Editorial:
World cities and their media and information networks

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Abstract

This special volume of the Information, Society and Justice is intended to provide a forum for discussions concerning such developments as well as issues of justice and poverty and those of media and information networks in the urban centres of the world. In this special issue, the guest editors have brought together interested researchers to discuss the above processes and their broader implications, and to present empirical and theoretical work that connects and encourages debates with the concerns mentioned above. The contributions examine some of the key themes in urban spaces on some cities.

For the first time in the course of global human history the number of people living in cities equal the number living in rural areas. The trend towards accelerating urbanisation is manifest by concentration of human populations and economic activities in global cities such as London, Paris and Lagos. Recently, as a response to forces of economic restructuring, globalisation and migration, the populations of large metropolitan cities have also become culturally heterogeneous on a scale never witnessed before. These trends pose enormous challenges for urban governance.

In October 2008, UN-HABITAT marked the World Habitat Day. The theme for the 2008 World Habitat Day was 'Harmonious Cities'. The vision of Harmonious Cities mandates harmony in economic and societal relations, urban and regional relations and urban growth and environmental relations.

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Echoing the aspirations of UN HABITAT, the specific objective of the special issue is to provide a platform to review the wide ranging and inter-related socio-economic, cultural and political impacts of the 'immigrant', 'ethnic' and diasporic media and information sectors in these cities. These issues are discussed without losing sight of the increasing social as well as cultural divisions that demarcate spaces in the urban centres. Further, it is essential that we understand how these local developments connect, if at all, with the expanding global transnational corporations that permeate beyond national boundaries in search of bigger markets in the age of globalisation.

Cities play an important role not only in the political, but economic as well as environmental organisation across the world. These cities where more than half of the world population lives in the 21st century are also facing increasing challenges from a globally mobile population and thus increasingly becoming sites of labour and migration. Such changes mean that in many cities of the world there is cohabitation of a wide variety of nationalities, religions and cultures. Within the media and information sphere, clusters of networks have emerged that serve the diverse the populations of the cities and as well as enabling links with homelands.

This special volume of the Information, Society and Justice is intended to provide a forum for discussions concerning such developments as well as issues of justice and poverty and those of media and information networks in the urban centres of the world. In this special issue, the guest editors have brought together interested researchers to discuss the above processes and their broader implications, and to present empirical and theoretical work that connects and encourages debates with the concerns mentioned above. The contributions examine some of the key themes in urban spaces on some cities. Three articles focus on London and the themes in these include the development of community media and their role in providing spaces for the disadvantaged and the marginalised; the presence and the role of transnational companies in a megacity and the criteria used to measure poverty in city. Peter Lewis asks: how are the voices of marginalised and disadvantaged communities to be heard in a large conurbation such as London? This article argues the importance of community media, and particularly community radio, in providing such communities with opportunities to express their cultures and concerns. Shehina Fazal seeks to articulate the presence of media from India - both as multinational players as well as media for the Indian diaspora communities living in the city of London. It attempts to analyse the implications of these global media networks in London's audio-visual economy, often referred to by policy makers as a positive influence on the city's cultural and creative industries. Jim Lindsay interrogates geography of poverty in London from a longer term historical perspective. One of the questions that come to mind immediately when looking at the map of Charles Booth's survey of 1889 is the persistence of poverty. How much has the pattern of poverty recorded in that year by Booth and his surveyors changed? Can we see continuity in the areas of poverty in London from the period when Charles Booth mapped the geography of poverty in East London in the 1880s to the present day?

Reflecting on recent debates on the question of marginality in western cities with immigrant communities, Francesca Recchia examines the ways in which problems of relegation, territorial stigmatisation and unemployment emerge from the narratives of French writers of Algerian origins in the last twenty years. Drawing on data from the November 2005 clashes in Paris, she highlights the historical networks of social and cultural reasons that contributed to ignite them. Semi-fictional accounts of immigrants' life in the banlieues are a privileged source of information about the social distress that

nurtured the explosion of urban violence. Reading between the lines of these representations helps to grasp what happens underneath the surface of an over exposed situation of inequality that periodically morphs into violence.

Marion Banks examines the end of Irish monoculturalism and the changes which gave birth to the multicultural Dublin of today. It critically explores the reasons for the delayed industrialisation of Ireland, including the role of the Catholic Church and the specific nationalist forces which dominated the polity and economic thinking during the early years of the new Independent Irish State. The specific forces which gave birth to the Celtic Tiger and oiled the boom decade are outlined and discussed; the role of US multinational corporations, the EU and petro dollar recycling are explored and evaluated. Ireland, a country that historically witnessed emigration has, in the last decade, experienced non-British immigration for the first time in its history. The small and developing media and cultural engagement by the 'new Irish' is examined and discussed.

In the final paper, Emordi and Osiki examine some historical processes that have resulted in making Lagos hitherto the most urbanized centre in Nigeria, albeit a 'villagized' city. They demonstrate how the city was made by people and also how the activities of people have been a major threat to the city. Lagos is a city marked by filthiness and degradation with slums and squatter settlements. These problems are a result of fundamental neglect and poverty of urban governance. The collapse of critical public infrastructure such as roads, water, sewage and drainage systems, power supply and importantly, housing, essential for households and business concerns, increasingly characterize Lagos metropolis, thus making it a villagized city.