Urban Futures series
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Global Urban Politics
Informalization of the State

Julie-Anne Boudreau
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Introduction

In the Cureghem neighborhood of Brussels, people cross paths at various speeds — some of them live there, others are only passing by. Physically enclosed by a canal, a highway and the Gare du midi high-speed train tracks (the international hub connecting Brussels to London by the Eurostar, and to Paris and Amsterdam by the Thalys), the area is a dense intersection of mobile trajectories. The Spanish immigrants left many years ago, mostly replaced by Moroccans. There are also many West Africans who rent beds in the maisons du sommeil, which consist of multiple beds in dilapidated buildings generally owned by Lebanese landlords. The Lebanese control a large portion of the neighborhood’s ‘informal’ economy, but they generally do not live there. The Polish sausages which arrive daily at the district’s old slaughterhouse, now transformed into a market, cross paths with hundreds of used cars on their way to North and West Africa. This informal traffic of used cars is also dominated by the Lebanese, who buy old buildings, tear down the interior walls and use the space for car warehouses. Since the revitalization of the Place Lemmens and the removal of its many old refrigerators, which were sold informally in an improvised open-air market, more and more West Africans have moved to jobs in the car trade. Further down the road, the old Veterinary Medicine School is being converted into luxurious lofts. Located just a ten minute walk from the Gare du midi, these new condos are being marketed to ‘Parisians who prefer to live in cheaper Brussels and take the Thalys to Paris every day’ (figure 0.1). Moroccans are also active in the local economy, owning
INTRODUCTION

The many tea houses and restaurants of the neighbourhood, much to the chagrin of some white 'Belgian' social workers, skilled in finding funding for community activities, who long for a glass of wine. As one of them told us, 'After a while, integration/cohabitation, I'm sorry if I'm exaggerating, but it was couscous-merguez, small Moroccan cakes and mint tea...after a while...well, that's enough of that. Everyone knows couscous and, well, we're fed up. We want a glass of wine too' (Cureghem, February 2006)."1

On that wet winter day, I was visiting the area with Canadian and Belgian colleagues. We arrived in my colleague's car, parked and then joined the social worker. After a few hours, we came back and the car was nowhere to be found. My colleague panicked as he was convinced it had been stolen to be exported to Africa. A couple of phone calls and more careful searching later, we found the car where we had initially parked it. My colleague's local knowledge about the neighbourhood provided him with a specific grid to read the situation: given the intense car-export business in the neighbourhood, the most probable explanation for the car disappearance was that it had been stolen. My external vantage point provided me with another reading: we had forgotten where we parked the car and, given that I don't know this area, I had lost my bearings. In both cases, the complexity and fluidity of Cureghem provided us with a sense of helplessness. Unlike many Cureghem locals (the Lebanese businessmen, the West African workers, the Moroccan restaurant owners, the Polish butchers), we did not show a'capacity for anticipation,' as Simone (2010a: 96) would put it: 'this kind of anticipation entails the ability to see the loopholes and unexpected by-products in the intentions and plans of more powerful others.'

These many intersections in Cureghem are familiar to anyone who spends enough time there. Despite its physical barriers, isolating it from the rest of the city, Cureghem is a collection of moving spaces (the train station, the canal, the Place Lemmens, the slaughterhouse, the maisons du sommeil, the tea houses). It is a place of juxtaposed temporalities related to car exports, high-speed trains and to young second-generation Moroccans 'tied to their street corners: waiting for something to happen (to paraphrase how a teenager described his life in Cureghem). Frequenting a place, going there often, provides a vantage point for moving through its complexity and many intersections. Being able to effectively navigate such spaces enables us to take...
advantage of them through anticipation, and to stabilize our own presence within them.

