

THEORY BUILDING

THROUGH COMPARATIVE STRATEGIES

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The contemporary world is being transformed by a great variety of urbanisation processes. To understand and grasp the multiplicity of urban realities and experiences we have to expand the vocabulary of urbanisation and develop new concepts. This poses a range of questions: How can we grasp the multitude of urbanisation processes emerging all over the planet? How can we analyse urban developments in a planetary context without neglecting the specific determinations of concrete places and experiences in everyday life? How may we conceptualise urbanisation processes that bring together a multitude of experiences in different contexts?

One of the most prominent and promising strategies developed in recent years has been the mobilisation of a renewed epistemology of comparative urban research. Comparing urbanisation processes in different places offers different starting points for generating concepts which reflect a fuller range of urban experiences and thus more adequately address the development of diverse patterns and pathways of urbanisation across different contexts. Doing so makes it possible to go beyond specificity and identify underlying commonalities and logics. As a consequence, comparative urbanism has become a widely applied procedure in urban studies in recent years. But there are many different comparative strategies that could be used to attain this goal. This chapter

presents a short overview over some of them and outlines the specific comparative approach we developed and applied in our own project.

The goal of our project was to identify and conceptualise urbanisation processes in a new way, directly relating theory-building to empirical research. We therefore applied a *transductive* comparative research strategy that is able to go beyond specificity and conduct a dynamic analysis of urbanisation. We started right from the outset with a theoretical base and followed a methodological and analytical procedure driven by Lefebvre's three-dimensional dialectics of the production of space and by the decentring and process-oriented perspective offered by the epistemology of planetary urbanisation. As a consequence, we did not compare individual urban territories, but urbanisation processes that we identified in the different territories and then brought into conceptualisation.

To achieve this goal, we proceeded with the combination of a horizontal and a vertical analysis of the territory. On the one hand, we identified specific urban configurations in order to approach the specific patterns of urbanisation, and on the other we proceeded with a periodisation following a regressive–progressive procedure. This allowed us to identify specific paradigms of urbanisation in time and space.

COMPARATIVE URBAN RESEARCH

For a long time, comparative urban research followed relatively predefined routes and procedures—either by applying established theoretical frameworks or by looking for variations in the outcomes of similar underlying processes (Tilly 1984). Consequently, most of these studies focused on reasonably similar cases within certain geographical boundaries—mostly within and across Europe and North America, thus excluding places that were considered too different to compare (Robinson 2011a) or were understood as exceptional cases (Roy 2016). This spatial imagery corresponded to a temporal imagery as well, as it excluded places that were not deemed to inhabit the same time in relation to the supposedly universal time of powerful, influential cities of the West (Sheppard et al 2013).

The postcolonial turn in urban studies revived comparative analysis, and the restrictive and exclusionary formal methodologies of traditional approaches came under thorough criticism. Robinson (2004, 2011: 19) demanded a renewal of global urban studies and argued for 'a revitalised and experimental global comparativism that will enable urban studies to stretch its resources for theory-building across the world of cities'. In a similar vein, Nijman (2007) and McFarlane (2010) pleaded for a renaissance of comparative urbanism. In the following years, what might be called 'new comparative urbanism' (Lees 2012) has turned into an important significant resource for conceptual experimentation by encouraging open-ended comparisons crossing entrenched divisions in urban theory. This new strategy stands in contrast to earlier comparative endeavours in advocating a more experimental approach, in which urban territories with diverse histories and across established borders of specialized area studies were brought into conversation in an effort to enable new conceptual and theoretical framings. The full reach and extent of the new approaches and methodologies developed in the two last decades is analysed in detail in *Comparative Urbanism* by Jennifer Robinson (2022).

