Post-socialist Cities and Urban Theory: an Introduction

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Introduction

The main stimulus for this theme issue came from the perception shared by several scholars that "post-socialist" (or "post-communist cities")[1] cities are poorly visible in the urban studies literature, and that when they are, they fail to have an enduring influence on broader debates. Yet the post-socialist city, like any other place on earth, offers a unique source of, and potential for, new ideas, deserving more attention and more active engagement not only by scholars with a stated interested in the region, but also by the academic community at large.

Framing this problem as a matter of conceptual and theoretical imports and exports, Örjan Sjöberg (2014; see also Grubbauer 2012) recently concluded that imports of mainly Western-developed ideas into Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) have occurred extensively, while little, if anything, has been produced or refined for export from the region to the global market of ideas. Sjöberg's (2014) concerns add on to the increasingly frequent calls for a more globally inclusive urban studies, calls that are particularly voiced by scholars working in the post-colonial tradition (e.g., Roy 2009; Robinson 2005, 2011a, 2011b, 2013; Jacobs 2012; McFarlane and Robinson 2012), but that have in fact gained resonance within wider circles. What these scholars have in common is that they question the global reach of urban theory, and particularly of the unidirectional and parochial nature of the flow of urban knowledge from the West toward the "rest." While they do acknowledge the value of, for example, the significant body of literature on the articulations of neoliberalism in cities across the world, these writers nevertheless criticize such work on the basis of it being rooted in the experience of a mere handful of cities that key urban thinkers have as their back yards – often islands of exceptionality scattered across (the north-western quadrant of) a world of ordinary cities. Earlier versions of this critique had emerged already in the 1990s, when the dominance of Chicago and Los Angeles – the city "where it all comes together" (Soja 1989) – in urban theory supposedly silenced the voices of the sub-iconic and ordinary elsewhere (see Amin and Graham 1997).

The causes are certainly multiple, but four main explanations can be singled out. First, a resilient assumption permeating much research on post-socialist cities is that these cities are anomalous, subject to gradual correction with the return of "normal" economic relations rooted in a capitalist system, and as such, that they are ill-placed to inform broader urban theory. Such an assumption implies that there is, or should be, a final product (a post-correction city) liberated from all meaningful socialist legacies, its landscape "cleansed" (Czepczyński 2008) of any socialist-era

urban impurities. This way, the value of globally circulating urban knowledge may be expected to increase in parallel with the evaporation of the socialist past's anomalous vestiges. Meanwhile, the concomitant transition process needs to be theorized, but it is a theorization that is conscribed in space and time to countries undergoing this process, and is thus hard to re-export. A prominent and useful example of such theorization is Sýkora and Bouzarovski's (2012) multiple transformations conceptualization of urban transition, which allows for manifold and tortuous routes along a single broad trajectory from central planning and totalitarianism toward democracy and the market, providing the fresh canvas upon which (presumably slower) socio-cultural and urban spatial transitions are subsequently drawn. In this perspective, having completed this three-stage transition, cities enter (or return to) the realm of ordinary theory. However, while the approach echoes the literature on double transition processes in Latin America during the 1980s, it overlooks, or at least downplays, the important "third" (Offe [1991] 2004) and "fourth" (Kuzio 2001) transitions – toward state and nation-building.

Similarly, second, such conceptualizations sustain discourses that frame post-socialist cities as lagging behind (cf. Robinson 2004). They are in other words not just anomalous, but also non-modern, which effectively doubles their relative "difference" when seen through the lens of the principal First-World distilleries of urban thought. Accordingly, the need to "catch up" – against a backdrop of existing theory on First-World forerunner cities (Hirt 2012) – was a relatively unproblematic assumption during the 1990s – an assumption that became increasingly criticized later on (Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008; Hörschelmann and Stenning 2008; Hirt 2012; Ferenčuhová 2012).

Third, as both Robinson (2004) and Roy (2009) note, theory generated outside of this exclusive club, in general, tends to be viewed as a particularistic contribution to the description and understanding of what is past and elsewhere (see Peck [2015] and Scott and Storper [2015] for examples of similar critique toward the "new comparative urbanism" literature), and thus of little importance to other contexts. Post-socialist cities have a defining relation to the (socialist) past (see Hirt 2016), representing a project of catching up, of reducing the imagined distance in both time and space with the West. Thus, they are a particularly interesting example of cities that are "elsewhere," yet not so far, and that are "past," but not quite,[2] and as such, they are hardly considered as sources of general theoretical input. Yet, "ordinary theory" (Peck 2015) is fraught with much the same problem, and Robinson (2011a, 10) suggests that "most urban research is fairly parochial, with often quite locally derived conclusions circulating as universal knowledge." Leitner and Sheppard (2016, 230) add on to this critique (based on the example of the Burgess concentric ring model) by noting that "certain local epistemologies may gain hegemonic status for reasons that have little to do with their universal validity" (230).

