

Policy Statement

In the twenty-one years since its founding, the *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* (IJURR) has become a well-established, successful journal with a record of having published pioneering work in the field. We, the new editors and the new editorial board, wish to express our most heartfelt appreciation for the work of our predecessors: first and foremost the previous editors Michael Harloe and Chris Pickvance, and all former Editorial Board members since 1977. Their efforts since the journal's inception have accounted for the consistent high quality of the publication. Now, as we take on the task of publishing the journal, we wish to inform our readers of what they can expect in the future.

IJURR is a distinctive academic journal: multidisciplinary, multitheoretical and international, as well as having a focus on progressive social change in cities and wider societies. We perceive no need for a radical change of direction. We do, however, intend some initiatives in response to changes in the field and readers' suggestions. Last summer, in anticipation of the change in editorship, we undertook, in collaboration with our publisher, an analysis of the content of the journal and a poll of some of our readers and contributors (a summary of which will be published in the Events and Debates section of the journal). The editorial board then met for a two-day retreat to discuss our findings and make plans for the future. From that discussion arose both the wish for continuity and proposals for change. We list our concerns below by focusing on those elements, both in the real world and in the academic research. We hope that potential contributors to the journal, as well as carrying on its existing orientation, will respond to our desire to broaden its scope by submitting manuscripts on subjects previously perceived to be outside its area.

International

IJURR has been a leading journal in the internationalization of the urban research academic community and we intend to remain at the forefront. We have published more papers on Asia, Australia, South America, eastern Europe and Africa than most journals. Beyond the international coverage, we have aimed to promote the point of view of researchers from various parts of the world in order to limit the domination of the Western view of the world, and of the social science world in particular. We intend to remain the leading urban and regional journal in that direction and to encourage by different means (such as the Foundation for Urban and regional research — FURS) more scholarly research to appear as cities take different routes and meanings in different parts of the world.

Critical

IJURR defends a critical tradition in urban research. Twenty years ago, the implications were quite clear: critical urban research was rooted in some form of marxism. Although that tradition remains an important basis for analysing urban political economy, it is no longer dominant. Whilst capitalism remains more than ever a shaper of our societies, analysis must take into account the complexity of social structures and institutions, the strategies of social and political actors, and the multiple sources of urban and regional changes. In particular, the variety of experiences within capitalism, indicated through comparative research, points to the necessity of combining different theoretical perspectives. IJURR will not abandon its critical tradition, but it may take very different theoretical angles, use a multiplicity of methods and express itself in different types of writing. A critical distance with respect to policy issues remains as important as ever.

Multidisciplinary

IJURR is a multidisciplinary journal and will remain so. A glance over the disciplinary background in urban and regional studies clearly underlines the extent to which barriers

among disciplines vary over time between and within countries. Sociology, geography, political science, public policy, urban and regional economics, anthropology, international political economy, planning and history are represented and will continue to be represented in *IJURR*. It appears that urban sociology may be less dominant than in the past, while geography or political economy have become dynamic fields of urban and regional research. We believe that urban anthropology has an important contribution to make (as the forthcoming special issue on urban ritual and symbolism will bear witness). Community studies have enjoyed a revival and various fields related to urban research have known significant development in the past few years, such as the environment, health, new technologies and gender studies.

Academic

We intend to maintain the high academic standard which has been one of the characteristics of *IJURR* (including a rigorous refereeing process). *IJURR* has a well-established tradition of publishing leading theoretical articles and we mean to keep that orientation very much alive. At a time when everyone is confronted with the somewhat contradictory trend towards fragmentation and globalization of knowledge and research, such key theoretical papers appear as essential as ever. Also, following another distinctive pattern (see the continuing debate around Wacquant's contribution to the study of the 'ghetto') and in light of the confusion which we all face, we intend to publish key articles in an attempt to clarify concepts and open up debate. Questions of social equality and difference require debate to clarify positions and link various types of literature. Likewise, claims concerning globalization and the role of the state need further clarification.

