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## Inequalities and the City Gender, Ethnicity, and Class

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### INTRODUCTION

The question of urban inequalities relates to two interconnected processes of change. These involve: (i) the increase and transformation of inequalities on global and local scales and (ii) the urbanisation at a time when the majority of the world's population lives in cities and the growth of gigantic conurbations in both the Global North and South. Today, the traditional historical divide between urban and rural contexts is not so significant – also the case in the lesser developed countries and regions – with the social tensions produced by the new forms of inequalities being highly concentrated in the cities.

Economic inequalities have been increasing, particularly in industrially advanced countries (Milanovic, 2016; OECD, 2015; Piketty, 2013), even if extreme poverty has decreased on a global scale, particularly in the newly developing countries of the Global South, due to the growth in industrialisation and urbanisation. As will be seen in this chapter, the decline of rural poverty in the Global South has been counterbalanced by the rise of social fragmentation and new forms of social exclusion and poverty in both the Global South and the Global North (Sassen, 2014).

In this chapter, we focus on the transformations of the urban systems of inequalities produced by modernisation, industrialisation, and urbanisation in different urban contexts of the Global North and South. An urban system of inequalities is here understood as the different mix and level of gender, ethnicity, class, and demographic inequalities that characterise cities in different historical and development contexts.

In the next section, we introduce the urban inequalities resulting from early industrialisation in the industrially developing countries with the growth of the new urban working class and the development of strong gender and ethnic divisions and

discriminations in the new urban-industrial contexts. This is followed by a short discussion of the disruption of rural communities in the colonial and dependent countries of the Global South generating, at the same time, unprecedented forms of rural poverty and the growth of cities mainly inhabited by an urban poor lacking any form of social protection. Section three deals with the changing inequality systems that characterise today's cities in industrially advanced countries, particularly focusing on European cities. The fourth section focuses on the dynamic of changing inequalities in the cities of the Global South, and the final section looks at the unsustainability of the present level of urban inequality and its resistance and resilience. Finally, we consider the impact of social movements and forms of social innovation in dealing with the new difficulties and divisions generated by urban social inequalities.

The interest in urban social inequalities and social exclusion in cities has produced a large number of contributions on a wide range of issues.<sup>1</sup> Urban scholars have been debating the impact of social inequalities in cities and the spreading of new forms of poverty and social exclusion for a long time. More recently, the accelerated socioeconomic transformations connected to globalisation, financialisation, and the great recession, as well as the long-term wave of neoliberal policies started in the 1980s, have increased the interest in urban social inequalities, with particular attention to the new forms of poverty and spatial segregation in cities.

In the cities of the old industrialised countries, financialisation, globalisation, and the strong wave of neoliberalism are transforming the previous Fordist systems of urban divisions and inequalities. The decline of the manufacturing working class is accompanied by an increasing social fragmentation as well as the spread of both new forms of segregation and exclusion and new forms of social reaction to the commodification trends triggered by contemporary capitalism. Class, ethnic, and gender divisions have turned into a large, heterogeneous, and unstable area of social suffering, often segregating inhabitants in the city outskirts – *banlieue* and ghettos – where the difficulties of everyday life have been increased by social exclusion and discrimination. Minorities, new migrants, and less educated young people are the victims of a selective urban labour market, which gives rise to unemployment and an increasing number of working poor. At the same time, elderly people with health and mobility problems, and often with low pensions and suffering from isolation and solitude, have become a growing element of the urban population of advanced industrial countries. As will be seen later in the chapter, in these contexts new urban inequalities are not only a matter of insufficient income and economic poverty but they also mean a shortfall in social protection and representation. Moreover, gender

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<sup>1</sup> Social inequalities and social exclusion in cities have been at the core of urban studies since the first empirical research of the early twentieth century (Booth, 1902; Park, 1928; Rowntree, 1901). As we will see in the next sections, spatial inequalities were analysed in the light of capitalistic development (Castells, 1972; Harvey, 1973), commodification processes in the cities of developing countries (Acemoglu et al., 2001; Arrighi, 1994), the polarization between high-income and low-income groups (Sassen, 1991), the strategies to cope with urban life (Roberts, 1994), and the division of labour and the basic cultures of ethnic neighbourhoods (Wacquant and Wilson, 1993; Wilson, 1987).

inequalities are persistent, even if contrasted by women movements in many countries, and new strong ethnic tensions are growing, together with the increasing waves of immigrants and asylum seekers from less developed countries.

The rise of global inequalities has also hit the cities of the Global South, however, with different trajectories. In the countries where the manufacturing sector is growing rapidly (China, India, Brazil), a new working class with very limited access to forms of social protection has become concentrated in enormous megalopolises where housing, social services, and food are much more expensive in relation to the low and uncertain incomes of the workers and their families. This new working class has become removed from rural poverty, but, at the same time, it has lost the traditional protection of their village or tribal organisations. The system of inequalities is changing rapidly involving a new urban population of billions of people. The new working class of the emerging economies not only has problems of income and job security, but also suffers a dramatic lack of social protection and welfare. Gender and ethnic/minority discrimination, already present in rural communities, has been accentuated in the industrially developing cities where advanced technologies, new communication devices, and consumerism have led to great cultural contradictions.

In countries where industrial growth has been limited (a large part of Africa and parts of Central and South America), urbanisation has also often been equally rapid. However, the underlying causes are due to rural conflicts, wars, and economic crises. The new urban population, concentrated in gigantic sprawling cities, lacking any kind of planning and made up of shantytowns without any basic infrastructures, is exposed to extreme forms of poverty without any hope of protection and representation. In this case, urban inequality appears particularly dramatic and pushes part of the population to migrate to more industrialised countries. The migration waves (which mainly originate from cities) raise serious problems and contribute to increasing the inequalities in both the out-migration cities and new settling ones. Out-migration is quite selective and usually involves young workers with some degree of education and professional skills. Their departure contributes to exacerbating the inequalities in the regions of origin.<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, as we shall see later on in this chapter, in the more developed cities the migration flow provokes a feeling of insecurity and competition in the native population that may turn into discrimination, expulsion, and repression, thus fomenting inequalities.

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<sup>2</sup> In different terms the selection process of leaving behind the most disadvantaged is similar to the one noticed by Wilson (1987) in the American ghetto. In his book, *The Truly Disadvantaged: The Inner City, the Underclass and Public Policy* (1987), Wilson made an outstanding contribution to the aforementioned processes. As highlighted by Wilson (1991: 641) 'Especially since 1970, inner-city neighborhoods have experienced an outmigration of working- and middle-class families previously confined to them by the restrictive covenants of higher-status city neighborhoods and suburbs. Combined with the increase in the number of poor caused by rising joblessness, this outmigration has sharply concentrated the poverty in inner-city neighborhoods ... Outmigration has decreased the contact between groups of different class and racial backgrounds and thereby concentrated the adverse effects of living in impoverished neighborhoods'.

