster that can be invoked or emulated but cannot be really be reproduced. Frequently, the Singapore model in circulation functions as a set of abstract standards for "realizable utopian" projects for cities in emerging countries.

In her chapter, **Lisa Hoffman** traces the influence of the Singapore model in various efforts to remake Dalian, a northern Chinese city, into a center of "green urbanism." Urban modeling, Hoffman argues, can affect different spheres of metropolitan living and has social implications beyond the city itself. First, Singapore as a garden city is invoked to initiate a new green regime intended to change the governance of both Dalian and its residents. Using a discourse of sustainability, city planners reshape city parks along with city manners in order to promote a new ethics of urban life. Second, the "green urbanism" improvements enable officials to position Dalian itself as a model other Chinese cities by defining a new "green" standard for ranking cities throughout the nation. Urban modeling is thus deployed as a tool for remaking the urban environment and reshaping sociality, as well as for making "sustainability" a new criterion for ranking cities in general.

For less up-to-date centers in Asia, the Singapore model of corporate and residential planning seems a packaged deal for raising the city profile. Manila

has long been on the sidelines as other Asian cities played a game of catch-up in changing their urban infrastructure and investment appeal. **Gavin Shatkin** describes the material and social aspects of "planning privatopolis" in Manila, a downtown project that is in part modeled as a "Little Singapore." The development emphasizes self-contained zones, with requisite elements of "urban efficiencies" that can attract new investments. The broader reference to Singapore lies in the hope that a refurbished downtown with the "appropriate" urban conditions can "nurture a desired type of citizen – globally oriented knowledge economy workers who can form a creative and managerial core for a process of economic transformation." What is being emulated goes beyond concrete, glass, and steel; urban modeling also involves the mimicry of the neoliberal packaging of international glamour, talent, and entrepreneurialism that promises to animate a moribund metropolis.

These chapters reveal that the Singapore brand articulates different elements and scales of urban innovation, from offering an achievable standard of urban makeover and promotion on the one hand, to shaping an urban culture of self-managing and self-enterprising subjects on the other. From Dalian to Manila and beyond, modeling practices tend to recast "sustainability" in neoliberal terms as city governments and developers variously deploy and link techniques of green urbanism and urban entrepreneurialism.

Shannon May's chapter on "ecological urbanization" examines a different kind of modeling, an eco-city prototype hatched in Silicon Valley and implemented in rural China. The brainchild of an international consortium in partnership with the Chinese government, the eco-city model is tested in Huangbaiyu Village, northern China, as a potential solution to China's massive environmental problems and a slew of problems that have been associated with rural development and urbanization. May points out that an urban design on paper to deal with runaway pollution in the emerging world does not work out as intended in the actual environment of peasant China. Because the eco-city model ignores social and economic conditions on the ground, the infrastructural change results in the (unintended?) dispossession and outmigration of local peasants.

At other scales, however, the eco-city may not be considered a "failure," as the project enhances American corporate access to government contracts, and the eco-city provides support for Beijing's claim to be a serious player in environmental urbanism. Modeling an eco-city in this case appears to be less about sustainability than about two different but convergent political goals; that is, bringing Chinese peasants under a mode of global environmental governance on the one hand, and allaying global fears about China's mammoth carbon footprint on the other. This chapter highlights the complex political and ethical elements surrounding the cultural translation of urban competition, a question to which I next turn.

Inter-referencing practices

In recent decades, a variety of actors have sought to transform their cities by measuring their urban innovations against those of more impressive centers in the emerging Asian region. An idiom of referencing other cities can perhaps be traced to the dawn of market reforms in China. In 1992, the late Premier Deng Xiaoping visited Shenzhen and called for the creation of "a few Hong Kongs" (*ji ge Xianggang*) along the coast. As "development fever" caught fire, industrial zones sprang up around Guangzhou, Shanghai, and Xiamen, and Hong Kong and Taiwanese managers helped to shape the infrastructural and capitalist transformation of these mainland cities. This urban process of learning from established Chinese centers sparked a phenomenon whereby "Shenzhen is Hong Kongized, "Guangzhou is Shenzhenized, and the whole country is Guangdongized" (Cartier 2001: 242). While this began as a Chinese discourse of learning from other cities, the language of urban transmission continues to reference cities in the Asian tiger economies, including Singapore. Allan Pred (1995) has observed that the articulation of discursive and non-discursive practices produces spaces of spectacle and, one may add, of emulation. Indeed, gestures of inter-referencing are spatializing practices in that by constantly comparing and contrasting cities, new kinds of inter-city relationships are formed. This largely China-generated idiom of emulatable cities has become a driver of real estate and business values, and thus a resonant theme in the Anglophone inter-Asian world of business, media, popular culture, urban planning, and scholarly research (see below).

