

– ACCENTUATE THE REGIONAL

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Abstract

We are witnessing an unprecedented period in which the urban and the regional, formerly quite distinct from one another, are blending together to define something new and different. Never before have regional approaches been more important in urban research, and urban emphases more influential in regional development theory and planning. As one of the only forums that explicitly combines the urban and the regional, IJURR has a rare opportunity to take the lead in defining and expanding critical urban/regional studies. This essay identifies eight challenging themes for innovative critical and comparative regional research.

Introduction

I want to urge as strongly as I can that IJURR not only retains ‘regional’ in its title, but that the journal becomes the springboard for a resurgence of regional research focused on such issues as the extraordinary generative power of city-regions and the growing integration of urban and regional studies. Never before have regional approaches been more important in urban research, and urban emphases more influential in regional development theory and planning. This increasing fusion of the urban and the regional in theory, empirical analysis, social activism, planning and public policy is creating many new pathways for innovative critical and comparative research, some of which I will identify and discuss in this essay.

IJURR is one of the very few places for scholarly debate that explicitly joins the urban and the regional together, positioning it to lead the way in advancing critical regional–urban studies. I reverse the usual convention of putting urban first to signal the increasing absorption of the urban into regional studies, or at least the growing inseparability of the two terms and concepts, as signaled in such terms as city-region, regional city and what I will call regional urbanization. If we are entering a ‘new urban age’, as some proclaim, it is a distinctly regionalized urban age.

The new regionalism

A starting point for this effort is to recognize that regional studies have changed radically over the past few decades. Building on the so-called spatial turn, the transdisciplinary diffusion of critical spatial perspectives, a new regionalism (NR) has emerged and generated a radical reconceptualization of the nature and importance of regions and regionalism.¹ The most forceful presentation of this reinvigorated regionalism, even if it never uses the term new regionalism, is *The Regional World: Territorial Development in a Global Economy* (Storper, 1997).²

Storper asserts that regions are vitally important social units, on a par with social formations based on kinship and culture, economic exchange and markets, and political states and identities, the traditional foci of the social sciences. Moreover, Storper argues, primarily through the stimulus of urban agglomeration, cohesive regional economies, especially those in city-regions, emit a powerful generative force for economic development, technological innovation and cultural creativity that is comparable to, if not stronger than, market competition, comparative advantage and

1 For a discussion of the spatial turn, see Soja (2008). A brief discussion of the new regionalism framed within a discussion of the evolution of regional planning ideas can be found in Soja (2009).

2 Territory and territorial are often used as a substitute for region and regional, a practice I hope will not continue in the future, if used at the expense of asserting the regional.

capitalist social relations. Even at its most hyperbolic, traditional regional development theory never went this far in its assertive regionalism.³

Unfortunately, the new regionalism in an explicit and assertive sense has remained poorly articulated in the wider literature and not well developed empirically, even by some of its most forceful proponents. One consequence has been a widespread difficulty in distinguishing between the old and the new regionalism. Many on the left dismiss the NR as just another deceptive neoliberal ploy, while others see only a renewed and economic regional science or a lightly disguised version of growth pole theory, leading to little more than tired demands for entrepreneurial regional government and city-regional marketing.⁴ Still others welcome the NR but define it too narrowly, focusing only on multinational trading blocs. Without a sufficiently clear explanation of the new regionalism, it is no wonder that contemporary regional studies often appear so confused and uncritical to non-regionalists.

What then are the distinctive features of the NR? What makes the regional question so important in the contemporary academic and political worlds? Most clearly distinguishing the new from the old regionalism is the NR's much more powerful and far-reaching theoretical foundation, as exemplified by Storper and related works by Allen Scott (1998; 2001; 2008) on city-regions and the world economy. Regions in the past were viewed primarily as places in which things happen; background repositories of economic and social processes. Today, regions are seen as powerful driving forces in themselves, energizing regional worlds of production, consumption and creativity, while at the same time shaping the globalization of capital, labor and culture.