## ENGINES OF URBAN INEQUALITY

In the nineteenth century, the widespread development of capitalism was accompanied in many European countries, especially in England, by a rapid process of urbanisation and industrialisation and the weakening of the traditional social ties grounded on local communities and family. In England, because of the Industrial Revolution and the dramatic changes occurring in social protection after the adoption of the New Poor Laws of 1834, masses of migrants and rural workers moved from the countryside to small towns that then grew into large industrial cities, such as Manchester.

In *The Condition of the Working Class in England*, Engels (1892) offered a detailed analysis of the first waves of urbanisation in Manchester and the resulting economic and social changes triggered by the rapid growth of English industrial cities, with the creation of slums and the spatial segregation imposed by the new division of labour. Similar to Engels, other nineteenth-century thinkers and social reformers, such as Alexis de Tocqueville and Charles Booth, focused on the social consequences of the rapid urbanisation and industrialisation with the rise of capitalism. Tocqueville's *Memoir on Pauperism* contextualised the new forms of poverty and social exclusion produced by industrialisation and urbanisation and their consequences on social and political stability in the capitalistic societies (Goldberg, 2001). Social reformers and scholars, such as Booth and Rowntree, documented the spatial segregation of nineteenth-century London and York, with their dramatic concentration of poverty, but also the beginning of the first networks of mutual aid and collective action concerning labour and housing conditions (Morlicchio, 2018).

The first empirical studies on urban poverty, such as in Rowntree's book, *Poverty: A Study of Town Life* (1901), thoroughly documented the massive concentration of poverty in urban space, by exploring the demographics and features of social exclusion. Where a rapid industrial growth and division of labour occurred, spatial segregation spread. The new urbanised working class remained in poverty for most of their lives, with a short respite only when their teenage children began working and remained at home. The urban poor were confined to unhealthy housing and living conditions where life expectancy was lower than in the countryside.

The rise of urban inequalities, involving marked class divisions, was evident in England during industrialisation and proletarianization that took place in the nineteenth century. The same process occurred later in most of the other European cities, where part of the new working class maintained some connections with the family that had remained in the countryside, thus being able to supplement their wages with social support from rural relatives (Tilly and Scott, 1978). The living conditions of the new urban working class in European cities were also difficult and unstable. The new industrial jobs were insecure and poorly paid, and, until the end of the century, workers had no social rights nor welfare protection.

In the second half of the nineteenth century, large numbers of workers migrated to American cities, particularly in what is now known as the rust belt of the north-eastern United States where industrial growth was concentrated (mainly Pennsylvania, Ohio, Indiana, and Michigan). It is in this context that ethnic and class discrimination and forms of spatial segregation originated and developed. Immigrant workers were extremely vulnerable, with great difficulties in finding housing

and exposed to widespread discrimination and harassment. They were able to find a kind of rough protection living in their original national communities, thus giving rise to forms of spatial concentration and segregation. In American cities, class and ethnic/race inequalities have been strictly interconnected from the very beginning of the industrialisation process.

Later, during the Fordist period, the different types of socio-spatial segregation developed with their own social bonds, cultural identity, and division of labour, from ethnic neighbourhoods to the 'black communal ghettos' of mid-twentieth-century American cities (Marcuse, 2001). As many scholars pointed out (Marcuse, 2001; Wacquant, 2008), this 'city within the city' reflected the high concentration of specific segregated social groups in urban space enforced and legitimised by the state. In Europe, Wacquant's (1996) comparative analysis on French *banlieue* and US ghettos showed how scale, structure, and welfare institutions played a pivotal role in shaping the socio-spatial marginalisation. While the French working-class *banlieues* were characterised by ethnic heterogeneity and regular contact with more central neighbourhoods, the US ghettos were strictly segregated, with a marked ethnic homogeneity and racial stigma. While in the case of the French *banlieues* the segregation was only territorial, the US ghettos assumed a residential, racial, and symbolic segregation, without any relations with the adjacent white neighbourhoods (Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991; Sassen, 2006)

As anticipated, it is also in the industrially developing cities of the West that the modern gender division of work originated and developed. On the one hand, urbanisation dismantled the protection of rural communities, however, maintaining the patriarchal ideology. On the other hand, urbanised women remained without basic support from community or kinship and therefore became extremely vulnerable. In the early phases of industrialisation, women represented a significant part of the workforce, particularly in the textile sector. Notwithstanding, they were vulnerable due to lower wages than men, to work instability, and to the lack of social support during pregnancy and child rearing. With the advent of the second industrial revolution, Fordism and the Keynesian compromise changed the division and balance of power between productive and reproductive functions (Mingione, 1991; Morris, 1996; Orlof, 1993). This created a strong division of tasks between, on one side, the organised male working class (the male breadwinner) and, on the other, the assignment of domestic and care work to women, seen as the main institution regulating private life (Lewis, 1997). As pointed out by Korpi (2000), during the Fordist period, power divisions in the family were related to the differences in labour market participation. While men benefited from a full institutional social protection due to their stable working conditions, women were only entitled to protection in their role as a wife, widow, or mother (Lewis, 1997). The urban context favoured this gender division of roles as the need for home care and domestic work grew in order to support higher productivity workers. Women were forced into long hours of domestic and care work without any income or into working double shifts of lowly paid or unpaid work (Hochschild and Machung, 1989; Lewis, 1992; Pfau-Effinger and Geissler, 2005; Esping-Andersen, 1999, 2009).

The forms of poverty and spatial segregation that developed in the cities of the industrially advanced countries are quite different from the system of inequalities resulting from the commodification process in the cities of the developing and colonised

countries. The early colonial exploitation of the Global South was based on a massive appropriation of land and labour in rural areas – extensive/intensive agriculture – without any attempt to establish modern institutions, bureaucratic authorities, or rules aimed at promoting economic development and a modern division of labour (Acemoglu et al., 2001; Arrighi, 1994).

The urbanisation and repressive disruption of rural communities led to the expansion of unplanned urban centres, with the accompanying endemic poverty and social degradation. The disappearance of the indigenous communities and villages resulting from the massive urban migration flows created new forms of urban segregation and social exclusion. Le Galès (2017) describes the colonial city as a system of political control and economic exploitation. Even though colonial elite and Western oligarchies modernised infrastructures and transportation, the new cities remained isolated, with a strong division between the elite and the masses segregated in slums, barrios, and ghettos. In a scenario of rising inequalities and economic exploitation, the legacy of colonialism led to the creation of huge socioeconomic inequalities, spatial segregation, illegal settlements, high pollution, and a lack of services and governmental capacity to implement public policies.

