Commentary. The New Urban Politics Thesis: Ruminations on MacLeod and Jones' Six Analytical Pathways

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Introduction

Birthed by and in turn giving substantive content to Harvey's historical materialist manifesto for urban studies, it is possible to think of the New Urban Politics (NUP) thesis as in many ways a talented sibling carrying the hopes and aspirations of an expectant parent. Harvey's mission of course was to persuade urban scholars that there existed an inescapable embroilment of urban processes in capitalism's histories and geographies; cities were both constituted by and in turn were constitutive of, capitalism and its trajectories. The contribution of the NUP thesis was to mobilise this analytical framework to make sense of epochal transformations in the governance of the contemporary capitalist city and therein to provide insights into the ways in which, at this historical moment, Western cities might be apprehended as key sites in the struggle over the division of the national product.

In part, the popularisation of the NUP thesis can be accounted for by the worldly dramas which unfolded as they did. In the early 1970s, the mileu in which modern Western cities existed was changing rapidly; the Fordist Keynesian compromise which had underpinned 30 years of economic growth and improved standards of living for all had collapsed. Subsequently, the assault on welfare systems wrought by ascendant rightist governments began and local governments came to recognise the full import of their diminished capacity to serve as managers, administers and adjudicators of the distribution of items of collection consumption. Meanwhile, the growing footlooseness and transnational ambitions of capital served to create a new set of expectations of and burdens on cities who—whether they sought it or not—were now charged with the responsibility of spearheading national accumulation strategies. Urban fortunes and futures would increasingly be defined by the capacity of cities to register the new *zeitgeist*, digest its meaning and implications, and define and enact a new *modus operandus*.

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At the heart of the NUP thesis—and based upon Harvey's widely (and at times wildly) circulated terminology introduced in his famous 1989 *Geografiska Annaler* paper—is the proposition that an era of urban managerialism has given way to a new era marked by urban entrepreneurialism (Harvey, 1989; see also the seminal interventions by Cox, 1993, and Cox and Mair, 1989; and Hall and Hubbard's, 1996, magisterial review of the field). The growing intensity of interlocality competition for investment, tourism and the consumer dollar, organs of the state and skilled workers have created a climate in which local welfare budgets have become diverted into often-speculative city marketing projects, hallmark events and downtown aesthetic make-overs. Referring specifically to Detroit, Neill (1995) memorably likened this development to the application of lipstick on a gorilla. Steadily the city has become more intensely commodified, beautified and packaged so that in some cases it is now quite literally being sold for a song. Given that not all cities can win, a new era of rivalry and conflict has arisen between state institutions and different factions of capital in different places, with ruinous consequences for public and private stakeholders in those cities who miss out. Moreover, competition for a role in the global division of labour has created a 'race to the bottom', as ever more local resources become diverted to subsidise those who are regarded as key consumers of the city product. Meanwhile, the position of poor, marginalised, vulnerable and working-class communities has become more precarious, exposed as they are to the vagaries of fiscal retrenchment, the diversion of welfare budgets to local economic development projects and the vulnerabilities produced by a more aggressive market system. Trickle down has been revealed as a myth. Here place marketing projects come to double as civic boosterist projects; hallmark events serve both to sell places and to mobilise and manipulate local jingoism and civic pride to galvanise support for local accumulation strategies. The mantra of 'community' and 'locality' is deployed to contain, subdue and conceal the inequalities, risks and threats which are generated by local economic development initiatives—a modern-day version of bread and circuses (Cox and Mair, 1989, Boyle and Hughes, 1995).