As networks of urban agglomerations, cohesive regional economies have come to be seen as the primary (but not sole) generative force behind all economic development, technological innovation and cultural creativity. In another twist derived mainly from the work of Jane Jacobs (1969), this generative force may go back more than 10,000 years to the origin of cities and the development of full-scale agriculture.⁵ The NR is built on these far-reaching premises and promises.

The generative power of cities and regions

This amazing 'discovery' of the generative power of cities and regions is, in my view, not just a ground-breaking idea in urban and regional studies; it may be the most important new idea in all the social sciences and humanities. We have only begun to explore this subject and there remains significant resistance to its implied urban spatial causality, especially among geographers who fear a return to the embarrassing environmental determinism of the nineteenth century. At this time, research and writing on this stimulus of urban agglomeration, what I have called synekism (Soja, 2000),⁶ has been monopolized by a creative if stiffly quantitative cadre of geographical economists, including several Nobel prizewinners, as well as by a few opportunistic spatial entrepreneurs selling superficial notions of economic clusters or creative cities.

Blunting the development of more comprehensive and critical research has been the almost complete absence in the Western literature of any effective recognition and analysis of the generative power of urban spatial organization. All there is to refer back to is *The Economy of Cities* by Jane Jacobs (1969) and the much earlier work of Alfred Marshall (1890) on agglomeration economies. Just recognizing that such

3 Regionalism is defined as advocating the usefulness of regions for any particular purpose, for theory building, identity formation, political action or just economic efficiency. A simple definition of region is an organized space with some shared qualities. The term comes from the Latin *regere*, to rule, from which also come *regal*, *regime* and *regulate*.

4 See Lovering (1999) for an early critique of the new regionalism (using Wales as an example). See also Hadjimichalis and Hudson (2006).

5 Some have claimed Jacobs deserved a Nobel Prize for her 'discovery' of the stimulus of urban agglomeration. Economists now call these urbanization economies Jane Jacobs externalities.

6 The term synekism is taken from the Greek *synoikismos*, literally coming together to live under one roof, a reference to the stimulating formation of the *polis* or city-state.

an urbanization effect exists, which I believe is now beyond doubt, points to an extraordinary lacuna in the Western social science and humanities literature.

Here then is one of the greatest challenges to the future of IJURR: to encourage the conceptual broadening and more acute critical interpretation of research and writing on the generative force of urbanization and regional development. We still know very little about how this generative effect works, whether big agglomerations always generate more than small ones, whether networks of smaller agglomerations generate more development impulses than one large agglomeration, whether specialization or diversity is more important to economic clusters. What is the role of face-to-face contact (what is called 'buzz' in Storper and Venables, 2004)?⁷ Has the internet made location and other spatial variables more or less relevant and influential? Does the clustering of profit-motivated firms differ from the logic of cultural clusters of artists or musicians?

Even more challenging and less recognized is the question of how agglomeration also generates negative effects, something that the geographical economists have thus far largely ignored. Accepting Jane Jacobs' argument that this generative effect goes back more than 10,000 years to the very first urban settlements, it becomes possible to trace how urban agglomeration stimulated the development of social hierarchy and power differentials in human society, from the early rise of patriarchy and empire-building states to more contemporary exploitative class relations and racism. We know a little about how capitalism, racism and patriarchy shape urban space, but almost nothing about how these social processes are shaped by the organization of urban and regional space, a necessary component of what I long ago called the socio-spatial dialectic (Soja, 1980).

There is also the issue of environmental degradation and climate change. Has the concentration of the world's population in cities and megacity-regions been more or less conducive to sustainable ecologies? Are the largest agglomerations more energy efficient than much less urbanized areas, and does this matter? Is networking among city-regions becoming more important than international organizations in developing effective environmental policies? Given the anti-urban biases of the past and the theoretical weaknesses of the old regionalism, it will take a great deal of effort to put these issues of urban spatial causality and regional synekism on the research agenda.

