

LISA B. W. DRUMMOND AND DOUGLAS YOUNG, EDS.

Socialist and Post-Socialist Urbanisms: Critical Reflections from a Global Perspective.

Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 2020. 336 pages. \$100.00 (hardcover), \$42.95 (paperback), \$34.95 (e-book).

“The city is a palimpsest,” opens the introduction to this volume by its two editors, Lisa B. W. Drummond and Douglas Young. Lisa Drummond passed in 2021. This volume is as impressive in scope as it is rich. It brings together a collection of essays exploring the scripts on the under- and overlaying parchment of socialist and post-socialist urban planning and market forces, but more importantly, of the lives lived by the inhabitants in these cities across continents. The essays cover places as near and far from one another as Vinh, Vällingby, Hà Nội, Leningrad, Prague, Phnom Penh, Addis Ababa, Bucharest, Berlin, the various cities of China in the National Civilized City project, Tirana, Managua, Hồ Chí Minh City, and Khujand. What connect these cities are the approaches that the volume covers, elucidating the ways cities are tied to past and present visions of modernity, of politics, of the future itself.

The editors’ introduction takes us through a history of modernist socialist urban planning, from the nineteenth century’s utopian Owenite and Fourierist villages and the English Garden Cities, to the decades of the twentieth century’s various urban projects to address social needs. The volume’s focus, however, is on actually existing socialist urbanism of the twentieth century and thereafter, when the Cold War waned and global capitalism spread. Actually existing socialism is presented in this volume as including a range from social democracy to repressive state socialism. The common thread

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that connects the studies in this volume is the “social” in “the commitment to the modernist idea of universal progress, a desire to create a socially egalitarian society, and a heightened degree of state intervention in processes of city-building and urban governance” (4). The volume gives us a post-Cold War and expansive view of modernist socialism in its various forms and places, conceptually blurring the Cold War divide between the capitalist West and the socialist East.

The volume is organized into three parts, addressing aspects of socialist and post-socialist urbanism across Europe, Asia, Africa, and Latin America. Part 1, “Housing Experiences and Life Trajectories,” traces the types of housing envisioned and built, as well as how inhabitants lived out their lives in them over time. Christina Schwenkel follows the flagship housing project in Vinh built with support from the German Democratic Republic in the early 1980s to showcase socialist modernist design and solidarity, only to fall derelict due to Vietnam’s marketization and changing land-use laws. While the housing project was intended to provide this necessity for workers who contributed to nation-building, the gendered division of labor resulted in men being more often allocated land than women, with land later accruing much greater speculative value in the new market economy. Drummond and Nguyễn Thanh Bình trace a similar path for collective housing in Hà Nội, where the local government embraced the demolition of housing blocks to replace them with condominiums built with private investment. Schwenkel, Drummond, and Nguyễn Thanh Bình place us in these dwellings and their journeys through marketization by way of the residents’ accounts.

How inhabitants navigated socialist housing options provides an interesting method taken by Thomas Borén and Michael Gentile as their chapter chronicles the housing history of one family in Leningrad through interviews. The housing-history is a life-history that reveals tactics practiced by residents who interpreted the seemingly uniform design of the units for values that might add to their lives. A similarly longitudinal method is used by Bo Larsson in his interviews of seven households to trace the life changes of residents in the Vällingby suburb of Stockholm since a 1950s sociological study was conducted. At that time, this housing development was vested with intentional design and meaning in a social-democratic vision of egalitarianism and integrated work-life functions.

Part 2, “Planning and Architecture: Designing Socialist and Post-Socialist Urbanism,” deals with socialist efforts to redesign urban centers away from the failures of capitalism as well as how people in the post-socialist era interacted with these earlier socialist visions. Steven Logan shows how people find renewed value in South City, Prague, in what motivated its earlier socialist design for functionality and mobility in the 1960s. Looking at two unfinished projects in Bucharest from Ceaușescu’s Romania, Laura Visan follows debates about whether to repurpose or abandon these sites and the vision they embodied. Relatedly, Markus Kip and Douglas Young follow the oscillation in debates about whether to preserve Alexanderplatz Square in East Berlin to argue for present social uses of such space.

Considering Cambodia’s tumultuous history, Gabriel Fauveaud argues that “post-socialist transitions produce political, economic, social, and territorial changes evolving at different time scales” (129). Multiple temporalities are at play in the post-socialist city of Phnom Penh—the layering and patchworking by planners and investors on violent historical ruptures as well as persistent features of the city like the river, royalty, and spirituality. As such, Fauveaud provocatively calls into question “the post-socialist city as a readable and generalizable unit of analysis” (129). And in a rare look at African socialism, Jesse McClelland follows the early socialist intervention in Addis Ababa that emphasized resource redistribution to present urbanization pressures that increase the importance of its urban spaces for residents.

