

1 Introduction

Futurity and Urban Asias

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In both popular and academic imaginations, the future is not where it used to be. During much of the twentieth century, imperialism and modernization theory constructed the West as the leading edge of human transformation. More specifically, it was *cities* in Western Europe and North America that were most frequently imagined as centers of innovation and crucibles of modernity. Paris, London, Chicago, New York: these have been the world's principal "great cities" since the nineteenth century,¹ not only in scholarly precursors to today's transdisciplinary urban studies, but also in the mental maps of people around the world. In my own research on mid-twentieth century Malay mobilities, London, New York, and (perhaps more surprisingly) Liverpool were aspirational destinations for young men seeking to place themselves within—and to refashion themselves through—trend-setting Atlantic urbanity.² Yet by the time some of the same men made return journeys to Southeast Asia in the 1990s, the perception was one of going back to the future. They found a Kuala Lumpur in which skyscrapers, including the tallest in the world, had replaced (what one Liverpool-based man recalled as having been) a "mostly jungle" landscape, and a Singapore that had transitioned "from third world to first".³ Importantly, what were at one level profoundly personal experiences of spatio-temporal change were entangled with wider geopolitical and economic discourses of an emerging, rising, even miraculous Asia.⁴ Academics, of course, do not transcend such discourses, even as we seek to subject them to critical scrutiny. Asian cities are increasingly imagined as global frontiers of urban studies in the twenty-first century.⁵

This volume examines urban futurity in Asia, past and present. Its objective is not to chart some wholesale planetary shift in the geography of “the future” from the West to Asia—or from the north Atlantic to the Asia-Pacific—although several of the essays that follow engage such discursive re-mappings and the material transformations that they (over)generalize. There are many Asias. Most straightforwardly, of course, singular continental imaginings continue to be internally fractured by region (East Asia, Central Asia, South and Southeast Asia, West Asia etc.), and in terms of constituent territorial states. Even in urban studies where the city rather than the nation-state remains the primary unit of analysis, states form the territorial basis for a further continental division into “developed” and “developing” Asias.⁶ Some countries have long been imagined as developmentally “ahead” of others, with Japan as the vanguard of (East) Asian economic transformation from the 1960s being the most well-known example.⁷ There is similarly nothing new about certain cities being cast and experienced as “more in the future” than others, even if the locus of the ostensibly “most ahead” has shifted over time.⁸ What is perhaps new is the prominence of Asia in imaginings of *global* urban futurity,⁹ and a corresponding rise in the tendency for “inter-referencing” among Asian cities, rather than looking to EuroAmerica for pathways to modernity.¹⁰ Increasingly complex inter-Asia relational urban geographies remain problematically teleological as well as hierarchical, with diversity conceived in terms of relative positioning along pathways to “world class” Singapore, “global city” Tokyo, or “export manufacturing” Shenzhen, among others.¹¹

While it is important to take seriously geopolitical framings of Asia’s regional partitioning and political economy conceptions of developmental differentiation, including geographies of inequality at various scales,¹² there are other dimensions to the pluralization of urban Asia connoted by the title of this volume. “East Asia”, “South Asia”, and “Southeast Asia”, to take the three regions that feature most prominently in the essays that follow, do not share reference to some immutable continental whole, but are each different iterations of “Asia”.¹³ What is more, other iterations articulate very different urban geographies and teloi of futurity than those associated with discourses of rising Asia. One important example concerns the growing tendency for megacities of the global South (including, though not only, in Asia) to be cast as the new “cities of the future”. Dhaka, Jakarta, Manila, or Mumbai—typically depicted as demographically out of control and environmentally-challenged landscapes of slum poverty—are among the megacities most often used to connote Asia as dystopian planetary urban future.¹⁴ Such iterations of Asia dislodge EuroAmerican cities from imaginings of “the future”,

but they do so in ways that continue to place cities everywhere at different points along a singular pathway, and are driven more by Western anxieties about the future than analysis of lives or prospects in “Third World” Asia.¹⁵ Other Asias are invoked in plans and policies intended to transform, tame or clean up the Asian (mega)city.¹⁶ Importantly, however, there are also (re) iterations of Asia that are embedded in—and emerge from—the urban life-worlds of ordinary people, their languages, cultural imaginings, and beliefs about the good life (and perhaps after-lives).¹⁷