Regional urbanization

Another defining (if not definitive) feature of the NR is the increasing intermixture of urban and regional concepts and forms that is at the foundation of what I describe as regional urbanization. This hybridizing process I argue is leading to a paradigmatic transformation of the modern metropolis, an epochal shift in urban form and 'ways of life', to use the old Chicago School phrase coined by Louis Wirth. In its wake, much of traditional urban and regional theory is being shattered as regional urbanization opens up many alternative arenas for urban-regional (regional-urban?) research.

Within metropolitan areas, for example, regional urbanization is erasing the once fairly easily identifiable boundary between urban and suburban and, as a new literature suggests, between urban and rural, city and countryside. As 'outer cities' take shape through a complex process of decentralization and recentralization, a new 'inner city' is also emerging, creating new challenges to urban planning and policymaking. Many downtowns have been divested of their domestic populations and partially filled with suburban-like homes, while some inner-city areas have attracted vast numbers of migrants from nearly every country on earth. An unstable and unpredictable inner city

7 The original subtitle of this article was closer to 'the generative effect of cities', but the journal editors claimed their readers would not understand this and recommended a change to incorporate 'buzz'.

is emerging, often filled with tensions and conflicts between domestic and immigrant populations, as well as among urban planners confused by declining central-city densities and new minority majorities.

At the same time, there has been a growing peripheral urbanization, as high-density development covers what was once sprawling low-density suburbia. An expanding glossary of new terms has been generated from this mixture of the urban and the suburban, and the mass urbanization that is ‘filling in’ the entire metropolitan area. Included are edge cities, outer cities, boomburbs, in-between cities, hybrid cities, rurban areas, urban villages, citistates, metroburbs and exopolises. Although these new forms are frequently crammed back into old metropolitan typologies, it is clear that suburbanization is not continuing in the same way as it did in the postwar decades. Traditional suburbia is slowly disappearing as the once relatively homogeneous suburbs are feeling the effects of mass regional urbanization, opening up a rich frontier for comparative research on the differentiation—the many different ways of life—of what some now call post-suburbia.

Some former suburbs, such as Orange County and Silicon Valley in California, have become large urban-industrial complexes, with as many jobs as bedrooms. Combining increasingly dense outer cities with mass migration into the inner city, the five-county Los Angeles city-region surpassed New York City’s 23-county metropolitan area in the 1990 census as the densest ‘urbanized area’ in the US, a remarkable transformation given that Los Angeles was the least dense major US metropolis 60 years ago. Indicative of its extraordinary peripheral urbanization, the City of Los Angeles is surrounded today by 40 cities of more than 100,000 inhabitants.

Despite the urbanization of suburbia and outer-city development happening to some degree around almost every major city in the world, many areas have been able to fight in new ways to maintain their old suburban densities and lifestyles, often based on private residential governments and gated communities, as well as specialized zoning laws. Peripheral urbanization and the growth of outer cities has been noted for decades—it has been an integral part of the urban restructuring process generated by the urban crises of the 1960s—but we still know very little of its dynamics; too many scholars refuse to recognize the magnitude and transformative significance of the changes taking place, and still cling to the old and declining metropolitan model and mentality.

The end of the metropolis era

Regional urbanization and the rise of polycentric city-regions and regional cities (I think the term regional cities will become much more widely used in the future) are the core concepts of the new regionalism (see Hall and Pain, 2006).⁸ In several recent writings (Soja, 2010a; 2011a; 2011b), I have taken the regional urbanization concept one step further, arguing that it is not just an extension of the modern (or postmodern) metropolis but an indicator of an epochal shift in the nature of the city and the urbanization process, marking the beginning of the end of the modern metropolis as we knew it. Such a radical shift also suggests the need for radically new approaches to urban and regional theory and practice.

