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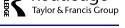Published online: 05 Oct 2020.

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EDITORIAL

Cultural policies in cities of the 'global South': a multi-scalar approach

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ABSTRACT

Building on the literature on global cities and on the worlding of cities, the articles in this special issue chart how cities outside Europe and North America try to reinvent and rescale themselves using culture. They suggest that the fabric of urban cultural policy is embedded in multi-scalar power dynamics. First, the contributions in this special issue reveal the importance of circulating standards across borders in structuring narratives about urban history, heritage and identity, in conjunction with local actors' interests. Second, the diffusion of hegemonic cultural policy models such as the "creative city" leads to logics of exclusion, gentrification, and has been met with resistance, which suggest that these models can be to the detriment of local residents, despite the progressive values they are often claim to promote. Third, this special issue points to the need to rethink the politics of cultural policy mobility and offers conceptual tools such as vernacularization to make sense of the ways in which urban elites navigate, negotiate and take advantage of circulating cultural policy models.

Introduction

In 2019, UNESCO named the city of Sharjah, 'World Book Capital.' This reflected the culmination of a long series of efforts that started in the mid-1990s when this small city-state in the Gulf (the third largest Arab Emirate in the UAE) began to reinvent itself as an artistic and cultural destination. With its prestigious Biennial and Book fair, Sharjah went from being seen as the dull, conservative peripheral neighbour of the more exciting Dubai to a must-attend destination for many of the world's cultural movers and shakers. Sharjah is not alone. Many cities outside of the main cultural centres of the West have used culture to reinvent or reposition themselves in the global cultural hierarchy. Beijing's 798 art district helped transform the image of the Chinese political capital into a dynamic art scene (Ren and Sun 2012). With the opening of a new museum, Zeitz MOCAA, in late 2017, Cape Town heightened its prominence at the heart of the African contemporary art world. In 2018, the government of Buenos Aires joined forces with the Art Basel Cities program to support a multi-year series of initiatives to enhance the city's art scene and build bridges with the international art world.

This special issue emerged from a conference held in Florence in March 2019 on cultural pluralism in 'global South' cities. It aims to explore the modalities and implications of the mobilization of culture to position cities on the world stage. It gathers contributions from a wide variety of cities in different

continents: Xi'an, Buenos Aires, Jakarta, Doha, Beirut, Port Elizabeth, Singapore, Bogota, Istanbul, Rio de Janeiro and Cairo. The contributions of this special issue all point to the importance of circulating ideas, standards, or models in shaping local cultural policies. Local leaders mobilize and vernacularize transnational references either as policy toolkits, or on the contrary, as foils that they wish to move away from.

A clarification is in order here: we use the term 'global South' acknowledging its connotations and limitations. The term is used here as a shorthand expression that refers to world regions outside Europe and North America (Dados and Connell 2012). We adopt this term to refer to the cultural, economic and geopolitical hierarchies that structure the world and that imbue international cultural relations and cultural policies. We acknowledge though not only the bias inherent in the term (generally used in the past as a metaphor to denote underdevelopment) but also its contested character as both cultural and economic power balance is shifting in the 21st century and the BRICS countries are emerging as important players internationally. We use the term here to emphasise its subverting power in line with Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's approach (Spivak 1988).

There have been numerous studies on culture-led regeneration in Western cities, what is often called the 'Bilbao effect' or urban (re)branding through culture (see for example: Bianchini and Parkinson 1994; Zukin 1995; Hannigan 1998; Scott 2000; Evans 2003). They chart how post-industrial cities are creating institutions or inviting already prominently established ones to create outposts like the Guggenheim Museum in Bilbao. Other cities 'rebrand' themselves by showcasing a period in history when the city thrived and which connects it to a different past and therefore a different present. Or they have become temporary hotspots, attracting large numbers of visitors for special events which planners then hope will translate into a more ongoing set of sustainable cultural and economic activities. This scholarship has focused primarily on cities in the West. The proliferation of cultural initiatives in cities of the 'global South' over the last two decades, however, calls for further investigation into these processes in a wider range of contexts. The emergence of new museums and festivals, the launch of creative industries programs, the multiple UNESCO labels that have been attributed to cities, which, for a long time, were considered peripheral in the highly hierarchical global art field, raise novel questions that require new theoretical approaches to be answered satisfactorily.