The combination of steadfast tribal divisions, unregulated economy, violence, and the new division of labour imposed by Western governments and multinational companies, continued into the postcolonial phase with the unequal exchange and the necessity to finance the fast growth of welfare capitalism in the West. However, as will be seen later, the population of the Global South mainly remained concentrated in the countryside where poverty levels became chronic and famines recurrent. Later, the processes of urbanisation and urban growth accelerated at an unprecedented pace and urban poverty and inequalities have now become prominent social questions in every continent of the Global South. The gender division became exacerbated by a mix of persistently strong patriarchy and enormous difficulties for women to organise life in urban slums. On the ethnic ground, urbanisation and the oppressive dominance of commercial and financial interests made ethnic and tribal rivalries increasingly strong leading to deadly conflicts and violent confrontations.

### INEQUALITIES IN THE CONTEMPORARY CITIES OF THE GLOBAL NORTH

As we have seen in the previous section, the cities of the Global North have been at the centre of the industrial transformation creating the modern inequality system through two different phases. In the first phase, during the take-off of capitalist industrialisation, the new urbanised working class was the victim of widespread urban poverty, particularly in England, but also in the other industrially developing countries. In the second phase, which reached its peak in Europe after World War II, the development of welfare capitalism based on the so-called Keynesian compromise, led to a massive expansion in urban social policies, social security, education, health services, and social housing (Flora and Heidenheimer, 1981). Through redistributive policies, this extraordinary model was able to reduce or at least to keep under control the major economic and spatial inequalities in Global North cities. In the welfare capitalist countries, the balance has been financed by high growth rates and

unequal global exchanges (Mingione, 2018) so that welfare policies have been able to alleviate the impact of the inequalities (legal protection of minorities, progressive taxation, struggle against poverty, increasing social spending, etc.). Democratic citizenship and social citizenship were able to justify the inequalities produced by the market economy and to redistribute part of the increasing wealth, without affecting capitalistic accumulation.

The social effects of the welfare capitalism economic model were particularly evident in the cities, with huge investments being made in urban development and in favour of the growing urban population. Every country in the Western world had to face the challenge of the massive flows of people shifting from rural areas to the cities in providing housing and public services such as education, transport, and health. However, forms of spatial segregation and urban poverty persisted, such as the ethnic neighbourhoods or the ‘black communal ghettos’ of the mid-twentieth-century American cities (Marcuse, 2001). The class, gender, and ethnic inequalities of Global North cities remained considerable and gave rise to various conflicts on both sides of the Atlantic – mainly on racial issues in the United States and on political cleavages in Europe. However, the increase in welfare investments in cities contributed to limiting the impact of commodification in terms of shortfalls in social protection in the individualised and consumer-oriented contexts of Fordist cities.

With the end of the ‘golden age’ and the passage to the ‘fragmented’ era of Western capitalism (Mingione, 1991; Andreotti et al., 2018), the uncertain compromise between market economy, welfare protection, and democracy discussed by Marshall (1972) became increasingly unable to maintain a balance (see also Streeck, 2016; Mingione, 2018). Already in the 1970s, Marshall (1972), in a very important article, explained that the constitutive logics of capitalism, democracy, and welfare – the basic elements of welfare capitalism – are different and not compatible with one another. In fact, the logic of the market produces strong and cumulative economic inequalities that obstruct both the working of democratic citizenship (because the unequal distribution of resources means unequal distribution of power, representation, and opportunities) and the protective capacity of welfare. On the other hand, Marshall argues that the egotistic character of representative democracy often hinders the protective capacity of welfare as the majority of the population is not in favour of protecting groups of citizens considered to be undeserving.

During the golden age of welfare capitalism (Esping-Andersen, 1990), Marshall argues that democracy and welfare had enough resources to legitimise inequalities through the expansion of democratic participation and the growth of social investments, the struggle against poverty, the expansion of education, health, transports and social housing (particularly concentrated in the growing cities). Class, gender, and ethnic divisions remained pronounced but made less unacceptable by the political perspectives of change.<sup>3</sup> However, this equilibrium was unstable, as it did

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<sup>3</sup> Think of the important achievements that women and ethnic movements realized everywhere in Western industrialised countries during this period. The real perspectives of change contributed to produce the legitimation of inequalities.

not take into consideration that, above a certain level, inequality could no longer be legitimised.<sup>4</sup> As will be seen, the economic crisis in the 1970s, de-industrialisation, globalisation, and financialisation made welfare capitalism no longer a sustainable option, beginning in the large cities where minorities, migrants, long-term unemployed, and precarious low-income workers were concentrated in more upmarket urban areas.

In the following decades, the disappearance of the foundations of the Keynesian compromise and the increasing misalignment of market economy, democracy, and welfare confirmed the correctness of Marshall's vision of the importance of the welfare capitalist failure regarding inequalities. The rate of economic growth in industrialised countries dropped and the new economic dynamism showed a decreasing capacity to compensate the impact of commodification with investments in welfare support. On the contrary, redistributive policies began to be substituted with neoliberal policies, which explicitly denied the capacity and legitimisation of the state to steer market forces. Therefore, the support for universalistic public policies decreased, accompanied by a public discourse being more and more centred on xenophobic, anti-minority, and divisive arguments.

Since the 1980s, financialisation and the neoliberal policies fuelled the rise of economic inequalities in Western countries (OECD, 2011, 2015), particularly in cities and metropolitan areas. As mentioned, this change reflected a regime shift from the post-war order to a new fragmented phase (Mingione, 1991) marked by the dominance of finance and the limitation of state intervention in the economy and in social policies. Against this backdrop, 'trickle-down economics' claimed that tax cuts and benefits for the high-income earners were a driver for economic growth favouring new jobs and advantages for low-income groups. After more than 30 years, it is today clear that trickle-down economics was a hoax (Atkinson, 2015; Piketty, 2013) and that it was a fundamental tool for the individualisation of social dynamics, favouring the spread of competition in all social contexts. If in the previous phase, the Keynesian compromise was legitimised to protect workers and their families from market fluctuations, welfare has now become an 'individual affair' and the 'losers' in the competition are the first culprits for their failure. Today the state is legitimised to cut the protection for social groups considered undeserving (migrants, ethnic minorities, ex inmates, squatters, and the like).