The ‘metropolis era’ as it is used here began in the late nineteenth century, growing out of an earlier, more centralized and denser version of the industrial capitalist city. Unlike that earlier city, with its unplanned concentricities that the Chicago School adapted from Engels’ view of Manchester, the metropolis was more centrifugal than centripetal, growing primarily by suburban expansion, at least in North America. In the interwar years, the modern metropolis ceased growing by accretion (e.g. incorporating adjacent and already dense ‘streetcar suburbs’) and instead

8 For a look at the megacity-regions of the US, see Nelson and Lang (2011).

spawned an expansive suburbia filled with a constellation of little 'almost cities'. This created a pronounced dualism, two very different ways of life that became embedded in popular as well as academic notions of urban form and function. The urban studies literature reflected this dualism, being categorically divided into urban and suburban emphases. Furthermore, the metropolitan model came to be thought of by many as a kind of end-state, an ultimate equilibrium that could never become anything else, making the notion of regional urbanization almost inconceivable.

One of the tasks of new research on regional urbanization is to rethink this rigid dual model of the metropolis, and recognize the paradigmatic shift that is taking place from a metropolitan to a regional model of urbanization. Now, to be sure, this shift is (like all social processes) happening unevenly, more intensely evident in some areas, much less so in others. With some effort, however, evidence of peripheral urbanization and outer-city growth, as I have noted, can be found in almost every large city-region. This widespread impact of peripheral urbanization accentuates the demand for rigorous comparative analysis at the national and international scales.

The relation between peripheral urbanization and sprawl is particularly complicated and needs to be clarified, especially given the negative connotations attached to such notions as 'periurbanization' in Europe, where it is associated with unsustainable sprawl beyond hinterland boundaries. Regional urbanization does not just involve moving outward from inner to outer metropolitan rings. Urbanization in what was once suburbia can take place almost anywhere, close to or far away from the old city center, and brings with it much higher densities than before. That it strains public services (especially mass transit), often worsens pollution and public health, and creates many other problems (including aggravating income inequalities), needs to be seen and responded to, not as an extension of the metropolitan model but of the new processes associated with regional urbanization. Again, the need for good comparative analysis is vital.

In the US, regional urbanization is probably most advanced in the city-regions of Los Angeles, the San Francisco Bay area and Washington, DC, with Chicago catching up rather quickly. New York's very extensive suburbanization contains a large number of edge cities but remains relatively less dense than the other city-regions mentioned. The spread of Greater London, the extended regions around Milan, Barcelona and Berlin, and the multi-centered Dutch Randstad are European examples, as is the almost entirely new 'Grand Region' surrounding the financial center of Luxembourg and including the German Saar, the French Lorraine and other parts of Germany and Belgium. The Gauteng region of South Africa, containing Johannesburg, Pretoria and the Witwatersrand, was the first officially proclaimed 'global city-region'.

Extended regional urbanization

Another collection of new terms and concepts has arisen from what can be called extended regional urbanization, stretching beyond the outer limits of the metropolis (see Soja and Kanai, 2007). Included here are the endless city, megacity-regions, megaregions, megalopolitan regions, regional constellations and galaxies, and more. Growing out of the computer games empire created by SimCity, for example, the latest version of the OpenSimulator focuses on creating megaregions, assiduously keeping the world of simulation up-to-date with the new regionalism.

Although a new regional lexicon has not yet been established, the most general term in use today is city-region, with or without a dash (although cityregion as one word is not used); those with more than a million inhabitants are either millionaire city-regions or megacity-regions. Megacity is also widely used for city-regions with populations exceeding 5 million, while megaregions (occasionally megalopolitan or megapolitan regions) usually refer to giant regional units of more than 20 million inhabitants. The UN claims that the first and now largest megaregion combines

Shenzhen, Guangzhou and Hong Kong in southern China's Pearl River Delta, with a population of 120 million. En route to an urbanization of the world, some say the scale of urbanization is getting even larger with continental-sized urban regions identifiable in North America, Europe and East Asia, where an urban zone stretching across China, Korea and Japan is home to more than 400 million people.

