Pencilling Tokyo into the map of neoliberal urbanism

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Abstract

There is no questioning the immensity of change in Tokyo's urban landscape over the last few decades, despite the difficulties faced by the Japanese economy. This transformation results from a vigorous promotion of urban restructuring by the state and a keen uptake by corporations. The question examined here is the extent to which Tokyo fits into a palette of policies generally seen as neoliberal and, more generally, how and where Tokyo fits into global narratives of urban change. In order to put some perspective on the nature of urban change in Tokyo, three themes are pursued here that are generally considered to indicate a neoliberal policy turn: a territorial rescaling designed to concentrate energies on places of economic strength; a relaxation of regulations facilitating urban restructuring; and housing and other social policies resulting in residential segregation and producing greater social inequality which finds a spatial expression. In doing this, the paper reviews recent debates in the literature on Tokyo, debates that suggest a difference in view between those who see urban life-spaces as conditioned increasingly by a neoliberal policy approach and others for whom the pattern and spaces of life in Tokyo are coloured by a more distinct set of policies moulded by the (neo-) developmental state. The paper concludes by arguing that only some elements of a 'neoliberal urban inventory' are present in the urban landscape of Tokyo, that they exist within a recognisably neoliberal discursive framework, and that this is best conceptualized within a wider East Asian framework.

Key words: neoliberal urbanism; Tokyo; territorial rescaling; deregulation; residential segregation; developmental state; East Asia.

Introduction

There is today a flourishing debate around approaches to urbanism, built around divergent master narratives. On the one hand are those who wish to understand and explain urban change from a standpoint outside that of Western theory, seeing this as the best means to capture the diversity of daily life and its urban spaces and thus contribute to agendas of locally driven improvement schemes. Others, however, argue that urban life around the world is becoming more polarized, and neoliberal policies are creating growing spatial injustice; solutions must therefore be rooted in the political domain. To put it differently, there is disagreement over whether characterizations of contemporary capitalism should be seen as external (North Atlantic) theoretical constructs or whether changing forms of capital accumulation should form the baseline for an understanding of the conditions of urban life. Japan and Japanese cities, with their ambivalent position outside a north Atlantic sphere and beyond the global south have the potential to offer useful insights.

We find in recent years a strong and growing sense of the importance of moving away from 'theory from the West' (Connell, 2007; Roy, 2009; Roy and Ong, 2011; Edensor and Jayne, 2012). This body of work seeks new ways of understanding and theorizing cities. In part by identifying a number of counter-paradigmatic cities -- among them, Istanbul, Singapore, Sao Paolo, and Johannesburg -- it has significantly shifted the focus away from a Western framing, but has struggled to move theoretical underpinnings onto new territory and present what one might call a theorization from elsewhere.

A different emphasis is presented by those who foreground in their analyses the continued hegemony of neoliberal capitalism. This work privileges neoliberal policies and their expression in entrepreneurial urbanism as an interpretative mechanism. Brenner and colleagues over a period of years have drawn attention to the variegated nature of this neoliberalism: variegated in its discourses, uneven in its spatial distribution, inconsistent in its temporal penetrations (Brenner, Peck and Theodor, 2010). They and others have argued that its principal points of diffusion and propagation can also be found in the presumed peripheries, deconstructing thereby hierarchical topographies of centre and periphery. Larner (2003), referring to Latin America and New Zealand, reminds us that neoliberalism has been as much if not more a product of the global periphery as it has been of the centre. Perreault and Martin (2005), in support of this contention, point out that it was first in Chile and then in other Latin American countries that neoliberal policies were applied. On a similar note, Stenning *et al*. (2010) describe the active "domestication" of many of the neoliberal prescriptions implemented by central and eastern European governments in the early transition period. Shock therapy was not only a story of 'experts' bringing the gospel from Washington; many of the apostles of neoliberal reforms were from the region.