This special issue aims to fill this gap in the literature in which comparative and cross-regional research on cultural policies in 'global South' cities is lacking. Research on cities in the 'global South' is often based on cases studies, which do not take into account the multi-scalar power dynamics in which they are embedded. They also frequently rely on theoretical frameworks established in and for Western cities and tend to interpret cultural policies in 'global South' cities in light of homogenizing scripts such as the 'creative industries', 'cultural diplomacy', or the 'creative city.' But as the articles in this special issue demonstrate, empirically based analyses, which look closely at how urban governance is inscribed in different scales of power, reveal important variations and insights from these regions.

We are not suggesting that there is something unique about urban cultural policies in the 'global South'. Rather, we argue that these policies are particularly important in driving forward and helping us to understand processes of cultural 'rescaling' through which pre-existing territorial hierarchies, within and between countries, are challenged and reworked. By cultural rescaling, we mean how cities position or reposition themselves within multi-scalar cultural hierarchies. For example, when the Zeitz MOCAA opened in Cape Town, it was not only an attempt to displace Johannesburg as South Africa's cultural capital (if it had not already done so). It was also an effort to rescale Cape Town as an important capital of the African, if not global, contemporary art world.

A long and rich literature drives home how the restructuring of global capitalism necessarily shifted our attention away from national policies to consider the effect of multi-scalar processes on cities (Brenner 1999; Çağlar & Glick-Schiller 2018). While focusing on cities as sites where cultural policies are enacted is now widely accepted, methodological nationalism still prevails (Grodach and Silver 2012). This is, in part, because cultural policy is often understood as primarily focused on promoting national culture and heritage. Research in this area also tends to focus on formal cultural frameworks established at the state level. From our point of view, this understanding of cities as

cultural policy actors is much too narrow. It fails to take into account the widespread networks in which cities are embedded and the complexity of the interactions between the intersecting urban, national, and international actors and institutions within them.

This special issue advocates for the added value of a multi-scalar approach to cultural policy. By this we mean that we do not take as given the levels and hierarchy of the relevant scales of social action in each of our cases. Rather, we ask empirically which scales are working in combination with one another and the ways in which the power dynamics between them bring certain actors to the fore while marginalizing others. Our approach is distinct from a multi-level approach in that we include formal institutions, such as international organisations, states, and local governments alongside other axes of power such as private actors, policy models, and aesthetic norms. A multi-scalar approach makes clear just how much the seemingly local is connected to other trends in other places. The different positionality or embeddedness of each actor, institution, or urban space in the multi-scalar field strongly influences what kinds of cultural policies are used, toward what ends, and with what level of success.

Cities' cultural rescaling processes go hand in hand with the emergence of a transnational and multi-scalar cultural policy-making field, which is characterized, by the circulation, vernacularization, and uneven adoption of global cultural policy standards and models. Traditionally understood within the scope of the nation-state, cultural policies have been reconfigured by the intense (yet uneven) interconnection of urban centres worldwide. Transnational organizations, like UNESCO, the International Olympic Committee, or international consulting firms have emerged as key catalysts for the global circulation of policy ideas. Cultural professionals have to navigate between local interests and power dynamics. The factors determining a city's rising fortunes and their own careers extend far beyond the urban borders – a new reality which brings into sharp relief the consequences of transnational processes on grounded urban transformation.

'Global South' cities have been the object of other comparative special issues in the International Journal of Cultural Policy, with regional entries on Asia (Lim 2012) and the Ibero-American region (Rodríguez Morató and Zamorano 2018). Both of these volumes share our concern about the need to decentre the scholarship on cultural policies by bringing into focus a wider variety of local contexts that are outside Europe and the West. This special issue pushes this discussion forward by taking it beyond regional categories. Our contributors allow us to make cross-regional comparisons, thus providing us with fertile ground for developing new analytical paths. We do not want, however, to repeat old mistakes by proposing an essentialist view of 'global South' cities.[1] Rather, precisely because they are so diverse, these urban centres are particularly well suited for showing us how global cultural hierarchies actually get restructured. They also reveal clearly how multiple actors, operating at multiple scales, are connected to actors at different levels in and outside the nation. Urban and national cultural policies are constituted transnationally, and these, in turn, contribute to the production of global models we see circulating throughout the world (McCann and Ward 2012).