Finally, fourth, still relatively few scholars working in post-socialist countries have managed to reach out with their results, for various reasons, including language barriers, resource constraints, lack of library access to the international literature, and thus detachment of their work from current theoretical debates. Certainly, the overall situation has improved during recent years, but the improvements have not taken place in a geographically uniform way, leading to increased differences between and within particularly country contexts (see Timár 2004; Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008; Ferenčuhová 2016a).

From the above, it is clear that post-socialist cities may suffer from a kind of exclusion that is broadly similar to the situation that has been lamented by postcolonial scholars during the past 10 to 15 years in regard to cities in the Global South. Yet, as Tuvikene (2016a) cautions, these cities run the risk of double exclusion – from mainstream theory and from the postcolonial critique. Calls have been made "to rethink the list of 'great' cities" (Roy 2009, 820), to "provincialize" urban theory (Leitner and Sheppard 2016), to "*de*-provincialize" it (Mbembe and Nuttall 2004),[3] and most importantly, to engage with cities on their own terms and in their entireties (Robinson 2005), which requires "light and revisable" theory (Robinson 2016a), and perhaps also realizing that theories are

subject to geographical and temporal limitations and that the days of all-encompassing theory are gone (Leitner and Sheppard 2016).

Thus far, few have responded to these calls departing from the experience of cities located to the east of Berlin and to the north of the 40th parallel. Perhaps this region includes few – or none – of the new great cities that Roy (2009) talks about, but it was and still is a land of great cities, as Chauncy Harris (1945) observed more than 70 years ago in relation to the Soviet Union. Instead, what we may observe is a dramatic increase in studies rooted in Chinese and, to a lesser extent, Indian cities. Within this journal, which started off as in 1960 as *Soviet Geography*, followed by *Post-Soviet Geography* (1992-1995) and *Post-Soviet Geography and Economics* (1996-2002), the Chinese city research trend is particularly evident among the articles that might fall under a broad definition of urban geography, including its historical branch: since 2005, out of 26 such articles,[4] twelve focus on Chinese cities and seven on cities in Russia, of which five are based on the case of Saint Petersburg. Of the remaining seven articles, two are on Indian cities, one is on Kiev, one on Vilnius, one on Vietnamese cities, and two cover broadly the post-Soviet region and "world cities," respectively. Clearly, part of the explanation lies in China's (and India's) demographics – each of these two countries carry far greater weight than the whole CEE region taken together in this respect – but, as McFarlane and Robinson (2012, 767) note, changes in the global balance of power certainly play their part too. And funding, of course.

This incipient recalibration of the geography of urban knowledge production comes with the risk of (re)producing dominant islands of theory on the one hand, and typological thinking about the rest of the planetary archipelago of cities on the other (see Nijman 2007; Robinson 2013). However, this risk can be forestalled by sharpening our comparative vision and by thinking in a de-territorialized manner (Tuvikene 2016a; see also Tuvikene, Alves, and Hilbrandt 2016), by thinking relationally (Ward 2008), and by paying attention to particular *aspects* of cities, rather than to cities in their entireties (Robinson 2016b). Perhaps this strategy will allow the post-socialist city to be released from its partly imposed, partly self-induced, exile. The works included in this theme issue take assertive steps in this direction, and their authors formulate ambitions to theorize post-socialist urbanity, proposing several strategies to (re-)connect post-socialist cities to urban theory.

Thus, this theme issue brings together contributions that connect critical reviews of the research, empirical studies, and theoretical discussions in the field, with traditional and contemporary debates in urban theory. Three main challenges emerge: (1) the content and relevance of central concepts, (2) the role of the socialist past in shaping the present and future, and (3) the contribution of the post-socialist world in theorizing the nexus between social change and urban space.