Contributors to this volume examine urban future-making practices from “above” and “below”, while also unsettling any such neat dichotomy. Making and remaking the city from above typically conjures the figure of the planner, the state policy expert, the architect, and other design professionals. Theirs are futures expressed in blueprints, political visions, and as seductive imagery displayed in advertisements and on billboards—futures which may be visibly present, and do work in the present,¹⁸ but often remain figuratively as well as literally out of reach for the urban majority.¹⁹ Nonetheless, ordinary and even subaltern urbanites do also negotiate future possibilities, including through imaginative, speculative and anticipatory engagement with official plans and corporate imagery.²⁰ The capacity to plot and navigate pathways to alternative futures—to realize forms of what Arjun Appadurai has termed “thoughtful wishing”—is highly unevenly distributed within and across urban Asias.²¹ The most marginal of city dwellers may be constrained not only by structures of material opportunity but also by cosmologically-ordained and delimited imaginings of their proper place in the world.²² Yet as Appadurai has shown, even Mumbai slum-dwellers’ horizons of the possible have been expanded by prospecting and learning from elsewhere,²³ in a kind of subaltern equivalent to the study tours and fact-finding missions of city elites.²⁴ Conversely, planners—especially the “middling” actors who perform routine planning labor—are often much more constrained than critics of “high-modernist” schemes acknowledge, with plans functioning (at best) more as means to organize the present than as roadmaps to any blueprint future.²⁵

Not only is past and present urban future-making invariably a co-production involving intertwined action from above and below,²⁶ but actors on both sides of the heuristic divide may even have common—or at least overlapping—visions of aspirational futures. D. Asher Ghertner’s work on Delhi, for example, shows how poor people whose presence and places in the city were threatened by its “world class” make-over shared associated aesthetic aspirations and desires.²⁷ Much more widely there is (to borrow a phrase from Ghertner) “aesthetic consensus” that urban futures will con-

tinue to look like “the city”.²⁸ While this observation may seem unremarkable, it contrasts sharply with recent critical scholarship in which cities are merely one territorial outcome of urbanization processes that are planetary in scope.²⁹ A powerful example in the current volume is the planned China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC) which Nausheen H. Anwar casts not so much as connecting extant city-based urban worlds, but as an expanded terrain of urbanization in its own right.³⁰ Work in Southeast Asia is also under way on other “operational landscapes” of capitalist urbanization, often far removed from the territorial boundaries of the city and stereotypical imagery of “the urban”.³¹ Whether or not urban futurity is imaginatively located in South, East, or any other Asia, then, in academic urban studies at least, it is certainly not limited to cities. It is also important to note that scholarship on urban Asias beyond the city—including by one of the scholars who has contributed to this volume—pre-dates the recent Lefebvre-inspired surge of interest in “planetary urbanization” in international urban studies.³² So if we look back, we find that there is a long history of Asias’ urban futures not being where they used to be.

The remainder of the volume comprises twenty-four essays across seven sections plus a conclusion by Daniel P.S. Goh. The first section, *Futures Past?*, comprises three chapters on historical imaginings of urban futurity in Asia. In chapter 2, André Sorensen takes us to Tokyo, a city that has long been (globally) recognized as a “fertile setting for futurist visions”. Sorensen focuses on the utopian modernist architecture of the Metabolists from the 1950s. While most of their plans never came to fruition, the Metabolists’ material influence is evident in and way beyond Tokyo. Japanese expertise in city (re)building through large-scale clearances and megastructures has been exported to many other parts of Asia. Chapter 3, by Christina Schwenkel, concerns a small city in north central Vietnam that has historically imported urban development expertise. In the case of Vinh, however, the source of that expertise was neither Tokyo nor centers of capitalist urban development in the West, but socialist East Germany. Schwenkel focuses on Quang Trung which became the prototype for modern and efficient mass housing in Vinh. Now in a state of dilapidation, for some Quang Trung denotes a modern future consigned to the past. Yet as Schwenkel shows, some (mostly elderly) residents see the old blocks in terms of a once-better future than the present-day exclusive urbanism of the high-rise condominiums that increasingly dwarf Quang Trung. In chapter 4, Pen Sereypagna tells a similar story of the White Building in Phnom Penh, Cambodia. Involving a collaboration between European and local architects during the

Sangkum Reastr Niyum era (1953–1970), this relatively low-cost housing was designed for a modern Cambodia(n) of the future, and has been further vernacularized by residents. Although such “informal” additions and the structural deterioration of the building have resulted in the White Building being cast as a site of social as well as material decay, Sereypagna describes how it has also become home to a community of artists who are revalorizing its place in the city and nation, and using it for political and artistic re-imagination of urban futures.