The question we are faced with here, however, is how to insert Tokyo into these debates. If Tokyo is not quite North, or perhaps a different North; it is not South at all. It tends therefore to be treated *sui generis*. But such exceptionalism is not helpful, as Pow (2012) has argued in the context of Chinese cities. Better, perhaps, would be to set Tokyo in a regional context (Waley, 2012). Given these difficulties, it is perhaps not surprising that Tokyo has tended to be under-theorized, or only partially theorized, with very little explicit discussion of Japanese urbanism in the context of dominant theoretical lenses. An exception is presented by Machimura, who, writing in the context of the Tokyo of the 1980s, borrowed and adapted Logan and Molotch's concept of urban growth coalition and identified a "coalition for urban restructuring" (1992, p. 120). In arguing that the formation of public-private partnerships was an obvious way to harness interest from both state and capital, he wrote that "both … sought new bases for their own growth, [and] rediscovered the city as a frontier for economic development" (1992, p. 122). Coalitions were opaque and the division of tasks between the state and capital often unclear (1998). Machimura's position finds echoes in more recent work (Saito, 2003; Waley, 2007; Sorensen, 2011b; Tsukamoto, 2012). Other writers stress the distinctive features of Tokyo, describing it as nested not global (Hill and Kim, 2000; Fujita, 2011; Jacobs, 2012). The role of the state is here the distinctive feature, one that sets Tokyo apart from other leading global cities. Saito (2003, p. 288) has offered a critique of this position, arguing that this "research has … still fallen short of comprehending and explaining the role of the state in the transformation of Tokyo." The argument nevertheless remains on the table, and that is that urban change in Tokyo is fundamentally shaped by internal factors, and predominantly the nature and policies of the Japanese state (Bae 2012).

This approach runs the risk of precluding 'exogenous' explanatory mechanisms. How, then, are we to read the situation in Tokyo and other large Japanese cities? To what extent is urban development state-led? Is there 'local' theory that takes issue with the global story and its local variants? Where/ how should we insert neo-liberalism: as an explanatory framework, as alternative variant or as occasional prompt? Or does Japan have things to tell us about neoliberalism and the ways it affects how cities change? Should Japan be seen as another pole that destabilizes already polarized readings of urban change? Does Japan's relationship with neoliberal urbanism share points in common with that of other countries in East Asia? This short paper cannot hope to answer all these questions. Its more modest objectives are three-fold. One is to bring together a number of different discussions in the (largely Anglophone) literature involving scholars working on issues that have a bearing on urban life, and thereby, and this is my second objective, to contribute to the

debate about the nature of urban change in Tokyo specifically and Japanese cities more generally.[1] By doing this, my aim is that Tokyo become better inserted into contemporary debates about global urban change. The paper starts off with a brief discussion of Japan as a post-developmental state and what this might mean for Japanese cities. It then sets out a sort of inventory of the features one would expect of cities that have undergone a neoliberal makeover. The heart of the paper consists of three sections, examining urban governance, the regulatory environment, and social welfare regime in order to determine the extent to which current conditions in Tokyo suggest a neoliberalization of policy with concomitant impact on the urban terrain. In the conclusion section, I suggest that Japan's 'post-developmental neoliberal cities' can best be understood in an East Asian regional context.

Japanese (post-) developmental model

Recent years have seen a fair amount of discussion over whether Japan should still be considered developmental or whether it has passed into a post-developmental phase. Many of the features that have characterized Japan as a developmental state would appear to have remained in place, even if they have undergone some change. The nature and extent of that change has been disputed, but there seems to be some agreement around the notion of regime shift (Pempel, 1998; Fujita, 2011) towards a post-developmental state in which neoliberal rhetoric and occasional policies are present.

At heart of Japan's developmental state was a sense of the pressing need to 'catch up with the West'. This was accompanied by a visceral antipathy towards Communism allied to a subservient attitude towards Washington (McCormack (2007). Increasingly this has manifested itself in nationalistic and neoliberal rhetoric. This concords with David Harvey's comment, written with reference to Japan amongst other countries, that "the neoliberal state needs nationalism of a sort to survive" (2005, p. 85). In Japan, the strongest nationalist positions have indeed been adopted by those politicians who have been most vehement in their rhetorical adherence to neoliberal nostrums. Politicians like Nakasone Yasuhiro, Koizumi Jun'ichirō and more recently Abe Shinzō and Ishihara Shintarō, former Tokyo governor, have advocated policies in both foreign relations and defense that have been at the strongly nationalistic end of the Japanese spectrum, pressing either surreptitiously or openly for a more active military presence and revisions to the Constitution. At the same time, they have been the most strident in their advocacy of a greater freedom for business in urban restructuring.

Despite this apparently neoliberal rhetoric, Fujita (2011) and Tsukamoto (2012) both refute the idea of a full 'neoliberal' turn in Japanese policy. What we see instead, Tsukamoto (p. 72) argues, is a "system that adopts neoliberalist ideas while keeping core [Japanese Developmental State] traits". If most commentators have difficulty fitting Japan into overarching arguments of neoliberalization, so too they take issue with an 'orthodox' world/ global cities script that sees Tokyo set unproblematically alongside New York and London in a rising tide of neoliberal urbanism (Hill and Kim, 2000). Fujita and Hill (2003) have delivered a strong counter-blast to theories of global convergence, and to a vision of urban conditions in Tokyo as shaped by global capital over and above the national and metropolitan state. Instead, they have theorized Tokyo in terms of nested city and nested configuration "Tokyo, for example," they write, "is nested in relationships with the Tokyo metropolitan government, the Kanto region, Japan's unitary and developmental state, an east Asian region characterised by a distinctive 'flying geese' division of labour and a Confucian heritage" (2003, p. 213).

