



GEOGRAPHY DISTINGUISHED SPEAKER

Traces of Elsewhere: Arriving at urban policy/urban theory



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Under conditions of globalisation, city futures are imagined in the context of a wider world of cities: policy making for cities is profoundly internationalised. And in the wake of vast changes in where urbanisation is taking place across the globe scholars must now theorise the contemporary urban condition with reference to a world of diverse cities. Both these processes, of policy making and theory building, require new vocabularies and new ways of working with traces of elsewhere as city futures are re-imagined. Policy makers operate at the complex interface between circulating policies and local political contestations, and scholars need to find strategies for revitalising and re-inventing comparative and international ways of doing research. The paper draws on topological theorisations of space to analyse the ways in which policy makers arrive at city-wide strategic urban policies through engagements with ideas from many different contexts. And then it draws on this spatial imagination to propose some new possibilities for imagining the geographies of urban theorising for a world of cities.

*Jennifer Robinson has published widely in urban geography: on the politics of segregation in South African cities (*The Power of Apartheid*, Butterworth-Heinemann, 1996), on urban development in post-apartheid cities, and, more generally, her book, *Ordinary Cities: Between Modernity and Development* (Routledge: 2006) established a post-colonial critique of urban studies, arguing for urban theory to draw on the diversity of urban experiences across the globe in developing more general accounts of cities.*