COMPARATIVE URBANISMS

Despite the convincing arguments in favour of a resurgent comparative urbanism, empirical studies using this methodology have been slow to take off. As Peck (2015: 170) observes: 'Most corners of the urban studies field remain dominated by "lone scholar" models of enquiry and generally small-scale collaborations, which is sufficient for single-site studies or unidimensional comparisons across a few sites, but rarely much more.' Despite this caveat, a number of important studies have been published

in recent years. Including only analyses of urbanisation, a whole range of important works could be cited: AbdouMalik Simone (2004a, 2010) for example, is applying his ethnographic comparative theorisation of how urban dwellers are advancing urban development across Africa and Asia in a masterly and illuminating way. Ola Söderström (2014) compares the trajectories of urban development in Hanoi and Ouagadougou, Theresa Caldeira (2017) presents a comparative analysis of peripheral urbanisation across the global South, Gavin Shatkin (2017) investigates the drivers of urban real estate megaprojects in Asia, and Miguel Kanai and Seth Schindler (2019) investigate the development of large-scale peri-urban projects near Manaus and Dar es Salaam.

In contrast, larger comparisons are logistically, financially and also methodologically demanding projects and they confront researchers with the difficult choice of forming either a small team that can travel through a limited number of cases so as to elaborate a coherent account, or of engaging a larger but also more heterogeneous team of researchers, which can handle a larger number of cases, but then face difficulties of ensuring coherence and coordination. Whereas limited comparisons that present a collection of individual case studies summarised in the introduction and linked together by a conclusion are common, more sophisticated comparative contributions that generate or compose new concepts are still rare. To go beyond such limitations required that researchers involved in a comparative project must adopt a shared methodological and theoretical perspective to probe and test new concepts and grasp the contours of a collaboratively defined problematic.

Addressing the difficulties of comparative urbanism discussed above, our own project tried to put in place a kind of middle way by bringing a limited number of cases in conversation with each other that were nevertheless sufficient to represent enough difference in our sample. The selection of our case studies was thus not the result of a systematic analysis of specific criteria, such as economic structure, demographics, regional characteristics, historical pathways and a concomitant search to place cities in categories like ‘global cities’, ‘metropolitan regions’, ‘capital regions’, or ‘megacities’. Instead, we selected the eight case study areas according to two commonalities: their size and urban dynamics. We chose these criteria because we sought to avoid the influence of the effects of scale and of the opposing dynamics of growth and shrinking. Thus, all case studies are very large urban territories, all of which have experienced long periods of strong urban growth, leading to processes of both urban extension and urban intensification. The smallest territory, Paris, counts about 12 million inhabitants; the largest, the Pearl River Delta, more than 60 million (because of this large size, we analysed only the eastern

part of the entire conurbation; namely, Hong Kong, Shenzhen and Dongguan). Our sample represents about a quarter of all the urban regions worldwide that have more than ten million inhabitants. A further criterion was to choose urban territories across the various divides that are shaping our planet, such as ‘North’ and ‘South’, or rich and poor, including very different economic, social and political situations, territorial regulations and forms of everyday life. For our final selection of concrete case studies we needed researchers who were already familiar with these places at the beginning of the research project (see Chapter 3).

Consistent with our dynamic understanding of urbanisation, our goal was not to compare territories, settlements, cities or regions, but processes. The basic unit of comparative analysis, the comparable, was therefore ‘urbanisation processes’. While there are many studies that compare large urban regions and mega cities, most famously *The Endless City* (Burdett and Sudjic 2006), the book that introduced the term ‘the urban age’ into the debate (for a critique of this concept see Brenner and Schmid 2014), there are far fewer studies that compare different urbanisation processes; and if they do exist, they mostly focus on already established processes, such as gentrification, suburbanisation or urban regeneration (see Chapter 4). Our own project, however, compared large, openly defined urban territories and aimed to conceptualise urbanisation processes. This required us to proceed with a double comparison: firstly, to identify different urbanisation processes in one territory and then to compare them across different territories. In this way, our project was both novel and experimental in a strict sense.

COMPARATIVE STRATEGIES

As Robinson (2022) shows in her detailed overview of comparative urbanism, a wide range of comparative approaches exist and new concepts of urbanisation can be developed in many ways. Existing individual case studies involve to some degree an implicit or explicit comparison with similar or related cases. The most common procedure is thus generalising insights from individual case studies and transferring their results to other cases. However, it is difficult and problematic to derive new concepts just from one specific case or singularity, as it always bears the risk of oversimplification and of bringing an implicit bias generated by the specificity of the context into the conceptualisation process. Names themselves can carry certain connotations that might impose assumptions on similar processes in other contexts. Prominent examples of these transpositions are the concepts of gentrification and suburbanisation (see Chapter 4).