[1] The paper engages predominantly with English-language sources. While there are a few polemical books, some of which are cited in this paper, a search for relevant papers through the National Diet Library's online catalogue and discussions with Japanese colleagues reveals an absence of Japanese-language work.

Much of the subsequent literature on Tokyo has been an elaboration and occasionally a qualification of this position. Jacobs, for instance, extends this line of analysis both to the entire archipelago (2011), and in more detailed fashion to the whole of the southern Kantō plain in and around the Tokyo conurbation (2012).

Whilst there are some differences in emphasis, there are scarcely any divergent positions. Few, it seems, would depart from the basic presupposition that Tokyo and other large Japanese cities, as spatial reflections of social policies, represent a distinct form of urbanism, distinct that is from patterns discernible in 'global west' or indeed in 'global north' or 'global south'. This leaves open the possibility of some sort of 'global east'. The idea of a sort of urban 'global east', floated in Waley (2012), is implicit in the edited volume *Locating Neoliberalism in East Asia* (Park, Hill and Saito, 2012). The most confident assertions of a neoliberal urban condition come in the book's concluding remarks (Park and Saito, 2012, p. 295). Their analysis, based as it is on contributing chapters, suggests that the concept of neoliberal policy has greater purchase when applied in other parts of the East Asian region than Japan.

Neoliberal urban inventory

In order to ascertain the impact of policies that might be characterized as neoliberal on the urban terrain in Tokyo, we must decide first what we would expect to find in a neoliberalizing urban landscape and what the policies might be that bring it about. For if, as Leitner, Peck, and Sheppard write, "The propagation of neoliberal discourses, policies, and subjectivities is argued to have given rise to neoliberal urbanism" (2007, p. 4), we need to identify and visualize this neoliberal urbanism. They ascribe to neoliberal urbanism the following characteristics: the favoring of an entrepreneurial urban governance; policies that promote the involvement of the private sector in urban projects, replacing municipal governments; and thirdly, an entrepreneurial and self-regulated approach encouraged amongst urban dwellers. To this I would add that neoliberal urbanism as envisaged by Leitner and colleagues is 'translated' onto the urban terrain through three conduits: urban governance, urban regulation, and social welfare regime, and through these conduits not only does it reshape the urban terrain but it refashions the daily lives and life-spaces of urban dwellers.

A regime of entrepreneurial urban governance would bring market operators into the planning and running of the city through public private partnerships and through an adherence to cost efficiency in out-sourcing. It would readjust scalar balances to favor growth poles, often involving finance industries. Neoliberal urban regulation could be expected to privilege property ownership and the rights of the property owner, and favor urban restructuring projects through looser regulation. Social welfare regimes impact on urban space in various ways. Where they are being reduced or withdrawn, they can exacerbate patterns spatial manifestations of greater inequality. The withdrawal of state involvement in the provision of housing is likely to have a similar effect.

As Marcuse and van Kempen (2000) powerfully asserted, globalizing processes would be expected to have similar impacts on urban form and urban conditions around the world (but they came to the conclusion that this was not happening). They cast their discussion in terms of the impact of globalization, which for them was clearly infused with neoliberal characteristics. Processes of marketization, commodification, and privatization are the hallmark of neoliberal urbanism, and one would reasonably expect them to lead to increasingly privatized city centers, greater involvement of business in urban management, and a greater extent of vertical construction. The neoliberal urban landscape is punctuated by extravagant flagship buildings and intimidating mega projects, designed as megalomaniacal calling cards. They are riven by growing socio-spatial polarization, with walls and gates cutting the affluent off from the ghettoes of the poor and feckless (Marcuse and van Kempen, 2000, p. 4). The question that this paper poses is to what extent this picture characterizes contemporary conditions in Japan's largest cities.

Rescaling of the central state's territorial governance institutions

As various writers have suggested (Brenner, 2004; Jessop, 2002), a rescaling of governance structures represents an important component within the neoliberalization of the political economy. Tsukamoto (2011, p. 73) casts this in terms of a de-territorialization and a re-territorialization in the search for a new scalar fix. In the context of Japan, there are two aspects to the rescaling of Tokyo. One is the affirmation and reaffirmation of Tokyo as a global city, a space for the accumulation and control of global capital. The other is the redrafting of the scalar relationship between central and local government in the pursuit of a more decentralized polity with greater fiscal burdens passed onto the local state.