Chinese planners expect 200 million new inhabitants in what they officially call extended urban regions, or alternatively *chengzhongcun*, meaning areas where village and city mix together. Some Chinese scholars use the term periurbanization, but without the negative connotations associated with its use in Europe. Led by China, the entire world is becoming enmeshed in a network of polycentric and expansive city-regions, absorbing and generating a disproportionate share of the world's wealth and innovative capacity. A recent UN report on the state of the world's cities claims that the 40 largest megaregions, containing 18% of the world's population, today concentrate two-thirds of the world's wealth and more than 80% of its technological and scientific innovations (UN Habitat, 2010; see also Florida, 2009).

Globalization itself is being redefined, around the spread of industrial urbanism in some form everywhere—the Amazon rainforest, the Sahara desert, the Siberian tundra, even the Antarctic icecap—after more than a century of being confined to the core capitalist and socialist countries. Five hundred megacity-regions of more than one million inhabitants (a fifth of them in China) sit atop this worldwide web of regional urbanization, coordinating all planetary activities. Not only has there been a globalization of the urban, giving rise to the most culturally and economically heterogeneous cities the world has ever known (an important research focus in itself), there has also been occurring an urbanization of the world, what some are now calling planetary urbanization, demanding recognition, attention and further research from an avowedly regional perspective.

In addition to noting the importance of megaregions, the United Nations now lists urban size by city-region, not metropolitan area or 'Greater so-and-so'. In the US census, increasingly complex metropolitan area definitions are sidestepped in a relatively new category of 'urbanized area', defined by local density levels. Incidentally, it is this measure that has made Los Angeles, perhaps the leading-edge exemplar of the regional urbanization process, surpass New York City as the densest urbanized area in the US.

Multiscalar regionalism

Extended regional urbanization is indicative of another distinctive feature of the NR: its expression at multiple scales. The old regionalism focused almost entirely on sub-national regions like New England, Quebec, Catalonia, Appalachia. Sub-national regionalism remains important in the NR and has seen a resurgence in recent years, stimulated by many different goals: political, economic, cultural, strategic. Examples abound in Belgium, Italy, all of the former Yugoslavia and Soviet Union, China, India, Brazil, Argentina, Eritrea, Somalia and Sumatra. But the new regionalism is more formatively characterized by the expansion of supranational regionalism, from everything associated with the European Union to the proliferation of regional trading blocs such as NAFTA, MERCOSUR and ASEAN.

The European Union, as the first attempt to unite advanced industrial nation-states, has probably been the most vigorous promoter of regionalism and regional policies, new and old, in the world today. Through the EUREGIO program and the European Spatial Development Perspective (four words that would never have been combined this way 20 years ago, yet now official policy across all the EU states), new cross-border regions have been created throughout Europe where there used to be confronting antagonistic forces. Related to these developments, more advanced forms of spatial and regional planning are recognizing and fostering 'innovative regions'

(e.g. Rhone-Alpes, Catalonia, Baden-Wurtemberg) and greater interconnections between the largest city-regions. The search for a United States of Europe, as well as what is called a Europe of the regions, is a form of supranational coalition-building aimed, like locally based community coalitions, at achieving for strategic purposes a sufficient size to compete with other giant entities like China, Russia and the USA.

Uncritical approaches to supranational regional training blocs, seen only as efficient state coalitions for competing in global markets, have unfortunately diverted attention away from nearly everything else in the NR. As the first exercise in my class on regional planning, I ask students to enter 'new regionalism' in their search engines and choose three pages of hits to analyze how the NR is being defined and discussed. Usually, there are more than 150,000 hits, but the vast majority are concentrated on regional trading blocs, leading to a biased picture of the NR (and loads of confusion for students).

