

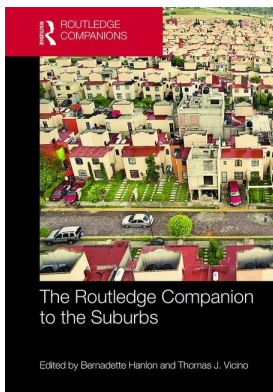
This article was downloaded by: 10.3.97.143

On: 28 Nov 2023

Access details: *subscription number*

Publisher: *Routledge*

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The Routledge Companion to the Suburbs

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Conclusion and future research on global suburbs

Publication details

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315266442-29>

Bernadette Hanlon, Thomas J. Vicino

Published online on: 30 Aug 2018

How to cite :- Bernadette Hanlon, Thomas J. Vicino. 30 Aug 2018, *Conclusion and future research on global suburbs from: The Routledge Companion to the Suburbs* Routledge

Accessed on: 28 Nov 2023

<https://www.routledgehandbooks.com/doi/10.4324/9781315266442-29>

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Conclusion and future research on global suburbs

Bernadette Hanlon and Thomas J. Vicino

The suburban context in an urbanized world

We live in a suburbanized world – yet, global socioeconomic changes have resulted in a world that is increasingly a blurry suburban landscape. It is evident that divergent realities characterize the suburbs in the twenty-first century. First, the suburban population and economy is growing in some favored metropolitan areas while it is declining in other disinvested regions. Suburban Baltimore, Buffalo, Cleveland, Pittsburgh, and Philadelphia – the Rust Belt – have experienced dramatic declines since the 1970s whereas suburban Atlanta, Dallas, Houston, and Phoenix – the Sun Belt – have experienced notable growth spurts at the same time. Second, the rapid growth in the Global South is an emergent characteristic whereas the growth of the Global North has stagnated. This is highlighted by the rapid urbanization of the metropolitan fringe of city-regions such as Lagos, Mexico City, Mumbai, and São Paulo. Third, migration flows have impact metropolitan areas around the world in two distinct ways. On the one hand, rural-to-urban migration flows have contributed to rapid urban change in countries like Brazil and India. On the other hand, in-migration flows from around the world have impacted the cities and suburbs of countries like the United States and Germany. Indeed, as the world “flattens,” people and resources flow more freely (Friedman, 2005). The result of these processes is that the world’s urbanized areas – a collection of cities and suburbs – are the sites of global social change.

As John Rennie Short asserts in this volume, “*Suburbia* is a myth that referred to a specific time and place . . . global suburbia is now the huge liminal space between central cities and urban fringes.” The globalization of city-regions reinforces the differentiation and blurriness of the suburbs. The United Nations *World Cities Report* (2016) shows that half of the world’s population now lives in urbanized areas – that is, cities and suburbs – and the future growth will increasingly occur at the fringe of existing development. In a reflection on the contemporary process of urbanization, Canadian Prime Minister Pierre Elliott Trudeau observes that,

human settlements are linked so closely to existence itself, represent such a concrete and widespread reality, are so complex and demanding, so laden with questions of rights and desires, with needs and aspirations, so racked with injustices and deficiencies, that the subject cannot be approached with the leisurely detachment of the solitary theoretician.

(United Nations, 2016)

Indeed, the urban system is a tangled web of cities and suburbs that presents many new challenges to policymakers and planners. Let us set the suburban context in an urbanized world by summarizing our major findings in this volume.

In Part I, “Suburban Descriptions and Definitions,” we confront one of the enduring and central questions in the field: what is a suburb? There is no single definition of a suburb, and scholars continue to debate the utility of any given definition. Ann Forsyth provides us with an orientation of the criteria that suburbs tend to be defined: political unit; age of development; location near the central city; economic function; physical form and design; transportation infrastructure; and so forth. Such criteria and definitions vary dramatically around the world. We learn from Richard Harris about the positive and negative aspects of suburban stereotypes. In many cases, it is our very stereotypes about the suburbs that define how we think and conceive of a suburban definition. Moreover, it is also a common benchmark by which we analyze social, economic, and political trends in the suburbs. Then, Nicholas Phelps tells us about the post-suburban era and its role in shaping planetary urbanization. In considering the multiple of descriptions and definitions of the suburbs, it is clear that they matter for empirical analysis and discussion of future trends about urbanization.