The urban restructuring of Tokyo has been occurring at some pace since the early 1980s, with urban land used as the basis for capital accumulation, and this has been undertaken to the accompaniment of a discourse first, in the 1980s, of internationalization and then in the 2000s of 'Tokyo as global city' (Machimura, 1992; 1998; Saito and Thornley, 2003). These are discursive attempts to engineer a rescaling of Tokyo, to anchor the city into a global scale of networked cities, supported on the ground by the development of the Tokyo Waterfront from the 1980s (O'Leary and Machimura, 1995; Saito, 2003) and by the Urban Renaissance policy (Waley, 2007). Both these campaigns and these phases of urban restructuring can be seen as part of moves to create a more dense and high-rise city, a more efficient city, and one that would be more appealing to global business. Ironically, however, the urban restructuring process has been carried out by Japanese corporations within a largely domestic logic of capital accumulation (Saito and Thornley, 2003, p. 681). This is despite the influx of U.S. investment capital through real estate securitization funds (Aveline-Dubach et al., 2012). Shibata argues that this discourse of globalization was largely accepted and endorsed by the media and prominent intellectuals (2008, p. 104). Among the few scholars-commentators working on urban issues to adopt a consistently critical position to what one might call the global Tokyo imperative have been Igarashi and Ogawa (2003; 2006).

Fujita places the state firmly at the forefront of the drive to 'internationalize' and 'globalize' Tokyo: "Tokyo's redevelopment was firmly placed in the national policy framework.… The state called for more involvement of the private sector in intensive investment in high-rise buildings in urban centers, and this growth focus inevitably led the [corporate] sector to turn low-rise Tokyo into a high-rise or even a super high-rise city" (2011, p. 319). In sum, Fujita argues that urban redevelopment policy is designed and led by the state. Waley (2007) sees government as adopting an increasingly withdrawn role, taking a back seat in urban restructuring with business corporations playing the leading role in planning, developing and building high-rise Tokyo.

The second axis of this process of territorial rescaling was initiated by prime minister Koizumi's decision, one that was followed by subsequent governments, of abandoning even spatial redistribution policies through a focus on the promotion of Tokyo (Tsukamoto, 2012). This has involved two elements. The first is an accelerated process of municipal mergers, which reduced the number of local government entities from 3232 in 1999 to 1728 in 2010, with potentially serious consequences for peripheral municipalities (Elis, 2012). The second is a change to the mechanism for redistributing funding from the centre to the regions, implemented in 2005 in the name of fiscal decentralization, and these, according to Tsukamoto's calculations based on official statistics (2012, p. 78), have resulted in a heavier burden on local administrations, who receive fewer redistributed funds even as they are asked to pick up more of the bills for construction and other projects. Tokyo, on the other hand, has benefitted from decentralization reforms as it now gains not loses from distributive mechanisms. The ostensible aim of this measure was to restore the national finances. It was wrapped up as part of a sequence of measures designed to give local entities more power, to make them less dependent on Tokyo, and to instill a sense of regionally based creativity and economic competition. While there is a broadly neoliberal focus to these measures, Tsukamoto does

not see this as an abandonment of government intervention to guide the economy, and he points as evidence to government interventionist economic strategies within the nested framework of the Japanese developmental state (Tsukamoto, 2012, p. 72).

In sum, as Tsukamoto argues, Tokyo has been promoted through being "designated the strategic site of national-scale interest in the globalized economy" (2012, p. 77), while fiscal responsibilities were pushed onto local governments. We see here in other words at least a partial adherence to a neoliberal script, but a script that is framed by the Japanese state.

Relaxation of the regulatory framework of state control over the urban landscape

One of the consequences on the urban terrain of neoliberal policies should, according to the conjectural inventory laid out in an earlier section, be an increase in the number of high-rise condominiums and office buildings, rendered possible through a relaxation in regulatory controls. In Tokyo, if not always in the same ways and for the same reasons, this verticalization of the urban landscape has occurred, played out in the context of strong private property rights and a successive loosening of already relatively weak planning regulations, a classically neoliberal condition (Shibata, 2008). Indeed, as Sorensen (2011a) reminds us, the primacy of individual land holdings dates from a historical compromise at the time of the Meiji takeover. He points out that the property rights clause in the 1947 constitution is very similar to the one in the country's first, 1889 Meiji constitution (2011a, p. 472). This has led to strongly entrenched interests, often able to resist state pressures for 'urban rationalization' despite the strength that the state displays in other sectors. At the same time, it is worth noting the extensive and growing land holdings of corporate interests, which own considerably more non-residential urban land on a national basis than private citizens, a situation that has engendered little academic attention in the English language literature (Statistics Bureau, 2011).