As stated by Colin Crouch (2009), the fall of the Keynesian compromise has been accompanied by rising inequalities and cuts to social expenditure, counterbalanced by a fast-growing financial industry that fuelled internal demand and consumption, especially for low-income groups. Many studies have emphasised this connection, showing how easy credit to families and private debt has contributed to both reducing the demand for public social spending and stimulating aggregate demand

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<sup>4</sup> As pointed out by Marshall (1972: 30): 'This malfunctioning of the system of legitimate inequality is probably the most deeply-rooted threat to the viability of the hybrid or hyphenated social structure ... The trouble is that no way has been found of equating a man's value in the market (capitalist value), his value as a citizen (democratic value) and his value for himself (welfare value) ... The failure to solve economic inequality is evidence of the weakness of contemporary democracy'.



without drawing heavily on public debt (Crouch, 2009, 2011; Harvey, 2014; Hay, 2011). Nevertheless, when the real estate bubble burst in 2008, even private debt used as a mean of social protection entered into crisis, resulting in a new wave of fiscal restraint and privatisation (Mertens, 2017). Some authors (Dowling, 2017; Harvey, 2014; Mertens, 2017; Streeck, 2017) interpreted these trends as a continuation of the neoliberal agenda towards an emerging social-investment market based on private investors replacing public authorities through the financial markets. As observed by Oberti and Prêteceille (2018), all these processes are now resulting in new waves of privatisation of many public assets – transport, utilities, and land – as was also the case for the remedies imposed on developing countries by the IMF and the World Bank in the past. These policies have reduced both the coverage and the expenditure for welfare protection, handing over greater responsibilities to individuals and families to take care of their own needs, resulting in an increasing unpredictability in a citizen's life trajectory. Moreover, they contributed to increasing the flow of social resources to the very rich and to the most powerful part of the state bureaucracy and political elite (Franzini and Pianta, 2016; Piketty, 2013; Stiglitz, 2012).

The city is the social arena where social heterogeneity and fragmentation magnify the impact of social inequalities (Smets, 2013; Watt and Smets, 2017), mirroring what Robert Castels (1995) called *désaffiliation*, i.e. the process of marginalisation occurring at the same time as the labour market, social ties, and welfare protection. It is in the cities, also, that new conflicts and tensions arise and threaten the stability of the economic model of growth based on a new global working class producing goods and services for a small privileged class (Sassen, 2014). The contrast between the new largely uninhabited skyscrapers, the squalid relict suburb quarters of the poor – often under the threat of being redeveloped or gentrified, thus pushing their population towards outer-lying zones – and an increasing mass of homeless people compose the new frontier of urban inequalities (Cohen and Watt, 2017; Watt and Smets, 2017).

The new fragmented forms of urban inequalities become especially clear when we observe the dynamics of the contemporary city, where the processes of segmentation and segregation of different groups of citizens are complicating the social geography of cities. On the one hand, there is a small class of extremely rich people, benefiting from the financialisation and globalisation of the economy, who earn incredibly high incomes, who occupy the most prestigious areas of the city, where other citizens are not welcome and discouraged to enter. The glamorous cities of the super-rich and of mega events pumped up by Arab oil investors and the international property speculation are a central part of this new picture. According to Mayer (2018a), the pursuit of such growth-chasing projects has led to exploding property prices. The worldwide spread of gated communities (Blakely and Snyder, 1997) is one of the most visible expressions of this increase in inequality and (self) segregation. On the other hand, the rest of the population is fragmented into more or less disadvantaged subgroups with decreasing access to urban resources (Mayer, 2018a). In many countries, the de-standardisation of the labour market, for instance, is creating a new class of workers in the urban economy with unstable low incomes, no or very limited access to welfare benefits beyond the very basic ones, and no real chances to transit to protected jobs. Often these workers belong to disadvantaged groups, such as immigrants or

discriminated minorities, but in many other cases, they are young people coming from low-, middle-, or working-class backgrounds unable to enter the core sectors of the labour market. Inequality in cities, indeed, is increasing the costs for families to raise their children and is exacerbating competition and conflict in urban life, especially regarding education.

With the dramatic increase in social vulnerability and the multiple sources of fragmentation that affected the labour market, the welfare system, and the family, inequalities spread across generations and working groups, including the traditional segment of the stable workforce. The nuclear family, still the main institution regulating social life, has become less able to offer protection to its members, due to longer life expectancy, the drop in the number of marriages and births and the increase in divorces, resulting in rebuilt families and people living alone. Families and communities are becoming increasingly varied and, often, unstable. Moreover, the increasing number of women entering the workforce has generated tensions in family relations and responsibilities. Conciliation between paid employment and family-oriented activities has become difficult and led to different gender, ethnic, and cultural tensions. Gender inequalities have decreased but both average income and working opportunities for women remain lower than for men. This happens in cities where the cost of living is high and where single mothers and isolated migrant women face great and increasing difficulties to cope with their needs.

Since the mid-1970s, American disadvantaged urban areas have attracted new migrant flows, with the emergence of the so-called hyperghetto as Wacquant and Wilson (1993) described the new marginal urban areas in the United States characterised by both race segregation and a lack of any cultural identity (Wacquant and Wilson, 1993; Wilson, 1987). In this context, while the ghetto functioned as reservoir of a cheap labour force for the city's factories, the hyperghetto institutionalised a system of racial segregation based on social disintegration, violence, and social control. Parallel to the decline in manufacturing jobs and the new massive waves of migration arriving from Latin America and Asia, the collapse of the communal ghetto into the hyperghetto intensified residential segregation and social control. The decline in public schools and welfare state institutions, the rise of new forms of repression and an increase in the numbers of incarcerated people contributed to the process of radical discrimination. Thus, the hyperghetto in American cities (see also Wacquant, 2008) has become an extreme form of segregation of the poor based on institutional discrimination, racism, and repression. According to the concept of 'carceral continuum' proposed by Wacquant (2001), there is a link between expulsion from the labour market, segregation in the hyperghetto, and a high level of incarceration of young Afro-American men. However, the hyperghetto is the other side of the coin of a fragmented urban system characterised by avoidance. Conversely, the spread of gated communities in the United States, and more recently in Europe, shows the choice of the more privileged urban subgroups to avoid interaction with other (lower) subgroups. Therefore, visible and invisible borders have emerged dividing the different subgroups in a context where inhabitants have access to different institutional services – education, bars and restaurants, public space, sports facilities, cultural events, etc. – and only occasionally interact with other subgroups across the city.

Due to deindustrialisation and financialisation, the hyperghetto further deteriorated, with the crisis in communal organisations being replaced by institutions of social control and a marked increase in homeless, unemployed, and vulnerable people, even in the most dynamic urban contexts (Wacquant, 2008). Sampson (2019) argues that, despite the fact that all social groups are now less exposed to violence than in the 1990s, in contemporary American cities racial and economic disparities remain, with a persistent lack of opportunities for the more disadvantaged groups.

Fragmented inequalities have also hit European cities, even if to a lesser extent and with different issues and consequences compared to US cities. Urban development created large working-class neighbourhoods that were, more or less, integrated in the urban social fabric. Some kind of 'ethnic neighbourhood' existed, but it was inhabited by groups that defined themselves according to some ethnic, religious, or other characteristic in order to preserve basic cultural traits and to maintain social cohesion. Unlike the US 'ghetto' it was not an institutionalised form of segregation based on the subordination of one group to another (Marcuse, 2001). Indeed, over time these minority groups were often able to obtain full citizenship.