The second section of the volume, on *Pastness for the Future*, focuses more specifically on how inheritances of various kinds are drawn upon as future-building resources. In chapter 5, Tabassum Zaman examines contrasting ways in which “the past” is invoked in Dhaka, Bangladesh. While in official heritage narratives old Dhaka is almost entirely divorced from contemporary megacity realities, Zaman shows how Dhaka dwellers deploy nostalgia as a critique of the present, and even in more prospective ways. The imagined city of other times and places becomes a means of nurturing alternative urban visions, aspirations and dreams. In chapter 6, Cecilia L. Chu shows how in other contexts “heritage” is not the preserve of government or tourist marketing discourse, and can itself form the basis for “future-oriented urban intervention”. In particular, Chu is concerned with citizens’ activism around colonial built heritage in Macao and Hong Kong. The rather different colonial heritages in these two cities continue to provide resources for generating cultural imaginaries of the future as well as of the past, and so actively contribute to the political dynamics of urban change. In chapter 7, Jamie Gillen shows how aspirational futures in Vietnam may not be “urban” at all. For Gillen’s informants, Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) is a “means to an end” which is imaginatively placed beyond the negative associations of city life. Among the motivations for car ownership among city dwellers, therefore, is a desire to be able to connect (back) to and experience a rural “outside”. Of course, as Gillen acknowledges, the road infrastructure improvements that enable such extra-city automobility raise the question of whether imagined “rural” destinations may be understood to form part of an extended fabric of urbanization.

The third section of the volume consists of four chapters on *Infrastructures of Future-making*. As has already been mentioned, Nausheen H. Anwar’s contribution (chapter 8) concerns the planning and construction of the China-Pakistan Economic Corridor (CPEC). This forms part of China’s even grander One Belt, One Road (OBOR) initiative. Anwar reads (geo)political visions of CPEC/OBOR in terms of a “mega-future utopia” of harmonious connectivity. Yet neither CPEC nor the

OBOR are tabula rasa beginnings; they engage, reactivate, and stand to be disrupted by pre-existing local and regional dynamics. While Anwar thus points to how stupendous visions of future infrastructure are necessarily subject to contested geohistories, in chapter 9, D. Asher Ghertner considers how urban infrastructure more actively perpetuates caste-based inequities in India. Hindutva (or Hindu nationalism) has been widely critiqued but Ghertner points out that most existing critics have had little to say about recurrent sewage pipeline deaths, seeing these as merely technical or infrastructural matters. In contrast, Ghertner argues that the death toll among mostly *dalit* sewage cleaners means that pipes and sanitary systems—infrastructure—function in ways, and generate futures, that are “coded Hindu”. Indrawan Prabaharyaka’s essay (chapter 10) also compels us to take seriously the role of sanitation infrastructure—and associated maintenance labor—in future enactments of the city. In his case, the focus is on the Indonesian capital, Jakarta, where there is a long history of unrealized official plans for a universal sewerage system. At one level, this may be read as evidence of the failure of top-down planning blueprints but, as Indrawan shows, it has also given rise to local self-provisioning techniques and auto-constructed basic infrastructures. And while these are often inadequate and dangerous, they also represent forms of experimentation with alternative futures. Similarly, in urban Thailand Eli Elinoff (in chapter 11) shows how while the construction industry, real estate and finance may at first sight appear to have a monopoly on visions of the future, activists combine visions of a nostalgic past and critical lived experience of the present as resources for working towards alternative futures. Such uncertain possibilities are symbolised by the 10 Cal Tower, a Mobius strip of vertical concrete “that looks like a parking structure without cars”. Elinoff likens the tower to the actions of activists in Bangkok and Khon Kaen who “take urban modernity and twist it back on itself to estrange the present, casting possibilities for new future forms.”