The story of regulatory control over the last three decades or so has, as Sorensen (2011b) writes, been a cyclical one. Sorensen contrasts the formal challenges to deregulatory moves mainly from local governments and grassroots movements on the one hand with the piecemeal behind-the-scenes manoeuvres by politicians in central government to ease regulation and facilitate upward building on the other. The pattern that is discerned by Sorensen is one of intensified deregulatory measures in the 1980s and again in the late 1990s and early 2000s interspersed by periods of tightening controls, with Waley (2007) in particular arguing that the overall trend has been towards accentuated deregulation. In the 1980s, the political and economic scene was, as we have seen, dominated by disputes with the United States over Japan's trade surplus. Partly in response to these pressures, the then prime minister, Nakasone Yasuhiro, introduced his policy of *minkatsu*, or the promotion of urban development by private business (Hayakawa and Hirayama, 1991).[2] This was the start of attempts to promote the role of business in urban development, directing private and corporate investment into creating what was claimed would be a more efficient and business-friendly city brought about as a result of a general relaxation affecting such key issues as the height of buildings.

The second spate of deregulatory measures was intended largely to resuscitate the moribund economy of the mid to late 1990s. It culminated in the establishment of an Urban Renaissance headquarters in the Prime Minister's Office and the promulgation a year later, in 2002, of an Urban Renaissance Law designed as a further and dramatic loosening of rules and restrictions in specified, mainly city-centre zones. Urban restructuring was intensified as a result. The implications and consequences of this measure have been significant, and are considered in more detail below. The Urban Renaissance policy has been supported by other measures designed to enhance the role of

[2] This is short for *minkan katsuryoku no katsuryō*, meaning something like the 'active use of the dynamism of private enterprise'.

private actors in the urban arena. For example, the Minto organization (Minkan Toshi Kaihatsu Suishin Kikō) provides government-subsided loans for private companies involved in urban redevelopment projects (Minto, 2012). Further measures (*tokku* and *chiiki saisei*) have also been put in place to strip away regulations and enhance urban development projects (Wagamachigenki, 2012).

Alongside these measures have come a host of rule changes, introduced without fanfare, that have had a hugely conspicuous impact on the urban landscape. Many of these have been effected through revisions to the Building Standards Law. The most important came in 1997, with a decision to exclude common areas from calculations of Floor Area Ratios (FARs) in apartment blocks, thus allowing for the construction of much taller buildings in all categories of zones, including residential zones. The impact of this and other similar measures is discussed in detail by Sorensen et al (2010) in a landmark paper that picks up on specific examples of high-rise apartment blocks, the plans for which suddenly materialized to the consternation of local residents.

There were, at the same time, moves designed to counter this developmental thrust. Promoted by local governments and NGOs, these culminated in the passage of the Landscape Law in 2004, which was intended to restore to local governments some control over the height and appearance of new buildings (Sorensen, 2011a, p. 482). However, in a further twist, some of the measures introduced to control the pace and shape of urban development were appropriated by the very forces they were designed to harness. District Plans, for example, were introduced in 1980 to give local governments and residents more control over urban development in specific areas. However, as Sorensen (2011b, p. 727) writes, the logic of this measure has been co-opted to create High-Rise Residential Building Promotion Districts, in which FAR restrictions are lifted from specific districts. Waley (2007) has argued that the overall trend has been one of further dissipation of an already weak planning regime.

The transformation of Japanese cities in the last thirty years -- and more especially over the last fifteen years -- has been dramatic, almost rivaling that which Chinese cities such as Shanghai have undergone. Not only have skyscrapers come to predominate in city centre areas, but high-rise residential buildings now pepper the previously low-rise suburbs. This change has been effected principally through creeping, and often less-than-transparent easing of regulations on building heights, but it has been accompanied by a powerful rhetoric establishing the advantages of high-rise cities set within the framework of a weak public realm, strong private property rights, and a growing culture of business-led urban restructuring.