Such a schematic thumb-nail sketch certainly does not do full justice to the NUP thesis which even at the moment of its inception benefited from a certain richness, texture and nuance in exposition. More particularly, across the past 20 years, these basic tenets have been scrutinised, critiqued, embellished, reformed and refined; the thesis has fanned widely and more than a thousand flowers have bloomed. Against this backdrop, it is indeed a timely moment in which to take stock of what has been accomplished, where the thesis is now at and what prospects remain for its further development into the future. This Special Issue of *Urban Studies*, edited by Gordon MacLeod and Martin Jones, provides a key moment of critical reflexivity towards these ends and will surely serve as an historic staging-post in the development of scholarship to come. In framing this Special Issue, MacLeod and Jones usefully track 'six analytical pathways' around which NUP literature has emerged and pose some questions about the standing and future of each of these six pathways. *Inter alia* they comprise

(1) *Ontological concerns*: Does the NUP thesis continue to capture anything meaningful about the ways cities work in advanced capitalist economies?
(2) *Epistemological concerns*: Can the NUP thesis stretch to capture urban processes in societies beyond the West and does its wider application serve more to confuse than to reveal?

(3) *Noteable silences*: What related and concurrent processes has the NUP remained silent about and what implications flow from such silences?

(4) *Political struggles*: Beyond the bread and circuses gimmick, has the NUP adequately developed to capture the political struggles which mark the rise of urban entrepreneurialism?

(5) *Neo-liberal urbanism*: In what ways might a productive dialogue be instituted between the burgeoning literature on the neo-liberalisation of the state and the existing NUP literature?

(6) *Scaling dilemmas*: What wider and more localised processes are obfuscated by the NUPs analytical and scalar focus on intercity competition for investment?

In this brief commentary to accompany the collection, I appropriate MacLeod and Jones' mapping of the terrain and offer my own views on some of the lacunae, conundrums and breakthroughs they ruminate on. I conclude with some observations on the implications of the 2008 global economic collapse for the future of the thesis.

Commentary on MacLeod and Jones' Six Analytical Pathways

Ontological Concerns

Can one expect trends on the ground to continue so as to consolidate the pertinence of the NUP thesis moving forward? Will the shift from urban managerialism to urban entrepreneurialism enjoy the same strategic priority it was afforded in the 1980s and will interlocality competition for a role in the division of labour *and* city marketing still animate city managers? Whilst such questions demand a broader discussion, I offer some reflections here on the on-going status of one central pillar of the NUP thesis—the rise of the policy domain of city marketing.

Deliberation on the future use in local economic development projects of hallmark events, entertainment spectacles, trade fairs, local sporting clubs and associations, architectural and design make-overs, publicity and media campaigns, cultural, heritage and arts festivals, and pageantry and pomp, is best cast as part of a wider discussion of the *longue durée* of city marketing, promotion and commodification. More broadly, the story of the past, present and future trajectory of city marketing projects themselves might be viewed as but one rich strand in the wider history of the commodification of space and place. Our question becomes then what kinds of historiographical narratives might guide our understanding of the historical pathways which city marketing is likely to follow?

Commodity histories are now popular; social histories of products as varied as tea, coffee, salt and gin now form part of the staple diet of many undergraduate programmes. Yet for a whole variety of reasons, which are actually worth considering in greater detail and at length as part of a future debate, spaces and places exist as a unique class of commodity and conventional historiographies of commodities—such as those based upon life cycle narratives—bear only limited relevance and utility. What kinds of commodity histories might we write about space and place? Here, perhaps the language of empire and colonisation has a particular resonance. Lefebvre's (1991) charting of the creeping colonisation of everyday life by the abstract spaces created (and destroyed) by capitalism provides a valuable historiography of the expansionist tendencies of capitalism's spatial matrices. Meanwhile, Gregory's (1993) call for a new critical human geography of the growing empires of abstract, commodified and bureaucratised space promotes a similar eschatology. More pertinent to the present discussion, Kearns and Philo's seminal *Selling Places* (1993)

emphasises the growing and developing number of ways in which, through time, cities have been reduced to an object of market exchange. We might consider then the merits of the proposition that the commodification of space and place has deep roots in the history of capitalism and if anything has betrayed a dominant and imperial teleology marked by expansion, intensification and infiltration.