A second, widely applied approach is a renewed variant of variation finding. This approach presupposes that a definition of a specific phenomenon or process already exists, and tries to further develop the concept or to identify its limits and differences. Such projects usually start with already established theoretical frameworks and do not seek to detect and identify new conceptualisations, such as comparisons of government strategies and governance regimes. Other projects explore the contours of a phenomenon or a process in order to examine its reach and scope, such as *Spaces of Neoliberalism* edited by Neil Brenner and Nick Theodore (2002), which is an important transatlantic comparison of urban restructuring that inspired an entire generation of critical urban researchers. Similarly, *Whose Urban Renaissance?* edited by Libby Porter and Kate Shaw (2009) assembled a large team of scholars and activists to explore disinvestment and reinvestment in the context of urban regeneration projects across very different contexts in order to explore alternative strategies. The project 'Planetary Gentrifications' applied the concept of gentrification to all possible situations and processes across the world (Lees et al. 2016), and the large-scale project 'Global Suburbanisms' led by Roger Keil explored the huge diversity of forms and processes in urban peripheries across the world (see e.g. Keil and Wu 2022). However, as these two examples show, such comparisons often do not generate new conceptualisations, but rather stretch the reach of extant concepts as they find more and more new cases that they try to integrate into the existing definitional field, thus widening and loosening the concept itself (see Chapter 4).

To detect and develop new concepts, different tactics and strategies are needed. Robinson introduced the distinction between genetic and generative comparative strategies (Robinson 2016, 2022: 126). While genetic comparisons trace how specific (urban) outcomes emerge, and through this engagement with their production or genesis draw them into conceptualisation, generative comparative strategies bring different singularities or cases into conversation with each other by building analytical connections. In this way almost every question or problematic can be productively handled and concepts can in principle stay open and revisable. Examples of such efforts are the work of Roy and Ong (2012) on 'worlding cities' that foreground the disparate urban forms in Asian cities which cannot be conceptually reduced to universal logics, but are the outcomes of very different worlding practices. Pieterse and Simone (2013) explore 'rogue urbanism' in Africa, intending to produce new and relevant theoretical work within the border zone between inherited theoretical resources, emerging postcolonial readings and artistic representations of everyday practices. The large project on 'subaltern urbanisation' explores and defines new urbanisation processes beyond urban agglomerations in India

(Denis and Zerah 2017; see also Mukhopadhyay et al. 2020). All these are exemplary experimental studies using ethnographical methods, grounded theory and creative reflections. While they focus on 'southern' urbanisms, comparisons across the alleged North-South divide are still relatively rare. An early example is the work of Marcuse and van Kempen (2000) on 'globalizing cities', comparing the different modalities in which globalisation processes unfold in cities across the globe. Marie Huchzermeyer (2011b) makes an experimental comparison across space and time of tenement housing in 21st century Nairobi and 19th century Berlin. *Global Prayers* (Becker et al. 2013), a fascinating collaboration of researchers and artists from a wide range of fields and disciplines, explores relations between urbanity and religion by critically engaging with religious communities across the world. A paradigmatic example of a larger comparison across global divides is the detailed analysis of trans-scalar territorialisation processes induced by urban mega-projects in Shanghai, Johannesburg and London, conducted by a team of experienced researchers from these three urban territories (Robinson et al. 2022, 2021).

Our own comparative project combined both genetic and generative strategies, as it aimed to develop and define new concepts through the identification and comparison of urbanisation processes and at the same time to elucidate their genesis and outcomes. The goal of our comparative project was to detect and develop new concepts by comparing urbanisation processes, allowing a nuanced and detailed analysis of urban territories. In this way, our comparative project became part of theory production as the urbanisation processes themselves had to be detected, identified and conceptualised. Consequently, the research was guided by theory. While strongly informed and inspired by postcolonial approaches and the new comparative urbanism, it was anchored in Lefebvre's theory of the production of space and operated with the territorial approach developed in several related research projects (see Chapter 1). At the same time, this project had to keep the theorisation process open in order to accommodate new experiences detected during the empirical research.