The three challenges

The first – conceptual – challenge is approached from two angles in this issue. First, three short contributions collected in the "conceptual forum" (Hirt 2016; Ferenčuhová 2016b; Tuvikene 2016b) discuss the concept of the post-socialist city. More critical assessments of terms such as post-socialism, transition, and legacy then appear throughout the issue. Second, several articles debate the problem that the academic field of urban studies has faced since its early years, which is that of the transferability of theories and concepts between different cities and contexts. The authors discuss post-socialist cities as places where theories originating (predominantly) in research on Western cities are applied, but also as the context in which new theories or critical views on internationally debated topics may possibly emerge (Borén and Young 2016; Ouředníček 2016; Bernt 2016).

The second challenge relates to the role of the socialist (and pre-socialist) past, including representations thereof, in defining the present-day conditions in post-socialist cities. Writing on urban development and planning in socialist Central Europe, Jiří Musil (2001, 275) suggested that cities are best approached from a Braudelian *longue durée* perspective, emphasizing their long-term historical development and continuities rather than the sudden changes they may have experienced.

The articles included in this volume debate the importance of the inherited urban infrastructures for the present day, but they also analyze the ideological uses of the representations of the socialist past in current political discourses in post-socialist countries. Together, they illustrate that referring to history, and challenging its dominant narratives, supports our understanding of the contemporary situation (Chelcea and Druţă 2016; Bouzarovski, Sýkora, and Matoušek 2016; Ouředníček 2016).

The third challenge refers to the classical problem of research on socialist and post-socialist cities, which is how to make sense of, and to theorize, the relation between social change and urban space (Bouzarovski, Sýkora, and Matoušek 2016; Golubchikov 2016; Ouředníček 2016). This issue clearly remains important in stimulating new ideas and new conceptual tools in urban studies, reaching well beyond the field of research on post-socialist cities.

The conceptual challenge

This collection starts by opening the first of the three themes in the conceptual forum, which assesses the relevance of the theme issue's central concept – the post-socialist city. By doing so, it elaborates on a long-standing discussion that has been taking place among urban scholars interested in CEE, which is whether, and to what extent "post-socialist" still makes sense to describe and understand what has been happening in this region's cities over the past 30 years. While the debate is an old one (see Hann, Humphrey, and Verdery 2002; Hörschelmann 2002; Stenning and Hörschelmann 2008, just to name a few contributors), and some scholars might roll their eyes at the prospect of re-chewing gum that has already lost its flavor, there are three main reasons for which a continued discussion is warranted.

First of all, far from dissipating into oblivion, "post-socialist" (or post-communist, post-Soviet, etc.) remains widely used as an adjective to describe CEE (and not only) societies and the changes that are still taking place within them. As recently as the last year or so, journal articles have been published on "cycling in the post-socialist city" (Barnfield and Plyushteva 2015), "experiencing post-socialism" (while running in Sofia, Barnfield 2016), and on "regeneration projects in Central and Eastern European post-communist cities" (Hlaváček, Raška, and Balej 2016), as well as on various post-socialist urban phenomena and on urban phenomena that have taken place during the post-socialist period. Of course, there are also numerous publications that do not make use of the post-socialist qualifier, but the point is that, far from being dead, post-socialism is alive and well in current scholarship.

Second, the discussion on the meaning and value of the concept of post-socialism in urban research has neither been concluded, nor has it been conclusive. To the contrary, if anything, the debate has been re-invigorated during recent years, and several of the contributors to this volume have been at the forefront of this trend within urban studies. One of the trickiest problems that needs to be tackled is how to make sense of the fact that the two main transitions associated with the post-socialist epoch – democratization and marketization – are far from complete. What is more, within the former Soviet Union (minus the Baltic States), one of them (democratization) actually peaked during the late Gorbachëv era; that is, during late socialism. Since then, democracy has retreated in almost all of the former Soviet Union (Hale 2016), and it is increasingly being eroded in Central Europe. This sorry insight destabilizes much of the theoretical work on post-socialist cities because it deprives it of one of its key assumptions. For example, Sýkora and Bouzarovski's (2012) aforementioned multiple transformations model is based on the optimistic assumption that the key political transformations were already in place by the early 1990s and had a clear trajectory, and that this provided the ground for subsequent transformations at other levels, the socio-cultural and the urban.

