CAT-ference 2019 session proposal

Title: The Global East in the global geopolitics of knowledge: views from between North and South

Description:

A binary of North and South defines urban (and other social) theory today. The push in recent years to rebalance the European and American bias of urban studies and urban theorising towards an inclusion of a broader selection of cities has led to a surge of 'theorising from the South' (Miraftab 2009; Parnell and Robinson 2012; Roy 2009; Schindler 2017). Yet, many cities and countries do not neatly map onto the geographical imagination that underpins the division of North and South. This is not just the case with cities in the former Second World (Ferenčuhová and Gentile 2016; Müller 2018, 2019), but also with parts of East Asia (Shin, Lees, and López-Morales 2016), Turkey and the Middle East. As a consequence, these cities remain off the map in a debate that is framed around hemispheric notions of North and South.

The aim of this session is to reflect on the potential of the East as a third category, a tertium quid, in urban theory-making divided between North and South. This intervention needs to be seen as both an epistemological manoeuvre, challenging established binaries and what places count in making urban theory, and as an ontological intervention to multiply the diversity of urban experiences. The aim is not so much to theorise from the East, risking to establish yet another geographical, territorialised category with particularist claims, but, in a more humble manner, to theorise with and through the East as firmly part of the global – a Global East. The polysemic nature of the 'East' (Goody 1996; Todorova 1997) as a shifting, constantly displaced demi-other without a fixed territorial signified seems to present a promising opening for such an endeavour.

Contributors are therefore encouraged to engage with the literature on global urbanism (e.g. Parnell and Pieterse 2016; Brenner and Schmid 2015; Parnell and Robinson 2012; Peck 2015; Roy 2009; Sheppard, Leitner, and Maringanti 2013, by way of example) and with its silences to develop their own accounts of what it means to theorise urban processes and practise urban research from off the map (or on its fringes) of the North and South. Accounts that develop a theoretical agenda and/or critique from empirical research are particularly welcome.

The following guiding questions may be useful:

- What are the conditions and factors of exclusion and silence with regard to the East in global urbanism?
- How does theorising from the epistemological position of the Global East make a difference, without necessarily being unique or exceptional?

- How can one navigate internal heterogeneities and external difference of cities of the Global East?
- How can the dynamic between the over-researched cities of the Global North and the under-researched cities of the Global East be reimagined in the context of the neoliberalising academe?
- How does the global neoconservative, populist and/or authoritarian political trend affect the perception of the world's urban dichotomies?
- What lessons are to be learnt from the struggle of scholars in and of the Global South for recognition?
- What are strategies and tactics of claiming a voice with and for the Global East in global theoretical debates?

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