Spatial manifestations of social inequality

As Fujita and Hill (2012, p. 41) argue citing David Harvey (2005, p. 16), the impact of neoliberal policies can be judged by growing social inequality and uneven spatial development. The prefectural data show, they argue, that there was actually a slight decrease in regional inequality in Japan in the years from 1990 to 2003. However, the general *zeitgeist*, whether supported or not by evidence, presents a different picture, one of growing unease and even disquiet, a condition reflected in the work of a number of Japanese writers (Tachibanaki, 1998; Satō, 2000; Chiavacci 2008). The notion of growing social inequality has become firmly established. In this section I bring together differing interpretations of some of the elements that collectively might suggest a greater purchase of neoliberal policies and an increase in social inequality and uneven spatial development within Tokyo and its conurbation.

Behind much of the nervousness that has afflicted Japanese society over the last decade and longer is the realization that the country's population has started a rapid downward decline. Indeed, in a recent report, the Institute for Population and Social Security in Tokyo estimated that Japan's population will have fallen by a third in 2060 from its 2011 figure (IPSS, 2012). The implications of this unprecedented population decline are dramatic, and the challenges that will soon confront even

the great central conurbation of Tokyo are huge. Alongside this come uncomfortable, if contested, figures concerning growing inequality in Japan. The OECD figures on relative poverty place Japan near the bottom for comparable indicators in OECD countries (Nagata and Kiyokawa, 2009). Even though rates of uptake of social welfare assistance are thought to be very low (Nagata and Kiyokawa, 2009), they have nevertheless reached levels not previously seen since the mid 1950s. Interestingly, public opinion and the media, for long entrenched in the belief that Japan was predominantly middle class, are now convinced that Japanese society is unequal and becoming more so (Chiavacci, 2008; Pilling, 2007). Chiavacci, however, argues that despite the intensified nature of academic and popular debate on the country's 'unequal society' (*kakusa shakai*), inequalities are not necessarily more severe now than they were in earlier decades of rapid economic growth. It is more that the possibilities for upward economic and social movement no longer appear available (Sugimoto, 2010). Slater (2010) has shown how this growing picture of social inequality is affecting the labor market, with corporate restructuring causing widespread precariousness of employment especially for young people and women, while government policies that address this appear to be either absent or ineffective.

If Japanese society is indeed becoming more unequal -- and Slater's portrayal of the difficulties facing working class families in west Tokyo presents a convincing picture -- the question that interests us here is whether this inequality has a spatial component. As we have seen, Fujita and Hill have suggested that at a prefectural level the evidence is questionable or indeed to be refuted. But at a city level, they themselves unwittingly initiated what has become a fascinating and increasingly well-evidenced debate about the extent to which social inequalities are represented spatially in Japanese cities. The original claim they made in a work published in 1997 was that, in comparison with major U.S. cities, class-based social segregation was absent from Osaka, and by inference from other large Japanese cities. "If 'separate and unequal' best characterizes the political and social ecology of U.S. urbanization…," they wrote, "then, by contrast, 'together and equal' best characterizes urban form in Japan. Control over territory is not a means of class reproduction in Japanese cities…. Our field research in Osaka indicates that class-organized place stratification is practically nonexistent in Japan's second-most-powerful metropolis" (1997, p. 106). Subsequently, Fielding (2004) offered a nuanced critique, arguing that Fujita and Hill's evidence was drawn at too broad a scale and that within wards evidence indicated that there was a degree of clustering according to occupational status in Kyoto but that this was not as evident as in the Scottish city of Edinburgh.

This debate has recently shifted to the Tokyo conurbation. Wissink and Hazelzet (2012) agree with the general drift of the points made by Fujita and Hill and by Fielding in seeing segregation according to income as being a phenomenon present principally at a much finer level than that of the ward. Their evidence suggests significant differences in income levels and other relevant criteria between the Shitamachi, Yamanote and suburban districts of Tokyo, with more substantial differences at the neighborhood level accompanied nonetheless by representation of all income groups within neighborhoods. "In short," they argue, "'neighbourhood Tokyo' is mixed but not equal" (p. 1539), echoing the comments of Fujita and Hill on Osaka. In this context, Jacobs' findings are particularly interesting. In two recent papers, he has used the coefficients of variation for household and personal income to study change over the last decades in Tokyo's metropolitan wards (2005) and in the much broader Tokyo Metropolitan Region, comprising 228 administrative areas -- wards, cities, towns, and villages (2012). For both the smaller and the expanded geographical setting, Jacobs found growing divergence in income according to place. While the overall geographical picture is a complicated one, for the 23 ward area of Tokyo the indices showed that disparities were generally growing along the lines suggested by Wissink and Hazelzet's research. Growing they may be, but this is not occurring to the point where one might talk of polarization; nor is it, and this is the point that Jacobs is keen to make, in any way comparable to the situation in large U.S. cities.