Take the example of Bassim, who is about twenty years old. He was born in Cureghem and is very attached to the neighbourhood. He was hired by the Brussels region as an 'urban steward' in one of the social revitalization programmes for Cureghem. Through these programmes, local unemployed youths are hired for ethereal work contracts to create a stronger sense of 'civic behaviour' in the residents. They patrol the area on bicycles or by foot and can issue tickets for leaving trash on the street corner, for intimidating others and so on. They organize recreational activities with younger kids, they spend time in local parks and they connect with the mosques, the mothers and the social workers. Bassim also studies sociology. When he comes back to Cureghem from the university, he leaves his jeans and preppy vest behind and puts on his sweat suit. These are his street clothes.

Unlike some of his neighbourhood friends, Bassim regularly leaves Cureghem to go to university. Most residents tend to restrict their travels because of the harassment they have to face, especially by police officers. This is why Bassim changes his clothes to leave Cureghem. Bassim's friends benefit from his travels around the city, however. He 'imports' stories, experiences and images from other places and this brings the rest of the city into Cureghem (Simone, 2010a: 210). The Parisian dwellers of the Veterinary School lofts do the same, despite some limitations in their verbal interaction with Bassim's friends. The Polish sausages, the West African workers congregating on the street corner at the end of their shift, sleeping in a shared bed, the social workers arriving from other neighbourhoods, the Lebanese businessmen, the refrigerators arriving at Place Lemmens from various suburban homes and university professors such as ourselves coming here to 'experiment' from as far away as Canada... objects, people and stories criss-cross in Cureghem, producing intense movement with multiple trajectories and temporalities.

Movement is a defining characteristic of urbanity. It means changing location (physical or virtual) and entering into multiple relations with people, objects or stories. Movement occurs on multiple trajectories and temporalities, sometimes predictable and sometimes not. Whether one moves physically or not, the various movements of people and objects crossing one's physical environment shape how a person relates to space and engages in social, political, cultural and economic relations. Bourdin (2005; translation is mine) defines mobility as 'changing position in a real or virtual space. This can be social, axiological, cultural, affective or cognitive.' In other words, urbanity is about moving around, from the daily commutes of loft dwellers to Paris, to the migration of West Africans to Brussels. And it is more than just a change of one's position in physical space; urbanity is also about upward or downward movement on the socio-economic ladder (the social mobility of Lebanese businessmen). Urbanity is sometimes about moving value systems too, what Bourdin calls 'axiological mobility'. When some of Bassim's friends begin to participate in the Salafist activities of the mosque despite not having really practised religion before, they are moving axiologically. Urbanity is also about moving across cultural habits (when the 'Belgian' social worker who gave us a tour that day decides to study Islam or to drink only mint tea instead of wine), moving affective relationships (reconstructing a family in Brussels after migration, for instance), or cognitive movements (when Bassim began to study sociology, he changed his field of work). The combined effect of these multiple movements concentrated in cities is a profound challenge to modern restricted and immobile definitions of society, nations and communities.

In Sociology Beyond Society (2000), Urry contends that it is pointless to maintain the idea that societies are clearly demarcated from one another by borders. Rather than focusing on society as a collective unit of analysis, he suggests that it is much more relevant to focus on physical and virtual movements across borders, such as the movements of
people, images, money, waste, ideas and so on, a focus that has emerged from the debate about the effects of globalization on nation-states and on the geographical organization of the contemporary world (Taylor, 1994). This launched the idea of a ‘new mobility paradigm’ (Sheller and Urry, 2006; Cresswell, 2006). This ‘new paradigm’ argues that with globalization, technological progress, the breaking down of the wage system, the flexibilization of production and the intensification of individualism, social relations are constructed through various connections beyond co-presence, and that the ensuing types of mobility are organized in complex systems requiring ever more expertise to navigate.

This creates powerful inequalities between those who can move and those who cannot, as well as between those who can choose to move quickly should they wish to and those who are forced to move slowly because they are obliged to (e.g., to find work or a better life). Those who have a choice are enticed into greater movement to fulfil their chosen lifestyle, such as bettering their career, finding the right spice for their ‘ethnic’ recipe or exploring the world through tourism. This free mobility is actively encouraged through various government programmes in Europe, as well as in North America. Hypermobile young professionals gravitating around European institutions in Brussels, for instance, are greatly welcomed by city authorities (Favell, 2004).