This has several implications. It is first, as always, difficult to make the links between theory and empirical research, between micro and meso, and between various processes shaped by or shaping cities. The editors have found it difficult in the past to deal with papers with a very broad theoretical perspective followed by a very detailed classic case study, where the two are not easily integrated. We hope to publish more papers which examine the links and the processes by which a more limited theoretical perspective can be integrated with more clearly articulated cases. Most importantly, we are keen to seek comparative papers, because this approach is often a good way to think through those links and processes, and to think about outcomes in a more precise and interesting way.

A second implication is that we intend to pay more attention to methods. It is important both to reflect on the ways in which we, as social scientists, are able to provide evidence or fragments of evidence in various contexts, and to reflect upon the categories we use. To some extent we intend to accept more tables, maps, statistics and types of evidence in the papers we publish, providing they are linked to arguments. Thanks to new technologies, it will soon be possible to provide full supporting evidence in the form of, for example, data sets or detailed maps on the *IJURR* internet site. By contrast, we continue to recognize the value of qualitative research.

Signposts for the future

Cities and regions are nowadays both different and the same: we have to deal with globalization, new technologies and increased forms of individualization, but also with poverty, racism, power and social/spatial segregation. Old questions remain salient and new emphases are also welcome. Elements of our research agenda follow.

First, in the broad postmodernist and cultural studies research which has developed over the past ten years, we have found many interesting avenues for research and an emphasis on contingency, reflectivity and diversity which we have to take more fully into account. We aim to develop a fruitful dialogue between a more open political economy tradition (i.e. marxist and non-marxist) and cultural studies. *IJURR* has already published a fair number of papers on race, identity, culture, gender and imagery and we recognize the importance of these categories for understanding our societies. Images prove essential

to understanding the remaking of some communities (invented or reinvented) and cities play a major role in that process. IJURR will critically address the links between knowledge, images and the production of cities.

The case put forward for a gendered perspective has proved remarkably successful in advancing a different critical tradition which goes beyond classic frameworks, and in developing very interesting urban research about the economy, social structure, political institutions and social movements. A more general point arises from cultural studies: i.e. that the social construction, aggregation and disaggregation of various analytical categories (for instance race and ethnicity) require more and more attention. Most ambitiously, one fruitful way forward would be to develop a cultural political economy approach which may take different forms, including putting identity and discourse into the political economy of cities as a way of responding to questions, critiques and challenges raised by postmodernist theories and research, for instance Eurocentrism.

Central to our research agenda are the forces, effects and processes associated with globalization. Increased economic and cultural integration raises significant issues with worrying implications — economic restructuring and resulting forms of exploitation, social conflict, environmental risk and ideological representation. We must examine critically the various conflicting processes and outcomes at stake, to look at ways in which social groups, institutions, individuals and cities are reacting against, adapting to, or redefining themselves in relation to changes which may be connected with some form of globalization. In some areas for instance, these processes are raising new questions about the scale and organization of cities, and the territorialization and deterritorialization of groups and firms. If traditional concepts of cities are still mostly valid, for instance in Europe, the growth of urban regions in various parts of the world associated with the rise of new technologies poses questions about the structure of cities (transport, information, organization, way of life, regulation of individual choice). It also leads us to examine the changing physical and built form configuration of urban spaces in relation to different political economy, geographical and social contexts. How, for instance, do new technologies, newly privatized infrastructures and governance regimes, and new ‘customized spaces’ for inward investment capital come together to structure the urban landscape (edge cities, networked cities)? What are the different meanings of ‘city’ in that respect?