While urban modeling is a concrete instantiation of acknowledging another city's achievements, inter-referencing refers more broadly to practices of citation, allusion, aspiration, comparison, and competition. The practice of citing a "more successful city" – itself an unstable category – seems to stir urban aspirations and sentiments of inter-city rivalry as well as standing as a legitimation for particular enterprises at home. In India, inter-referencing practices operate as a kind of elite dreaming, as when leaders in Mumbai wonder when it will become the next Shanghai (Prakash 2008). English-speaking politicians frequently invoke Singapore and Shanghai in order to sell their real estate programs, justify unpopular measures to clear slums, and otherwise thwart political resistance from local residents (see the chapters in this volume by Michael Goldman, Ananya Roy, and Asher Ghertner). In East Asia, Shanghai's rise as China's preeminent financial center has been said to provincialize Hong Kong, spurring city managers to emphasize Islamic banking in order to rival Dubai. The circular nature of inter-city citation fuels a spiral of comparison. Singapore planners try to transcend their own staid "clean and green" image by opening a casino zone that they claim is "not like Macao," but perhaps more like Las Vegas. Through

a process of multiple referencing, urban actors are constantly juggling heterogeneous multiple cultural norms of what constitutes urban success and achievements in a world of circulating city symbols.

Inter-Asia inter-referencing practices are thus inseparable from and in fact constitutive of an emerging system for the judgment of urban value. Through the favorable mention, allusion, and even endorsement of another city, actors and institutions position their own projects in a language of explicit comparison and ranking, thus vicariously participating in the symbolic values of particular cities. The idiom of inter-referencing pits cities in relation to one another, by invoking desirable icons of "world class" amenities – upscale hotels, shopping malls, entertainment and conventions facilities, symphonies, opera houses, international enclaves, and airports – as symbols of desirable urban attributes. Not least, as booming centers of the expansion of a new middle class, Asian cities have begun to compete with one another to provide improved conditions of working and living. By tweaking urban desires and aspirations in emerging countries, citational practices put into circulation a symbolic language of globally significant urban style that has traveled beyond Asia.

While speculations in capital are obviously not limited to Asian cities, inter-city comparisons reinforce the link between economic speculation and urban aspiration. Speculative discourses draw together the building of impressive urban structures and the imagination of a city's global future. The constant allusion to other cities energizes efforts to assemble ideas, forms, and alliances in order to "catch up" with pace-setting cities that now exist outside the West. As inter-referencing practices drive speculations on a city's future residents and citizens are often caught up as well in a kind of disciplinary inter-city rivalry. By pointing to another city that is ahead, planners and developers can persuade people to accept potentially controversial projects in the name of the greater metropolitan good. "World-classness" is a slippery term that tweaks anxieties and primes speculations about the fortunes of one's own metropolis, but it can also stirs the skepticism and resistance among some sectors of the population.

The proliferation of urban comparison and contrast shapes the inter-city consciousness, affecting the reflexive self-knowledge of citizens, residents, and migrants as they locate and see themselves in and through particular cities. In a time of accelerating growth, residents are extremely aware the rising or falling fortunes of their own city or nation in relation to other places. In the 1990s, Kuala Lumpur boasts that it has the largest shopping mall in Asia, where residents and tourists can pretend they do not live in a tropical, regimented Muslim environment. Meanwhile, Hong Kong residents have sought to distinguish the city from other Asian shopping meccas by cherishing old buildings that embody its recent past as a preeminent harbor city. Across Asia, citizen, denizens, and dreamers evaluate different

cityscapes, mingle in each other's cities and comparison shop for consumer goods, ideas and lifestyles (Chua 2000). By visiting, living, and working in a variety of urban spaces, city-dwellers develop a sense and knowledge of themselves as subjects of more or less successful urban geographies.