The data used by both Jacobs (2012) and by Fujita and Hill (2012) show growing prosperity in Tokyo's central wards. Fujita (2012, 323) sees this as longstanding and ongoing, dependent on the real estate market, and therefore cyclical. This trend is clearly reflected in the increasing number of apartment blocks built in central Tokyo wards, as well as immediately across the river in central eastern Tokyo (Jacobs, 2012). Local government policies promoting the construction of apartments on the upper floors of new office buildings have encouraged this trend, as has the continued conversion of former industrial or otherwise redundant land along the bay. So prominent has been this phenomenon that it has prompted some writers to consider it as a form of new-build gentrification. Lützeler (2008) shows that people moving into new housing are generally young or middle aged, one- or two-person households. This process, he argues, encourages gradual displacement and eventually residential segregation. In a perceptive comment on the changing social geography of Tokyo, Hirayama (2005; 2006) notes that the many new high-rise condominiums appearing not only in central wards but throughout the city can be seen as vertical gated communities. They represent, he writes, hot spots in the city, which he contrasts with cold spots in the form of 'older' apartments built, many of them in the 1970s and 80s, and now losing their value rapidly.

The connection between growing socio-spatial disparities and housing conditions and housing type is drawn by Yamaguchi (2008). While acknowledging issues with the poverty indices and the scale of measurement, she concludes by defining three areas of special deprivation: inner-city type in wards such as Nagano and Shinjuku; housing traps in suburban and peri-urban districts; and peripheral ex-industrial areas such as Sagamihara and Kashima (p. 154). The issue of deteriorating conditions in old social housing estates and the number of elderly people locked into them has become a prominent concern, and as Yamaguchi shows, there is a geographical pattern to the location of such estates, many of which are situated in suburban or outer suburban areas of Chiba and Kanagawa prefectures as well as the Tokyo metropolis. Yamaguchi's evidence is strongly supported by Lützeler (2011), who finds a similar pattern of demographically related poverty in the Tokyo conurbation. Lützeler's research into the dramatically increased average age of residents of public housing leads him to support Hirayama's picture of hot and cold spots around the urban area and to relate this back to Harvey's concept of the entrepreneurial city.

The wider housing picture reinforces a view of Japan travelling down its distinctive road that embraces some neoliberal policies within the embrace of the developmental state, trends discussed in work by Hirayama, Ronald and colleagues (see, among others, Hirayama and Ronald, 2007). Thus, in recent years, the government has largely dismantled its post-war housing compact, under which subsidies were designed to promote what in effect was largely middle-class home ownership through government support for loans to house buyers. These have now been replaced by a loan system operated by the banks and set up in such a way, according to Oizumi (2007), as to profit the banks rather than their customers. The successor organization to the Japan Housing Corporation has been selling off public housing, while a new law passed in 1999 limited the security available to tenants (Satō, 2007). At the same time, Japanese companies and institutions, which were important providers of housing and sustainers of the father as breadwinner in one-income nuclear families, have been removing themselves from the housing market. In general, then, the trend has been increasingly to allow market forces to organize housing provision. Another important feature of the Japanese housing scene, but one that has changed a lot less in the last few decades, is the scrap and build approach. This remains the predominant feature of the housing construction industry particularly in regard to single family occupancy housing. Closely allied to this is the strength of the construction industry and its ties with politicians, ties that lie at the heart of Japan's Iron Triangle (McCormack, 2002) and that are regularly replenished through Keynesian style economic impetus measures. In other words, even as the state withdraws further from housing through the implementation of policies that might be seen as neoliberal, it continues to maintain a close relationship with the construction industry, a hallmark of Japan the developmental state.

The evidence, as presented in the works considered above, is contradictory -- contradictory, that is, if one expects to find simple correlations between paths in Europe and North America on the one hand and Japan on the other. Tokyo would seem to be witnessing increasing residential segregation, but from a very low base and generally at a localized scale. City centre areas are being transformed through a distinctively Japanese process of gentrification and 'vertical' gated communities. These trends would appear to be encouraged by reforms to a housing policy that was already heavily predicated on private ownership and that has seen a very significant state withdrawal of remaining areas of support. Once again, Tokyo appears, superficially at least, to be changing along the lines one would anticipate, but with some important differences stemming from a more solid base in terms of social cohesion and a much lower instance of residential segregation that one would find in cities of the 'global west'.