Global policy circulation and the cultural rescaling of cities

Two streams of literature provide us with important foundations with which to analyse the multi-scalar production of urban cultural policies. One the one hand, the political economy approach has situated cities as key nodes of global economic restructuring. To understand how cities reposition and reinvent themselves, we need to understand the different processes by which some localities are incorporated more centrally and beneficially into circuits of power than others (Sassen 2012). The concentration of actors, institutions, and activities; the particular role a city plays in the urban distribution of labour as a result of that agglomeration, and the ways in which they connect cities to other parts of the world influences the city's global standing and its ability to raise its status.

On the other hand, research on cultural globalization also provides important insights. Cultural hierarchies are not solely determined by economic hierarchies. As Hannerz argued long ago, 'centre/periphery relationships of culture are not (…) a mere reflection of political and economic power'

(Hannerz 1992, 219). In fact, argues Buchholz (2018), the economic and cultural positions of cities in these different hierarchies often vary. There are, in fact, specific spatial logics for different cultural sectors and for different segments of the cultural production process. Yet this important theoretical step forward needs to be complemented with a look at the active role that urban actors play in positioning themselves within these cultural hierarchies and in reconfiguring them – an accompanying analysis of the ways in which local power dynamics influence scale-making (Tsing 2005; Molho 2015; Sindelar 2016).

Cities are not closed, rooted containers but constantly evolving processes of building, taking apart, connecting and disconnecting that create alliances and antagonisms (Çağlar and Glick-Schiller 2018, 9).[2] Cities, and localities in general, inform and are informed by the intersecting sites of the broader social fields in which they are embedded. The cultural structures and governance regimes operating on these distant planes (such as regional, national, and transnational government) all influence the seemingly local because 'the local' is located within and affected by the broader social fields where it lies (Levitt 2015). This reality translates into the rise of the circulation of urban cultural policies models (González 2011; Molho 2018). Municipal policy makers and planners adopt 'best practices,' mobilize transnational references, and vernacularize existing models (McCann 2011; Levitt and Merry 2009). Consultants and experts also play an important role in promoting these practices, mediating these processes of emulation and shaping new models for export and reuse.

Baker and Temenos (2015, 2) outline three views of policy mobility in the literature: the first emphasizes how policies are produced in connection with actions taking place elsewhere. While they note 'the constitutive tensions between fixity and flow, territories and relations,' they also argue that 'mobile policies are "placed" and derive their legitimacy from territorially embedded narratives of policy success.' A second version treats policy mobility as an instrument of neoliberalisation and uses the frame as an 'entry point into understanding hegemonic political-institutional settlements.' A third perspective sees policy mobility as a socio-technical assemblage and 'pays particular attention to the role of materials (policy documents, press releases, websites, manuals) and techniques (performance indicators, audit regimes), which shape the intentionality of policy actors'. In each of these cases, some kind of vernacularisation occurs whereby global models are not simply transmitted and translated but made comprehensible, appropriate, and useful (see Levitt this volume).

The contributions in this special issue shine light on the different intended and unintended consequences of cities' cultural rescaling and cultural policy mobility. First, they look at how global cultural policy models actually circulate and get used and how the social positions of the elites who promulgate them affect their diffusion and vernacularization. Second, they analyse the patterns of exclusion generated by dominant cultural policy models and explore how local actors and residents resist and develop alternatives. Third, they show how local actors make sense of their city's past and heritage in relation to multi-scalar logics of power and the strong influence of transnational standards and organizations in reshaping local narratives and transforming the city symbolically and materially.

