

Chapter 32

Conclusion: The Inclusive Future of Global Urban Transformation



Kei Otsuki and Ajay Bailey

1 Introduction

This book argues that the concept of inclusive city merits attention in the theorizations and imaginations about the rapid urban transformations occurring worldwide. It is imperative to critically examine the concept of inclusion to unravel its complexity and wickedness. When we include one group in a particular agenda or space, there is the possibility of excluding others. Moreover, it is crucial to explore how inclusion can both enhance and restrict opportunities for certain individuals to participate in the future of urban planning and development. Discussions about how to make cities more inclusive often lead to interventions that focus on particular “boxed” groups of people such as the urban poor, women, or low-income populations. However, we know that we cannot assume that people belong solely to one category or a fixed identity. The concept of intersectionality—or multiple intersectionalities—has gained traction in contemplating inclusive cities (Rigon & Castán Broto, 2021). This is because urban dwellers encounter diverse challenges that vary across time, space, and context in their everyday lives. Inclusion in urban life thus should be studied from an “actor-oriented” perspective (Long, 2001). Instead of assuming people’s identities, grouping them, and planning urban development *for* these groups, we, the researchers, need to conceptualize people as corporeal beings who actively engage in deliberation and self-identification regarding their preferred urban living (Archer, 2010). Furthermore, it is essential to involve residents in the co-designing of infrastructures; neighborhoods; and, ultimately, urban development policies and planning practices (Corsín Jiménez, 2014).

The necessity for deliberations on inclusion has become even more pronounced in light of recent multiple crises. When we started this book project, cities worldwide were grappling with the profound consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic

K. Otsuki (✉) · A. Bailey
Utrecht University, Utrecht, The Netherlands
e-mail: K.Otsuki@uu.nl

(chapters by Leung et al. and Andal) and enduring the aftermath of disasters like the Beirut explosion (chapter by Rehorst). The authors of the chapters on smart cities and digitalization discuss the potential for enhancing the efficiency and carbon neutrality of cities and infrastructures worldwide. They explore how cities can transform into centers of investment and innovation, particularly amid the global climate crisis and deepening inequality. These emerging processes allow us to critically examine the meaning and impact of inclusion in the context of cities and their transformation. In the face of local lockdowns, global climate crises, and geopolitical challenges, we are currently witnessing the profound empirical and analytical significance of external forces in relation to local agencies and the creative expressions of everyday lives. Cities are comprised of the lived-in places of various groups of people who experience urban spaces and infrastructures such as public transportation differently. Based on people's experiences, we need to address social inclusion and exclusion and possibilities of co-designing cities as lived-in places.

This book has specifically focused on intersectionalities and the potential for co-design precisely because diverse groups of urban dwellers are not passively waiting to be included in existing cities through infrastructures and innovations imposed by external experts. Instead, they actively negotiate and navigate their way through the urban fabric in different ways by including and thrusting themselves into urban life. Researchers thus have a valuable opportunity to bring to light the ongoing agentic processes of inclusion, thereby contributing to the improvement of how cities are co-planned and co-created by experts. Cities are increasingly becoming hubs and networks of opportunity, and we should not let new modes of gentrification and gated enclosures limit the distribution of benefits to the rich and powerful. At the same time, we are aware that local livelihood opportunities are being altered constantly and quickly, more often than not by factors from the outside. There is a widening gap between what is currently happening in various cities and people's wishes and aspirations, such as the active exclusion of migrants, the disabled, and older adults (chapters Nagesh et al., George et al.). There are also frequent chains of displacement due to urban renewal and property speculation in cities (chapters by Kisémbó & Otsuki, Suprayoga & Wargyawati). New opportunities such as digitalization and smart city making can lead to the privileging of already wealthier groups (chapter by UDI Writers Collective) as well as ad hoc interventions to upgrade cities leading to frustration and local indifference (chapter by Kassel et al.). By examining the trends of the past decade, it becomes evident that both the internal and international mobility of migrants has rapidly increased in cities across the Global South and North, with various implications (chapters by Brouwer, Biswas). As we have discussed elsewhere, this is also related to the increase of financial capital flows, including foreign direct investments into infrastructure development, trade, aid money, new charities, and remittances (Zoomers et al., 2021). Together, they have contributed to large-scale spatial, political, and socio-economic transformations, which have helped people to not only improve their lives but have also led to growing inequality.