In other contexts, people who struggle to envision better futures in situ may consider pursuing them elsewhere. Such is the case in Elaine Ho’s contribution to the volume (chapter 12)—the first of four essays in section 4 on *Relocating Futurity*—concerning African student migrants in China. In comparative historical perspective what is perhaps most significant here is not the human mobilities per se but the fact that Africans are increasingly looking to cities in China, rather than in Europe or North America, as sites of futurity. Ho shows that African migrants have clear hierarchies of preference among cities in China but also that, overall, they experience disappointment in China and plot future trajectories elsewhere. The hierarchical urban perceptions of African migrants, of course, have many

equivalents in other Asias. In Indonesia, as John Taylor shows in chapter 13, Jakarta-centrism—the tendency to see national innovation as emanating from the capital city—exists alongside a variety of other inequities, such as along lines of age and gender. The Urban Social Forum meetings detailed by Taylor have provided a platform for civil society groups from across the archipelago to share their city-making experiences. In this socially and geographically inclusive space, urban social innovations of groups from far-flung corners of the Indonesian archipelago are taken as seriously as those from internationally-connected NGOs in Jakarta. A more conventional, but no less important imagined geography of the future is examined in Zane Kripe's essay (chapter 14) on "technopreneurs" in Singapore. Among Kripe's informants Singapore was perceived to be "more in the future" than other parts of the (Southeast Asian) region. Kripe elaborates how, somewhat improbably, a former industrial factory that housed technopreneurs while a larger, purpose-built zone was under construction came to be vaunted as the "Silicon Valley of Singapore". Although in terms of technopreneurship, Singapore may thus still be imagined as a rung down—or a step further back in time—from Silicon Valley, Carol Upadhyia (in chapter 15) shows that in terms of urban development, planning and governance, Singapore is itself a preeminent global model. Part of a long line of utopian, modernist city developments, Amaravati, the new capital of the recently divided Indian state of Andhra Pradesh, references and has employed Singapore planning expertise. Rather than merely reading the iconography of the official plans, Upadhyia considers associated ground-level "imaginings, anticipations, and aspirations", while noting highly uneven possibilities of benefiting from the Amaravati scheme.

The subsequent four essays (on *Whose Futurity?*) look more explicitly at the variegated capacity to imagine and shape alternative futures. In the case of Rebecca Bowers, in chapter 16, this means examination of gendered employment practices in the construction industry in the Indian city of Bengaluru. Bowers focuses on rural migrant women who perform the most mundane and lowly-paid construction labor that transforms agricultural land into the material infrastructure of "India's Silicon Valley". These women have few opportunities for up-skilling and it is revealing that questions about their desires for the future were "often greeted with incredulity and incomprehension". Similar sentiments were expressed by some of Michelle Ann Miller's informants (in chapter 17) who had been relocated following the 2010 eruption of Mount Merapi in Indonesia; some spoke of being "too tired to aspire". Although many of the same people also felt more secure and optimistic about their relocated futures, Miller notes im-

portant differences in terms of age/generation and gender that tend to be overlooked in “community-centric” post-disaster activities of both government and donor agencies. While Miller’s work allows comparison of the social dynamics of groups that variously underwent and resisted urban relocation, Rita Padawangi’s contribution to the volume (chapter 18) concerns the threat of eviction faced by an established Indonesian urban community. Padawangi documents historical changes to the Bukit Duri neighborhood in Jakarta. Community action enabled significant social improvements in the 1990s but flooding became both more frequent and extreme. The fact that this resulted largely from upstream economic activities meant that residents were reliant on actors elsewhere in (and beyond) the city. Ironically, it was government flood mitigation strategies that led to the eventual eviction of riverside sections of Bukit Duri. While the “modest aspirations” of Padawangi’s Jakarta-based informants to remain in place were thus bulldozed, the subsequent essay (chapter 19) sketches ways in which diverse groups use Malaysia’s capital city to project and “demonstrate” alternative futures. Julian C. H. Lee and colleagues ask who Kuala Lumpur’s skyscraping futurity is for, and who—people of which class or ethnic background, which religious or sexual orientation—are othered by dominant visions of the city. The authors document important cases of non-state sanctioned public protests, and other means of (re)claiming the future city such as through graffiti and queering tactics.