In Part II, the chapters explore how different modes of inter-city referencing directly affect the perceptions, ambitions, and projects of ordinary and elite urban subjects.

Helen Siu explores the vulnerabilities of middle-class Hong Kongers who experience a sense of provincialization in the broader context of Shanghai's rise as China's economic capital. The relative decline of Hong Kong *vis-à-vis* Shanghai undermines Hong Kongers' sense of cultural significance in a shifting global environment. While the Hong Kong elite have long been famous for their cross-border commercial skills, current conditions of globalized business are proving to be harder to navigate. Siu observes an interesting contrast in that professionals from New Delhi, compared to middle-class Hong Kongers, seem more capable and flexible in making a living in foreign cities such as Dubai and Singapore. The Hong Kong middle class, increasingly bypassed by shifting global capital circuits, is turning its attention to restoration projects that reclaim their urban history as a mercantile center in Asia.

Until the recent debt crisis, Dubai had become a dream-city for millions of citizens in Asia, Africa, the Middle East, and beyond. With its sleek Arabo-modernist facade, Dubai projects a vision of metropolitan modernity for elite South Asian migrants seeking their fortunes overseas. In the next chapter, **Chad Haines** traces a new stream of middle-class professionals from New Delhi to Dubai, where there were more lucrative jobs than available in India. Haines calls their aspirational migration practices a form of neoliberal self-branding that depends on working in what is understood as a more globalized city. The association between working under the Brand Dubai and being branded as world-class professionals produces a cultural validation back home in New Delhi. But even before Dubai's recent financial woes, Haines found cracks behind the facade of glitz and glamour, as Indian white-collar workers discover limits and obstacles to an affordable lifestyle and to "global citizenship" in the city.

The next chapter identifies ambitious cities as sources of iconic urban forms and actors that circulate through the Asia Pacific. **Glen Lowry and Eugene McCann** follow the transfer of corporate designs between Hong Kong, Vancouver, and Dubai, and analyze how the discourse and building of business zones link the cities together in a system of urban-corporate inter-referentiality. As residents of Vancouver, however, the authors wish to look beyond the flow of corporate urban forms to discover other mobilities that instantiate other cultural forms identified with the city. They interpret Henry Tsang's installation art, planted in one of Vancouver's public spaces,

as an aesthetic intervention that draws on indigenous and migrant cultures to disrupt the framing of the city as a site of seamless capitalist urbanity. The authors argue that this aesthetic interruption of inter-city corporate parallelism recovers a view of Vancouver as constituted by an alternative cartography of transpacific cultural flows ("in-the mix").

Addressing the complex nexus between inter-referencing and speculative practices, **Aihwa Ong** explores dual aspects of "hyperbuilding" – both as a speculative of overbuilding and as a particular type of spectacular monument in East Asian cities.

A message of inter-referencing is the role of the state in funding or fostering mega-projects. The political exception engenders a variegated governmentality of urban space, creating conditions for a synergetic interaction between speculative activities and spectacular spaces. Building frenzy is a mode of worlding that leverages value from real estate to other sectors of capital accumulation, although hyperbuilding can also lead to an asset bubble. Ong next looks at Rem Koolhaas' paradigmatic "hyperbuilding," the CCTV Headquarters in Beijing, as a hyperspace of Chinese sovereignty. While the CCTV complex symbolizes China's media power in the global realm, it has also become a symbol of overbuilding in pornographic jokes about the urban overbuilding and the political shadow it casts on ordinary people. With the shift of the urban hyperspace to China, what are the broader implications for a popular view that radical architecture makes allusions to the modernist utopia?