Since the 1950s and 1960s in France, the United Kingdom, and Belgium, and since the 1980s in other countries, such as Spain, Italy, and Ireland, European cities have been the destination of important flows of immigrants arriving from developing countries. The first migrant flows in France and the United Kingdom were largely made up of citizens from former colonies who obtained citizenship and, while facing forms of discrimination, were integrated in the labour market as part of the working class. The post-Fordist transition has reopened the question of urban inequality and the poverty of migrants in terms that are quite new.

Between the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, European cities have witnessed a transformation in the working-class neighbourhoods. First, the number of immigrants is increasing everywhere, and they tend to concentrate in specific urban areas. This ethnic diversification has led to multicultural neighbourhoods that sometimes generates underlying fears as the number of residents of foreign origins increases. In countries with a long-standing tradition of immigration (France, the United Kingdom, and the Netherlands), the growing tensions mainly concern the integration of second and third generations, who struggle to achieve the living standards of the general population. In southern European countries (Spain, Italy), in a first phase, immigration has mainly concerned a typical individual immigrant who has just arrived alone (including single women seeking jobs in personal services). However, today the second generations also face problems being included in social processes as they are exposed to high risks of expulsion from the education system and struggle to find decent jobs. Although their role in both the formal and informal economy retains considerable economic importance, it is exceedingly difficult to translate this 'functional integration' into improvements in working conditions. Immigrants 'make the city work' by cleaning, repairing, maintaining, and serving; however, they have not been able, so far, to 'make the city pay' (fairly).

The other side of the coin is the question of urban security and the 'criminalisation' of immigrants, in general, and of some ethnic groups, in particular, such as Islamic

groups after the terrorist season or the Roma communities. Even if urban security in the present fragmented cities is much higher than in the past and the crime rate has dropped to historical lows, public opinion is susceptible to claims regarding a lack of security, as migrants are perceived as dangerous. The difficulties of integration summed up in xenophobic and racist attitudes make the level of political marginalisation of some groups of migrants and minorities (like the Roma; see Picker, 2017) extremely high and unsustainable.

In addition to the current wave of economic migrants, particularly in the last years, the wars and violent conflicts in Africa and the Middle East have also resulted in massive waves of refugees. This phenomenon is triggering a serious political crisis in Europe, raising great difficulties in implementing actions for multicultural integration in cities (Amin, 2012). The new migration waves have a controversial impact on cities and regional inequalities and mainly concern large cities and metropolitan areas, but some medium and small cities are also affected. Moreover, the perception of being 'invaded' is also strong in cities where the number of new migrants is limited. Given present conditions, the different traditional policies of integrating migrants (from assimilation to multi-ethnic 'melting-pot' strategies) are no longer (thought to be) working. The difficulties of integrating migrants and minorities are reflected everywhere in serious political tensions and social conflicts on a local scale.

At present, the main difficulties and conflicts giving rise to social inequalities, particularly in European cities, concern immigrants and minority groups. Since their number is increasing everywhere, they have to face difficult conditions of living, housing, and work and lack of adequate welfare protection. Despite their role in both the formal and informal economy, immigrants and ethnic minorities remain at the outskirts of the cities. Moreover, discrimination, xenophobia, and mounting racism make their position even more onerous, including second and third generations in countries with a long-standing tradition of immigration. As previously mentioned, the city is the social arena where social heterogeneity and fragmentation magnify the impact of social inequalities (Smets, 2013; Watt and Smets, 2017). The traditional class divisions and inequalities are less marked but individualisation and social fragmentation are creating new inequalities and tensions. Young entrants in the labour market, especially if less educated and low skilled, have difficulties in finding reasonably paid and tenured jobs. If their family does not protect them, they end up being a new precarious class without social rights, political representation, and welfare protection.

Gender inequalities are now less if compared to the Fordist period when women were overloaded with domestic and care work in heavily bureaucratised urban contexts. However, nowadays cities with less social investments and more flexible and precarious work conditions are triggering new forms of discrimination against women. Moreover, gender inequalities tend to produce different impacts in urban and rural areas. While rural poverty is more affected by inadequate settlements, limited access to basic services and high rates of crime and violence, urban poverty is more dependent on income for satisfying basic needs. This makes urban poverty a distinctive gendered dimension (Gammage, 2010) in terms of employment opportunities, paid and unpaid work, and quality of life (Chant, 2010).

## INEQUALITIES IN THE CONTEMPORARY GLOBAL SOUTH

This section describes some of the features of the highly diversified urban change in the Global South. Urban growth is rapid and massive and contributes markedly to the changes in social inequalities. The decline in absolute poverty has mainly been due to urbanisation in the Global South as hundreds of millions of newly urbanised people now earn higher incomes and enjoy access to public and private services unimaginable in rural contexts. However, these new urban dwellers have also lost their village or tribal community support<sup>5</sup> and their lives have become exposed to expensive, chaotic, and violent urban situations and, as a result, have become more difficult and uncertain. In brief, it could be argued that, at different pace and in contexts exposed to different production, transport, and communication technologies, the masses of new urban dwellers of the Global South are repeating the trajectory that Tocqueville and Engels noticed in Western Europe two centuries ago. What is different is that this is happening over just one or two generations, involving billions of people, while in Europe it happened over many generations and it involved ‘only’ millions of people. They are moving from a rural condition characterised by harsh material living conditions, but supported by forms of community protection to individualised and unprotected forms of urban poverty. Moreover, this process of change differs across different countries and regions, creating a new working class, in some cases, or a large population engaged in informal activities and services living in shantytowns, slums, favelas, or urban self-built villages in other cases.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Even in the case of China, the newly urbanised workers lose the basic social protection that they enjoyed in their rural communities (*hukou*) (Ren, 2013). In most cases, the migrant workers have to pay for welfare services (health, education, and so on) in the cities where they work. As outlined by Müller (2016: 56) ‘When people move, their household registration stays in the place they came from, the sending area, and this often means that they are entitled to social protection in a place where they cannot use it.’ Consequently, a large share of internal migrants remains without an adequate social protection safety net. In the rising asymmetries between urban contexts and rural areas, while unskilled workers provide cheap labour for urban industries, social expenditure remains low, with a further marginalisation of migrant workers (Zhao et al., 2011) and rising pressures towards market-based welfare solutions.