Rethinking cultural policy mobility from cities of the 'global South'

Local cultural policies use scripts or borrow ideas, references and practices from elsewhere. These are not one-way policy transfers (McCann and Ward 2012). While, in the past, many researchers reduced changes in urban cultural policies in Asia, for example, to the global circulation of hegemonic scripts, neoliberalism, and the enthusiastic adoption of creative industry policies (Kong 2009; Lee and Lim 2014), more recent work takes a closer look. Globalisation can take regional cultural configurations (Triandafyllidou 2017a, 2017b). Roy and Ong (2011, 13), for example, argue that 'the tendency is no longer simply to turn to Western prototypes, but rather to develop homegrown solutions to Asian metropolitan challenges, distinctive urban profiles, political styles, and aesthetic forms'. The 'art of being global' is a situated process, driven by local actors in interaction with various scales. It is 'a political game that is allusive, contrastive, comparative, and contested, with cities in the region, but

also beyond' (Roy and Ong 2011, 13). This game is driven by a transnational class of art makers and cultural managers who are each embedded in their own networks (Harkness and Levitt 2017). Some tend to circulate globally – they are present everywhere. Some circulate more regionally, gaining expertise and reputation in a more limited geography. They influence rescaling by importing models, tools, and visions and through the prestige they accord to a city when it becomes important enough for them to come there to work.

The contributions of this special issue propose conceptual tools and perspectives to think cultural policy mobility from the perspectives of 'global South' cities. The notion of metonymic menace captures the construction of Dubai as anti-model by urban elites in Beirut and Istanbul. The concept of modelling used in the comparison of Doha and Singapore reflects on how emerging global cities endeavour to construct themselves as models. The notion of vernacularization provides a theoretical framework to analyse the process of adoption of circulating cultural policy models. These three contributions provide different takes to decipher the urban politics of transnational cultural policy mobility.

Ryan Centner's comparative analysis of Beirut and Istanbul explores how city shapers established Dubai as a 'metonymic menace' epitomizing the 'spectacular yet supposedly culture-less Gulf cities.' He shows how urbanists draw on their city's history in order to construct distinctive urban profiles. In the context of speculative construction frenzies that threaten their local heritage, Turkish and Lebanese city-shapers stress that their cities are 'more' than Dubai, emphasizing their long-standing 'civilizations'. City-shapers, including architects, planners, researchers, philanthropists, developers, and politicians, constitute discursively their city's future and aspirations. They emphasize the symbolic character of their cities' infrastructure to draw a stark contrast with Gulf urbanism. Dubai, in turn, rather than described as 'a carefully detailed contrast,' is caricatured as 'a foil, easy to dismiss.'

Actors in Istanbul portray their city as a bridge between the different civilizations of Europe and Asia (as materialized in the actual bridges that span the Bosphorus) while city-shapers in Beirut celebrate its pluri-lingual, pluri-religious past. Centner's account challenges the idea that models are diffused and unquestioned and opens a field of reflection around the politics of cultural policy mobility. Models are not depoliticized toolkits that professionals mobilize to reach universally accepted and consensual goals. Rather, they must be understood as political constructs created by urban elites who tap into external symbolic resources to build their legitimacy. As Centner's article makes clear, anti-models are also rhetorically mobilized to aid their cause.

Jeremie Molho's comparative study of Doha and Singapore focuses on cultural districts as highly mobile policy instruments. The article stresses local actors' capacity to adopt and adapt global models to suit their particular interests and, in turn, to promote themselves as models. Drawing on Roy and Ong (2011)'s concept of modelling, he argues that this process takes two forms. On the one hand, modelling can consist of the projection of a pre-established discourse within the urban landscape, through cultural planning or regeneration. This top-down approach is evidenced in cultural districts like Katara in Doha, established from scratch to portray the city as a beacon of Arab culture and project a combination of a cosmopolitan openness and a celebration of national traditions. In Singapore, the transformation of the Gillman Barracks, a former British military complex into an art cluster to catapult the city-state into the centre of Southeast Asia's art market operates according to the same logic.