For many political scientists, international relations specialists, economists and some geographers, regionalism and hence the new regionalism is seen as an alternative to bilateralism and multilateralism in trade relations, and defined only as a coming together of nation-states. It takes some effort to convince students, as well as a few urban and regional scholars (including influential figures in IJURR?), that there is something more to the NR than ASEAN, NAFTA and MERCOSUR. At the same time, it must also be said that there is a need for more critical research on trading blocs and their potential for adding more progressive political, environmental and economic equity goals to their focus on trade regulation.

The NR thus needs to be seen as stretching across many scales. At the global level, in addition to the European Union and trading blocs, there has been a complex restructuring of what has been called the international division of labor, or most simply-mindedly the North-South divide. What was once the Third World has disintegrated, with the Asian 'tigers' or NICs (newly industrialized countries) joining the developed world, and the poorest countries being relegated to another categorical world of deepening poverty. For the most part, the socialist-communist Second World has disappeared (although it is not entirely clear whether the formerly communist states have entered the First World or Third World in their old sense). New regionalists such as Kenichi Ohmae (1995; 1996) have suggested that, as the world becomes increasingly 'borderless', three great regional power blocs have emerged: one in the Western hemisphere dominated by the US; another in Europe, the Middle East and Africa dominated by the European Union; and the third in South and East Asia led by China.

Another area of interesting debate remains unresolved: the significance of the differences in urbanization processes between North and South, developed and developing worlds. I have argued that regional urbanization is happening everywhere, albeit unevenly. That more people live in the cities of the developing South than in those of the developed North, and that this disproportion will increase in the future, takes nothing away from the global process. What the globalization of the urban suggests is that the differences between urbanization in the developed versus the developing world are decreasing. They have certainly not disappeared entirely, but more than ever before their similarities make it possible for London to learn from Lagos as much as Lagos can learn from London. It is this global balance that must inform contemporary urban and regional studies, not some categorical Eurocentrism or Third Worldism.

Similarly, I think it is becoming unacceptable to speak of typically European or North American cities, especially when this refers to compact versus sprawling cities. To some degree, every city on earth is experiencing some similar developmental forces shaped by globalization, the new economy and the revolution in information and communications technology. At the same time, each experiences these general

processes in unique ways, rooted in local history and geography. What is needed is not some confrontation between Northern and Southern perspectives but rigorous and open-minded comparative analysis, based on an appropriate and contemporary theorization of cities and regions.

What have just been described are examples of scalar restructuring and its regional implications. Closer to the bottom of the scalar structure has been another, still poorly understood, tendency that forms an attractive focus for urban and regional research.⁹ I refer to another kind of scalar fusion, as metropolitan regions seem to be blending into larger sub-national regions, creating something like region-states. Barcelona blending into Catalonia is one example. Berlin, Hamburg and Singapore (plus the old Hong Kong) already exist as regional city-states. To some degree, however, all megacity-regions have experienced some of this scalar coalescence. Almost by definition, the city-region is larger than the metropolitan region. A major problem here is the absence or weakness of regional authority, as the restructuring of economic relations has proceeded much faster than the adaptation of governmental administration. This brings us to another research frontier.

Regional governance and planning

Another aspect of the NR worthy of more detailed study is the governance crisis generated by the expansion of megacity-regions, and the deepening political and economic tensions caused by the tendencies towards income inequality and social polarization that seem to be built into regional urbanization. Several studies in the US have suggested that income inequalities tend to be lower in city-regions where there is some effective regional authority.¹⁰ If this is true, then there is an extraordinarily strong case for introducing more effective regional governance and planning in all the world's city-regions.