A TRANSDUCTIVE COMPARATIVE RESEARCH STRATEGY

What can concrete case studies tell us? The starting points of our comparative endeavour were concrete and specific urban territories. The challenge was thus to develop a comparative procedure capable of apprehending the general tendencies of urbanisation and at the same time of addressing the specificities developing in each urban territory. This implies the use of a strategy of comparison that starts neither with concrete individual case studies nor with generalised concepts, but applies a transductive strategy by maintaining a dialectical relationship between theory and empirical research. In Lefebvre's understanding, transduction 'is an intellectual operation which can be methodically carried out and which differs from classical induction, deduction and the construction of "models", simulations as well as the simple statement of hypothesis. Transduction elaborates and constructs a theoretical object, a *possible* object from information related to reality and a problematic posed by this reality. Transduction assumes an incessant feedback between the conceptual framework used and empirical observations. Its theory (methodology) gives shape to certain spontaneous operations of the planner, the architect, the sociologist, the politician and the philosopher. It introduces rigour in invention and knowledge in utopia' (Lefebvre 1996 [1968]: 151).

Lefebvre understands transduction as a dialectical movement. The first moment consists in empirically analysing a specific, concrete social practice, while also getting rid of the allegories, metaphors, pseudo-concepts and representations that try to define and dominate this practice. The second moment focuses on analytically approaching the fullness of the lived experience without destroying it. Finally, in the third moment, the concept is developed in such a way that it can be used to analyse the contemporary society, to articulate a critique of the present and to illuminate the horizon of future development. To engage in this dialectical procedure is to think along with this movement (Lefebvre 1980: 37, 1996 [1968]: 165–166).

In our comparative project, then, we started from a well-defined theoretical base but applied an empirically grounded procedure. The point was not only to find new phenomena or to trace possible connections, but also to use comparison to detect and reconstruct new concepts of urbanisation that might be related to each other in various ways. Thus, these concepts needed to be flexible and we kept their definitions as open as possible. As a methodological principle, the urban processes to be compared and the criteria of comparison were thus not pre-given and we sought to avoid reliance

on any kind of predefined concepts. The new concepts of urbanisation had to emerge during the research process itself, discerned by the use of specific methodological tools, some of which were developed and applied in grounded theory. These issues are analysed in detail by Monika Streule in Chapter 3.

The analysis in Chapter 1 has shown how important the interplay of the three dimensions of the production of space is in the generation and analysis of urbanisation processes. The production of an urban fabric and thus of second nature on the basis of everyday actions and interactions, the processes of territorial regulation through which power structures are inscribed into a territory and the patterns and dynamics of lived differences that emerge, consolidate or get incorporated—all contribute to the specific character of urbanisation processes. By differentiating these three dimensions we were able to define urbanisation processes more precisely. By using the appropriate comparative procedure, it was possible to identify a common problematic across different cases or singularities and the various divides that separate them.

The main challenge of our own project was thus to develop a comparative research strategy to apprehend the general tendencies of urbanisation and at the same time to address the specificities developing in each urban territory. The definition of urbanisation processes implies a moment of generalisation emerging from observations in specific urban territories; to detect a bundle of characteristics, certain common underlying mechanisms, logics and regularities in the way urbanisation unfolds and proceeds, thus producing similar urban outcomes in very different territories. These urban outcomes can be grouped and analysed comparatively so as to distinguish systematically between different processes that share a common problematic.

However, this process of discovery and conceptualisation needs to start by addressing the problem of being influenced by all sorts of pre-conceptions. This is particularly pertinent when analysing spaces, because we cannot see a space without having conceived of it before. What we perceive and 'see' is therefore necessarily influenced by existing representations. Such representations of space structure our 'view of the world' and guide and determine our research to a certain point. This engenders a tendency of selective perception: we see what seems to be obvious. Therefore, many aspects are either concealed by existing conceptualisations or remain under the radar of our attention. It is important to make explicit such representations of space, because often researchers already have certain concepts in mind, or compare their own findings with concepts that are easily available and have already been elaborated. This may lead them to overlook differences and dismiss important factors. Therefore, in our comparative analysis, we

wanted to systematically exclude existing representations, concepts or models of spaces in a first phase, and took them into consideration only in a second round through a critical assessment.