Investment in the expansion of the Gare du midi did not concern residents of Cureghem as much as it did the younger, educated Europeans (figure 0.2).

In many ways, Cureghem is a good example of global urban politics. It is characterized by juxtaposed movements and temporalities, involving human and non-human actors articulating across multiple scales. It is traversed by conflicting affects and uneven power relations that become visible in the various policies and programmes designed for the area, as much as it is in the interpersonal relations and informal transactions that take place between inhabitants of different socio-economic and ethnic backgrounds on the streets of the neighbourhood. From a perspective of institutional analysis, interpersonal relations

Figure 0.2 European advertisement in the subway, Brussels, 2006. Julie-Anne Boudreau

and ontological changes, this book seeks to provide understanding of how we engage politically and govern our cities in the contemporary urban world, and how this contributes to informalizing the modern national state.

DEFINING THE URBAN

How would you describe suburban life? I asked.
What is a suburb? she responded.

We were sitting in a tiny windowless room in a private high school, located in a ‘suburb’ of Montreal. The use of quotation marks is necessary here because as a densely populated, multicultural and largely working-class neighbourhood marked by gang-related tags, Laval-des-Rapides
is by many accounts an ‘urban’ place (figure 0.3). This sixteen-year-old girl never thought of defining where she lived in relation to another type of settlement (a suburb in relation to a city). She lived in a place where she had friends and family and habits that she took for granted and that shape her daily activities. My question reveals how pointless it has become (or has it always been?) to perpetrate widely entrenched binary-spatial categories (city/suburb, urban/rural, local/regional and so on). It also shows that (sub)urban-ness has to be thought of as a social, economic and political set of conditions rather than a fixed geographical category.

Urban is a social condition referring to certain daily habits, ways of thinking and interacting, as Wirth (1938) suggested long ago.

Inspired by Simmel 1976 [1903], Wirth spoke of impersonal relations, anonymity and ‘cool’ behaviour, derived from the fact that, with urbanization, interpersonal relations have been transformed from ‘organic’ community-based relations to ‘individualized’, interest-based capitalist relations. To cope with the urban chaos of the capitalist transition, Simmel argued, urban dwellers have developed a blasé attitude.

The urban is also therefore an economic condition, resting on a market-based organization of society, where organized chaos is often described by Smith’s (1977 [1776]) metaphor of the invisible hand. In a world dominated by an agricultural mode of production, for example, a farmer produces cereal to be sold in the village or town market. In this instance, the farmer’s world is first and foremost rural. In a world dominated by an industrial mode of production, however, the farmer produces ever-larger volumes of cereal and enters this production into a mass-distribution system (often largely regulated by the state). Similarly, in an industrial world, factory workers conceive of their world on a national scale of mass production and consumption. In many of the so-called ‘global North countries’, postwar suburbanization created mass markets for consumer goods, resulting in a certain homogenization of national territories.

In contrast, in a globalized urban world, the increasing importance of financial markets has given more prominence to urban control centres, such as Manhattan or the City of London. Factory workers are replaced by knowledge workers, who capitalize more on niche markets and specialization than homogenization. The farmers’ profits are controlled by world markets and the strength of the national currency. If world demand for cereal increases, farmers will see the price of their production increase. However, these profits will soon disappear if the increase in cereal exports increases the value of the national currency. Even agricultural production, therefore, depends on urban economies where financial transactions are controlled.
As Lefebvre suggests (2003 [1970]), the urban does not rest on industrial capitalism (production) so much as on profit-making exchanges (of goods, services and ideas).\(^3\) Exchanges require interpersonal interactions, either face-to-face or as mediated by technology. Interactions are infused by power, through mechanisms such as domination, authority, influence and even support (an empowering relationship). In this sense, the urban is also a political condition where several authorities coexist (Magnusson, 2011). Local gangs, churches and enterprises are political authorities in the sense that they 'have the capacity to regulate and deploy violence, as well as articulate and enforce rules of conduct' (Magnusson, 2011: 22). Urban life is characterized by the fact that everyday people make it happen. They make things work and, by doing so, they generate new forms of authority. As Magnusson puts it: 'People cannot achieve their ends, be they individual or collective, unless they adjust themselves to the freedom of others, and this means that they are always involved in governing themselves and attempting to govern others' (Magnusson, 2011: 161).