In line with a revised political economy tradition, we have to take a wider view of regulation issues and to think creatively about the ways in which capitalism can be regulated. Since Marx, Weber and Polanyi there has been interest in the political and social foundations of the economy, and how regulation mechanisms differ from market mechanisms to explain the transformation of societies. We have seen an extension of market regulations in relation to globalization processes, marking a new phase of capitalist development which has manifested itself in the shape of increased capital mobility, having a decisive edge over immobile institutions or social groups that are rooted in one city. This leads to us look at the ways in which the economy is regulated, into the long-term effects of institutions and interest groups, and at the interaction and conflicts between social structures and institutions within each country, region or city in order to understand these societies and the ways in which capitalism is managed and regulated, or how it destroys societies. The major revival of research on the informal economy, social structure and household strategies on the one hand, and on the local economy, its embeddedness and dynamic processes of learning and innovation on the other, are obvious evidence of the growing importance of these approaches within both economic institutionalism and economic sociology.

Urban research in sociology has numerous traditions: the ecological tradition following the Chicago school and community studies, the Weberian tradition where the city is a structure and a society, the marxist political economy tradition, the Simmel influence of the *Großstadt*, and more recently the postmodern and cultural studies tradition. IJURR has published various sociological works, encompassing a wide range of

articles around issues of social inequality and change. These traditional strong points of the journal should remain so. At the same time we recognize that the metropolis is the place of hyperchoice for those individuals who have the resources, who increasingly are not bound by constraints (including proximity), but who are able to exercise selective choice and are parts of far-flung networks.

When the nation state plays a lesser role in structuring and guiding societies, the city as a social fabric may be more relevant, both in positive and in negative terms. Some wonder whether the long movement of ever increasing individualism is not going too far, leading to some 'negative individualism', which is another name for the risk of society's disaggregation and fragmentation. To go forward in understanding social inclusion/exclusion or cohesion, it is worth thinking about the current structures of societies and the space of solidarity. In that respect, *IJURR* has published important research and we are very interested in papers which examine the ways in which households in cities — families — play a role in welfare, in the formal and informal economy, or in religious communities.

Important developments have been taking place in the politics and policies of cities that have been echoed by *IJURR*. The changing relationship between national states and cities creates a period of transition for cities. From studies done on cities and regions, it is possible to establish a link between the decline of state regulation and the increase of competition between territories, especially between cities and regions. Initially, this competition has been analysed mainly in relation to economic development. Gradually, the emphasis has also been put on institutional and political developments (Europe, NAFTA) as well as on urban mobilizations in their capacity to produce collective strategies and new conflicts to oppose them. Are cities and urban regions in the process of trying to invent images of new communities and culture? Are they relevant places to develop democratic processes and the public sphere? The now important literature on urban growth coalitions, on competition among cities and urban regimes, and on governance suggests there is a case for the study of cities and urban regions as systems of actions, or political collective actors in the making. This would entail an examination of the ways in which cooperation is structured and political goals are defined; how some elites tend to impose politically hegemonic projects by creating a 'natural' general city interest while some cities (actors in cities) are trying to organize themselves to resist the destructive impact of markets. This echoes traditional questions of planning, land property and social housing. From a political perspective, since cities have to face all the tensions and contradictions of our societies — as shown, for instance, in the differentiated but still essential role played by social movements — these questions are important as elites have to make choices about how to deal with all sorts of 'urban disorders'. The policing of cities on the one hand, and the choices made in terms of welfare and collective consumption (housing, social services) and 'social justice' on the other, are still on the agenda of urban research.

Last but not least, we crucially need to explore the emerging linkages between cities, new technologies and urban infrastructures. New information and communications technologies are deeply woven into the shifting political economies of cities, as part of the wider shifts towards globalization, privatization and liberalization. New computer networks, for example, support most aspects of contemporary urban economic restructuring. They underpin new labour processes, new terrains of social division, new types of built form production, intensified patterns of social surveillance, and new ways of developing and managing urban infrastructure networks such as transport and utilities.

IJURR will build on a more open, pluralist political economy perspective to promote dialogue and address issues raised in other intellectual perspectives to understand cities. We believe urban and regional research has a lot to say to mainstream social sciences. *IJURR* also intends to contribute to this.

Patrick Le Galès, Susan Fainstein, Linda McDowell and the Editorial Board