HORIZONTAL AND VERTICAL ANALYSIS

The fact that cities no longer constitute units that can be delimited in a clear way, as they are highly dynamic, multifaceted and complex, poses a significant methodological challenge for any urban comparative project. To address this problem we applied two theoretical principles: firstly we understood an urban territory as a force field in which various urbanisation processes unfold, collide and interweave, thereby generating specific patterns of urbanisation; and secondly we analysed the historical and path-dependent process by which this territory was produced, and thus reconstructed the pathway of urbanisation.

In an article written in the 1950s on rural sociology that would later become famous, Lefebvre presented a novel procedure to analyse agricultural territories (2003 [1953]). In his own research he had observed that very different social formations and levels of technology may coexist side by side: modern large-scale mechanised farming, and also certain residues such as tools, cultivation methods and community forms that were survivors of a distant past. He concluded that agricultural territories presented a twofold complexity: a horizontal complexity, created by the presence of social formations and structures of the same historical time that generate differences that can go as far as being antagonistic. On the other hand, he observed a vertical complexity through the simultaneous presence and coexistence of social formations originating from different times. These two kinds of complexity intertwine, intersect and interact, creating a confusing ensemble of facts ‘that only a sound *methodology* can disentangle’ (Lefebvre 2003 [1953]: 113; emphasis in the original).

Transposing these considerations to contemporary urbanising territories, our research adopted a twofold approach. We proceeded with a horizontal or synchronic analysis of the patterns of urbanisation to grasp the present situation of a concrete urban territory. The synchronic analysis aimed to develop a comprehensive understanding of the expansion and interweaving of urbanisation processes and identify the resulting pattern of urban configurations. This intellectual operation freezes the urban process conceptually so as to discern its manifold constituents and thus examines the pattern of an urban territory as it appears at a given moment. This requires a specific method of mapping that is presented by Monika Streule in Chapter 3. In a second step, we applied a vertical or diachronic analysis to understand the historical

production process of the current urban situation. Thus, we had to reconstruct the urban development by following the pathways of urbanisation, which requires a specific methodology of periodisation that I elaborate below.

It is only through the combination of horizontal and vertical analysis that we can grasp and analyse an urban territory in its specificity (see also Schmid 2014). As a next step, therefore, it is necessary to combine the two analyses in order to identify the different urbanisation processes that are constantly transforming the territory and crystallising in various urban configurations. From such a dynamic perspective, any given urban territory can be understood as the materialisation of an ensemble of specific urbanisation processes that are articulated with each other. Using this approach, we do not try to define the ‘limits’ of an urban space, but to analyse the succession and overlap of various urbanisation processes. Therefore, in this analysis urban areas do not come to an end—it is just the analysis that stops. The outer boundary thus marks the end of the analysis, not the end of the urban territory as such. This diachronic and synchronic analysis was done for each urban territory independently by individual researchers. At the same time, we brought the various urbanisation processes emerging through this analysis into conversation with each other through our collective comparative procedure. What we compared in our research therefore was not cities or territorial units but urbanisation processes.

In the following, I first treat the construction of urban configurations and of a periodisation separately and then show how they can be analysed in space and time. In doing so, I explain how we define urbanisation processes and urbanisation paradigms. In the first case we highlight one individual process (say popular urbanisation) and in the second we analyse the simultaneous interaction and entanglement of several processes in a territory.

IDENTIFYING URBAN CONFIGURATIONS

The horizontal analysis examines the patterns of urbanisation in a given territory. While increasingly exact data and sophisticated quantitative methods are available for mapping and analysing spatial distributions, they can only create an illusion of exactness. Urbanisation is a dynamic process that is constantly changing, and no representation of space can provide more than just a snapshot of it at a given moment. Furthermore, urban realities comprise very diverse multi-scalar attributes that are superimposed on each other in layers—an urban territory is always a more or less thick palimpsest comprising traces and remnants of different times and social formations (Corboz: 1983). Accordingly, many different lines of demarcation may be

drawn, depending on the observer's perspective and heuristic interest. This necessitates a specific method of mapping.