The rise and rise of Florida's (2002) influential creative class thesis presents a case in point. According to Florida, the quality of human capital in any place, and more particularly the membership base of the 'creative class' in that place, is now as important, if not more important, than attracting investment, in driving local economic growth. Given the central role they play, it is crucial that cities and regions re-engineer themselves so that they offer the right package of attractions to the creative class. 'Cool places', which transcend distinctions between the bohemian and the bourgeois ethic, which provide 'low entry barriers', which offer 'plug and play communities' and which promote tolerance, diversity, creativity and 'boho chic' will offer the greatest lure in future; career opportunities, salary packages and labour market differentials will be of declining importance. The policy diagnosis, therefore, is for places to transform themselves from stuffy, conservative, bureaucratic and stifling 'working-class enclaves', 'boring post-industrial service centres' and 'high-technology 'nerdistans', into liberal, bohemian, multicultural and culturally cosmopolitan hubs. Although critiqued by those within the neo-conservative movement as complicit in the moral degeneration of the Western city, the creative class thesis is in fact no liberal dream. As Peck (2005) shows, Florida's prescriptions are best read as the latest incarnation in the urban entrepreneurial agenda; a veritable

wolf in sheep's clothing. The consumer market is being better profiled and segmented, space and place are being gilded with a finer cosmetic brush, and more sophisticated product differentiation is the mantra of the moment.

Epistemological Concerns

Without toiling on the thorny question of what the idea of the 'Western city' itself denotes, the application of the NUP thesis to cities beyond the West or cities embedded in nations which are at best only partially Westernised is to be welcomed. Thus far, attention has been given to the question of policy transfer. Young's (2005) pioneering work which charted the rise of place marketing in eastern European cities who were and are aspiring to European Union membership remains a model for studies of the routing of the NUP thesis into societies deemed 'other'. More broadly, Ward (2010) has drawn sustained attention to the policy transfer process and has scrutinised the mutations and metamorphoses of paradigmatic models as they become disemebedded from their point of origin, refracted in transit and reworked into a new cultural, economic, political and historical milieu (see Cook and Ward, in this Special Issue). And as the NUP comes to be applied to a diverse range of cities (Dubai, Shanghai, New Dehli, Mumbai, Rio de Janeiro and Singapore have all already attracted discussion; see also Chatterjee in this issue), innovating analytical frameworks which are capable of reconciling the key tenets of the NUP thesis with the complex historical, institutional and ideological specificities of markets and their operation in non-Western or emerging Western societies will be vital (see Raco et al., 2011).

Yet will customising the NUP to places which are 'foreign' to its location of origin be enough? Beyond policy transfer, there

exists a much more profound set of questions concerning theory transfer. As revealed in the proliferation of such mantras as 'unthinking Eurocentrism', 'history without a centre' and 'provincialising Europe', within post-colonial studies, there is now a well-established wariness that Western theory—even theory which professes for itself critical and radical ambitions—might be open to the charge that it is guilty of interpreting the history and culture of non-European societies principally through European frames of reference (Minca, 2003). Even when aspiring to a decentring of the sovereign supremacy assumed by the European geographical imagination, urban studies it might be argued, is vulnerable to falling prey to a certain kind of Eurocentrism or metrocentrism, defined here as set of theoretical practices predicated upon an insufficiently reflexive commitment to the superiority of particularly European ways of rendering the world intelligible. Pollard *et al.* (2009) have recently criticised economic geographers for noting the cultural specificity of Western market systems only then to proceed to examine the entire global economy using theoretical frameworks which stem from Western constructs. In applying the NUP thesis to urban systems beyond the West, at the very least urban studies risks rendering itself vulnerable to a similar charge.