The proliferation of the authoritarian characteristic of urban life rests on the fact that 'so long as there are many different human actors - as inevitably there will be - the ultimate order of things will be determined by human interaction' (Magnusson, 2011: 83). The complexity of urban life is something we understand intuitively very well, as we make things work for us on a daily basis. However, we rarely understand these skills in political terms. Rather, the principal suggestion of this book is to highlight how urban life is political life.

If we wish to retain a spatial meaning for the urban, a more accurate definition would need to be stripped of any fixed and dichotomous categories. The urban is not the city - it is more than just a type of settlement characterized by concentric centrality and density; nor is it an enclosed zone defined by clear boundaries. The urban is rather a specific mode of relation to space, time and affect, marked by mobility, intense interdependence, discontinuous spaces that carry emotional significance, and multiple temporalities.

We live in a world where the 'urban' has become a common trope just as 'global' was twenty years ago, or 'modern' before that. An urbanized world is a world where specific modes of social, economic and political relations have been adopted by ever more people living in various types of settlements (cities, suburbs and villages). This is a world where mobility has become a way of life, where what shapes people spatially is not so much where they live (their residence or their neighbourhood) but how they move around and use space (the frequency of passage in certain places) and the ensuing effects this has on their social, political and economic relations. In Cureghem, I was unable to anticipate this because it is not an area that I usually go to.

This is perhaps one essential element that differentiates the contemporary urban condition from what Wirth described for Chicago almost a hundred years ago. While he did see mobility as an important urban characteristic, the intensity, frequency, speed and spatial extension of mobility practices were very different from those that we experience today. Interpersonal interactions now take place as much through their extension and movements in and through the 'in-between' spaces of the suburbs, the periurban, or the 'desakota', as through the concentration of people in cities. McGee (1991) uses the term 'desakota' to describe the variety of rural-urban landscapes that make up 'extended metropolitan regions'. I follow McGee and many others here in using a non-Western definition of the city, as it cannot be dualistically opposed to other forms of settlements (rural or suburban); it also encompasses various landscapes. A city grows and shrinks daily, with the flow of people travelling back and forth between their 'rural' village and their 'urban' neighbourhood, or as refugees flood in and out, as 'temporary' camps become stable, as domestic workers leave their children in the village and go to work in cities. These multiple flows are often considered temporary, even when they last for decades. Temporariness is indeed a characteristic of the urban world. Villages are not only engulfed by city expansion, but are often the very motors of urbanization. This is particularly clear in the case of Hanoi, where thousands of...
craft villages are driving industrialization and urbanization processes, as we will see in chapter 4.

In the following chapters, I will try to show how the term 'urbanity' may be a more accurate definition of contemporary life than other related terms such as 'modernity', 'postmodernity' and so on. At its spatial root, 'urban' refers to specific ways of relating to space. As the suffix '-ity' indicates, it speaks of a historically situated (and therefore not universal) set of conditions. Urbanity could thus be defined as a geographically uneven set of historical conditions, which affects ways of life, modes of interaction, economic transactions, political relations and worldviews. Like modernity, it is unevenly distributed: some places are more (or differently) urban than others. Most obviously, Rio de Janeiro is more urban than a settlement in the Amazonian forest, but some places within cities are also more urban than others. Unlike modernity, urbanity is not defined in opposition to another set of historical conditions (such as 'pre-modern' rural traditions). Urbanity coexists with other social, economic and political modes of spatiotemporal relations.