On the other hand, the modelling process can tap into the symbolic resources of the place but only if local cultural actors engage with the urban environment and challenge pre-existing narratives. In Singapore, the official discourse promoted a 'side-by-side' approach to diversity, which would have led to the creation of three separate tourism-oriented ethnic heritage districts. This vision, however, was questioned, nuanced, and altered by cultural actors in each district. The Little India district, initially planned as a showcase of an essentialized portrayal of the Indian community of Singapore, gave way to a more complex picture of the intercultural exchanges that presided over the making of the neighbourhood and of the various and dynamically evolving components of the Singaporean Indian community. In Doha, the homogenizing Qatari identity discourse has been rendered more complex through the excavation of the diverse heritage of the Msheireb district,

and an emphasis on the long-negated story of the Qatari Afro-descendant community, in the recently inaugurated Bin Jelmood House Museum.

The article argues that modelling cities and constructing them as cultural diversity models can also be a way to respond to critiques from the outside world, particularly over how cities manage diversity. In Doha and Singapore the situation of low-skilled migrant workers that are symbolically and physically excluded from urban cultural policies constitute a clear example of such contradictions.

In her article on Buenos Aires and Beirut, Peggy Levitt shows how cities position themselves as 'cultural destinations of choice.' These loosely-coupled strategies, which have been put in place to help cities achieve greater prominence on the world map, borrow a similar grammar and grow out of a set of ideas shared by public and private actors on the kinds of cultural institutions and activities that are needed for a city to be recognized as an important cultural centre. But they also grow out of specific logics based on the kinds of actors involved and their transnational connections. Levitt expands upon the concept of vernacularization as a way to better understand policy mobility and adoption. The added value of the vernacularization approach is to bring under one analytical umbrella the separate but entwined factors which affect policy travel and use including (a) positionality or the social and spatial status of actors, institutions and localities, (b) processes of communication that go beyond translation to make ideas and practices understandable, resonant, and useful, (c) the resulting vernacularization of aspirations and goals, and (d) the ways in which each of these factors changes over time as policies come to ground, are modified, and circulate once again. Each aspect of vernacularization relies deeply on meaning making and remaking, whether it be the identity of the vernacularizer herself or of the institutions and cities where she is located.

While vernacularizers have similar conceptions of what a successful art ecosystem is supposed to look like, their strategies and networks differ. The construction of a 'cultural destination of choice' follows different patterns and logics depending on the networks of local actors and on their capacity and willingness to vernacularize global standards to adjust them in local contexts. The article distinguishes different types of vernaculizers: 'stars' who are singled out by the international community, 'supporting actors' who are partially integrated into global networks, and 'the extras', who have more limited international exposure. Their connectivity also influences their ability to become generators of new approaches in their own right which will then go on to be vernacularized elsewhere.

Hegemonic urban cultural policy models and resistances

This widespread diffusion of global urban cultural policy models has left its mark on cities throughout the world. Although they generally espouse progressive values, they often drive forward the marketization and the commodification of local culture and lead to increased exclusion of already marginalized communities. Much scholarship emphasizes the rise of neoliberal cultural policies, which tend to reduce culture to a mere economic development tool. As Grodach and Silver (2012, 6) argue, the various efforts to use cultural policies as economic development engines 'marginalize those that do not fit this narrative of economic development including ethnic minorities and the urban poor, not to mention artists.' It is, therefore, essential to analyse who the city's cultural policy is addressing and how these global models get vernacularized in local contexts.

The contributions to this special issue emphasize the contradictions of these models in 'global South' cities and analyse different forms of resistance that emerge on the ground. The struggle between more globalized and more localized frames plays out in different ways. More globally oriented elites and tastemakers often try to exclude publics whose vision goes against their version of the city's global aspirations. The global cultural economy materializes within the urban space, generating centres and peripheries and processes of gentrification, exclusion, and marginalization of minority cultures. The special issue highlights the tensions between efforts to attract cosmopolitans,

tourists, and transnational professionals and the needs of ordinary residents. It reveals urban social movements and other types of mobilizations that contest these dominant discourses.

