

CALL FOR PAPERS



Megacities / Urban Subjects of the Global South

This year marks the 15th year of the publication of Robert Kaplan's influential essay "The Coming Anarchy" in the *Atlantic Monthly* (1994) which provided a terrifying portrait of megacities of Africa, Asia and Latin America where chaos has become the order of the day. Borrowing an image from Thomas Fraser Homer-Dixon, Kaplan positioned his Western readers as passengers in a comfortable limousine cruising the streets of the megacities of the South filled with the violent, the diseased, the hungry, the criminal, the deviant, the poor, the corrupt, and the uneducated. In his view, these allegedly dangerous classes pose a serious threat not only to those who are inside the limousine, but also to the millions of middle and upper classes in North America, Europe and the Pacific Rim. Kaplan warned his readers that "a rundown and overcrowded planet of skinhead Cossacks and *juju* warriors, influenced by the worst refuse of western pop culture and ancient tribal hatreds" are going to destroy Western civilization. This dystopian vision of the "Coming Anarchy" is repeated by other writers who claimed that the dawn of a new post-cold war era was leading to "Clash of Civilizations" (Samuel Huntington, 1993) and the "End of History" (Francis Fukuyama 1992). In this arrestingly simplistic and nightmarish vision, the social, environmental and political crises facing the globe in the new millennium will gestate and mature in the megacities of the South.¹

In the contemporary context of global neoliberalism, the megacities of the South face new challenges characterized by stymied urban economic development, unprecedented urban poverty, crumbling infrastructure, massive rural to urban migration, environmental degradation and bitter social and ethnic strife of varying intensity and state violence directed to control massive social movements struggling for the "right to the city".² They also face a range of problems associated with externally imposed schemes of structural adjustment programs, privatization of state-owned industries, rising urban unemployment, and withdrawal of the state's from already limited and circumscribed social welfare functions and provisions of basic infrastructure and services. Despite the proliferation of a considerable number of descriptive accounts and dystopian narratives of megacities of the South, they remain under theorized.

We are interested in papers that address the following topics and themes:

- **Floating Lives and Urban livelihoods**

The phenomenon of informal urbanization has been the single most pervasive element in the production of megacities of the South. Large scale migration fueled by rural poverty, economic insecurities, agrarian crisis, draught, war and political conflicts, and the physical violence of the state have swelled the ranks of already overburdened postcolonial cities. Unable to find shelter, work and livelihood, many of the new migrants join millions of squatter settlers and the urban poor in the informal settlements to fashion a social and material world beyond the logics of the postcolonial city. The imposition of neoliberal policies through the state has led to a

¹ Davis, Mike. 2004. "Planet of Slums: Urban Involution and the Informal Proletariat," *New Left Review*, 26, p. 5-6.

² UN Population Division. 2002. *World Urbanization Prospects, the 2001 Revision*, New York: United Nations,

proliferation of ingenious local responses of survival strategies among a wide section of the urban population. We invite papers that examine the floating lives of the urban poor and urban livelihoods in the informal settlements of megacities of the South which are connected to political upheavals, economic deregulations and migratory movements.

- **Spaces of Consumption and Exclusion**

In the last three decades, megacities in the South have witnessed a major transformation as a result of their further integration into the global economy through neoliberalism, resulting in a new form of urbanism characterized both by spatial fragmentation and disaggregation into separate “micro-worlds” where hyper-consumption, crime, segregation and social exclusion are recasting the urban cultural fabric and reordering everyday life. We invite papers which focus on the city as a site for the intersection of global networks, hyper-consumption practices and social exclusion.

- **Urban Restructuring**

In recent decades, megacities of the South have played a crucial role in the rescaling of the state and the decentralization of government apparatuses under the direction of the World Bank and IMF as part of the broader strategy to rejuvenate the productive capacity of the market and reduce the role of the state. New set of rules were imposed across a broad range of megacities to remove institutional constraints, legal barriers, state control apparatuses as a condition to make the market function efficiently through deregulation, privatization, decentralization and other policies. We invite papers that examine the role of the state and its various agents in the spatial restructuring of megacities ostensibly and the recasting of the state-civic society relations.

- **Contesting the City**

The imposition of a neoliberalism has given rise to a multitude of urban social movements in the megacities of the South, challenging the “rule of law” regarding private property by squatters, poor peoples’ movements and others. We invite papers that explore the multitude of ways in which popular groups contest the city.

Abstracts should be 400-500 words in length. Authors should send their material with the abstract attached as a Word document. Please be sure to include the following: full name, university affiliation, and the title of your abstract.

Deadlines: submission of Abstracts, October 30, 2009.

Authors of accepted proposals will be asked to submit articles in final form (in English) by April 30, 2010.

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