Defining urbanity in this way may seem counter-intuitive because the urban has always been conceived as opposed to the rural. Inspired by the work of Lefebvre (2003 [1970]), urbanity is understood not simply as a geographic condition, a specific type of settlement, but rather as a specific type of socio-economic and political relations. Lefebvre differentiates the urban from the industrial and rural modes of production. While in a Marxist tradition he foregrounds economic relations, I wish to qualify urbanity as a historical condition marking instead a specific logic of action. It is difficult to identify a precise date marking the beginnings of this historical condition. Like Lefebvre, I locate such a shift in relation to the structural development of global capitalism. A convenient starting date could then be the end of the 1960s, which is often described with reference to 'urban crises' and flourishing novel forms of political action. While in the 1970s the welfare state was still strong in the western hemisphere, the urbanity of these political forms was less visible, or at least untheorized in political analysis. After decades of neoliberalization and challenges to the national state, this book aims to highlight this increasingly visible logic of political action: urbanity.

Living in an urban world, in short, calls for a profound rethinking of how we act politically and how we engage with our worlds. Is there a specifically urban way of acting politically? I would argue that there is; however, our social scientific tools that were developed in parallel with the rise of the national welfare state over the past seventy years have prevented us from appropriating detecting it. Each of the subsequent chapters explores a specific area of global urban politics in greater detail: social movements, diversity, the environment and security/safety. Urban politics has become global in the sense that global urbanization has had a profound effect on the political process. The term 'political process' is key. This is not a book about municipal and metropolitan institutions; it is a book about the broader political processes of cities, including governing institutions and 'informal' or street-level politics, as well as the transnational connections that affect them.

Institutionally, global urbanization affects the architecture of state power. In the 1990s, this was described as the 'hollowing out' of the state. Much research has shown how globalization has spurred the state restructuring process, with a central role being played by urban neoliberalism (Brenner and Theodore, 2002). This has affected policymaking, and the functioning of governance on all scales. Overall, it has increased the importance of cities as 'command centres' of the new economy (Sassen, 1991), as political actors in the inter-governmental state scalar arrangements (LeGallè, 2010) and as agenda setters because 'urban' issues are pushed to the forefront of national political agendas (public safety, the management of diversity, vulnerability to extreme climate events, etc.).
Interpersonally, global urbanization processes have affected the logic of collective action. Urban lifestyles—and most specifically people's relationships with mobility, temporality, and public sensual and emotional life—impacts how individuals engage politically. While social movement and partisan politics remain very important, this book highlights other active forms of political engagement. These modalities of political action are less predictable and visible. They are not based primarily on antagonism and claim-making. Political decision-making has long been conceived of as a cost–benefit analysis of expected consequences. However, action is often less strategic, spurred by forces of impulsivity rather than planning. Take the example of demonstrators in the streets of Athens in December 2008. The trigger for the first marches was rage against police abuse. As the protestors' actions unfolded, however, it became clear that unpredictability was the primary source of inspiration. The people who took to the streets did not know where this would lead; nor did they have a clear concept of who the enemy was (the state, mostly, but also other forms of diffuse authority). This logic of urban action builds on the interdependency inherent to the urban world, on the necessity of taking risks, on experimenting and learning through mobility.

Ontologically, global urbanization processes affect worldviews and the formation of political subjectivities. The global urban world affects how people situate themselves in the world, how they construct identities and, therefore, the kinds of political claims they make. Throughout this book, we travel with gang members, urban villagers, street vendors, racialized youths and domestic workers, as well as many others, in and through the various spaces and temporalities they inhabit to illustrate how people become politically engaged.

Each of the following thematic chapters concludes by highlighting how the political process is unfolding institutionally, interpersonally and ontologically.