New solidarities

The crisscrossing references and borrowings so dominant in East Asian settings are echoed in city politics in South Asia. Asian sites are not only crucial platforms for experimenting with architectural and social forms, but also the contexts of evolving political practices that straddle deep class divisions. In cities where the state presence is weak, advantageous private–public partnerships and cross-class appropriations are becoming validated in reconfiguring the new social. "The social" is an idea that bypasses conventional notions of state–society divisions to register an emerging "form of life" constituted within a limited space by political and moral authorities that inscribe an intelligibility for regulating conduct and forming ethical subjects (Rose 1999: 100–1). Experimentations draw together disparate logics, techniques, and practices to shape new regimes of urban governance. Stephen J. Collier (2009) has argued from Foucault's later lectures that governmentality identifies a kind of governing reasoning (govern-mentality) that can be analyzed as a dynamic process of combining different rationalities and techniques, whereas neoliberalism refers to the recombination of techniques associated with advanced liberalism with other elements. Collier cautions

that we should not confuse situated clusters of neoliberal reason and techniques with "some mysterious neoliberal 'whole'" (96–100). Instead, we need an anthropological investigation of particular recombinations of the neoliberal with other elements in shaping emerging situations of power. For instance, it has been illuminating to consider how a neoliberal logic of "governing from a distance" (Rose 1999: 49–50) has been deployed in China's authoritarian context not to rollback the government, but as a rational calculation in order to optimize conditions for self-governing by the educated urban elites (Ong and Zhang 2008). The neoliberal is a new relationship between government and knowledge through which robust state interventions are cast as non-political technical solutions to a host of social problematizations. Neoliberal techniques in urban governance are, however, rather unevenly and differently deployed in South Asian situations.

Indian cities have been studied as hotbeds of the deep and simmering class struggles. Partha Chatterjee's (2006) identification of "the politics of the governed," and Arjun Appadurai's (2002) concept of "urban governmentality" differently register the proliferation of community-initiated activism and organizations in Indian cities. As broker politics flourish, subaltern groups gain power to negotiate with official agencies to improve urban services for the marginalized and neglected. It appears therefore that Indian urban politics are not limited to struggles against class oppressions and contestations centered on the state. What seems dramatically different than in other Asian contexts is that non-government organizations are more likely than government authorities to wield neoliberal rationalities in order to optimize desired outcomes.

In cities where the relative absence of effective government by default opens up a space for community activism, the challenge is to investigate how the neoliberal has been variously deployed to shape emerging sociality. New urban solidarities that tend to straddle class, city, and national divisions, and particular projects tend to depend on novel combinations of entrepreneurial and civic elements. For instance, Ananya Roy and Nezar Alsayyad (2004) have noted a new kind of "informal governance" in Middle Eastern and South Asian cities where cross-class entities have developed new norms and forms for governing people and the use of urban space. But while such initiatives may invoke democracy and human rights – say, on behalf of the welfare of the urban poor – these urban initiatives cannot be neatly understood as a victory for "neoliberal" rule or for civil society. Frequently, such strategic partnerships are linked to official interests and party machines (e.g., Hezbollah), and their interventions effect an informal extension of corporate interest or state power, shaping a mode of "civic governmentality" (Roy 2009). In other words, the symbiosis between neoliberal calculations and social activism engenders a complex urban scene of multiple motivations, coalitions and borrowings that both destabilize and form new configurations of urban society.

Under this section, chapters on South Asian urban politics highlight the frequent use of "world-class city" as a talisman to endorse varied kinds of partnerships, justify mega-projects, and denote the necessity of dislocating inconveniently sited poor residents, a common practice in many cities, but one with special resonance in South Asian initiatives to spark long-delayed urban renewal. In "Speculating on the Next World City," **Michael Goldman** analyses how a transnational policy network seeks to boost Bangalore, India's famous cybercity, to the next level of urban stratosphere. In the midst of official corruption and lack of political oversight, a transnational mode of "speculative governance" claims eminent domain to dispossesses rural populations of their means of livelihood. "World-city" is wielded to justify the conversion of surrounding peasant lands into sites for IT corridors and an international airport. Goldman concludes that in the race to catch up with Shanghai and Singapore, Bangalore has become a new speculative model that strips ordinary citizens of their human rights.