In Lefebvrian terms, we need to understand a map as a representation of space. As Nietzsche stated, we cannot see something without giving it a name. Accordingly, we are not able to act within a space without having developed an idea of what it looks like. In order to communicate this idea, we require terms, concepts, images and maps that delimit and denote this space. Thus, representations of space are defined in a twofold manner—as (conceived) ideas and as (communicated) concepts. Lefebvre refers here to the German terms 'Vorstellung' and 'Darstellung' (Lefebvre 1980: 26). Representations of space signify something and they also prescribe something; they guide our actions and give them a direction. As Lefebvre warns us, such representations are never innocent: they are always associated with power.

What effects do these representations of space have? They privilege certain aspects and suppress others. This raises the question of what is present and what is absent, what is illuminated and what is hidden—what is not shown often being more important than what is shown (Lefebvre 1980). Representations of space have an operational quality: their purpose is to denote something, to illuminate something, to change something. Thus, proposing a different representation of space constitutes an intervention in a debate. The point is not to find the 'real' or 'true' situation but to construct a representation of space (and time) that is useful for understanding the process and capable of revealing the problematics and potentials underlying it. Lefebvre's theory is self-reflexive at this point and shows how researchers themselves become actors in the process of the production of space. This directly poses the question of the responsibility of the researcher. As Lefebvre notes, the author has to take personal responsibility in such operations and incurs risks, including the risk of error (Lefebvre 2000 [1968]: 28).

In our project we proceeded with the horizontal analysis by distinguishing different urban configurations in a given urban territory. The analysis of an urban territory starts with the choice of the perimeter of analysis. We did not look for bounded units but chose larger territories that allowed us to identify different urban configurations. These configurations are areas that have a certain apparent coherence and are produced by similar processes. This means that we could differentiate an urban territory according to concrete phenomena we analysed on the ground. The identification of an urban configuration was thus the result of a detailed research process: finding the characteristics that distinguish different territories—(the list was open—any kind of characteristics could be used to differentiate a specific

area). This already includes a comparative procedure; namely, differentiating areas and assigning them to different configurations.

This approach was developed in an analysis of the urban development of Havana in a collective project. Its goal was to distinguish different areas and identify their respective problematics, problems and potentials to inform urban planning. In the case of Havana, the identification and analysis of urban configurations revealed an urban structure that was completely different from the hitherto dominant representation of this urban space, which was basically defined in strictly geographical terms. The prevailing planning concept, which had been applied for many years, subdivided the entire urban area of Havana into three zones—a central, a peripheral, and an intermediary zone. In contrast to this representation, two large urban configurations emerged from our analysis that we called 'Blue Strip' and 'Deep Havana'.

The Blue Strip was our term for a heterogeneous zone of varying width along the coast in which most of Havana's important institutions, facilities, restaurants and hotels are concentrated. It is the area that continues to determine the image of Havana today—from which the famous iconography of the city as a tropical, urban Eldorado, which has been reproduced for decades in cinema, literature and advertisements, stems. Accordingly, the Blue Strip is also the part of Havana that draws the greatest international attention, as well as the crowds of tourists and visitors and the influx of investments. By contrast, Deep Havana is a large area that is also quite heterogeneous and comprises very diverse neighbourhoods. While it is located right in the geographical centre of Havana, in many respects it forms a remote, forgotten, neglected and disregarded part of the Caribbean metropolis, overshadowed by the famous neighbourhoods along the coast and far away from the flows of visitors and capital. The elaboration of this other representation of space was the key to addressing the socio-spatial inequalities that have developed in Havana over the decades. We identified a series of five more urban configurations. Although the full analysis has yet to be published, this analysis has already entered the local debate on planning and urban development (Peña Díaz and Schmid 2007).

The heuristic concept of urban configurations offers us an open and flexible way of analysing an urban territory. It allows us to distinguish between different patterns of urbanisation and to develop a typology of them. An urban configuration brings the movement of urbanisation to a standstill; it is a picture of a certain moment in time or a snapshot in the continuous process of urbanisation. A specific configuration might change its territorial extent or footprint as well as its characteristics over time. It is in constant transformation through renovations, demolitions and new constructions, and also in the

changing context of the wider territory—what once had been peripheral might become central in the course of the development. Therefore, urban configurations are always tentative and provisional, meant to analytically structure the territory in order to be able to better comprehend it. We could say that an urban configuration is emergent: it emerges as process and as concept. Our method of identifying urban configurations is explained in more detail in Chapter 3.