DEFINING THE CONTOURS OF AN ALTERNATIVE FIELD OF URBAN POLITICAL STUDIES

This book proposes that transformations in conceptions of space, time and rationality brought about by urbanization profoundly impact the very definition of the political process. Barnett (2014) summarized these transformations into three points: (1) urbanization generates particular objects of contention, such as struggles over diversity, which we will expand upon in chapter 3; (2) urbanization provides a distinct medium for political action because cities are intense sites for public encounters; and (3) urban infrastructure and spaces have agentive qualities, and thus political action in urban settings unfolds with a close relationship between human and non-human actors. Although this is a useful starting point, it nevertheless remains attached to interpersonal and institutional levels of analysis. In other words, it explains how interpersonal social relations in urban settings affect the kinds of issues that are politicized (the objects of contention), and how institutions supporting the political process have changed with urbanization (the medium or channels for making claims, ruling and governing). However, the argument of this book is that living in a world of cities makes it necessary to rethink the political process altogether—institutionally, interpersonally and ontologically—because the very basic understanding of how politics unfolds has been challenged by new conceptions of space, time and rationality, which differ from those prominent in a world of nation-states.

Developing an alternative field of urban political studies entails highlighting processes different from those of the state-centred model of political action. The state is understood here as formal institutions of governance at all levels (local, state, national). In this model, conflict and contention is tolerated as long as they sustain the state. The state, as protector of this 'social contract' or national sovereignty,
is responsible for managing and channelling these conflicts through various mechanisms (elections, public consultations, the protection of the freedom of expression and association, management of risks and social and civil protection). This state-centred logic of action relies on a conception of space, time and rationality very different from what I illustrate in this book. In this state-centred model, political action unfolds in a clearly defined territory. It is within this container that the political process unfolds because it is within this territory that the state acts with sovereignty. The political process is understood on a linear temporality: time is seen as directional and with constant velocity. It works through strategic thinking, which involves acting with specific objectives, planning and evaluating the consequences. It rests on the idea of a historical march towards progress represented on a timeline (past, present and future). The stability of the space of action and of linear time facilitates pretension to scientific rationality as the motor of legitimate action. We calculate, plan and act because we think we can master the parameters of the issue at stake (figure 0.4).

This state-centred logic of action tends to favour organized action. Social and political movements appear thanks to the mobilizing action of various political entrepreneurs and civil-society organizers. We are therefore faced with a modern concept of the actor, understood as a coherent, sovereign, rational individual or group. These willful actors behave strategically. Their actions are recognizable and accountable — we know who acts and why. This is what we have called elsewhere a heroic conception of action (Boudreau and de Alba, 2011).

In contrast, an urban logic of political action implies a different conception of space, time and rationality. Action unfolds in networked, fluid and mobile spaces that are not fixed by clear borders. The temporality of action is fragmented, composed of multiple situations and dominated by the ‘here and now’ more than the future, by tactic more than strategic thought. Multiple paces and circular (cyclical) temporalities clash with direction trajectories and stable duration. Rather than favouring rationally planned action, the political process is marked more by creativity, unpredictability, sensorial stimulation, intuition, emotion and loss of control.

This leads to a more diffuse form of social movement, where leadership is absent (or at the very least invisible or negated). The actor is not conceived as an identifiable individual or group. Rather, action unfolds in specific time and place through a network of relations. We recognize political action only if we decentre the gaze from leaders and analyse specific situations instead (how actions unfold in time and space). The motor of this process is not so much antagonism and
contention as impulsion. By impulsion I mean the intensification of multiple encounters and experiments that are characteristic of urban ways of life. This is equal to a post-heroic conception of action. In this model, there are no heroes, only heroic moments (figure 0.5).

