

# The city multiple and the Global East: thinking beyond hybridity and post-socialism

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This paper investigates one simple but important question: What, if anything, do cities from Krakow to Vladivostok and from Murmansk to Tashkent have to contribute to global urban studies? If Indian cities were crucial to thinking informality, African cities to thinking postcolonialism, South American cities to thinking resistance and North American cities to thinking neoliberalism – what, if anything, would cities in the former socialist countries in Eastern Europe and Eurasia be paradigmatic for? Falling between the cracks of the Global North and the Global South, cities in this region too often appear to be on the receiving end of global processes; of the rollout of neoliberalism, of the arrival to modernity and of mobile policies that always seem to end rather than originate in post-socialist cities.

For answering this question, this paper proposes two interlinked concepts: that of the Global East and that of the city multiple. The *Global East* is that which gets erased when carving the world up in Global North and South, as urban scholars have tended to do. The paper recovers this region – stretching from Pomerania to the Pacific and from Karelia to the Karakum Desert – and its significance for understanding the contemporary urban experience. It considers the Global East as that region which is suspended between globalising processes and the legacies of multiple transformations from tsarism to communism to neoliberalism and neopatrimonialism. Neither North nor South, the Global East departs from the label of post-socialism, which looks backward rather than forward and has ceased to describe the everyday reality of many people in the region.

The *city multiple* is a way of coming to terms with the paradoxical unity in multiplicity that characterises cities, not just but especially in the Global East. Empirically, it is a way of coming to terms with the promiscuous *mélange* and superimposition of various political economies, architectural styles, urban policies and social practices that mark contemporary cities. Conceptually, it embraces ideas from Gilles Deleuze and urges to move away from the somewhat narrow definition of hybridity, both as applied to post-socialist cities (e.g. Golubchikov and Phelps 2011; Golubchikov, Badyina, and Makhrova 2014; Stenning 2005) and in urban studies more generally (Braun 2005; Gandy 2005; Swyngedouw 1996), to a more generous understanding of the city as a multiplicity that is both global and local, socialist and capitalist, formal and informal.

Illustrating this argument, the paper considers the multiple ways in which multiplicities mark the economy, architecture, housing, transport and people's everyday practices in a number of cities in the Global East. It then reflects on the relevance of these multiplicities for understanding cities as multiplicities elsewhere.

Keywords: multiplicity; Global East; hybridity; cities; post-Soviet; post-socialism