Debating the concept of the post-socialist city very often turns into a problem of general relevance in the social sciences. This is related to the fact that the concepts we use are also used and defined outside of academia, often with particular ideological connotations (see Kuus 2004; Hörschelmann and Stenning 2008; Wiest 2012; Hann, Humphrey, and Verdery 2002). As Castells

(1976, 60) explained, "[e]very science … consists of a mixture, which sometimes varies according to circumstances, of ideology and theory." The conceptual and theoretical debates on the post-socialist city raise our awareness of this intermingling, analyzing its influence on the state of the art produced in academia, and several contributions to this volume engage with this complication (Chelcea and Druță 2016; Golubchikov 2016; Ferenčuhová 2016b).

In addition, the articles collected in this volume illustrate how concepts such as post-socialism, path-dependency, or legacy can be used in new ways, strengthening their analytical value, making them relevant beyond the field of study within which they usually reside, and allowing them to become "exportable" products (Sjöberg 2014) within the international market of urban theory (see for example Tuvikene 2016b or Ouředníček 2016). Meanwhile, other articles in this issue see the potential for critical contributions to existing theories (such as that of gentrification, see Bernt 2016, or on the "creative city," see Borén and Young 2016), as a result of their being processed within the relatively uncharted "post-socialist" region.

The socialist past

The second challenge that emerges from research on post-socialist cities, and which figures prominently in this collection, is inextricably linked to the conceptual challenge discussed above: the socialist past and its legacies are now (back?) on the table (see, for example, the contributions in Beissinger and Kotkin's [2014] recent edited book, and legacy arguments abound among the interpretations of the past few years' authoritarian rebound in CEE). A proper analysis of socialist legacies means two things: (1) that we have a proper and detailed understanding of the actual workings of Soviet-type systems (and not just assumptions about it, see Ferenčuhová 2016a); and (2) that a legacy effect (rather than a mere correlation) can actually be demonstrated (Kotkin and Beissinger 2014). Within the urban context, the salience of legacy arguments becomes particularly evident when referring to memory politics, but legacies are now being revisited across a wide range of areas within post-socialist urban studies and far beyond. Demonstrated socialist legacies enhance the value of the concept of post-socialism – for what is post-socialism without socialism? (Hirt 2016) – but they call for a greater exploration of the concept. In this respect, it is useful to distinguish between Russia (and to some extent the other authoritarian countries in the Former Soviet Union) on the one hand, and the remainder of the post-socialist countries. Indeed, Alexander Etkind (2014, 155) suggests that "the unprocessed memory of the catastrophic Soviet past still keeps Russia in its interminable post-Soviet condition," whereas Chelcea and Druță (2016) argue that it is the constant processing of socialist memory that keeps Romania on its interminably undisputed neoliberal trajectory. Post-socialism, understood this way, is characterized by the continued presence of elements of socialism itself, rather than by their gradual (or rapid) demise and disavowal – it is *past*-socialism in the present.

Moreover, the articles collected in this volume suggest that we need to rethink the main historical turning points of the post-1989/1991 period and that these should not be taken for granted. Bouzarovski, Sýkora, and Matoušek (2016) stress the need to better reflect both the socialist (and pre-socialist) times' material legacies (such as urban infrastructures) and the political and economic changes that took place along the 1990s in our understanding of post-socialist cities. Similarly to Bernt (2016), their analysis challenges the representation of the years 1989/1991 and of the subsequent reforms as the single or principal milestones to be considered in explanations of "post-socialist" urban development.

Post-socialism, social change, and urban space

Finally, the third challenge is that of formulating new insights into the relationship between urban space and social change based on the experiences of post-socialist cities, and the authors in this volume represent different perspectives on this account. Using the urban margins of Czech cities as source of inspiration, Ouředníček (2016) highlights the relative stability of the dominant urban development patterns; accordingly, he challenges the approaches that ascribe pivotal importance

to the events that took place during the years of rapid political change, which lose sight of the more durable historically formed urban structures. On the other hand, a different picture – that of important changes having taken place during the socialist period – seems to emerge at the scale of the specific parts of cities, such as urban margins: Bouzarovski, Sýkora, and Matoušek (2016) consider the new "socio-technical lock-ins" that appeared *during* the post-socialist period and *as part of* the on-going transformations in the city of Liberec (Czech Rep.), emphasizing how the material urban environment has been used strategically by political and economic actors to create new path-shaping outcomes. Relatedly, Golubchikov (2016) formulates an important appeal to scholars writing on post-socialist cities by introducing "the notion of *urbanization of transition* (emphasis added), which articulates the centrality of the urban in the spectacular post-socialist experience" (<p. XX>).