Claudia Seldin, Caio César de Azevedo Barros, Thomas Ilg Gavinho and Pedro Vitor Costa Ribeiro's article contrasts Rio's mega-events and cultural flagship policies with grassroots cultural initiatives in the periphery. During the 2010s, Rio took a series of bold steps to get itself fully recognized as creative global city, including seeking UNESCO world heritage status, hosting global mega-events such as the 2014 FIFA World Cup and the 2016 Olympics, and creating world-class cultural institutions such as the Museum of Tomorrow. It also launched exclusionary culture-led regeneration projects like the Porto Maravilha. In this context of pervasive inequality and inaccessibility of even basic services, it is not a surprise that these 'creative global city' policies left many people out. In fact, this article is a stinging critique of hegemonic models that use culture as an urban development tool.

In response, it describes temporary cultural spaces in marginalized neighbourhoods as alternative cultural policies. The 'Cine Taquara' – an improvised cinema and debate forum reflects what the authors call an 'alternative transnational circuit,' where local issues of inequality, marginalization, and lack of access to public services are discussed. They liken such efforts to tactical urbanism. Rather than seeing them as bypassing traditional cultural policies or denouncing them for their rigidity, as is often the case in the literature, these authors see such projects as a way to claim a right to the city in the context of scarce public services – a radical contestation of urban inequalities. As they put it: 'in uneven cities, peripheral temporary spaces should be considered not as a model to be replicated, but as politically-charged attempts to create emancipatory territories within a much larger picture of economic and social dispute." Conscious of the critique that building alternative models often translates into "artwashing," which dissolves and aestheticizes social and urban issues, the authors stress these initiatives' subversive meaning and their goal of bringing about sustainable, meaningful improvements to the lives of the urban poor.

Marta Montanini analyses the effects of designating the oldest Township of Port Elizabeth into a cultural district called the 'Red Location Museum and Cultural Precinct (RLMCP).' The project was meant to accomplish three interrelated objectives: regenerating the neighbourhood, acknowledging the struggle against the Apartheid regime, and allowing Port Elizabeth to scale up to greater global prominence. The RLMCP master plan is 'studded with examples of and comparisons with Western projects,' and represents South Africa's full embrace of creative city models.

Montanini shows that the 'creative township,' that would deploy culture and creative industries for township development received strong support from urban elites. Yet, as we have already seen in other cases, the RLMCP would have led to gentrification which in this case, Montanini argues, was a goal not a side effect. The construction of a museum of the apartheid struggle was not intended to 'change the township, but the "reading" of the city.' The recreation of the space as a 'new South African kind of city centre' was aimed more at tourists and tastemakers than at local residents. Here again, locals resisted, protesting against displacement and dispossession but also against the diversion of public money away from social programs that would have rebranded the neighbourhood without resulting in concrete improvements in people's lives. A succession of protests ultimately blocked the project, underscoring the limits of culture-led regeneration aimed at external audiences with little consideration for local residents.

Violante Torre analyses the transformation Bogota's Avenida 26 into a place of memory, in the context of Colombia's post-conflict transition. Since memory and history are entangled with culture-led regeneration agendas, this has led to selective and incomplete representations of the past. Although the creation of places of memory is presented as a tool of inclusion, empowerment and peace-making, Violante Torre argues that they are 'deeply implicated in strategies of entrepreneurial and exclusionary urban governance, producing political alienation and social exclusion'.

Urban leaders mobilized culture to transform the city's image from a violent place into a cultural paradise. Numerous cultural spaces and memory markers were created around the city, including most notably, a 'Centre of memory, peace, and reconciliation' on the Avenida 26 which was developed in collaboration with victims of the conflict. As its popularity as a destination grew,

Bogotá became recognized as a model of successful urban transformation. But as Violante Torre explains, the main aim of these initiatives was to attract investment in the city centre which accelerated gentrification. Bikers and graffiti artists responded by creating their own grassroots responses to the city's difficult memory. The street thus became a site of conflicting, fragmented memories which undercut the city's rebranding efforts.

There is, therefore, a stark contradiction between the progressive values upon which many cultural projects are conceptualized and their actual effects. Organizing large sporting events and building museums are meant to promote social cohesion. The commemoration of difficult pasts is seen as a necessary next step in helping societies recover from the wounds of history. Yet these initiatives do not happen in a vacuum. They are embedded in local dynamics of power and are connected to a variety of local material interests. They are also driven by international and national elites who are disconnected from marginalized populations and more focused on external audiences. These contributions also showcase forms of resistance which either produce alternative cultural interventions or, as in the case of Port Elizabeth, prevent projects from moving forward.