In the case of the Havana project, the goal of the project was to identify and analyse urban configurations as a basis for the development of appropriate planning strategies. Urban configurations can also be used as starting points for further analysis and theoretical examination. This implies finding out how a specific configuration was produced and what its potentials are. That means setting the urban form into movement by inserting it into the process of the production of space. In a project oriented towards a more thorough study, we might proceed with a comparison of seemingly similar configurations. This is what we did in this book.

REGRESSIVE-PROGRESSIVE ANALYSIS

After having identified different urban configurations and thus analysed the pattern of urbanisation in a given territory, in the second step we proceeded with a vertical analysis to understand the pathway of urbanisation. The aim was to reveal the path dependency of the territory as well as the decisive interruptions and changes in the urban process. This analysis does not simply aim to reconstruct the history of an urban configuration; instead it is intended to detect the ways in which history remains present in the contemporary situation and influences the future trajectory of this process. This analysis follows the *regressive-progressive* procedure developed by Lefebvre (Frehse 2014; Schmid 2015). This analysis first descends into the past to identify the defining moments that have inscribed themselves into the territory as well as into the collective memory. Subsequently, it ascends to the present in order to reconstruct the main lines of development of the urban territory.

These two movements generate two different kinds of analysis. The descending movement engenders a genealogical analysis, while the ascending movement provides a genetic analysis. The descending, genealogical analysis emphasises the discontinuity and the contradictions of urban development, the shifting balance of power and political interventions; it searches for the origin of a historical process and insists on the site, the contexts and the connections. The genetic approach, in contrast, reconstructs the genesis of the urban process. It captures its

recognisable trajectory, emphasises the continuity and the inner cohesion of the historical movement and searches for the fundamental dynamics that shape the present moment (Schmidt 1990:183).

CONCEPTUALISING URBANISATION PROCESSES

The combination of the horizontal and vertical analysis, and thus the reconstruction of patterns and pathways of urbanisation, allows urbanisation processes to be conceptualised. We distinguish here between urban configurations and urbanisation processes. While urban configurations constitute a specific moment in time (in our research project around the year 2015), urbanisation processes are always situated in space and time. This means that there is a beginning and thus an origin of the process. It could be rooted in a certain problematic or in a specific constellation of the political forces that initiated the process. The process then evolves, unfolds, comes to fruition and reaches a moment of full development, and may subsequently go through several stages of transformation or may also come to an end, either by slowly fading out because of changed socioeconomic or political conditions or by being abruptly erased and replaced by another urbanisation process. In our comparisons, this happened with several urbanisation processes; for instance in Istanbul, where popular urbanisation was gradually transformed into plotting urbanism, or in Shenzhen, where the process of plotting urbanism was abruptly replaced by urban renewal.

We must be clear that certain urban configurations may not be dominated by one singular urbanisation process, but may be determined by a combination of processes, either at the same time or in a succession of processes that inscribe their traces in the terrain. These traces are then integrated into the urban pattern and thus survive, or leave their mark, such as in the process of multilayered patchwork urbanisation. Other urbanisation processes may be difficult to map because they are relatively general, like the incorporation of urban differences, or because they have a more scattered urban extent, such as mass housing urbanisation.

This is now the moment for theorisation and comparison: to evaluate specific urbanisation processes and analyse and compare their various trajectories and possible pathways. We give them names and develop consistent definitions to make them suitable for further applications. The precise procedure is presented by Monika Streule in Chapter 3.

