Urban Constellations
INTRODUCTION 4
Matthew Gandy

1 URBAN LEXICONS
Planetary urbanisation 10
Neil Brenner, Christian Schmid
Between Marx and Deleuze: discourses of capitalism’s urban future 14
Jennifer Robinson
Class, nation and the changing political dynamics of European cities 18
Patrick Le Galès
“Every revolution has its square”: politicising the post-political city 22
Erik Swyngedouw
Frontiers of urban political ecology 26
Roger Keil
Otherworldliness 31
Benedikte Zitouni
Urban intrusions: a reflection on subnature 35
David Crissen

2 CRISSES AND PERTURBATIONS
The work of architecture in the age of structured finance 42
Louis Moreno
Vertical accumulation and accelerated urbanism: the East Asian experience 48
Hyun Bang Shin
London for sale: towards the radical marketisation of urban space 54
Michael Edwards
The politics of the banlieue 58
Mustafa Dikeç
Splintered urbanisms: water, urban infrastructure, and the modern social imaginary 62
Karen Bakker
Disruptions 65
Stephen Graham
System city: urban amplification and inefficient engineering 71
Sarah Bell
Zooneses: towards an urban epidemiology 75
Meike Wolf

3 EXCURSIONS
Koebberling & Kaltwasser 82
Martin Kohler 85
Ulrike Mohr 88
Laura Oldfield-Ford 92
Lara Almarcegui 96

4 PLACES AND SPACES
Urban complexity: an instance 100
AbdouValiq Simone
Assembling modernities: concrete imaginations in Buenos Aires 103
Leandro Minuchin
Lagos: city of concrete 108
Giles Omezi
Vertical urbanisms: flyovers and skywalks in Mumbai 113
Andrew Harris
Chennai as “cut-out” city 118
Pushpa Arabindoo
Queer nostalgia 123
Johan Andersson
London’s Trellick Tower and the pastoral eye 127
Maren Harnack
A configuration pregnant with tensions 132
Jane Rendell
“Terror by night”: bedbug infestations in London 139
Ben Campkin
Dictators, dogs, and survival in a post-totalitarian city 145
Ger Duijzings
Interstitial landscapes: reflections on a Berlin corner 149
Matthew Gandy
 Phantom limbs: Encountering the hidden spaces of West Berlin 153
Sandra Jasper
Evictions: the experience of Liebig 14 158
Lucrezia Lennert
A rough and charmless place: other spaces of history in Tel Aviv 163
Noam Leshem
A footprint among the ruins 167
Karen E. Till

5 PROJECTIONS
Traces and surfaces 174
Stephen Barber
Faces, structures, words, and colours: collages and décollages of Berlin and other cities in the work of Pola Brändle 178
Joachim Schlör
Wonderful London: silent-era travelogues and the walking tour 182
Karolina Kendall-Bush
Chinatown, automobile driving, and the unknowable city 186
Iain Borden
Intimations of past and future in the cinematic city 190
Mark Tewdwr-Jones
Urban vistas and the civic imagination 194
Rebecca Ross
“The sun will shine on the homes of the future”: danish welfare architecture on a scale of 1:1 198
Claire Thomson

CONTRIBUTORS 203
During the last several decades, the field of urban studies has been animated by an extraordinary outpouring of new ideas regarding the role of cities, urbanism, and urbanisation processes in ongoing global transformations. Yet, despite these advances, the field continues to be grounded upon a mapping of human settlement space that was more plausible in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries than it is today.

The early twentieth century was a period in which large-scale industrial city-regions and suburbanising zones were being rapidly consolidated around the world in close conjunction with major demographic and socio-economic shifts in the erstwhile “countryside.” Consequently, across diverse national contexts and linguistic traditions, the field of twentieth-century urban studies defined its theoretical categories and research object through a series of explicit or implied geographical contrasts. Even as debates raged regarding how best to define the specificity of urban life, the latter was universally demarcated in opposition to a purportedly “non-urban” zone, generally classified as “rural.” As paradigms for theory and research evolved, labels changed for each term of this supposed urban-rural continuum, and so too did scholars’ understandings of how best to conceptualise its basic elements and the nature of their articulation. For instance, the Anglo-American concept of the “suburb” and the French concept of *la banlieue* were introduced and popularised to demarcate further socio-spatial differentiations that were occurring inside a rapidly urbanising field.

Nonetheless, the bulk of twentieth-century urban studies rested on the assumption that cities—or, later, “conurbations,” “city-regions,” “urban regions,” “metropolitan regions,” and “global city-regions”—represented a particular type of territory that was qualitatively specific, and thus different from the putatively “non-urban” spaces that lay beyond their boundaries.