We will explore the post-heroic conception of agency in greater detail in chapter 2 through a discussion of global urban social movements. In chapter 3, through a discussion of global diversity politics, I will come back to impulsion as a motor of political action. In chapters 4 and 5, through examples of global environmental politics and global security politics, we will develop the idea of non-linear temporality and multiple affective registers in political action.
The first chapter is the longest as it seeks to properly define what I mean by global urban politics. Global urbanization does not necessarily mean that most of the world’s population lives in dense cities with a clear centre and a beautiful skyline; it does mean, however, that urban lifestyles, life philosophies and cultural habits are present across the world. This is what I mean by living in an urban world. I alternate the use of ‘world’ and ‘global’ urbanization, and ‘urban’ or ‘global’ world, to refer to the contemporary period characterized by a strong dissemination of urban social, spatial, economic and political relations. This first chapter begins with a critical review of the Anglo-American field of urban politics and its neo-Marxist and postcolonial critiques. The core of the chapter discusses how global urbanization imposes the need to open the field of urban politics and articulate its state-centred analysis to make sense of the multiple movements, temporalities and rationalities behind urban conflicts. The chapter ends with a reflection on the adjective ‘global’ used in the title of this book, and on ‘informalization’ in the subtitle. What does it mean to emphasize connections, indeterminacy and interdependency when studying urban politics?

While the following four chapters are thematic, they also serve to illustrate in greater detail what I mean by changing conceptions of space (chapter 2), time (chapter 4) and rationality (chapter 5). In chapter 2, we travel to Mexico City, Montreal, Barcelona, Los Angeles and Tunis to discuss how people constitute themselves as political subjects and to expand upon the forms of political action that are currently very visible in cities around the world. The chapter begins by discussing the idea of ‘situations of action’, which directs our analytical attention to the process of action more than ‘heroic’ actors. Through a critical review of urban social-movement literature, I emphasize the need for heuristic tools that enable us to understand unarticulated and unplanned political actions. The chapter suggests that political engagement occurs on multiple levels and is intimately linked to everyday routines. This individualization of political engagement is sustained by the individualization of mobility practices characteristic of the urban world. To illustrate this, the chapter discusses three political forms (youthfulness, open-systems and anti-power), using the examples of student movements in Mexico City, the Indignado encampments in Barcelona and the Arab Spring revolution in Tunis.

Chapter 3 focuses on global diversity politics. The chapter begins with a critical review of the literature on urban diversity management and racial segregation, arguing, following Isin (2002), that people do not ‘arrive’ in cities with essentialist differences, but rather that differences are constituted by urban encounters. Global urban politics, therefore, is an invitation to explore how differences are generated, not merely accommodated or managed. Using the beautiful prose of two novelists, the chapter illustrates how an undocumented immigrant, his neighbours and his false identity card produce specific types of citizens. We see the manner in which people’s intimate feelings about where they live and how things ‘should be’ are translated into public problems of undocumented immigration. Using a second example from Atta’s (2010) novel on Lagos in the 1980s, the chapter continues with a discussion of intersectional (class, gender and ethnicity) power plays and their global connections. This sets the stage for a theoretical reflection on the meaning of citizenship and democratic theories in an urban world.

In chapter 4, we explore changing conceptions of time through a discussion of global environmental politics. Here, we delve into everyday life in urbanized villages on the periphery of Hanoi to illustrate how a linear discourse on environmental degradation and modern urban planning clashes with circular and metabolic conceptions of time and environmental threats to villagers suffering from the confiscation of their land. The chapter analyses how multiple temporalities intersect in the rice fields that are now converted into new urban settings. The linear temporality of the planning project is contested by the multiple speeds of capitalist dispossession and speculation, but
also by the overwhelming presentism of uncertain futures and livelihood strategies. Moving from this discussion of how villagers creatively use these contradicting temporalities to the high-level policy corridors of climate change regulation, the chapter suggests how global linear environmental discourse is met with very local adaptation measures. This is a politics of doing more than planning.

Chapter 5 focuses on global urban security politics. It begins, unsurprisingly, with the fall of the Twin Towers in New York City in 2001. Building on Baudrillard’s argument that terrorism appears when a system has become totalizing and perfect, the chapter briefly reviews the flourishing, mostly US-based literature on the security state, urbicides and fear of the city. We then turn to four ‘uncanny’ figures developing political contestation through the mobilization of visceral registers of action: the home-grown terrorist, the barrio bandit, the rioter and the barebacker. The chapter discusses the state’s reaction to these undefined movements, particularly the depoliticizing effects of actuarial risk-management techniques through youth prevention programmes and aggressive public health campaigns. At the same time, we see how barebackers, youths and drug users emphasize their racialized, sexualized and pathologized bodies to fight back. From this, it becomes clear that we need to develop conceptual devices that do not restrict the political process to rational deliberations.