In Part II, “Global Perspectives on the Suburbs,” we examine the multiple ways that the process of suburbanization is expressed around the world. Drawing on their Major Collaborative Research Initiatives project on *Global Suburbanisms*, Pierre Hamel and Roger Keil introduce us to global perspectives by offering a theoretically grounded approach to the comparative study of suburbanization around the world. Then, we learn about these experiences throughout various regions in the world. In Latin America, for example, Lawrence Herzog demonstrates that mega-suburbs that are built on the periphery, often times segregating land uses through walled communities while disenfranchising residents living in informal settlements. In the case of Australian, Robert Freestone, Bill Randolph, and Simon Pinnegar show us that the suburban landscape is socially and economically diverse and houses the majority of metropolitan residents. Turning to the case of Europe, Ruth McManus traces the evolution of suburbanization of Dublin, illustrating that low-density garden suburbs for the working classes helped build the nation. In India, Annapurna Shaw frames the process of suburbanization as periurbanization, one that yields rapid growth on the metropolitan fringe by segregating land use and social classes. In Indonesia, Deden Rukmana, Fikri Zul Fami, and Tommy Firman explain that the suburbanization of Jakarta, one of the world’s largest cities, produced rapid urban growth and land use change, facilitated by new town and industrial estate developments. Last, in metropolitan Seoul, Chang Cyu Choi and Sugie Lee attribute the growth of the region to very strong and centralized growth management policy that favored dense neighborhood and abundant housing supplies. It is therefore evident that suburbanization is a global phenomenon, a process of growth and outward decentralization of people and economic activities. Although the form and function of suburbs varies by region of the world, the pattern of suburban life is a reality for a plurality of inhabitants of the planet.

In Part III, “Diversity, Exclusion, and Poverty in the Suburbs,” we explore the impacts of suburbanization on people. The process of the decentralization of people and their activities (i.e., economic activities, public policies, etc.) produces a series of both positive and negative externalities on the city, the suburbs, and the metropolitan area. Andrew Gorman-Murray and Catherine J. Nash explore the growth of queer suburbia, demonstrating the suburbs have been home to a diverse group of people, including the LGBT population. Erina Iwasaki sheds new light on the inequality of suburbs through an analysis of economic inequality in suburban Cairo. Magnus Dahlstedt and David Ekholm make clear that multi-ethnic suburbs of Sweden institutionalize various forms of social exclusion. Anjuli N. Fahlberg similarly examines exclusion and division of poor residents of Rio de Janeiro, showing the informal development on the metropolitan

fringe disenfranchises residents from formal economic and political opportunities in the city. Jon Teaford historicizes the content of local political incorporation in the United States, which led to tensions between self-governance and separation from the metropolis. Kyle Walker demonstrates the suburbs in the United States have become settlement hubs for immigrants from around the world. Katrin Anacker uncovers how impoverished suburbs confront the provision of a social welfare infrastructure in the United States. Willow Lung-Amam and Alex Schafran uncover the political, racial, and economic tensions in suburbs, demonstrating how social movements form in the suburbs. Last, Whitney Airgood-Obrycki and Cody Price reflect on the evolution of suburban stigma and how it shapes the capacity to respond to socioeconomic inequality in communities of the United States.

In Part IV, “Planning, Public Policy, and Reshaping the Suburbs,” we consider the role of urban planning and public policy in confronting issues of growth, decline, and renewal in the suburbs. First, we look at the case of metropolitan Paris. Theresa Enright highlights the regional politics of urban and suburban issues how the Métropole du Grand Paris (MGP), a new metropolitan institution, governs the region effectively. Juliet Carpenter explains the pattern of growth of the suburbs of Paris, namely the French *banlieue*. Constructed from the mid-1950s in response to rapid economic growth and subsequent migration to the cities, the Parisian periphery has now become synonymous with marginalization and socioeconomic exclusion, and social isolation in suburban environments. Next, turning to the case of the United States, Justin Hollander, Colin Polsky, Dan Zinder, and Dan Runfolo examine the consequences of suburban housing collapse during the Great Recession in 2008, which resulted in widespread housing vacancy and left suburban governments with an imperative to plan for suburban shrinkage. Then, Lisa Benton-Short argues that the growth of the suburbs is a continual process of evolution, influenced by new design ideas and resulting in different spatial forms. Drawing on a case study in Mission Viejo, California, Benton-Short documents the redesign of the suburbs and the rise of the master-planned communities. In suburban Chicago, Suzanne Lanyi Charles examines the phenomenon of teardown mansionization and shows how different physical, social, and economic characteristics change the inner-ring suburban landscape. Bahar Durmaz-Drinkwater, Jaap Vos, and Asli Ceylan Öner explore the concept of “amenity migration,” which deals with movements of people based on a place’s natural, cultural, or lifestyle characteristics, in a case study of the growth and redevelopment of a suburb in metropolitan Turkey. Last, Alison L. Bain reflects on the cultural production processes in the suburbs, arguing that neoliberal economic development policies further exacerbate the socio-spatial inequalities between city and suburb.

Future research

As we reflect on the future prospects for suburbia, let us consider the issues confronting a suburban world and put forth a research agenda.