The transnational fabric of the city's cultural armature

A city's cultural armature – its social and cultural policies, histories, institutions, and demography that strongly influences what cultural actors do and the kinds of ideologies and commitments they embrace – also determines the resources and liabilities a particular city brings to the rescaling task (Levitt 2015). The cultural armature plays an important role in the perception of the city from the inside and out. It influences how urban history gets mobilized as a resource to reposition the city nationally and internationally. It also shapes the ways in which cities reinvent their pasts to encourage different futures and whose interests are served when history gets told in a particular way. Our contributors dig deep into the cultural armature of their field sites. In particular, by exploring Cairo's successive conservation paradigms, the politics of world heritage labeling in Jakarta, and the reimaging of Xi'an through multifaceted interpretations of the silk road, they uncover how multi-scalar power dynamics shape reconstructions of each city's history, heritage, and identity.

Momen El Husseiny and Nihal Hafez's article studies the heritagization of the Old City of Cairo comparing two projects: the colonial-era conservation of a traditional Egyptian house by *Comité de Conservation des Monuments de l'Art Arabe*, and the regeneration of a thirty-hectare urban park, with support from the Aga Khan Trust for Culture at the end of the twentieth century. These projects, they argue, represent a paradigm shift in heritage conservation in Cairo.

The first project was carried out in the context of the modernization of Cairo, initiated in the 19th century by Khedive Ismail who, in his attempt to 'Europeanize' the city, emphasized its medieval heritage with help from orientalist art historians, architects and intellectuals. This period is marked by the predominance of the 'conserving by aesthetics' paradigm which focused on the preservation of monuments and the belief that residents were incapable of preserving their own heritage.

A new phase started in the late 1970s as President Sadat broke away from the Pro-Soviet leanings of his predecessor Gamal Abdel Nasser. With help from international agencies such as UNESCO and the Aga Khan Trust for Culture, it led to the re-branding of Cairo and the rise of the 'conserving by development' paradigm. This new approach emphasized the role of heritage and community participation in fostering 'development' and introduced a market-driven mindset that encouraged investments in cultural tourism. It produced a 'sanitized choreography,' intended to allow Cairo to become a member of good standing in the world heritage club.

This shift from the aesthetic to the development paradigm shows the malleability of the city's cultural armature. Different actors connected to different transnational fields vernacularize and mobilize specific aspects of Cairo's past to achieve their goals. The city's heritage landscape can be interpreted in a range of ways that can, in turn, be deployed to include some communities and exclude others. The conservation of Cairo's old neighbourhoods, Momen El Husseiny and Nihal Hafez

argue, drives accumulation by dispossession and disrupts local residents' lives in order to project a more attractive image to the global stage.

Bastiaan Nugteren's analysis of the campaign during the mid-2010s to get the old Dutch colonial neighbourhood of Jakarta, Kota Tua, on the UNESCO World Heritage List showcases a range of interconnected tensions between actors operating at different scales. Many heritage professionals' aspirations for the neighbourhood combined different temporalities: the past with its conflicting interpretations of the neighbourhood's colonial heritage, the present which used heritage preservation to promote development and the future with an entirely new vision and purpose for the area. This 'universalist' approach conflicted with the Indonesian government's postcolonial and nationalist interpretation of history. In the end, the UNESCO application celebrated Holland's transformation of the city into a regional trade centre while also emphasizing the indigenous Indonesian contributions to its history. The UNESCO framework also pushed heritage professionals to situate the neighbourhood in a global landscape by comparing it to other cities with common features such as the other Dutch colonial port towns of Colombo and Cape Town. This case also underscores the importance of the material interests at play. Despite its eventual failure, the nomination included major investments in 'cleaning up a neighbourhood that symbolizes the present-day problems facing Jakarta: poverty, crime, corruption, political disintegration, pollution.' While conscious of the risks of gentrification for local residents, heritage professionals were hard pressed to prevent them.