Next, **Asher Ghertner** examines the different uses of "world-class making" in efforts to reposition New Delhi as a cultural center. He argues that a form of aesthetic governmentality is at work whereby slums are considered a blight on the image of the capital, an assessment that justifies the clearance of slums even when it violates existing land-use and environmental codes. State-run slum surveys associate slum-dwellers lack of property-ownership with aesthetic impropriety, while presenting state-issued resettlement plots as a means to propertied and aesthetic citizenship. In challenging the new urban aesthetics, slum-dwellers creatively appropriate bourgeois norms of aesthetic valuation by producing poster art, a kind of street-level contribution to "world-class" claims of city elites. Ghertner argues that such strategic borrowings of elite ideals also embody a call for world-class services, employment, and rights that the state has yet to offer the urban poor, thereby undoing the tie between state-imposed "world-class aesthetic" and urban property-ownership.

Finally, **Ananya Roy** argues that the rise of India as an economic superpower in the "Asian century" is also a project of making "world-class cities." The increase in urban renewal projects, peri-urban development, and special economic zones are instantiations of a "homegrown neoliberalism," a kind of public–private intervention that actively references other Asian cities. For the emergent middle class, the new urban spaces represent a civic ideal of the good city, embodying the set of urban forms that is called "Global Indian." Unsurprisingly, goals to realize such "world-city aspirations" have required the violent exclusion, even criminalization, of the poor in the urban–rural peripheries. In Kolkata, the dislocations of rezoning have been blocked by a popular political opposition that mobilized the rural-to-urban poor. While this blockade may be read as a refusal of imposed urban projects, the abandoned factories, stalled condominium projects, and fleeing

investors leave behind a blighted landscape that once again becomes the condition for renewed speculations and collaborations for achieving the Global Indian city.

By bringing together interdisciplinary perspectives, the chapters in this volume variously recast concepts and methods toward a genuinely globalized urban studies. Instead of viewing particular urban settings as merely specific instantiations of general capitalist mechanisms or postcolonial agency, the authors examine an array of initiatives – economic, political, and cultural – that variously engage urban challenges and visions of the world. Instead of universal forms of global economic or political integration, we discover how situated webs of interrelationships create highly differentiated contexts of urban transformation. Instead of seeing the city as a fixed space or node, we approach the metropolis as a milieu of experimentation where diverse actors and institutions invent and aspire to new ways of being global, and in doing so, recuperate the global not as the endpoint to an already given urban developmental process, but as a terrain of problematization. Instead of abstract hierarchies and typologies of cities and citizenship, we are open to the variety of ideas, idioms, methods, and solutions that political leaders, developers, citizens, workers, and slum-dwellers deploy in a global game of claiming the world's attention through the staging of showy architecture, cutting-edge industry, and homegrown urban aesthetics.

This art of being global ignores conventional borders of class, race, city, and country. There are promiscuous borrowings, shameless juxtapositions, and strategic enrollments of disparate ideas, actors, and practices from many sources circulating in the developing world, and beyond. We identify urban modeling, inter-referencing practices, and new solidarities as the flamboyant features of worlding cities in Asia. The ubiquity of urban modeling both in the planning imagination and in the built forms of emergent cities indexes the challenges of these cities not only to catch up with one another, but also to create new conceptions of achievable metropolitan standards for the developing world. The discourses that sustain this inter-referentiality shape an intense inter-city consciousness of contrast, comparison, and rivalry, as a well as an idiom that initiates and legitimizes the extravagant claims of mega urban makeovers. International ties and private–public partnerships are involved in building urban industries as well as shaping new modes of urban governance and sociality that are not deterred by preexisting social barriers. States and governments capitalize on the global circulation of ideas, objects, codes, and standards to engage in a spectrum of experiments that reinvent notions of urban modernity.

Urban exercises are practical and symbolic practices constituting the urban out of varied situated and global connections. They both depend on and contribute to emergent forms of spatialization that they seek to plot, transform, and achieve. Human action in the urban problem-space is of

course subject to the vagaries of history, geography, and the play of the unexpected. The metropolis, we are reminded, is still a site of exception surrounded by vast hinterlands strewn with old administrative seats, ramshackle settlements of various kinds, and countless towns and villages retreating into invisibility. Skylines are rising in the East, projecting urban gestures of the moment that claim to characterize an emerging age. But it is in the midst of the precarious past and the unknown future that myriad human experiments draw on inter-city, inter-Asian, and global flows to shape fragile metropolitan futures.

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