The first of three essays in the sixth section of the volume, on *Doing Urban Futures*, follows on from Lee et al. in its concern for counter-hegemonic efforts at reclaiming the city. In response to the emergence of the neoliberal “globopolis” in Asia since the 1980s, Mike Douglass (in chapter 20) details an agenda for doing cities based on principles of inclusion, distributive justice, conviviality, and environmental well-being. He presents the South Korean capital city, Seoul, under Mayor Park Won-soon as an exemplar of such “progressive” (re)orientations. Importantly, Douglass locates the source of Seoul-as-alternative-model not in the figure of the mayor, but in a wider civic culture. In a related way, in chapter 21, Mary Ann O’Donnell identifies certain phases and sites in the development of Shenzhen as alternatives to the city’s current global city orientation. This forms part of a wider historical cultural geography of the diverse projects of future-making that emerged from, and were imposed upon, the area that is today known as “Shenzhen”. O’Donnell contrasts the post-2009 phase of urban redevelopment that is oriented to replicating the corporate post-industrial downtowns of New York, London, and Tokyo—similar to the exclusionary globopolis of commercial elites that Douglass critiques—with an earlier

future exemplified by the Tianmian area of Shenzhen, where redevelopment included rental spaces for working class families and small businesses, even as factories were transformed into upmarket design offices. Whereas O'Donnell “excavates” futures of the present city, mapping historical reconstruction of developments now manifested in physical developments and landscapes, Vineeta Sinha (in chapter 22) focuses on ways of researching religious future-making in Singapore. Reflecting on the methodological underpinnings of her wider interest in “folk” Hinduism, Sinha demonstrates how long-term ethnographic engagement alongside archival and visual methods enable examination of forms of religiosity which leave few material traces—the sites concerned continually have to “make way” for secular development—and where aspirations are often not consciously articulated. For the minority religious practitioners concerned, future uncertainty is double-edged. On the one hand, it gives rise to feelings of vulnerability; on the other, it foments experimentation and means that the people concerned are constantly in “future-making” mode.

The fact that Singapore is a site for consideration of religious futures is among the ways in which Asia(s) can be made to speak to Euro-American-centered urban theory. As Peter van der Veer notes in chapter 23, the first of three essays that comprise the final section of the volume (on *Asia in New Geographies of Theory*), urbanists have been among the “most secular” of social scientists, and have consigned religion to the past. Van der Veer shows how processions and other city-based religious activities—often intertwined with economic practices—involve extended geographies, including both connections with contiguous rural hinterlands and wider transnational linkages. With reference to Seoul, Singapore and cities in China and India, he suggests the need for inter-Asia comparison, and critical comparative engagement with capital-centered political economy accounts of planetary urbanization. Trevor Hogan’s contribution (chapter 24) also advocates forms of comparison for making sense of what he terms “the new epoch of Asian hyper-urbanization”. The comparativism he proposes is at once historical (understanding twenty-first century urbanisms in the *longue durée*) and relational (recognizing that urban innovations past and present have involved systematic borrowings from elsewhere). Hogan thus sets an agenda for “big scale” comparative thinking about Asia(s), while also acknowledging (and reflecting upon) his own locatedness in the Antipodean “deep south”. Finally, in chapter 25, Gavin W. Jones revisits his past work on extra-city urbanization. He does so in part to consider some demographic and communications technology-related shifts that have taken place during the two decades since the publication of his article on the “thoroughgoing

urbanization” of East and Southeast Asia, but also to reflect on the implications of such trends for recent scholarship on planetary urbanization. While acknowledging blind-spots associated with many categories of demographic data collection, he shows from recent empirical work on Bangladesh and Laos that strong urban-rural differences remain—in mortality, poverty, educational attainment, and access to services. Jones flags established strands of non-city-centric scholarship on urbanization in and across diverse Asian contexts, and shows that demographers and other social scientists—often area specialists rather than disciplinary theorists—have long recognized and sought to move beyond crude statistical binaries of non-city versus city, rural versus urban Asias.