How might we handle the potentially metrocentric tendencies of the global march of the NUP thesis? It is at this juncture that a moment of opportunity presents itself for dialogue between post-colonial studies and urban studies. There is scope now to engage seriously with the works of such post-colonial scholars as Cooper, Young, Spivak, Chakrabarty and Mignola. For example, and with specific respect to post-colonial studies of India, Chakrabarty (2007) offers a theory of two histories as a way of addressing metrocentricism within post-colonial

studies. History 1 is based upon a particular universal telos, —for instance, Marx's reading of capitalism (in our case the NUP thesis)—whilst history 2 is constitutive of numerous other tendencies in history that do not necessarily follow the eschatology of Marx's capital (in our case, local urban processes). Chakrabarty (2007) proposes that post-colonial theorists should resist the temptation to prioritise history 2 over history 1, by say avoiding the abstract theories of Western social science in favour of recovering pristine subaltern histories. There can be no veneration of history 2 *per se* as somehow more authentic, progressive and innately superior. Instead, the critical agenda is to explore the productive tensions which exist between history 1 and history 2. History 2 has the potential to arrest the thrust of capitalism's universal history and help it to find local ground, whilst history 1 has the ability to assist history 2 to render its wider location meaningful. The preferred method then is to run both histories concurrently, understanding them to be distinctive but mutually enriched through dialogue.

Noteable Silences

As with all theoretical enterprises, the NUP literature has undoubtedly played down or ignored altogether a number of concurrent processes and trends. In many cases, the implications of such a selective and particular focus have been largely benign. In other instances, however, parallel developments have encroached on the NUP agenda and mediated, interrupted and on occasions undermined its thrust and orientation. In their introduction to the *Special Issue*, MacLeod and Jones rightly point to the ongoing significance of welfare provision and the management of collective consumption as one particularly apposite example. For sure, the turn by local states to local economic development was rarely substantial

enough to displace welfare provision as the core duty of city governance and too many studies have sought to find revolutionary new thinking in places where there has been little more than small reprioritisation (see also McGuirk and Dowling, and Fairbanks in this Special Issue). To complement MacLeod and Jones' focus, here I draw attention to three additional concurrent developments which deserve to be more present in NUP analyses: the relationships which exist between cities and environments; the role of labour mobility; and, finally, the move beyond class analyses to a concern for a variety of axes of difference.

To the extent that the environment entered into early discussions of the NUP, concern tended to be restricted to the role of environmental improvements (tackling river pollution, reclaiming brownfield sites) in the cultivation of new imagery for older industrial conurbations. Given the central role which cities play in the metabolic transformation of nature, it is unsurprising that as the environment has steadily asserted itself in the realm of public policy so too has the relationship between the NUP and the ecology of the city come under extended scrutiny (see Jonas *et al.*, in this issue). The more important debates which are emerging include: the role of *laissez faire* planning in the facilitation of speculative developments in flood plains; the impacts of development on waste production and strategies for waste management including the siting of landfills and incinerator plants; conversely and perversely, the growth of interlocality competition for potentially environmentally hazardous facilities; the role of urban morphology, design and housing density planning on energy consumption; and, finally, low carbon imagery as a growing signifier in place promotion campaigns.

In many ways, the rationale for the NUP is predicated upon a set of assumptions about labour's comparative immobility and capital's relative footlooseness (Cox, 1993). Because the friction of mobility on labour is greater than that on capital, labour is placed in a position of comparative vulnerability and is drawn into a competition to procure capital. This assumption is becoming increasingly precarious and in some specific cases the very basis of the NUP model is threatening to unravel or at least demand renewed formulation. The much-lamented depopulation of Detroit provides evidence, if it is needed, that labour can and will move when uneven development demands that it does so. Moreover, Florida's creative class thesis, mentioned earlier, has inverted the relationship of capital and labour; capital anchored in specific places is now at the mercy of footloose labour and is entering into a competition with rival capitals to prospect for that labour. Meanwhile, cities are re-evaluating the links which exist between the emigration of their citizens and their own development. Once viewed as a barometer of failure, emigration is now being viewed as a source of competitive advantage. As testified in Pittsburgh's turn to '*diaspora* strategy', attention is being given to increasing philanthropic donations, generating 'roots' or return tourism, and building business networks and diasporic investment.