Part 3 covers governance and social order, addressing questions of the continuity or discontinuity of socialist governance in post-socialist cities. Carolyn Cartier shows how the National Civilized City campaign in China, which emerged from the socialist model-making tradition to allow central state discipline while incentivizing local municipalities, continued to operate in more recent times of capitalist conversion. Marcela Mele and Andrew E. G. Jonas find the earlier socialist anti-urban governance of Tirana and its suburbs necessitated informal strategies by which residents now accessed land, services, and political participation. In Hồ Chí Minh City, Marie Gibert and Emmanuelle Peyvel interview young professionals to assess how they pursued global neoliberal values in lifestyle and social mobility while negotiating legacies of socialist urbanism. Moving to Tajikistan, on the periphery of the Soviet Union, Wladimir Sgibnev shows how maps—official and

mental, from pre-Soviet to the contemporary moment—offer fascinating insights into ways of knowing, moving through, and living in the city of Khusand. Sgibnev finds even individual modes of mapping were shaped by official cartographic erasures as residents navigated the range of socialist and post-socialist urbanisms. In Nicaragua, Laura Shillington studies Managua's contemporary socio-natural relations as shaped through socialist and neo-liberal modernist discursive formations under the Sandinistas and neo-Sandinistas. Socio-natural entities or phenomena like lagunas and lakes or earthquakes went from being sites vested with revolutionary potentials to sites of privatization contemplating sustainable development and neoliberal socialist nostalgia.

In their conclusion, the editors consider socialism in dimensions of urbanism from the material to the symbolic in the governance and production of space. Through this rich tour of cities across the globe by way of diverse methods, the editors and authors make audible and visible the voices, lives, and traces of people who lived or live still in these places.

As Drummond's final publication, *Socialist and Post-Socialist Urbanisms* is a fitting tribute to a career and a life shaped by a passion for urban geographies, their quotidian rhythms, and the people who bring them to life. Drummond did her undergraduate and MA work in British Columbia, completed her PhD in geographical sciences at Australian National University, and served as associate professor of urban studies at York University. She was fascinated with cities across the world, especially in southeast Asia, and specialized in Hà Nội and Hồ Chí Minh City.

In her intellectual approach, she went for the lives in the place, the place in the city, the city in the world, held in a web of interconnections. She was interested in how young inhabitants made or navigated public spaces in relation to private ones. She emphasized how class, gender, and sexual practices informed and transgressed spatial formations. Besides other publications and the present volume, she edited *Critical Reflections on Cities in Southeast Asia* with Tim Bunnell and Ho Kong Chong, *The Reinvention of Distinction: Modernity and the Modern Class in Urban Vietnam* with Vân Nguyen-Marshall and Danièle Bélanger, *Consuming Urban Culture in Contemporary Vietnam* with Mandy Thomas, and *Gender Practices in Contemporary Vietnam* with Helle Rydstrom. She was writing a book about public

space in Hà Nội from the French colonial period to the present. Some of her publications also appeared in Vietnamese. As an extension of her interest in how people lived their lives in cities, Drummond promoted the visual arts. She curated and worked to find opportunities for Vietnamese artists to exhibit their work in Canada and the United States.

A life is also a palimpsest. Lisa's was so much more than what could be documented on the surface of the pages of her books. Beside her devotion to her son, she nurtured, inspired, and led the people who were lucky enough to cross her path. She led us, her friends, through the layers of hopes, dreams, catastrophes, and heartbreak that made cities as she walked us through their streets and alleyways. She showed us the height of the Petronas towers that evoked not just the developmentalist hubris of skyscrapers but also the colonialist altitude of English hill stations. She led a group of her friends up above the Bund in Shanghai where some of us from former colonies tasted our first English afternoon tea with the unease that came with it. We watched the sun flit across vertical walls of glass only to dissipate on the river past its bend. Some of us were refugees from one of the cities Lisa studied. Once, she was on the phone from Hà Nội explaining the processes that made possible displays of exorbitant goods around me as I walked through a newly erected glitzy mall in Hồ Chí Minh City. Beneath stirred Sài Gòn. Lisa was there with many of us, taking us on palimpsestic journeys that go on beneath and above the capitalistic superfluous in cities made up of tumultuous dreams and sorrows, of unexpected or well-worn lives and loves.

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