<sup>6</sup> Even if we consider only the cases of Asian cities, where manufacturing expansion is particularly important, each case is different from the others. As numerous scholars have noted, the specific processes of rapid urban growth in Asia are irreducibly national and local, even while expressing the broader trends of neoliberal globalisation (see e.g. Barthel, 2010; Harvey, 2005; Roy and Ong, 2011). The motivating politics and economies of slum clearances in Delhi (Ghertner, 2015), for instance, differ from those driving the spectacular urbanism of Dubai (Elsheshtawy, 2009; Mitchell, 2007) or expressions of the ‘edifice complex’ in Baku (Grant, 2014). Each discloses unique historical trajectories that demand case-specific assessments alongside reconsiderations of long-standing elements of urban theory (Roy and Ong, 2011; Datta, 2016; Chien and Woodworth, 2018: 723).

A powerful and extremely rich national upper class and an international business community, very often living in heavily protected self-segregated luxurious gated communities, is the other side of the coin of the emerging urban inequality systems in the cities of the Global South. In these cases, the gap between the small elite at the top and the enormous and fast-growing poor at the bottom is much larger than it has ever been in the cities of the Global North. In the middle there are varied, fragmented, and often unstable middle classes made up of professionals, technicians, specialised service workers, and people managing informal and illegal businesses. These composite middle classes are vulnerable to the instability of the national and local political regimes, exposed to increasing costs of living and housing and often to high levels of violence and conflict.

For a long time, urban social studies have pointed to some Latin American cities, such as Mexico City, São Paulo, or Rio de Janeiro, as contexts of extreme urban poverty and social exclusion, with a lack of public services, sanitation, and state welfare intervention (Castells, 1972). As is widely known (Lattes et al., 2004; Rodríguez-Vignoli and Rowe, 2018), between the 1930s and 1970s urbanisation in the large Latin American countries was primarily driven by massive waves of migrations from rural areas to metropolitan areas. This resulted in a rapid urbanisation marked by the spreading of slums and favelas in the absence of any public services and welfare provisions. In this context, marked by social exclusion and a strong division between the wealthier social groups and the poor located in segregated marginal areas, globalisation, deregulation, and the free movement of capital reinforced spatial segregation and violence (Roberts, 2005). Repressive slum clearance increased the suffering of the worst off. Since the 1980s Latin American cities adopted a post-Fordist and global-bound economic model, supporting the development of city regions strongly marked by a high concentration of producer services – financial, legal, marketing, information technologies (Esping-Andersen, 1999; Sassen, 1991). Consequently, a further trend was the privatisation of urban services. This led to an increasing participation of private companies, especially multinational, in providing various public goods: water, electricity, transportation, and telecommunications (Sosa Lopez, 2017).

Huge investments in large-scale urban and commercial developments changed the urban landscapes, with the creation of fortified enclaves for the most privileged social groups and ghettos for the poor (Angotti, 2013). Recent analyses (Marques and Bichir, 2003; Marques and Saraiva, 2017) documented major changes in urban policies, especially in Brazil where urban social activism and the spread of federal programmes aimed at reducing poverty and social exclusion has changed the structure of social and spatial segregation. In this respect, Latin America metropolises have become more heterogeneous with a more complex mix of gated communities and social and infrastructure improvements in the segregated suburbs.

One of the most striking emerging models of urbanisation in the Global South – but with global influence in the new developments for the super wealthy and for financial speculation – is that of the Arab Gulf cities (Molotch and Ponzini, 2019). Here, social inequalities have assumed extreme forms between, on the one hand, the glamorous skyscrapers built for the sheiks and their families, technicians, and professionals (often coming from the Global North), the business community and tourists, and guest camps where a large and increasing mass of immigrant guest workers are confined, on the other hand. The glamorous part of the city is often uninhabited

while the camps and barracks of the workers who have no social rights, citizenship, nor social protection are overcrowded and largely lacking any urban infrastructure.

It is also important to mention that, today, some African cities are growing even faster with enormous slums and urban villages springing up, housing an extremely poor and unprotected population, in contrast to the modern business parts of the city and fortresses of the super-rich. Lagos in Nigeria now has over 20 million inhabitants and is still growing: at the present rate, it will soon be the world's most-populated city (Agbibo, 2016; Akanle and Adejare, 2017; Myers, 2011).

Under the present conditions, inequalities in the Global South cities cannot become legitimised by means of democracy and welfare, as has been the case for the Western welfare capitalist societies in the golden period after World War II (Marshall, 1972). Moreover, the equilibrium of welfare democracies ended long ago in Europe and was possible only due to the availability of huge resources deriving from the unequal exchange with the ex-colonies or poorer countries (Mingione, 2018). The question posed by Wallerstein and others (2013)<sup>7</sup> if it will be possible to develop a basic welfare that protects the new billions of urbanite workers in the Global South, still remains open.

It is now worth mentioning the case of China, where a centralised socialist market economy (Sigley, 2006) regime is expected to keep the spreading of social inequalities under control, despite facing great difficulties. China has gone through a gigantic process of urbanisation and urban growth starting in the late 1970s, 'with the urbanization rate going up from 17.92% in 1978 to 54.77% in 2014, and correspondingly, with the urban population increasing by 577 million (from 172 million in 1978 to 749 million in 2014)' (Ma, 2018: 161). Many serious difficulties have emerged concerning the settlement, housing, and welfare protection of millions of migrant workers, which is giving rise to mounting urban inequalities. Housing shortages are widespread and produce various typologies of marginalised poor urban groups living in extremely unhealthy and harsh conditions.<sup>8</sup> However, the housing marginality is less visible in Chinese cities compared to other Global South cities where shantytowns and slums occupy a large part of the urban compound, but it still remains a serious problem. In addition, it is worth mentioning the fact that a portion of the marginalised housed population is invisible because it lives underground, especially in Beijing, where basements are abundant.<sup>9</sup> According to Ren

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<sup>7</sup> As noticed by Wallerstein et al. (2013: 186): 'Only after 1945 were the former peasants and working classes of the West and Soviet bloc factored into social security and prosperity by their national states. In total, this amounted to several hundred million people. But are there now resources, let alone political will, to factor in several billion people in the global south?'

<sup>8</sup> According to Ma (2018: 162), China 'is facing various challenges, including the unsatisfied housing demands of 128 million migrant workers (according to the census of 2010), young people, urban low-income groups, and other sandwich-class groups. Urban villages, "ant clans", "rat tribes", group renting, as well as cramped living space and high housing expenditure burdens are the reality of the difficult living situation for so many'.

<sup>9</sup> Of the estimated 7.7 million migrants living in Beijing, nearly a fifth live either at their workplace or underground, according to state news agency Xinhua, as a Reuters report pointed out (Ma, 2018: 176).

(2013), urban poverty in China is concentrated in three types of neighbourhoods: old inner-city areas, degraded work-unit housing compounds, and migrant villages. Basically, in these neighbourhoods are confined unemployed, laid-off, and working poor, marginalised from the processes of urban renewal that have changed Chinese cities in the last four decades.