Conclusion: Tokyo and a putative East Asian neoliberal urbanism

What does Japan and what do Japanese cities have to tell us about the nature of neoliberalism? Or, to put it differently, what can they tell us about the wisdom, or otherwise, of 'theorizing from the West'? Alternatively, in a world of transcendent global capitalism, is there much of its European and North American origins left in the notion of neoliberalism, given that it has become so thoroughly decentered (Leitner, Peck and Sheppard, 2007)?

We can start by asking where the conceptual expectations for a neoliberal urbanism intersect with the various interpretations of urban change in Japan's large cities. Neoliberal urban governance should be reflected in an entrepreneurial urbanism that is marshaled by an effective discursive disciplinary framework. We noted in this regard the existence of a strong and well-supported discourse of 'global imperative', of a discursive use of global competition as a justificatory device, as Machimura, Saito, Shibata, and others have argued. This discourse has been used to justify a renewed concentration of political and construction capital on Japan's capital city. The state, albeit a (post-)developmental state, is here very much at the helm in the discursive construction of a neoliberal framework within which policy is enacted.

Hill, Park, and Saito (2012) detect a pattern of *discursive* neoliberalism in East Asia; Japan fits comfortably into this picture. But there are other factors at play: the corporate sector's burgeoning role in urban restructuring also suggests an approximate entrepreneurial urbanism. The sheer extent of urban restructuring that has transformed Japanese city centres and inner city areas can only result from a dynamic urban construction sector and a loosening of the regulations that once held it back (Machimura, 1998; Waley, 2007). As we have seen, the last three decades or so have been punctuated by some important rounds of regulatory relaxation (Sorensen et al, 2010). Changes in urban regulation generally, if not entirely, connect with the script of neoliberal urbanism. Alongside urban governance and urban regulation, the third indicator of potential neoliberal urbanism that I outlined was the impact of shifts in the social welfare regime. Here, it has become clear as a result of the work of a number of writers, including Jacobs, that Japanese cities incorporate limited but growing spatial inequalities, although not at a level to be compared with North American cities. Hirayama, Ronald and others have argued convincingly that Japanese housing policy exhibits a number of features that can be considered neoliberal.

On the face of it, it might appear then that Japanese cities are becoming increasingly neoliberal in terms of their governance, regulatory environment, and spatial inequality. That, however, is only a partial picture. We should note at the same time the absence of many of those features of the neoliberal urban landscape that had featured in the 'neoliberal urban inventory' proposed earlier in this paper. Here, we find significant lacunae in the landscape and a consequent silence in the literature. Ghettoisation and gated communities are only peripheral aspects of the landscape, for example in Hirayama's reference to expensive new high-rise condominiums as vertical gated communities and passing mention of day laborer districts as being territories written

off the map (Hirayama 2005; 2006; Waley, 2000). There is too an absence of large-scale and sustained attempts to resist urban restructuring -- none of the disturbances and few of the protests that have been witnessed, for example, in China. Research undertaken by Fujii, Sorensen and Ōkata (2007) has revealed the huge obstacles placed in front of those groups who have chosen to resist urban restructuring projects and the ultimate failure of their campaigns.

There is, then, no simple answer to the question of how Tokyo connects with variegated patterns of global urban change 'with neoliberal characteristics', nor, to put it differently, whether seeing urban policy in Tokyo as being infused with neoliberalism is particularly helpful. This might in part be because of an under- or partial theorization of Tokyo and Japanese urbanism in the literature. Perhaps it is because of the tardiness of urban theorizing in moving beyond its North Atlantic comfort zone -- something, after all, that has occurred only recently. Perhaps too it is the result of a tendency toward an Asian exceptionalism, and in particular, a Japanese exceptionalism. Or again, perhaps there is a hesitance here caused by what Roy (2007) refers to as ontological difference. We should understand that we are looking here at a parallel trajectory with occasional intersecting lines. Japan is starting from somewhere different, as are other developmental states in East Asia. The starting point, as Hill, Park, and Saito write, is the developmental city not the Keynesian city (2012, p. 12).

This is the contextual key, for what we see is the intertwining of the (post)developmental state and neoliberal policies, or the (post)developmental state continuing to assert itself, in part through the implementation of neoliberal policies. Such a view certainly helps to explain some of the inconsistencies and contradictions presented by any attempt to impose onto the streets of Tokyo a non-contextualized picture of neoliberal urbanism. It echoes Perreault and Martin's comment about the "multiple, often contradictory neoliberalisms, that emerge from a diversity of political contexts and generate a range of effects" (2005, p. 194), but does so in a context that works for Tokyo and makes sense in a broader East Asian regional setting. An approach that sets Japan in its regional context is the surest starting point for further investigation (Park, Hill and Saito, 2012; Waley, 2012).

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