The contributions

The three challenges that frame this issue on the "post-socialist city and urban theory" emerge – implicitly or explicitly – in all contributions, and at times the connections and intersections between them become especially evident. The authors present conceptual debates and theoretical insights that are based on relevant empirical material or on thorough overviews of the literature. Some of the contributions have an explicitly comparative perspective, whereas others rely on single case studies.

Chelcea and Druță (2016) elaborate on the issues opened up by the conceptual forum, connecting them to the empirical reality. In order to understand and explain the character of neoliberal capitalism in CEE, which they recognize as harsher and "more capitalist" than anywhere else in Europe, the authors introduce the notion of "zombie socialism." They show how the ghost of socialism is exploited by political elites in post-socialist European countries to push through reforms or to facilitate the state's withdrawal from the provision of social security. Using the example of housing, Chelcea and Druță (2016) illustrate how claims for social security are labeled as "socialist," and thus backward, non-democratic, non-progressive, or simply shameful. Accordingly, the socialist "zombie" is mobilized to create pressure on the labor force to accept the costs of economic "progress." Armed with this argument, Chelcea and Druță (2016) propose new uses for the concept of post-socialism, stressing its associations with socialism, as well as its role in contemporary ideology. Thus, they suggest that neoliberalism in CEE should be examined with greater sensitivity to the specific meanings and connotations associated with the socialist past and with the capitalist economy in its post-socialist guise.

Martin Ouředníček (2016) considers the mobility of concepts and theories between prevailingly Western urban theory and post-socialist cities. Looking back at the 1990s, he explains how concepts and theories produced by research on Western cities found their way into Czech urban studies, becoming adopted by researchers seeking to grasp and even predict the future development of cities in the post-socialist era. His overview of almost three decades' worth of geographical research on Prague demonstrates the value of these concepts and theories, as well as their limitations when applied unreflectively to the new context. Using the example of the urban margins of Prague (and of other Czech cities), and particularly of the socialist-era housing estates, he argues that the imported concepts are frequently unsatisfactory and that there is a clear need for new conceptual tools that may have wider relevance in urban theory. In addition, Ouředníček (2016) more or less explicitly suggests that empirical research should remain high on the agenda, as we are still missing plenty of facts. This responds to past criticism that studies on post-socialist cities tend to favor empirical work at the expense of the theoretical contribution (see, for example, Timár 2004).

Matthias Bernt (2016) proposes a slightly different opinion on the issue of the transfer of concepts. In his empirical examination of gentrification in East Berlin and in Saint Petersburg, he shows how the post-1989/1991 political reforms within the domain of housing have impacted on the material environment, accelerating – or holding back – the process of its regeneration. By

comparing two dissimilar cities, the article critically assesses the concept of gentrification in its value and capacity to explain urban changes across different contexts. Bernt proposes using gentrification as an umbrella term for locally specific urban social transformations where the displacement of poorer households takes place in tandem with the entry of better-off groups within a context of heightened economic investment in the area. Such a broad definition captures the idiosyncrasies of gentrification across a wide spectrum of contexts, including "post-socialist cities," while giving the latter the necessary space to engage in wider theoretical conversations on the topic.

Thomas Borén and Craig Young (2016) recognize the critical role that research on post-socialist cities may play in responding to internationally circulating theories and concepts. Their article discusses the hitherto marginal position of research on post-socialist cities in relation to the Anglo-American stronghold of urban theory, problematizing its schematizing effects. Using the example of the creative city discourse and theory, the authors propose a more thorough explanation of the sidelining of post-socialist cities in urban studies, suggesting the need to consider "the patterns in academic knowledge production" (<p. XX>) in order to understand this condition. They also discuss the requirement and expectation to produce transferable theories within urban studies (and in academia at large), based on rules of knowledge production that are construed as global, as well as the mobility of the very policies associated with the idea of the creative city.

The final two articles use research on post-socialist cities to formulate insights on the relation between urban space and social change and propose strong theoretical proclamations. Oleg Golubchikov (2016) formulates at least two crucial challenges that should resonate in future research on post-socialist cities. First, he reminds us that "urbanization is a major institutional dimension of transition, not simply its playground" (<p. XX>), meaning that the attention of urban scholars should revert to their traditional object of inquiry and that cities are social and material realities where neoliberal capitalism and its social relations are produced, with far-reaching impacts. Second, Golubchikov (2016) questions the geographical limitations of the extant theories of "transition," the validity of which being conscribed by the boundaries of the post-socialist states, while promoting an understanding of transition as a "totalizing project of planetary reach" (<p. XX>). Through this lens, transition is seen as a process whereby neoliberal capitalism goes global and which transforms and seizes the historically formed materiality and social relations present in post-socialist countries.