Indeed, as demonstrated by various chapters in this book, an examination of the evolving geographies of urban development on a global scale reveals the dual

nature of globalization. On one hand, it has expanded opportunities and possibilities for individuals and communities. On the other hand, it has also imposed new restrictions, perpetuated inequalities, and exposed people to vulnerabilities and risks. In an increasingly fragmented world marked by escalating levels of exclusion, the chapters in this book provide rich empirical examples that highlight the need for reflexive understandings of urban development processes. These chapters demonstrate that, in light of planetary boundaries and new and unexpected realities, the future of global urbanization hinges upon the ability to develop innovative solutions *rooted in the everyday experiences of diverse urban dwellers*. Achieving such a goal necessitates a transdisciplinary approach that engages a wide range of stakeholders including citizens and non-citizens, policymakers, urban planners, business investors, development practitioners, and civil society activists, who can inform what it means to be living in particular cities in the changing climate and political economic context. Through this book, we aim to foster ongoing inquiry, reflection, and critical engagement with two key questions: how can we collectively comprehend and channel capital flows towards inclusive urban development? Additionally, how can we address not only the need for excluded individuals to be included in decision-making processes but also empower them to generate their own solutions to everyday challenges? This requires the support and involvement of those with resources and power, who can actively contribute to enabling marginalized communities to find sustainable solutions to their unique problems.

2 Inclusive Cities in Contemporary Urban Development Policymaking

The questions we have addressed in this book are not only relevant for theoretical discussions but also hold significance for the practical realm of urban development policymaking and planning practices. Currently, initiatives such as the New Urban Agenda and Sustainable Development Goal Number 11 (sustainable cities and communities) exemplify the contemporary policy agenda for urban transformation. These frameworks emphasize the importance of inclusive and sustainable urban development—the city for all—and have been promoted at both the national and the local levels. The global recognition of the importance of inclusivity and sustainability has prompted a shift towards a more balanced approach in today's urban development policies and planning. It is now widely acknowledged that urban development must address both social and environmental goals to achieve truly sustainable outcomes. However, while pursuing global agendas for inclusivity and sustainability in urban development, it is crucial to be mindful of the long-term impacts that these pursuits may have on different localities. It is important to recognize that the pursuit of global agendas can inadvertently shape and influence the ongoing process of the urban frontier expansion. A notable example is the growing trend of utilizing cities as technological and infrastructural solution to address climate change at the expense

of social justice and equity (as pointed out by Long & Rice, 2019) and as means of financial value creation through densification (Shih & Chiang, 2022). However, these processes also lead to increased displacement and relocation, land speculation, gentrification, and segregation of areas with varied living conditions and access to quality urban services.

Current policy debates on sustainable urban development often narrowly focus on how to build sustainable and green cities with new infrastructure development. In this context, social impacts are described mainly in terms of access to infrastructure services while a city is conceived as spatially bound, plannable, and legible by the state and its experts (Mitchell, 2002). The current approach to urban transformation often emphasizes the role of citizens with established rights in accessing infrastructure, while neglecting the agency and participation of diverse groups of citizens and non-citizens as active shapers of their own cities on a daily basis. While some local governments actively acknowledge the existence of non-citizens such as migrants in their cities and their importance (chapter by Espiñeira and Fernández-Suárez), many remain invisible in the new city and in infrastructure planning. Furthermore, a deepened neoliberal political environment has made both citizens and non-citizens consumers and customers of public services, which has exacerbated inequality between those who can afford quality services and those who cannot.