Finally, whilst rooted in the political economy tradition and steeped in Marxist-inspired analyses of the production of urban space under capitalism and the concomitant rise of a new class-based politics, the NUP thesis has not survived untouched by the emergence of a wider critical human geography which is concerned with multiple axes of difference; class for sure, but also ethnicity, gender, age, sexuality, disability and so on (for example, see the work of Hubbard, 1999; Holloway and Valentine, 2000; and Staeheli, 2008). Some of the more interesting critical human geographical studies have explored the politics of place

promotion through the theme of access to and exclusion from public space. In some cases using Cresswell's (1996) method of transgression, these studies have explored the complex senses of insiderness and outsiderness which different social groups negotiate as they explore their sense of alterity and belonging to the 'new' city being crafted and imagineered by marketers. Patterns of inclusion and exclusion are complex; the pursuit of the creative city has opened spaces for some groups (youth sub-cultures, street artists, bohemians, gay, trans-sexuals and bi-sexual groups, ethnic investors, etc.) but at the same time social exclusion and marginalisation persist for many others (subalterns, beggars, single females at night, asylum-seekers, homeless groups, substance abusers and so on). Indeed, referring to the visceral formal and informal exclusion of social groups who are ill-aligned with the manicured image of the new city, Smith speaks about the rise of a nastier 'revanchist city' (Smith, 1996; MacLeod, 2002). Not surprisingly, a political agenda centred upon the now much-lauded idea of 'rights to the city' has been the result (Mitchell, 2003).

Political Struggles

In the original NUP thesis, political struggles over the transition from urban managerialism to urban entrepreneurialism take the form of a class-based struggle and politics over the distribution of the city's product (DeFillipis, 1999). The redirection of state expenditure from welfare priorities to local economic development projects (through tax reductions on capital, changing budget priorities, the failure of speculative developments, etc.) exposes working-class populations to further marginalisation and poverty. In retrospect, the idea that the flimsy logic of trickle-down and the strategy of securing hegemony for entrepreneurial projects through the intoxicating effects of urban spectacles and the mystifying consequences of an elevated civic patriotism, seems at best misguided. 'Bread and circuses' has at most played a minimal role in the management of working-class dissent and resistance to developments which are antithetical to working-class interests. To this end, a fresh literature has emerged which, in prioritising the concept of 'sustaining communities', has yielded more substantial insights into the seriousness with which capital and the capitalist state have treated working-class disenfranchisement (Brudell, 2011).

Blairite in origin but propagated more widely through the international popularisation of Giddens' philosophy of the 'third way', the sustaining communities agenda holds that neither the Fordist-Keynesian welfare/nanny state nor the *laissez faire* neoliberal state championed by Thatcherism had the potential to deliver a meaningful regeneration of disadvantaged communities (Raco, 2007). Marginalisation, anomie, alienation and exclusion have resulted from each. New thinking is needed. The objective now is to encourage state intervention to foster community rehabilitation but then to work to enable communities to stand on their 'own two feet', reproducing themselves autonomously in the market economy. In return for state intervention, communities are expected to comprise active citizens; welfare is to give way to workfare. To instill active citizenry, attention needs to be focused on rebuilding local social capital—taken loosely to refer to the vibrancy, intensity and inclusivity of local social networks. Greater social capital is presumed to be the midwife of increased participation and the formation of more sustainable communities. In Blair's schema, state intervention—in areas such as improved urban design, the pursuit of social mixing, the promotion of skills training, the foregrounding of community empowerment and the encouragement of an enhanced role for the voluntary sector—is seen as

important in the fostering and nurturing of social capital. Interestingly, in the UK, whilst Cameron's slogan of the 'Big Society' is equally concerned with the idea of sustaining communities, it would seem that a new formulation is being piloted on the principle of 'mainstreaming' 'unruly' and subaltern communities without state support; civic society has to pull itself up by its own bootstraps.