Yang Yang's article analyses how images of the Silk Road are mobilized in heritage policies in the city of Xi'an. She argues that the Chinese government-led Belt and Road Initiative (BRI) is an integral part of its plan to extend its influence beyond its borders by using culture as a tool of soft power. Cities fit in the narrative by selectively incorporating related symbols into their built environment. Xi'an's inclusion in the Belt and Road Initiative transformed its heritage policy. Yang Yang shows how urban elites mobilized the Silk Road narrative to reposition their city in the national and international realm, raising its status, and challenging the long-standing dominance of coastal cities which have received most of the country's development resources.

Yang Yang brings to light the divergence between the top-down BRI narrative and the stories that emerge on the ground. In particular, she shows how the Hui Muslim community has emphasized the non-Chinese cultural influences in the city and the cosmopolitan character of the city's Silk Road centre. It was a commercial hub for Arab and Persian merchants, a site of frequent intercultural exchanges with the local Chinese during the Tang dynasty, and a Muslim pilgrimage route leading from China to Mecca – histories that all contribute to a 'less China-centric' narrative. At the same time, by taking part in the construction of the city's Silk Road narrative, Muslim elites demonstrate their support of the Chinese government's vision.

In sum, these three articles make clear that we must take all of the different local, national, and international actors and standards contributing to the (re)definition and contestation of a city's history into account when analysing rescaling processes. We must also take into consideration the ways in which cities selectively deploy pieces of their cultural armature by mobilizing their pasts to connect themselves to particular futures. Some view their 'golden age,' as a springboard to a more prominent present and future while others want to erase or reinvent that past which then connects them to other actors, narratives, and networks in the multi-scalar web. Each choice determines the effectiveness of culture as a rescaling tool.

In conclusion, this special issue stresses the need to consider embeddedness of all kinds in processes of rescaling – be they individual actors, institutions, or cities – in multi-scalar webs of power. The models that circulate, to whom and where they travel, and how they are vernacularized and deployed depend upon the power and position of the actors and institutions that receive them. The cities in the 'global South' that are showcased here are not accepting imported models hook, line, and sinker. Rather urban policy making is fraught with tension not only because of local conflicts between elites and the poor but because of conflicting interests across the world that influence seemingly local decisions. Purposeful efforts to thicken the circulatory routes between 'global South' cities may lead to more fruitful exchanges of models better suited to this context. What these articles

show is that, to a certain extent, this is well underway. Hegemonic models emerging from the West are not the only ones available and cities around the world are taking part in producing new approaches and alternatives.

Notes

1. Recent works have engaged critically with 'Southern urban theories' (Robinson 2016; Dines 2016)
2. Çağlar and Glick-Schiller (2018) distinguish their multiscalar approach from a multi-level approach. While a multilevel approach would also confront different levels of analyses their multiscalar approach specifically attempts to unveil unequal power structures that play out across different scales and to call our attention to how scales and scaling processes are socially constructed.

Disclosure statement

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Anna Triandafyllidou has been awarded the Canada Excellence Research Chair in Migration and Integration at Ryerson University, Toronto that started on 1st August 2019. Professor Anna Triandafyllidou has held a Robert Schuman Chair at the Global Governance Programme of the European University Institute (Robert Schuman Centre for Advanced Studies) between 2012 and 2019 where she directed the Cultural Pluralism Research Area. She is the Editor-in-Chief of the *Journal of Immigrant and Refugee Studies*, Chair of the IMISCOE Editorial Committee, and member of the IMISCOE Board of Directors. She has been Visiting Professor at the College of Europe in Bruges between 2002 and 2018. She is the Scientific Coordinator of two large Horizon 2020 projects: The GREASE project (started in October 2018) studies European and Asian approaches on governing religion and addressing religiously-legitimated radicalization, while the BRaVE project (launched in January 2019) analyses wider processes of polarization and violent extremism towards both the far right and Islam, with a view of elaborating policies and practices that build resilience towards such phenomena. Anna Triandafyllidou also leads the EUI team in the SIRIUS project on the drivers and barriers towards migrant and asylum seeker integration in European labour markets.

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