Similarly to other contributions, the article by Stefan Bouzarovski, Luděk Sýkora and Roman Matoušek (2016) analyzes the situation in the mid-sized Czech city of Liberec, where the prices that local inhabitants pay for district heating are extremely high in the national context. The authors identify the causes of this situation in the combined effects of the socialist-era heating infrastructure, of the privatization and local administration reforms in the 1990s, and of the (vested) interests of the local political and business spheres. The authors also contribute to the conceptual debates within research on post-socialist cities. In a critical response to the conventional path-dependency perspective, they develop the idea of "path-shaping" post-socialist transformations (Pickles and Smith 1998), stressing the role of the years of the political and economic reforms in shaping subsequent developments. Bouzarovski, Sýkora, and Matoušek propose the notion of "rolling path-dependencies" to reflect the multi-layered determination of the present-day situation. This notion, which refers to the general path-dependency concept, may well bear fruit beyond the post-socialist context, and it may be relevant to research on other cities undergoing changes linked to important historical events or transformations.

Conclusion

The starting point for this theme issue was the observation – challenged by various contributions to this volume – that research on post-socialist cities has yet to escape from the periphery of contemporary urban theory.

This volume takes several important steps toward the center of urban theory, and away from its margins, by critically responding to wider debates and by producing new knowledge that is

rooted in research on post-socialist cities. First, there are attempts to (re)define key concepts that have been used in the field (for example, legacy, post-socialism, transition, path-dependency), and to discuss their value for urban theory in general, rather than in relation to CEE alone. Concepts such as "post-socialism" or "transition" are ascribed global relevance in their capacity to relate cities across the globe to one another. Second, some of the authors signal that new concepts may emerge inductively, based on empirical research conducted in specific parts or on particular aspects of post-socialist cities, particularly when a close connection to the socialist past appears to be present (as in the housing estates). Third, established and globally circulating concepts and theories (e.g., gentrification, or the creative city) can be critically discussed and developed through research on post-socialist cities. Many of these concepts have already been in use to describe and analyze the CEE context, but the attempts to actually add onto them (to "re-export" them, in Sjöberg's [2014] language) have been few and far between. Fortunately, this has been changing in a favorable direction recently, and the articles included in this volume represent an additional significant effort. Here, post-socialist cities are not presented as the anomalies of urban theory, but as places where important knowledge can be generated, favoring critical discussions of the (center's) state of the art.

Finally, research on post-socialist cities is sensitive to the ideological side of urban life, and perhaps more so than within urban studies at large. Several contributions to this issue link an analysis of ideology with research on the material and social structures of cities. Moreover, this sensitivity extends to the concepts and categories used, including, but not limited to, the category of post-socialism. We consider this to be one of the greatest strengths and potentials of research on post-socialist cities, and it comes with the benefit of an enhanced awareness of the political and ethical dimensions of our work.

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[1] "Post-socialist," "post-communist," and sometimes even "post-Soviet" are concepts that are used almost interchangeably in the literature, despite their slight differences in meaning. In this publication, as theme issue editors, we opt for "post-socialist," not least because past debates concerned the "socialist" rather than the "communist" city. Even so, this does not amount to an endorsement of the "post-socialist city" concept *per se*. Because the post-socialist city is a widely used and understood concept, we will continue using it in the rest of this introduction, dropping the initial quotation marks which are intended to emphasize the somewhat contentious nature of the concept and of the associations that it carries. Our main focus is on post-socialist cities in Central and Eastern Europe, but many of the insights contained in this volume are relevant elsewhere, too.
[2] Reading Homi Bhabha's *Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse* (1984) is particularly inspiring in rethinking the ambivalent meaning of post-socialist identity.
[3] In this case, "provincializing" and "de-provincializing" are not to be seen as each other's opposites. Mbembe and Nuttall (2004) and Leitner and Sheppard (2016) use the term "provincializing" in somewhat different ways.
[4] This figure excludes articles that provide statistical overviews of general urbanization trends, and other works of similar character.