According to Peck and Tickell (2002), the sustaining communities agenda in fact represents nothing more than a thinly veiled politics of incorporation, a vehicle for managing working dissent and disaffection. For Peck and Tickell, the 'third way' is best conceived of as a flanking support for neo-liberalism, a form of 'roll-out' neo-liberalism in which the state is permitted a more aggressive role in the management of potential opposition and resistance. Urban entrepreneurialism has shifted from the 'law of the jungle' to the much more purposeful construction of market rules and social acquiescence. Community consultation vehicles—paraded in the form of Arnstein's famous 1969 'ladder of participation' or in the many hundreds of derivative ladders, models, hierarchies and caricatures of methods and modes of participation which Arnstein's framework has bequeathed and which permeate literature on sustaining communities (see Rogerson et al., 2011)—have merely served to obfuscate the reality; many local economic development projects pit capital and working-class community interests as irrevocably in conflict and an agonistic politics between capital and working-class communities is a necessary and unavoidable result (Brudell, 2011). In casting the sustaining communities policy agenda using the NUP literature in this way, some commentators have usefully drawn upon the recent developments within political philosophy (in particular, the work of Mouffe, Žižek and Rancière) to situate the NUP as an

exemplar of the rise of an era of 'post-politics' (Swyngedouw, 2009). If such a moment is characterised by the sanitisation and active policing of the public realm, the manufacturing of consent, the suffocation of genuine agonistic conflict and the passing of a much-deformed public sphere as genuinely fit for purpose for democratic debate, then perhaps 'roll out neo-liberalism' does stand as at least one of its iconic expressions (see MacLeod, in this issue).

Neo-liberal urbanism

The vocabulary which circulates around the idea of 'neo-liberal urbanism' now adorns research monographs which hitherto might have simply mobilised the NUP thesis as the vital context (Larner, 2000). In their introduction to this Special Issue MacLeod and Jones make a telling point when they contend that, whilst sharing the same parentage, care must be taken not to conflate NUP literature and recent literature on the neo-liberal city, and that at the very least a dialogue must first be struck between both. In the first instance, the extent to which the term 'neo-liberalism' may be said to map onto any meaningful empirical referent is now becoming a matter for debate (Larner 2000). A palpable mood of hostility against those who might use and abuse the notion has simultaneously grown. According to Hackworth (2007), sceptics question the integrity of the concept of neo-liberalism on the grounds that, as it has become embedded in nations, regions and cities in contextually specific ways, neo-liberal doctrine has become hybridised and has crystallised into complex and mutant 'actually existing' forms. In addition, these forms often contradict the principles from which they derive and in any event run in parallel with other ideologies and programmes of reform. A removal of the term from the

academic vocabulary seems the only way to overcome glib and fruitless characterisations of contemporary political economy.

In the work of Brenner and Theodore (2002), neo-liberalism is considered to have pushed cities to the forefront of the drive for national competitiveness. The urban scale now constitutes the most appropriate entry point for empirical explorations of the grounding of neo-liberalism in concrete histories and geographies. Yet the resulting patterns are messy. While recognising the potential abuses which were risked by continued usage of the label, Brenner and Theodore assert that the idea ought to be retained and mobilised in a qualified form, to denote actually existing expressions which the ideology assumes in concrete secular time. Whether it be in terms of the filtering of national and regional programmes of state reform into specific cities, or reforms beginning and ending in the city itself, neo-liberal thinking has become woven into localities in different ways as a consequence of their unique social, cultural, economic, political and institutional histories. A period of creative destruction has then ensued in which neo-liberalism has junked, metamorphosed and recalibrated existing institutions, and erected many new constructs. Mapping and explaining the genesis, trajectories and path dependencies of different urban-based neo-liberal experiments has emerged as a key research agenda.

