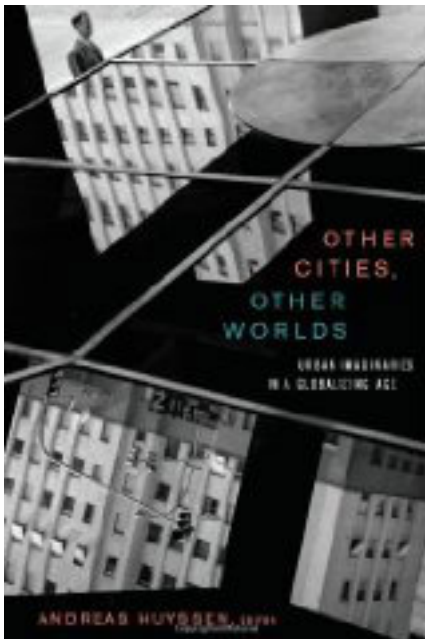


## Andreas Huyssen's *Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age*

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*Other Cities, Other Worlds: Urban Imaginaries in a Globalizing Age*. Edited by Andreas Huyssen. Durham and London: Duke University Press, 2009. 327 + vii pages. \$89.95 cloth, \$24.95 paper.



In his previous books on modernity and post-modernity, Andreas Huyssen focused primarily on the cultures of Germany and the United States. As editor of *Other Cities, Other Worlds*, he brackets the dominant cities of the “northern transatlantic” in order to seek out the “deep histories and current development of urban areas elsewhere in the world” (2), which he defines as Latin America, Africa, Asia, and the Middle East. This move to bracket the “dominant” in the interests of the “other” is intended to increase “knowledge of the ways in which modernity has evolved in the non-Western world” (2), but the impulse leads Huyssen into trouble. Most immediately, he sidesteps problems with names and boundaries: is Latin America less “Western” than the United States? Is the Middle East anything other than a fiction of empire that obscures Cairo’s location in Africa (despite its absorption of migrants from the south) and Istanbul’s status (obvious but unevenly analyzed) as a bridge between Europe and Asia? Despite several strong contributions, the organization of the volume seems whimsical, including, for instance, two essays on Mumbai but none on Delhi or Kuala Lumpur, and it sometimes reflects Huyssen’s “own connections to intellectuals” (2) in New York instead of key researchers abroad.

More seriously, Huyssen’s attempt to bracket the rich cities of the global north (including, in

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Saskia Sassen's familiar taxonomy, Tokyo as well as New York, London, and other European capitals) while nonetheless insisting on their pre-eminence as the "world's most influential urban centers" (11) and thus on the insufficiency of critiques from the south such as Jennifer Robinson's argument for the diversity of "ordinary cities" (11) leads him into contradiction. Despite initial critique, he reiterates the hierarchy of "core world cities" in Europe and the U.S. through "secondary world cities," which allegedly include post-imperial and shrinking Vienna as well as post-apartheid and growing Johannesburg (10). Because of this, he misses the complexity of the economic ties (through migration and capital flows) as well as "imaginaries," image-repertoires, and other modes of aesthetic affiliation between north and south.

The Latin American section in particular highlights cities that compare to those of the north, especially New York and Paris. Nestor García Canclini's summary of the Urban Culture Project's research at México's Universidad Autónoma Metropolitana juxtaposes the city's reputation as a "monstropolis" (87) with the fact that it has more museums than New York or Madrid (81) and thus spotlights the inconsistency of "global city" hierarchies. Beatriz Salo's account of Buenos Aires "from integration to fracture" begins by asserting that the city was "international from the very beginning of [its] modernization" (27) but argues that this international frame revealed not only the image of Paris desired by the elites but also the transformation of the social fabric by a population whose majority were poor immigrants. Recalling Le Corbusier's visit in 1929, she notes that the international modernist acknowledged the mimicry of Paris, Madrid, and Barcelona in the imposing boulevards, and even of Chicago in the skyscrapers, but that he paid more attention to the "simple geometric forms" of Italian masons and to the tendency of their modest districts to turn away from the river rather than to embrace it in the European manner (29). She goes on to argue that this segregation by class widened the social gap between the "Hispanic-criollo" elite and the majority immigrants (39) in the Peronist era and facilitated the surveillance of public space under the junta. Similarly, Teresa Caldeira's investigation of the shifts in managing and imagining São Paulo "from modernism to neo-liberalism" (51) builds on her in-depth research in *Cities of Walls* to track the acceleration of privatization and fortification of elite enclaves against criminals and the poor in the 21st century. Although her subject is São Paulo, Caldeira's analysis of fortified enclaves draws on Los Angeles and has prompted comparative research on Johannesburg and elsewhere.

Huyssen's citation of the South African Robinson points to the critical significance of Africa, this most neglected continent, to any global claim to challenge northern dominance. AbdouMalique Simone, an urbanist at once cosmopolitan and grounded in several African cities, begins his essay on Douala, Cameroon, with the biblical quote "the last shall be first" (99). In response, his contribution fuses ethnographies of ordinary people making do in the midst of corruption and decay with the systemic analysis of causes and consequences of precarious governance in African cities. But the essays that follow read like accounts by tourists. While Hilton Judin earned just recognition for *Blank\_\_\_\_\_: Architecture, Apartheid and After*, a groundbreaking collection

of essays and images on South Africa to 1997, he seems content here to replay old scenarios, quoting mostly from contributors to his volume. His comments on rural migrants adjusting to high-rise living in inner-city Johannesburg in the 1990s do not take account of the long history of migration, nor do they acknowledge that Africans from Senegal through both Congos to Mozambique have transformed the inner city in the decade since 1997, forcing locals to re-imagine their city. Despite xenophobic violence, this re-imagining, enacted and documented by urbanists like Lindsay Bremner, writers like Judin's Johannesburg-based co-editor Ivan Vladislavi, and others better placed to write on Johannesburg, has also led to remarkable collaborations between planners and artists that have enhanced daily life and culture in the city. These collaborations have involved artists from African cities like Kinshasa and Dakar as well as projects comparing urban displacement from opposite ends of the continent, from the Cape to Alexandria. An essay on this work would have provided readers with more insight into the imagination of modernity in the south than does Okwui Enwezor's account of some blockbuster exhibitions out of Africa. Enwezor is a canny curator but his article mostly promotes his own exhibitions, failing to compare, for instance, his *Africa: the Short Century* (2002) with competitors such as *Africa: art of a continent* (1995) or *Africa Remix* (2007).

The weakness of the African section is unfortunate not only in itself but also because it undermines the volume's central claim to overturn global hierarchies between north and south. The project thus misses the opportunity to explore the south-south flows of people and research (linking São Paulo and Johannesburg, Johannesburg and Mumbai, to take two active links missing here) and thus to make the south a more substantial category and a more compelling place than merely "other" to the north.

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