Globalization and urbanization

It is clear that future urban growth will occur at the periphery of urbanized regions around the world. Cities – and now suburbs – are the sites of globalization (Glaeser, 2011). A connected and networked world of cities and suburbs will continue to fuel the urbanization of our population centers. An understanding about how and why this process occurs in the suburban context will be essential to our knowledge about twenty-first century suburbanization. Indeed, divergent

realities of suburbs will likely persist; demographic transformations, deindustrialization, and housing issues will shape these patterns of divergence (Short et al., 2007). These realities will also vary regionally around the world, particularly in developing countries. It will therefore be imperative to extend our research agenda to consider how and why the process of urbanization (and growth along the urban periphery) differs around the world.

Migration

The globalization of cities and suburbs has been facilitated by the process of migration – the movement of people and capital around the world (Hanlon and Vicino, 2014). In fact, this free flow of people is one of the primary drivers of urbanization. Internal migration often occurs with the movement of people from the rural hinterland to the urban centers whereas international migration occurs when people move between countries. In 2016, there were some 250 million international migrants living abroad. For example, some 44 million immigrants, or approximately 14 percent of population, live in the United States. What is more, the number of migrants to the United States doubled since 1990, making the United States one of the largest destination settlements in the world. Similarly, in the Europe Union, some 33 million residents are migrants. Since 2015, refugee migration to Europe has soared, with 1.2 million estimated asylum applications reported. In contrast, in other regions like Japan still struggle to attract international migrants as its demographic structure transforms dramatically. These global conditions establish the context for the future challenges of urbanization. Questions abound about the role of public policy and planning in the regulation of migration. What will be the impact of governments that promote or discourage migration on societies? Where will migrants settle, and what impact will this have on the communities they leave behind and the new places where they settle? Finally, an understanding of the increased population heterogeneity will be essential for evaluating the impact of growth.

Social movements and the right to the city – and suburb

Cities – and now suburbs – are the sites that empower social, economic, and political change (Mitchell, 2003; Carpio et al., 2011). There is a long tradition of using the space of the city as a site to shape the political agenda of the city. The right to the city, David Harvey (2008, p. 23) asserts, is

far more than the individual liberty to access urban resources: it is a right to change ourselves by changing the city. It is, moreover, a common rather than an individual right since this transformation inevitably depends upon the exercise of a collective power to reshape the processes of urbanization. The freedom to make and remake our cities and ourselves is, I want to argue, one of the most precious yet most neglected of our human rights.

During the 2000s, some of the world's largest cities and their surrounding suburbs witnessed unprecedented social movements. Consider a few of these movements:

- In the United States, residents of cities and suburbs mobilized to protest discrimination and police violence after various shootings of unarmed, black men by police, thereby sparking the “Black Lives Matter” social movement.

(Lebron, 2017)

- In Brazil, more than one million residents took to the streets to protest urban inequalities in health, education, transportation, as well as political corruption, igniting “Free Fare Movement” social movement.
(Vicino and Fahlberg, 2017)
- In Egypt, millions of residents protested the authoritarian rule of law in cities across Egypt, beginning the “Arab Spring” social movement.
(Ketchley, 2017)
- In Turkey, the Gezi Park protests began over the contestation of the urban redevelopment plans for public space. Drawing millions of Turkish residents to the streets, protests ignited a movement to make Turkey a more democratic nation.
(Gürçan and Peker, 2015)
- In Hong Kong, millions of young people protested in the streets of Hong Kong for electoral reform, forming the “Umbrella Revolution.”
(Dapiran, 2017)

There are a few commonalities among these social movements. These protests were sparked by events that triggered many people to protest. The city and the suburb served as a public space to take collective action. These protests, like many others around the world, reflected the varied consequences of urbanization – socioeconomic inequality, voice, representation, and justice. As the process of uncontrolled growth persists throughout the world, these issues are more likely to impact residents of the suburbs. Scholars should focus increased attention on these movements.

Resilience and security

Finally, the resilience of metropolitan communities to rebound after a disruption to the system is an emerging concept worth examining in the suburban context. What makes resilient regions? Scholars have begun to explore how issues such as economic insecurities, failing infrastructure, lack of regional governance, and demographic shifts impact the long-term sustainability of metropolitan areas – their residents, their economies, their housing, and their rights (Pagano, 2013). Like cities, the suburbs are increasingly at risk for natural disaster, terrorism, and an aging public infrastructure (Flynn, 2007). As a result, it will be imperative to understand our vulnerabilities, challenges, and solutions to overcoming threats like climate change, global insecurity, migration, and war.

Conclusion

Suburbanization is a global phenomenon. It is a pattern of development that dates to the beginning of human civilization, and it blossomed during the twentieth century. Today, suburbia encompasses a vast territory of land that spans from the central city to the fringes of metropolitan areas. This pattern is evident in metropolitan areas of the world – the Global North and the Global South – in developed and developing metropolitan areas. The processes of growth, decline, and renewal of the suburbs demonstrate that the life cycle of suburbia reflects the patterns of living of our civilization. The growth of urbanized areas of the twenty-first century will be in the suburbs – the far fringes of the city. Thus, it will be essential to understand the impact of this form of development on the social, economic, and political systems of the world.

Guide to further reading

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