It is with respect to the concepts of path trajectories and path dependencies that dialogue between the neo-liberal city and the NUP might yield benefits. I am struck with the way in which case studies of the unfolding of neo-liberal reforms in particular cities invoke these two ideas, only to gloss over the local specificities and histories that matter. Arguably the rich potential which inheres within the ideas of path trajectory and path dependency has scarcely been realised. Whilst the emphases in the neo-liberal urbanism literature have been upon the variable and material manifestations of the neo-liberal agenda in concrete urban settings, it might be said that the emphases in the NUP literature have been upon the differential ways in which urban institutions have crystallised out and thereafter articulated specific entrepreneurial programmes and policies. A pressing concern of the NUP literature at the outset was the question of who within capitalist cities were pioneering the urban entrepreneurial agenda *per se*. From where was the claim coming that interlocality competition for a role in the division of labour now defined the vital context for cities? Linking both bodies of scholarship might provide one way in which more substantial meaning might be given to concepts which seek to apprehend neo-liberalism's local genesis, mutations and fate.

Specifically, in foregrounding the agency involved in the production, enactment and legitimation of urban entrepreneurial agendas, the NUP might have a useful role to play in improving understanding of why neo-liberalism is birthed and evolves in particular ways in particular cities. In their famous thesis on growth coalitions, Logan and Molotch (1987) sought to identify the coalition of interests which were coming together to promote development agendas within North American cities. Representatives from the private sector, such as property owners and rentiers, banks and newspapers, it seemed, were forming into a powerful urban growth machine which was capturing the local state in important ways (see also Jonas and Wilson, 1999). Extending Logan and Molotch's insights, Cox and Mair (1989) introduced the concept of local dependency to reach a better understanding of why some actors and not others were feeling compelled to act. The spatiality of capital and the state, and in particular the local embeddedness of public and private institutions and organisations in the urban economy, was what

mattered most. The concept of local dependency proved an important contribution both to studies of manifestations of growth coalitions in North American cities and also to international comparative research which sought to account for the limited and different appearance of growth machines in European and Asian cities (Boyle, 1999). Studies of the work of particular types of capital and the clustering of different local interests in and around growth machines can help us to understand how neo-liberal ideas and practices become brokered into cities in locally contingent ways.

Scaling Dilemmas

Finally, the question of what is included and what is overlooked by scaling analyses at the level of interlocality competition for investment is an intriguing one. In fact, competition between spaces for access to a restricted market, including the aggressive use of marketing toolkits and locality-specific make-overs, occurs at all manner of scales—from the household scale (witness the role of the estate agent), to the street (witness the role of the residents association), to the neighbourhood (witness the role of community councils), to the city (where growth machines function), to regions (especially in federal states where regional authorities assume considerable power and jockey for national positioning), to states (where national accumulation strategies still ultimately reside), to supranational states (witness, for instance, the tensions which exist between the EU, ASEAN and NAFTA). The NUP then represents but one territorially based competition for a share of the spoils and is best conceived as nesting within—and, as a consequence, mediating as well as being mediated by—a range of other scalar processes.

There is much to be gained from situating the NUP more consciously within a nested hierarchy of scalar-based territorial competitions for resources (Jones and Etherington, 2009; see also articles by Keil and Ancien, in this Special Issue). One prominent example would be to consider the various articulations and disarticulations which exist between intercity competitions for a role in the international division of labour and intraurban competitions for a role in the spatial division of consumption (see Phelps and Wood, in this Special Issue). The much discussed and lamented decline of the traditional downtown or city centre, wrought by the expansion of out-of-town retail parks and mega shopping malls, captures what is at stake here (Rice, 2009). Against the backdrop of such competition, a number of neighbourhood-based, private-sector-led growth coalitions have arisen in defence of turf, the most prominent of which are evolved into formal Business Improvement Districts (BIDs) with their own legal status (Ward, 2010). Often reflecting aggressive attempts by retail and property capital in city-centre locations to win back a viable share of regional spend, BIDs have been active in further sanitising the image of downtowns and further regulating the public spaces of the city. They have sometimes emerged (un)wittingly as agents of the lamented revanchist city. Whether the appearance of BIDs will help or hinder cities to present themselves more broadly as a united 'offer' or 'prospect' to investors who are adjudicating the rival merits of city regions *per se* remains the critical question.