Notes

- 1 Ananya Roy, “The 21st-century Metropolis: New Geographies of Theory” *Regional Studies* 43, 6 (2009) 819–30.
- 2 Tim Bunnell, *From World City to the World in One City: Liverpool through Malay Lives* (Oxford: Wiley Blackwell, 2016).
- 3 Lee Kuan Yew, *From Third World to First World: The Singapore Story: 1965–2000* (Philadelphia, PA: Harper Collins Publishers, 2000).
- 4 For recent critical examination of such discourses, see Parvati Raghuram, Pat Noxolo and Clare Madge, “Rising Asia and Postcolonial Geography” *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 35, 1 (2014) 119–35; and Eric Sheppard “Emerging Asias: Introduction” *The Professional Geographer* 68, 2 (2016) 309–12.
- 5 Thus, in marked contrast to his earlier imagining of Los Angeles as the urban center of the world, Ed Soja argued that, “We can learn as much if not more from understanding what is happening in Mumbai, Delhi, Singapore, and Shanghai [as] we can from Los Angeles, New York, London, and Paris”. Cited in Andrew Harris “From London to Mumbai and Back Again: Gentrification and Public Policy in Comparative Perspective” *Urban Studies* 45, 12 (2008) 2407–28, p. 6. See also Tim Bunnell, Daniel PS Goh, Chee-Kien Lai and Choon-Piew Pow, “Introduction: Global Urban Frontiers? Asian Cities in Theory, Practice and Imagination” *Urban Studies* 49, 13 (2012) 2785–93; and Fulong Wu “Emerging Chinese Cities: Implications for Global Urban Studies” *The Professional Geographer* 68, 2 (2016) 338–48.
- 6 Malcolm McKinnon, *Asian Cities: Globalization, Urbanization and Nation-building* (Nias Press, 2011).
- 7 Kaname Akamatsu, “A Historical Pattern of Economic Growth in Developing Countries” *The Developing Economies* 1, 1 (1962) 3–25.
- 8 These terms are taken from Zane Kripe’s essay in this volume (chapter 14). For a highly influential critique of the wider tendency to see patterns of uneven development in terms of degrees of historical transformation see Johannes Fabian, *Time and the Other: How Anthropology Makes its Object* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1983).
- 9 In popular cultural terms, depiction of Shanghai as the “near future” of Los Angeles—as in Spike Jonze’s the 2013 movie *Her*—has resonances that extend well beyond the urban geography of film production. It is also worth noting that notions of Shanghai “seemingly possessing and containing the future” are not new. See, for example, Amanda Lagerkvist, “The Future is Here: Media, Memory, and Futurity in Shanghai” *Space and Culture* 13, 3 (2010) 220–38, p. 222. On Chinese cities as imagined future for African students, see Elaine Ho’s contribution to this volume (chapter 12).
- 10 On the “inter-Asia” circulation of urban planning models, and associated “inter-referencing” practices, see: Aihwa Ong, “Introduction: Worlding Cities, or the Art of Being Global” *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, eds. Ananya Roy and Aihwa Ong (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2011) 1–26.
- 11 On the emergence of Singapore as a model and the travel of its urban planning expertise