Through various reforms, the Chinese government has moved from a basic system of universal welfare distribution based on a stable work unit in the countryside to a residual welfare system where the private market plays a crucial role and families take on their own major responsibilities (Ma, 2018; Zhu, 2008). On the other hand, the gap between housing prices and income is increasing. Therefore, the housing demands for various urban groups (including 180 million migrant workers, the so-called *floating population*) are unmet. The negative effects triggered by commodification concerns housing and welfare protection in general, including health and education. As previously mentioned, millions of migrant workers in Chinese cities are without a *hukou*, a document granting access to free services. 'According to census data, urban populations in China increased by 207 million, from 495 million in 2000 to 666 million in 2010, among which natural growth accounts for 11% (23 million), an increase due to city expansion and migration with a *hukou* of 27% (56 million), while an increase without *hukou* (i.e. migrant workers) is at 62% (128 million)' (Ma, 2018: 174). In this regard, also in China, the large majority of the new urban working class made up of migrant workers without a *hukou* is poor, living in bad housing conditions and forced to turn to the market for services. These conditions magnify the social inequalities and prevent a large section of the new working class to improve its living conditions. The question of social exclusion and inequality in opportunities remains open even if in recent years Chinese wages have risen. It is important to underline, in conclusion, that the Chinese centralised planning regime is also encountering enormous difficulties in dealing with the inequalities resulting from the impact of the global markets in its present phase of development.

### SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AS REACTIONS TO RISING URBAN INEQUALITIES

The increase in fragmented forms of urban inequalities in the industrialised cities of the Global North is a sign that the current model of capitalist development is not sustainable (Stiglitz, 2012; Harvey, 2014; Atkinson, 2015; Streeck, 2016; Wallerstein et al., 2013; Mingione, 2018, 2019; Andreotti et al., 2018). The present low level of growth with high global competition and strong financial control is limiting the expansion of the welfare investments able to compensate commodification with social protection as well as weakening the political agencies and movements in favour of equality and social rights. This transformation raises an important question regarding the grounds and perspectives of resistance and resilience to the present wave of unsustainable development. The working-class organisations and the urban social movements (Castells, 1983; Hamel et al. 2000; Harvey, 2008) that accompanied the developments of the welfare capitalist cities are no longer able to counter the fragmented inequalities. At the same time, urban social innovation and new movements do not appear to be sufficiently effective and stable to provide a perspective of less unequal and more sustainable cities, especially in the Global South.



In the cities of the Global South, the new economic dynamism of the emerging industrial countries has generated a large and heterogeneous new working class concentrated in a few megalopolises and in many large regional cities. This new working class still appears to be disorganised and unable to tackle the inequalities and foster the struggle for social rights. On the one hand, this new working class is removed from rural poverty. On the other, it has lost the basic traditional protection of the village or tribal organisation while the struggles and movements to obtain social rights and welfare infrastructures remain rather sporadic, divided, and not effective. The situation is even more controversial in other Global South cities where the gigantic urbanisation is not coupled with dynamic industrial growth in a scenario of tribal, ethnic, and religious conflicts, civil war, and authoritarian and corrupt regimes. The contrast between an impoverished and vulnerable village life and the chaotic large slums of the new metropolises is enormous. The out-migration pressures are increasingly stronger, with migrants being the vectors of new inequalities based on the transformation of the traditional lifestyles into forms of urban precariousness and vulnerability.

All these current trends reflect the dramatic increases in social difficulties and the multiple sources of fragmentation on a global scale (Harvey, 2014; Streeck, 2016). With the continual tensions affecting contemporary societies, the growth of capitalism at current conditions is now unsustainable, with few signs of organised counter-tendencies or new emancipation opportunities, as was the case with the rise of the 'golden age of the welfare state' after the 1929 crisis and World War II. Reflecting on these pressures and on the chaotic market forces that are leading contemporary societies, Wolfgang Streeck makes a gloomy prophecy arguing that this crisis reflects the exhaustion of capitalism's historical mission (2016: 59): 'The demise of capitalism so defined is unlikely to follow anyone's blueprint. As the decay progresses, it is bound to provoke political protests and manifold attempts at collective intervention. However, for a long time, these are likely to remain of the Luddite sort: local, dispersed, uncoordinated, "primitive" – adding to the disorder while unable to create a new order, at best unintentionally helping it to come about.'

It is possible, as argued by Streeck, that in the wake of this chaotic demise of capitalism, even the opposition movements end up being disorganised and unable to regenerate an alternative social order. However, it is important to take into consideration the impact and meaning of the variety of agency responses to the present trends in the growth of urban fragmented inequalities before dismissing them as local and dispersed. As argued in this chapter, contemporary societies, and particularly cities where an increasing majority of the world population is concentrated, face social conflicts, discrimination, and the spread of new forms of xenophobic intolerance and social exclusion (Sassen, 2014). This very process gives rise to signs of dissatisfaction with democracy and pressure to shift towards highly unequal and exclusionary societies, in the cities of both the Global South and North. Thus, the new wave of fragmented inequalities is not only a source of protest in favour of a more open and equalitarian society, but also a source of discrimination, particularly against minorities and migrants, but also against 'undeserving' poor. In some cases, this attitude favours the consolidation of autocratic governments through democratic procedures, as is the case of Rodrigo Duterte in the Philippines and Viktor Orbán in Hungary.

Indeed, the transformation trends of contemporary urbanised societies are once again rendering the tensions of the double movement visible, as described by Polanyi (1944). Commodification continues to offer new opportunities to work and consume by emancipating individuals from traditional social conditions (rural communities and villages, clans, tribes, patriarchal families, etc.) and making them more individualised and free. At the same time, it causes tensions, creates new social inequalities, and results in a decline of social protection, which is countered by the rise of new forms of solidarity. It is worth mentioning that, according to Polanyi, the dis-embedding process is always out of control, unpredictable, and undecided (Piore, 2008). It may reinforce emancipation and solidarity movements, but it may also lead to xenophobic, nationalist, and racist organisations defending the supremacy of some social groups against others. In the contemporary cities characterised by multiple divisions and the cohabitation of populations that are very diversified in cultural terms, the perspectives of re-embedding movements are not clear at all.

In the current phase of transition, new waves of protests and oppositions are occurring on a global scale (Della Porta, 2015; Della Porta and Tarrow, 2005; Tilly and Wood, 2009; Welzel, 2013), favouring the mobilisation of movements outside the traditional political and union organisations. In addition, new communication technologies have become powerful tools for mobilisation and participation. The Arab Spring movements, the experiences of Occupy Wall Street, the Spanish Indignados mobilisation, and the (until now unsuccessful) protests in Hong Kong to defend its special status against Chinese control are good examples of the importance of communication technologies. However, they have also shown their clear limitations when it comes to establishing permanent and solid forms of social solidarity bonds. In the same vein, the rise of new social coalitions among unions, civil society organisations and social movements in the United States and other Western countries (Frege and Kelly, 2003; Piore and Safford, 2006; Simms et al., 2013) have generated re-embedding processes aimed at promoting new social bonds and counter-balancing the new waves of commodification.