Conclusion

Where might this stock-taking and critical reflection on MacLeod and Jones' six analytical pathways take us? Perhaps the contours of a number of priorities for the future development of the NUP thesis present themselves, including: the development and insertion of historiographies of city

marketing within wider historiographies of the social production of space and place or commodity histories of the development of space and place as a tradeable good; the inculcation of a greater awareness that the globalisation of the NUP thesis requires attention to theory transfer as well as policy transfer and the nurturing of extended dialogue between urban studies and postcolonial studies; the rendering of noteable absences in the NUP thesis present and the interrogation of what these new presences might mean for its key tenets; the formulation of a critique of the post-political status of the contemporary capitalist city and the institution of a quest for a restoration of agonistic politics; the promotion of dialogue between literature on neo-liberal urbanism and NUP processes, not least with a view to critiquing, clarifying and developing such ideas as 'path trajectory' and 'path dependency'; and, finally, the promotion of a multiscalar framework within which interlocality competition for a place in the division of labour is considered alongside other scales of analyses of space and place commodification.

Of course, the dramatic collapse of the global economy in 2008 and the stuttering, spluttering and on-going road to recovery which has beset the advanced capitalist nations now threaten cities with a new species of epochal change. Quite what the outcome will be remains to be seen. There is much talk of a re-regulation of capitalism. Gleeson's (2010) recent call for a new social and environmental dispensation in his book *Lifeboat Cities* provides an exemplar case for a new capitalism. *Lifeboat Cities* offers a sustained critique of the neo-liberal city; Gleeson indeed likens the past 30 years of welfare retrenchment and the rise to prominence of neo-liberal rule as in retrospect being akin to being 'handcuffed to a madman'. For Gleeson, the global economic downturn has raised the stakes and created new opportunities. No longer must the call to resist or contest the NUP rest on an agenda of moderate reform. The scale of the task is now so great and the sense of urgency so crushing that much more ambitious thinking is required. Gleeson invokes the concept of the 'guardian state' to capture his vision for a more intensively state re-regulated city of the future. Yet even as the ink on *Lifeboat Cities* dries, the ideology of deep neo-liberalism is being pedaled aggressively as the solution to the crises; a form of schizo-capitalism is surfacing and is seeking to sell the same medicine that created the crises as ameliorative and central to its solution.

No doubt debate over how, when, why and what to regulate or not will continue for the foreseeable future. In the meantime, life will go on and the NUP will survive and thrive much as before. Nevertheless, I wish to end by forecasting six key trends which I think will mark the post-crises city and which will have particularly significant consequences for the unfolding of the NUP thesis. Perhaps scholars in a further 20 years might reflect upon whether any of these predictions accurately captured the ways in which the NUP was recalibrated in the early decades of the 21st century

— Stimulus packages will heighten fresh interlocality competition for state investment.
— Increased state ownership of insolvent banks and their associated land and property portfolios, and bankrupt land and property development companies will increase state involvement in city marketing processes.
— Fiscal retrenchment will make it politically more difficult for states to invest in cities' soft infrastructure, and not least in their arts, culture and heritage sectors.
— Retaining existing enterprises and jobs will assume greater priority over attracting new investment.

—Falling land and property prices will introduce new rent gaps and will stimulate fresh waves of gentrification.

—The reworking of the 'sustainable community' agenda into a 'big society' agenda will lay more bare the agonistic class politics which pervade local economic development projects.

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