In this context, it is imperative to envision new approaches to urban development interventions. This involves generating a comprehensive understanding of people's life histories and livelihoods, anticipating both the intended and unintended consequences of specific projects on both beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries as well as paying attention to both the short- and long-term impacts of interventions. Transformation truly stems from how people experience interventions, reflect on the consequences, and plan their future actions, which collectively contribute to changes in the fabric of cities from *within* (Otsuki, 2016). The "success" of transformation, encompassing both environmental sustainability and socio-economic inclusivity, depends on the capacities of policymakers and planners to effectively steer the "inside-out" changes aligned with local priorities. This involves fostering the ability to communicate and collaborate with decision-makers at all levels and sectors. Investments should not only be focused on the hardware of sustainable urban development, such as infrastructure, but also on the capacity development and sustained engagement of city planners, urban movements, and community initiatives. It requires a shift in practice towards a new approach that prioritizes inclusiveness in urban development and transformation globally.

In order to further solidify the possibilities of global urban transformation from within, we outline three principles of the new approach to inclusive cities as follows.

Inclusive Cities Require a Translocal Perspective

We are increasingly aware that a city is not a bounded entity, but has porous borders. As people build livelihoods in and out of the city's administrative boundary, we cannot take a localized approach. If we reflect on the history of a European city (as shown in the chapter by Rose), the city was walled yet the wall was not an absolute boundary. In contemporary cities, even if a person is not physically mobile,

digital technologies also enable people—especially excluded groups of people such as women in certain societies—to be actively undertaking various activities (e.g., chapter by Steel et al.). The urban development intervention thus does not operate spatially nor temporarily in isolation. We propose applying a translocal perspective to emphasize how different localities within and beyond cities are connected to each other at various scales. For example, it is not only the “global city” as defined by Sassen (2005) that is connected to other “global cities” (here, the discussions tend to focus on cities with significant financial influence in the Global North such as London, Tokyo, and New York). Today, every city in the world can be a global city to some extent, and citizens and non-citizens alike are mobile, and their knowledge exchanges and social networks are multi-layered and multi-directional. In other words, localized urban development opportunities are largely determined by what is happening in other places and vice versa, and they are also changeable over time as people, goods, and information move between localities within and beyond a given city. Urban development interventions thus need to account for the constant changes that occur in a locality through individual people’s life trajectories to anticipate and accept any unplanned consequences.

Inclusive Cities are Sensitive to New Vulnerabilities

Vulnerabilities are constantly renewed. Every crisis—caused by war, climate change, a pandemic, or political uprising and protest—shows that cities demonstrate constant vulnerabilities as infrastructures are destroyed and existing institutions fail some groups of people. As we write, it is disheartening to witness such language and rhetoric being used by the French riot police to describe protesters demanding justice for a teenager who was shot dead by the traffic police in Paris as “social pests” (BBC news, July 2023). The recurring presence of exclusionary rhetoric in the media highlights the persistent view held by existing institutions that cities should primarily serve certain privileged groups of people rather than addressing the grievances of marginalized communities and individuals such as those with migrant backgrounds, whose income is relatively lower, or those with disabilities. Adopting a theory of change in urban development that aims to foster inclusivity requires continuous adaptation and the ability to reset objectives based on the voices and concerns raised by vulnerable groups. Riots and protests often emerge as expressions of frustrations and grievances, shedding light on the vulnerabilities and injustices experienced by marginalized communities. Inclusive cities must take these voices seriously and recognize them as crucial indicators of the need for change.