In the old regionalism, regional planners argued that regional planning, usually involving some variant of growth pole/growth center policy, was necessary to reduce income inequalities and prevent widespread social unrest. A similar argument can be made from the perspective of the new regionalism, but this argument is reinforced by a new form of spatial planning focused on the generative effects of urban agglomerations, industrial clusters and cohesive regional economies. The key challenge here becomes how to take maximum advantage of the positive effects of agglomeration while also recognizing and dealing with the perhaps inevitable accompanying negative effects on social justice and environmental quality.¹¹

Never before has the necessity for effective regional governance and planning been so great. This intensified demand does not necessarily revolve around the creation of formal regional governments, a primary focus of the old regionalism. A more adaptive and flexible regionalism is needed, focusing on particular issues such as mass transit, environmental management, regional equity, housing and social justice. One interesting example of such adaptive and flexible regionalism is the new 'metropolitcs' promoted by the politician-lawyer-regionalist Myron Orfield (1997; 2002; 2010).

Orfield's initial work focused on the Twin Cities (Minneapolis–St Paul) area of Minnesota and revolved around the formation of a metropolitan regional coalition, consisting of suburban municipalities and inner-city communities willing to pool their tax resources to invest in urban and regional redevelopment. The regional coalition

9 The scale issue and the process of rescaling can take us to a micro level—from neighborhood, to building, to the body—the so-called geography closest in, a (mobile) nodal region at the base of all nodal (territorial) regions. The NR can thus be seen as extending from the body to the planet.

10 A leading figure in this area is Manuel Pastor Jr, professor of Geography and American Studies and Ethnicity and director of the Program for Environmental and Regional Equity at the University of Southern California (see Pastor *et al.*, 2000; 2009).

11 For more on the old and new regional planning, see Soja (2009).

was relatively successful in Minnesota, and attempts continue to transplant the idea to other city-regions.

Other examples of more flexible regional associations and coalitions include various innovative alliances between industry and community groups in Silicon Valley, where regionalism has played a key role in weathering various economic crises,¹² and the growth of community-based regionalism, as practiced by several successful labor–community coalitions in Los Angeles.¹³ The largest and most successful of these regional alliances is the Los Angeles Alliance for a New Economy (LAANE), which consists of around 120 organizations grouped in different ways for different projects. An additional effect of community-based regionalism has been the growing connection between community development specialists and regional planners, a connection that was almost non-existent 10 years ago.

Seeking regional democracy

An open theoretical frontier growing out of the debates on regional governance and planning involves the application of critical regional and spatial approaches to the study of citizenship, democracy, justice, human rights and social movements. The development of community-based regionalism, as mentioned above, provides one interesting example of struggling for regional democracy. Closely related has been the ‘regionalization’ of the right to the city movement, based on an idea initially presented by Henri Lefebvre as *le droit à la ville*.

The right to the city idea has been expanded to at least the right to the city-region if not to the right to occupy space everywhere, a moot point in a sense if one recognizes that the entire world is being urbanized to some degree. In any case, there is now a World Charter for the Right to the City, many UNESCO meetings and publications on the subject and, most pertinent here, the formation in 2007 in Los Angeles (and later more formally in Atlanta) of a national Right to the City Alliance, led by regional coalitions from Los Angeles, Washington, DC and Miami. Struggles over the right to the city and community-based regionalism, and (with some careful qualification) the Occupy Movement of recent years, all revolve in one way or another around fomenting and promoting more participatory democracy, especially with regard to questions of equity, citizenship and hierarchies of social power.

Conclusion

Eight broad themes have been identified, each stimulated by new spatial insights and brimming with innovative research possibilities. We are witnessing an unprecedented period in which the urban and the regional, formerly quite distinct from one another, are blending together to define something new and different, an evolving regional–urban synthesis that demands new modes of understanding. As one of the only forums that explicitly combines the urban and the regional, IJURR has a rare opportunity to take the lead in defining and expanding critical urban/regional studies.

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12 For the opinions of a leading figure studying Silicon Valley regionalism, see Saxenian (2006).

13 The concept of community-based regionalism was developed first by Martha Matsuoka, a co-author of Pastor *et al.* (2009). LAANE and other labor–community coalitions are discussed in Soja (2010b).

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