Feminist researchers (Chant, 2003; Kabeer, 1997; Moser, 1995; Kabeer, 2015) have drawn attention to the fact that women are embedded in family and community structures that play a crucial role in determining their possibilities and contribution to urban and local development. Gender-specific issues recall that poverty and empowerment is not just a question of income but also of power, social legitimacy, and civic representation, both in Western societies and in the Global South. Despite efforts to diminish gender gaps, women lack citizenship rights, face growing rates of political and racial violence, and experience discrimination in gaining access to employment and basic services. Central to the framework that came out of this strand of literature was the distinction between vertical and horizontal inequalities. While the former relates to the income and wealth inequalities, the latter focuses on discriminations based on social identities, such as gender, race, and caste (Kabeer, 2015). This difference reflects the distinction between poverty as 'state' and poverty as 'process'. Following these premises, these studies outlined how women and men experience the poverty risk differently, with different consequences in terms of inequalities, power, opportunities, and mobilisation.

With the increased influence of globalisation and financialisation, urban mobilisations have taken different forms. While in the early 2000s urban mobilisations were strongly influenced by a combination of local mobilisations and transnational

networks for social justice and civil rights, in more recent years they have entered a new phase with local leaders directly engaged in the local political arena (Hamel, 2014; Andretta et al., 2015; Della Porta, 2015, 2020). In European cities, the privatisation of state assets, public land, and public areas has often transformed urban centres into 'exclusive citadels of the elites' (Mayer, 2018a). These 'enclosure strategies' led to various contestations and protests, forcing municipalities in some cases to re-communalise public spaces (see Eick and Briken, 2014). Social coalitions, urban mobilisations, and protests are part of a variegated ecosystem of practices that are changing the nature and content of urban mobilisation.

Civil society organisations have been frequently referred to as the civic 'glue' that might compensate for a shrinking public sector (Mayer, 2018b), promoting new forms of solidarity in the urban space. However, civil society and grassroots movements remain complex. Moreover, as Le Galès (2017) outlined, they include both the most progressive and the most conservative interest groups, ranging from the social movements against neoliberal policies and oligarchies, to the illiberal and xenophobic far-right movements against minorities. In Latin American cities, many new social movements aimed at democratising the policy processes after the domination of oligarchies have emerged in the last decades. These new spaces of 'insurgent citizenships' (Holston, 2008) have changed the urban landscape of many Latin American cities, especially in Brazil, where new social programmes have been accompanied by the resurgence of a new urban activism (Marques and Mirandola, 2003). In other Latin American countries such as Bolivia, Venezuela, and in the Mexican state of Chiapas, landmark parties and leftist movements have tried to promote alternatives to Western-controlled global institutions in development, environmental and foreign policy issues (Haarstad et al., 2013; Petras and Veltmeyer, 2018).

Most research interpreted this recent trend in Latin America as a new phase in which progressive urban movements, as well as local, regional, and national governments changed the urban landscape towards greater social and spatial justice. However, recent political changes have complicated the picture. Compared to economic and security discourse, social justice is losing importance. In Brazil, the election of the new far-right president, Bolsonaro, could mean the return to an authoritarian government system aimed at recovering the traditional social hierarchies. In the same vein, in China, protests, local mobilisation, grassroots mobilisations against rapid urban expansion, and the commodification of rural areas (Chien and Woodworth, 2018) coexist with non-democratic institutions aimed at maximising economic growth. However, the huge mobilisations of young protesters in Hong Kong (again a specifically urban phenomenon) in favour of more democracy and participation may be a sign that authoritarian institutions may also be losing control. The picture remains unstable and controversial.

The counter-movements also include the illiberal and xenophobic far-right movements and populist parties that are spreading across many European countries. In this case, the cities are the locus of new sources of social exclusion and conflicts regarding the collective goods and minority, religious, and interethnic segregations (Le Gales and Vitale, 2013). As stated by Rydgren (2017), radical right movements in Eastern Europe are a relatively new phenomenon, even though steadily on the rise. Traditionally, these movements refused to adhere to the rules of democracy and it is only in recent years that they began to enter the electoral competition, with different strategies and campaigns against minority groups. On the one hand,

mobilisations have reflected traditional conservative issues against ethnic and sexual minorities and, on the other hand, they aim at drawing support from the young, low-income middle class and people from underdeveloped regions. It is worth noting that, from an economic point of view, their campaigns and political strategies often stand for protection against globalisation and the negative effects resulting from the free movement of capital and workers, arguments that are seductive for native people excluded by economic growth.

As has been argued in this chapter, urban inequalities are giving rise to serious new tensions in contemporary societies, in both the cities of the Global North and South. The path of urban change is discontinuous, varied, and unpredictable. New fragmented inequalities create, at the bottom end, very difficult living conditions and trigger serious conflicts. At the same time, however, urban concentrations and new communication technologies favour the mobilisation of people demanding a more effective democracy, limiting the power of the elite. Moreover, fast and cheap transport opens up new opportunities for mobilisation and agencies in terms of out-migration and return migration, in commuting and in building new forms of community and solidarity. In countries with weak democratic institutions, the elite still holds the reins of power, using it to repress any opposition or protest movements. In addition, illiberal and xenophobic far-right movements are emerging. In the current phase of transition, social movements may reinforce emancipation and solidarity. However, they may also lead to xenophobic, nationalist, and racist organisations defending the supremacy of some social groups against others. The hope is that the social movements that ensue from the urban environment will enhance democracy.

It is easy to agree on the fact that the extreme forms of urban inequality and deprivation are not sustainable, but it is not so clear how the trajectories of change of our diversified cities will change, even in the near future. It is probably right to assume that, within these uncertain perspectives, the dynamics of change in the cities of the Global South assume great importance. The outcome of the struggle to gain protection, participation, and representation of the new urban working class of the industrially developing countries will design the most important lines of inequality on the global scale. In fact, we are thinking of populations in the order of billions of new urbanites. Another question concerns the urban middle classes of the Global South, so much fragmented, divided, and unstable in respect to their counterpart, that activated the bourgeois revolution in the West. It is possible, as argued by Therborn (2013), that they will assume a decisive role in favour of new forms of equality, participation, and democracy or that, on the contrary, they will stand steadily on the side of individual consumerism and the conquest of short-term success at the expenses of the different, the vulnerable, the new slaves.

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