- see Chua Beng Huat, "Singapore as a Model: Planning Innovations, Knowledge Experts" *Worlding Cities: Asian Experiments and the Art of Being Global*, eds. Ananya Roy and Aihwa Ong (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2011) 29–54. The way in which Singapore-as-model relates specifically to the new city of Amaravati in Andhra Pradesh is examined in Carol Upadhyā's contribution to this volume (see chapter 15). Mary Ann O'Donnell's contribution (chapter 21) details both the emergence of Shenzhen as a model for export manufacturing-led urban development in and beyond China, and how Shenzhen is in turn looking to world cities such as Tokyo as a model for post-industrial urban futures.
- 12 Sheppard, "Emerging Asias".
- 13 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Other Asias* (Wiley-Blackwell, 2008).
- 14 For an excellent critical review, see Austin Zeiderman, "Cities of the Future? Megacities and the Space/Time of Urban Modernity" *Critical Planning* (Summer 2008) 23–39. Among the most trenchant elaboration of planetary slum futures is Mike Davis, "Planet of Slums" *New Perspectives Quarterly* 23, 2 (2006) 6–11.
- 15 Zeiderman "Cities of the Future".
- 16 On Shanghai as a model "global metro" for the transformation of Mumbai, see Andrew Harris, "From London to Mumbai and Back Again: Gentrification and Public Policy in Comparative Perspective" *Urban Studies* 45, 12 (2008) 2407–28.
- 17 These are the "Other Asias" that Spivak is most concerned to foreground: see Spivak, "Other Asias". On more-than-secular, cosmological dimensions of urban Asias, see Peter van der Veer's contribution to this volume (chapter 23), and his own recent edited volume: Peter van der Veer, ed., *Handbook of Religion and the Asian City* (Oakland: University of California Press, 2005).
- 18 Ananya Roy, "When is Asia?" *The Professional Geographer* 68, 2 (2016) 313–21.
- 19 On billboard futures in Thailand, see Eli Elinoff's contribution to this volume (chapter 11).
- 20 There has been a good deal of compelling work on this theme in recent years. Examples include: David Pinder, "Reconstituting the Possible: Lefebvre, Utopia and the Urban question" *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 39, 1 (2015) 28–45; AbdouMaliq Simone, *City Life from Jakarta to Dakar: Movements at the Crossroads* (Routledge, 2010); Constance Smith, "Our Changes? Visions of the Future in Nairobi" *Urban Planning* 2, 1 (2017) 31–41; and Austin Zeiderman, Sobia Ahmad Kaker, Jonathan Silver and Astrid Wood, "Uncertainty and Urban Life" *Public Culture* 27, 2 (2015) 281–304. See also the contribution to this volume by Carol Upadhyā (chapter 15).
- 21 Arjun Appadurai, "The Capacity to Aspire: Culture and the Terms of Recognition" *Culture and Public Action*, eds. Vijayendra Rao and Michael Walton (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2004) 59–84, p. 82. And on differentiation in terms of gender and life stages see the contributions to this volume by Rebecca Bowers (chapter 16) and Michelle Miller (chapter 17) respectively.
- 22 Arjun Appadurai, *The Future as Cultural Fact: Essays on the Global Condition*. (London: Verso, 2013).
- 23 Appadurai, "The Capacity to Aspire". And on the prospecting of elsewhere for (re)imaginings of "elsewhen", see Tim Bunnell, Jamie Gillen and Elaine Ho, "The Prospect of Elsewhere: Engaging the Future through Aspirations in Asia" *Annals of the American Association of Geographers* 108, 1 (2018) 35–51.
- 24 Tim Bunnell and Daniel P.S. Goh, "Urban Aspirations and Asian Cosmopolitanisms" *Geoforum* 43 (2012) 1–3.
- 25 Richard Baxstrom, "Even Governmentality Begins as an Image: Institutional Planning in Kuala Lumpur" *Focaal* 2011, 61 (2011) 61–72. Compare James C. Scott, *Seeing Like a State: How Certain Schemes to Improve the Human Condition have Failed* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998). On "middling" actors—as opposed to policy or planning elites—see Wendy Larner and Nina Laurie, "Travelling Technocrats, Embodied Knowledge: Globalising Privatisation in Telecoms and Water" *Geoforum* 41 (2010) 218–26, 219.
- 26 Martijn Koster and Monique Nuijten, "Coproducting Urban Space: Rethinking the Formal/Informal Dichotomy" *Singapore Journal of Tropical Geography* 37, 3 (2016) 282–94.
- 27 Of course, they are positioned very differently in relation to discourses of the "world-class" city compared to middle class citizens groups or policy elites—and actively engage in forms of "aesthetic politics"—but the point is that rich and poor alike are subject to what Ghertner terms "aesthetic governmentality". D. Asher Ghertner, *Rule by Aesthetics: World-class City Making in Delhi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015).
- 28 Typically, this features tall and spectacular buildings of the kind that confirmed the expectations of futurity of the Malay men in my study, who returned to metropolitan Southeast Asia after half a century away. Bunnell, "From World City to the World in One City".

- 29 Neil Brenner, ed., *Implosions/Explosions: Towards a Study of Planetary Urbanization* (Berlin: Jovis, 2014). See especially the introduction to that volume: Neil Brenner, "Introduction: Urban Theory Without an Outside", 14–30.
- 30 See Nausheen Anwar, "Planning Mega Futures in South-Central Asia: Infrastructure's 'Contingent' Utopia", chapter 8 in this volume.
- 31 On "rural" Malaysian leisure zones as spaces of Singaporean urban practice, see Amel Farhat, *Extending the Terrains of Urbanisation: Operational Landscapes of Singapore in Rural Southern Malaysia*, Unpublished PhD thesis, 2017, Department of Geography, National University of Singapore. The term "operational landscapes" is from Brenner, "Introduction: Urban Theory Without an Outside", 18.
- 32 Gavin W. Jones' contribution (chapter 25) revisits an article that he published two decades ago. Gavin W. Jones, "The Thoroughgoing Urbanisation of East and Southeast Asia" *Asia Pacific Viewpoint* 38, 3 (1997) 237–49. Other examples include: Terry G. McGee, "Urbanisasi or Kotadesasi? Evolving Patterns of Urbanization in Asia" *Urbanization in Asia: Spatial dimensions and Policy Issues* 108 (1989); Eric C. Thompson, *Unsettling Absences: Urbanism in Rural Malaysia* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2007); and Peter J. Rimmer and Howard W. Dick, *The City in Southeast Asia: Patterns, Processes and Policy* (Singapore: NUS Press, 2009) 126.