The demarcations separating urban, suburban, and rural zones were recognised to shift historically, but the spaces themselves were assumed to remain discrete, distinct, and universal. While paradigmatic disagreements have raged regarding the precise nature of the city and the urban, the entire field has long presupposed the existence of a relatively stable, putatively “non-urban” realm as a “constitutive outside” for its epistemological and empirical operations. In short, across divergent theoretical and political perspectives—from the Chicago School’s interventions in the 1920s, and the rise of the neo-Marxist “new urban sociology” and “radical geography” in the 1970s, to the debates on world cities and global cities in the 1980s and 1990s—the major traditions of twentieth-century urban studies embraced shared, largely uninterrogated geographical assumptions that were rooted in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries’ geohistorical conditions in which this field of study was first established.

During the last thirty years, however, the form of urbanisation has been radically reconfigured, a process that has seriously called into question the inherited cartographies that have long underpinned urban theory and research. Aside from the dramatic spatial and demographic expansion of major mega-city regions, the last thirty years have also witnessed several far-reaching worldwide socio-spatial transformations. These include:

- **The creation of new scales of urbanisation.** Extensively urbanised interdependencies are being consolidated within extremely large, rapidly expanding, polynucleated metropolitan regions around the world to create sprawling “urban galaxies” that stretch beyond any single metropolitan region and often traverse multiple national boundaries. Such mega-scaled urban constellations have been conceptualised in diverse ways, and the representation of their contours and boundaries remains a focus of considerable research and debate. Their most prominent exemplars include, among others, the original Gottmannian megalopolis of “BosWash” (Boston-Washington DC) and the “blue banana” encompassing the major urbanised regions in western Europe, but also emergent formations such as “San San” (San Francisco-San Diego) in California, the Pearl River Delta in south China, the Lagos-centred littoral conurbation in West Africa, as well as several incipient mega-urban regions in Latin America and South Asia.
- **The blurring and rearticulation of urban territories.** Urbanisation processes are being regionalised and reterritorialised. Increasingly, former “central functions,” such as shopping facilities, company headquarters, research institutions, prestigious cultural venues, as well as spectacular architectural forms, dense settlement patterns, and infrastructural
The disintegration of the “hinterland.” Around the world, the erstwhile “hinterlands” of major cities, metropolitan regions and urban-industrial corridors are being reconfigured as they are functionalised—whether as back office and warehousing locations, global sweatshops, agro-industrial land-use systems, recreational zones, energy generation grids, resource extraction areas, fuel depots, waste disposal areas, or corridors of connectivity—to facilitate the continued expansion of industrial urbanisation and its associated planetary urban networks.

The end of the “wilderness.” In every region of the globe, erstwhile “wilderness” spaces are being transformed and degraded through the cumulative socio-ecological consequences of unfettered worldwide urbanisation. In this way, the world’s oceans, alpine regions, the equatorial rainforests, major deserts, the arctic and polar zones, and even the earth’s atmosphere itself, are increasingly interconnected with the rhythms of planetary urbanisation at every geographical scale, from the local to the global.

In our view, these geohistorical developments pose a fundamental challenge to the entire field of urban studies as we have inherited it from the twentieth century: its basic epistemological assumptions, categories of analysis, and object of investigation require a foundational reconceptualisation in order to remain relevant to the massive transformations of worldwide socio-spatial organisation we are witnessing today. Under contemporary conditions, therefore, the urban can no longer be understood with reference to a particular “type” of settlement space, whether defined as a city, a city-region, a metropolis, a metropolitan region, a megalopolis, an edge city, or otherwise. Consequently, despite its continued pervasiveness in scholarly and political discourse, the category of the “city” has today become obsolete as an analytical social science tool. Correspondingly, it is no longer plausible to characterise the differences between densely agglomerated zones and the less densely settled zones of a region, a national territory, a continent, or the globe through the inherited urban/rural (or urban/non-urban) distinction. Today, the urban represents an increasingly worldwide condition in which political-economic relations are enmeshed.

This situation of planetary urbanisation means, paradoxically, that even spaces that lie well beyond the traditional city cores and suburban peripheries—from transoceanic shipping lanes, transcontinental highway and railway networks, and worldwide communications infrastructures to alpine and coastal tourist enclaves, “nature” parks, offshore financial centres, agro-industrial catchment zones and erstwhile “natural” spaces such as the world’s oceans, deserts, jungles, mountain ranges, tundra, and atmosphere—have become integral parts of the worldwide urban fabric. While the process of agglomeration remains essential to the production of this new worldwide topography, political-economic spaces can no longer be treated as if they were composed of discrete, distinct, and universal “types” of settlement.

Endnotes