Inclusive Cities are Possible Through Longitudinal Research and Intervention

Any development intervention is temporary, and impacts observed at one point in a particular intervention can change over time. This is more so in cities as they are embedded in translocal networks and flows of various movements of people, money, and goods as well as in the moving contexts of property as well as vulnerabilities. Therefore, long-term perspectives for urban development interventions are imperative to observe and analyze the various consequences of development interventions for the following generations. For example, when it comes to the SDGs, the timeframe

for achieving the goals is set as 2030 while new interventions, with a projected duration of 3 to 5 years, are constantly proposed and implemented. However, the long-term environmental and social consequences of urban transformation may extend far beyond this timeframe. How do we sustain ongoing observation, collection of evidence, and analysis of impacts over an indefinite period, considering the evolving lives of individuals along the way? While many cities have established city labs or living labs, these initiatives often suffer from short-termism and often are not sustainable. Efforts need to be taken to preserve and develop these co-creation spaces to study, debate, and execute interventions that align with the context and the history of the city or neighborhood.

The involvement of city-based or local organizations is crucial for effective urban transformation. This includes city governments, urban citizen movements, neighborhood organizations, and collectives as well as universities and educational institutions. In the words of the United Nations (2018: 4), “The pledge to leave no one behind is seldom disputed in principle, but the complexity of its practical implementation is often insufficiently acknowledged.” In envisioning inclusive cities, we need to be aware with *whom* we work towards realizing the inclusive futures of global urban transformation. Civil society organizations can work as intervention watchdogs; sometimes they replace both the government and the private businesses where they do not have strong influence in providing basic services to citizens. Citizens themselves are constantly taking the necessary action that transcends the project boundaries, and researchers and observers like ourselves need to connect different actors based on our observations in order to realize the cities’ full potential for inclusion. As various chapters of this book have shown, various citizen initiatives are taking place, and they should be supported as the citizen agenda that has long-term development potential from within.

The three principles of inclusive cities necessitate a strong commitment to capacity development for local researchers and research institutes, including universities and schools where analysts can facilitate dialog with different citizen groups. In particular in the Global South, a lack of financial resources for research and project implementation still impedes such a commitment. Supporting local universities within the context of development intervention policies is essential to strengthen their budget and human resources, enabling them to establish and maintain an infrastructure for knowledge exchange, co-creation, and co-designing of inclusive cities. We then envision a global network of knowledge exchange by conducting different case studies. This book hopefully was an initial step in this direction.

3 Final Reflections

Cities across the globe are undergoing transformative changes, driven not only by physical alterations resulting from development interventions but also by the fact that a significant proportion of the world’s population now resides in urban areas. Within

these cities, people engage in diverse livelihood activities that accumulate a multitude of values at the household level. The households then reinvest in other activities, perhaps beyond city' boundaries, extending the possibilities of urban development in various directions. In this development process, which emerges from within but is influenced by external forces, diverse groups of urban dwellers strive to include themselves in various citizen agendas and advocate for resources to realize these agendas. Therefore, establishing the process of inclusion necessitates that urban dwellers frequently establish effective connections with external actors who are willing to share their resources and benefits to address both current and evolving vulnerabilities. Ultimately, strengthening local control is paramount in fostering inclusive urban development. As university researchers, we recognize the significant potential of local researchers and their institutes to play a role in changing the policy orientation and to reduce vulnerabilities for certain groups of urban dwellers. Fostering greater collaboration between universities and research institutes from the Global North and South, as well as between different countries within each region, is crucial for accompanying long-term urban development and transformation. Long-term collaboration is also important because crises are ever-present, and it is crucial to collectively anticipate disasters and counter exclusionary institutional development.

This book, comprising empirical case studies from diverse regions around the world, represents an initial step towards fostering such collaboration. It is our hope that we continue collectively observing the cases presented in the book, because they allow us to delve deeper into how inclusive cities could develop globally. This exploration is vital for different groups of urban dwellers whose identities and livelihoods undergo constant transformation over future generations. By maintaining an ongoing examination, we can further our understanding and contribute to the development of inclusive cities that address the evolving needs and aspirations of diverse urban populations.

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