We then return to these theoretical propositions and articulate them in the conclusion. Until then, let us embark on a strange trip through unexpected urban political worlds.

In Babel, González Infártt (2006) vividly illustrates global urban politics. The movie unfolds in three distinct locations: a desert village in Morocco, the Mexican–American border of Tijuana-San Diego and a Japanese town. The fates of a Moroccan farmer and his family, an American couple with marital problems on vacation in Morocco, their Mexican nanny in San Diego, and a depressive adolescent girl in Japan whose father gave a gun to the Moroccan farmer, are intimately entangled, crossing the frontiers of intimacy and indifference, proximity and distance, solidarity and domination. These interpersonal encounters unfold against the international geopolitical backdrop of the US war on terrorism.

‘Urban politics?’ you might ask, as a large part of the movie takes place in the deserts of Morocco and the US/Mexican border. Though the movie unfolds in a landscape that is rarely associated with urbanity, this book argues that urbanity is not about a specific settlement, namely the city, but rather about a specific worldview and its ensuing logic of action and interaction. The Moroccan farmer is influenced by the increasingly hegemonic urban worldview described in the introduction to this book. This is a worldview marked by specific relations to time, space and affect. His life as a goat herder is influenced by the unfolding war on terrorism, by increasing misunderstandings between his religion and that of the ‘West’. Glimpses of television news and daily conversations with his fellow villagers make this war, planned from the
circular and experiential ideas about progress and social change, and affective rationalities, make it clearer than ever that the modern state is not our only hope. State informalization forces us to think about how we live together in open-ended and always temporary ways. Perhaps, following the early work of urban regime theory, it may be more fruitful to think in terms of regimes of stabilization. How and why can specific arrangements be reached in certain places and at certain moments? What conditions favour the production of arrangements based on trust and justice, rather than violence and domination? Assembling ideas, voices and facts, this book is an attempt to highlight elements of responses as they are emerging in various cities, languages and dreams.

Notes

Introduction
1 All translations are mine: 'A un beau moment, l'intégration/cohabitation, je m'excuse si je caricature, mais c'était couscous-merguez, petits gâteaux marocains et thé à la menthe. Et à un moment, on dit: bon, ça suffit, tout le monde sait ce qu'est un couscous et puis, il y en a marre, on veut un verre de vin aussi.'
2 All names have been changed.
3 Lefebvre's evolutionary perspective (from rural, to industrial, and then urban) has been criticized by Castells (1972) and Harvey (1973). This is not the place to delve into this complex debate (please refer to the excellent critique by Goonewardena, 2004). Another thesis was developed by Jane Jacobs, reused by Soja (Jacobs, 1969, 1984; Soja, 2000; see also Taylor, 2012). Here the periodicity of industrialization and urbanization is ignored. At the core of the analysis is the claim that processes of socio-spatial agglomeration in cities are the basis of all modes of economic organization.
4 Admittedly a clumsy word in English, 'urbanity' has a long tradition in Latin languages such as French. Urbanité refers to the knowledge of urban cultural codes. Originally, such codes were exclusive, associated with refinement, politeness and cosmopolitanism. Bourdieu (1979) attributes this 'capital' to specific social classes. However, the argument here is that such codes have evolved beyond refinement and cosmopolitanism. They have also been 'democratized' in the sense that they have been appropriated by the majority of people (and, as argued later in this book, perhaps more so by the marginalized and excluded than by the bourgeoisie).

Chapter 1 Where are the Global Urban Politics?
1 'On avance, on avance, on recule pas!'
2 '[D]es moments de rupture; c’est des moments où les choses se passent plus comme avant, on brise le réel. Les choses ne se passent plus de façon prévue et formatée tsé. C’est imprévisible.'