PARADIGMS OF URBANISATION

On a different scale, this historical regressive–progressive analysis can also be used to establish the periodisation of the urbanisation of the entire urban territory and thus to identify and reconstruct specific paradigms of urbanisation. The concept of the paradigm of urbanisation was introduced in an analysis of the historical development of Zurich to distinguish several historical periods of urban development (Schmid 2006). These paradigms were then contrasted with a parallel analysis of Geneva in a comparative study (Marco et al. 1997). Despite the fact that both urban territories were centres of industrial production that developed into global finance places in the 1970s and were obviously determined by the same national institutional frameworks, they displayed quite different patterns and pathways of urbanisation. The regressive–progressive analysis revealed that these differences could be explained, at least partly, by the divergent political constitution of the two places as either an extended territory (Zurich) or a city-state (Geneva) in medieval times, and by the process of early industrialisation that was limited to the city territory in Geneva but covered a large area around Zurich, which soon became the centre of the industrial heartland of Switzerland. It thus became visible that certain characteristics may strongly determine the long-term urban development of a territory, a result that was then further explored in the analysis of the specificity of urban territories (Diener et al. 2015). Such periodisation can also contribute to a different and innovative reading of urban history.

There have not been many systematic attempts at this kind of comparative analysis. The closest is that of Abu-Lughod's (1999) ambitious comparison of New York, Chicago and Los Angeles in the *longue durée* from the foundational acts up to the present. While there are many parallels between this and our own method of analysis, the big difference from our project is that her periodisation followed the (pre-given) accumulation regimes of the USA. In our approach, however, we elaborate a specific periodisation for each urban territory, which sometimes leads to periodisations that diverge quite markedly from each other. For a more detailed discussion of Abu-Lughod's approach, see Brenner (2001).

In general, we understand a paradigm of urbanisation as the ensemble of urbanisation processes that determine a given territory at a specific time. Following Lefebvre's triadic conception of the production of space, a paradigm of urbanisation can be analysed on the basis of three dialectically related dimensions: the development of new forms of territorial regulation, the production and transformation of material socio-spatial structures and the production of meaning and symbolisms in everyday life.

Just as the identification of configurations helps to analytically structure the patterns of urbanisation, a periodisation helps to structure the pathways of urbanisation. This analysis thus attempts to identify periods that show a certain regularity and stability in time, which are dominated by specific material characteristics, power and class constellations and ways of life. These periods might be disrupted and changed at certain historical moments by revolutions, regime changes, shifting constellations of forces and parallelograms of power, economic crises and periods of growth or decline; but also by long-term changes in the production process and the global division of labour, and also by changing settlement patterns and urban transformations, constellations of particular territorial relations and regimes of territorial regulations. Also forces of nature, such as a massive earthquake, may play a key role. But our analysis shows that even such devastating events can have different effects on the patterns and pathways of urbanisation—in the case of Mexico City, it provoked a change in the paradigm of urbanisation, while in the case of Tokyo the urban structure was almost seamlessly restored.

However, we have to be clear that the paradigms of urbanisation distinguish different phases in the production of space and not different periods of general social development. While the production of space is linked to wider social processes, it nevertheless follows a logic of its own and accordingly displays a different kind of dynamic. This was a lesson that Henri Lefebvre had to learn in his encompassing history of the production of space of the West (see Schmid 2022, Chapter 6).

We therefore need to take into account the spatial division of labour and the related unequal development of urbanisation across the globe. Despite the fact that today, trans-scalar processes prevail as a result of globalisation and widespread processes of neoliberalisation, there may nevertheless be regional differences and specificities that go beyond variegations of Fordist or neoliberal accumulation regimes (Brenner et al. 2010). We therefore should not take it for granted that there is any kind of universal periodisation that follows a kind of world history. We always need to construct an independent, immanent periodisation for each urban territory, based on the specificity of this particular territory in time and space. It is obvious that such a periodisation may differ from that of the dominant regimes of accumulation.

Paradigms of urbanisation are always specific to space and time. This means that the territories under consideration may change along the pathway of urbanisation. This became very clear in the analysis of the Pearl River Delta, as manifested in the related but nevertheless distinct paradigms of urbanisation experienced by Shenzhen, Dongguan and Hong Kong before

1980. But with the new economic policy put forward by Deng Xiaoping, a new multipolar urbanisation process started that finally led to the integrated development of the entire Pearl River Delta (see Chapter 6).

The paradigms of urbanisation of our case studies are analysed in some detail in Part II of this book. Further results of the comparison of urbanisation paradigms are presented in the final Chapter 'Paradigms of Urbanisation: A Comparative Outlook'.