

The City and Global Development: Beyond the North-South Paradigm

Edited by

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Editorial

Global Development in an Increasingly Urbanised World

The 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement commit the international community to significant and extensive changes in order to address the current threats to life and coexistence, before it is too late. There is a certain consensus regarding the reasons why this is necessary. Humanity is crossing planetary boundaries. For example: The prevailing carbon- and resource-intensive systems of production and ways of life are unsustainable. Refugees from the Middle East and Africa mean that the global problems of wars, state failure and a lack of prospects are visible on the doorsteps of people in Europe. The emergence worldwide of authoritarian governments and populist movements, and in some cases right-wing extremism, calls the functionality of traditional democracies into question. How can we ensure that all human beings are able to live in an intact natural and social environment, and that no one is left behind? Everyone – each according to his or her specific responsibilities and means – is called upon to play a part in developing joint solutions that embrace all continents, religions and social strata. What role do religions play in this context?

For many decades the commitment to development aid and co-operation has been considered a case of distributive justice or charity on the part of a ‘developed North’ towards an ‘underdeveloped South’. It was understood as ‘catch-up development’, meaning that the ‘poor South’ was to open up to an existing model, and to integrate into the prevailing system of the early industrialised countries in the so-called ‘developed North’, which is based on capitalism and market fundamentalism. Today, this understanding is no longer tenable. It is not just knowledge of the complex causal mechanisms linking ‘development’ and ‘underdevelopment’ that place the relationship

between the North and the South in a new light. More importantly, the growing awareness of fundamental negative impacts undermines the explanatory force and legitimacy of the development paradigm itself – and thus the polarity between North and South. Problems such as hunger, climate change and all forms of structural violence can only be understood in a global context. The global expansion of the externalisation mechanism, through which the ‘developed’ early industrialised countries shift the social and environmental costs and risks of their development to other regions (in the ‘South’) and into the future, is reaching its limit. To the extent that distances across time and space are shrinking and truly global markets are emerging, it is becoming clear that the notion of ‘outside’ implied by ‘externalisation’ was always an illusion. Human beings and nature, whose exploitation was, and is, integral to the development of the North, no longer remain on the outside. The question of what we make of our life together for the benefit of all, and for the benefit of each and every generation (including those to come), can no longer be answered by a compass whose needle always points ‘North’.

Nonetheless, differences remain between North and South – not only between the different ways people live, but also between their basic opportunities: their access to resources, the realisation of their human rights, their nutrition, health, education, life expectancy, security, and their political and economic participation. Moreover, these differences are amplified in the context of the rapid urbanisation that has accompanied globalisation, and that is transforming identities, life-styles and world-views.

That urbanisation is transforming our world is already evident in the statistics and is the focus of Messner’s opening essay *Humanity on the Move*. In it Messner highlights how the 21st century will be the century of the cities and how the force of this urbanisation surge will primarily affect developing countries and emerging economies in Asia and Africa. Therefore, as Messner argues, if we are to address climate change and implement the 2030 Agenda, this can only be done in the context of new and different urban perspectives and strategies. Models of progress, resource consumption, forms of political association and governance, the nature of work, culture and pluralism are fundamentally transformed in this process of rapid and radical urbanisation. Theological and ethical reflection on the nature and impacts of this urbanisation is both essential and overdue.

In order to address this neglect, part two of this volume pursues a series

of theological reflections on urbanisation and its challenges. Martin Ebner reflects on how the theme of cities has been present in Christian thought from its very beginnings and highlights how, in the time of Paul, the perception of city was transformed and replaced other operative motifs, including especially the Imperium Romanum. Margit Eckholt extends the theological reflection in the context of hospitality and shows how cities create new preconditions for the faith of its inhabitants and argues for a brave new way of working and living. By contrast, Felix Wilfred focuses in his farewell article regarding his presidency, not on the opportunities, but rather on the ambiguities of cities as public spaces. In a searing condemnation of neoliberalism's impact on the poor and marginalized, particularly in cities, Wilfred argues for a theological vision and agenda that pursues a humanistic vision of coexistence in cities, one that makes common cause with others in the pursuit of humane communities and ecologically sound habitats.

Wilfred's analysis is both theological and ethical, and part three turns its attention in a more focused manner to the ethical dimensions of urbanisation. Both Michelle Becka and Daniel Franklin Pilario frame their respective ethical reflections in the context of globalisation and the differentiated positions occupied by cities North and South, where the boundaries of these categories are increasingly blurred. Thus, Becka discusses global responsibility from the perspective of Germany (one of the engines of industrialisation and globalisation) while considering the conditions necessary for a just city. Pilario's point of departure is the globalised megacity of Manila. His focus is on the role of faith and religion therein, and particularly on the ability of religion to provide a vision of humane co-operation. Much like Wilfred, Pilario sees seeds of hope in the praxis of lived religion. Hogan's analysis also focuses on the issue of humane co-operation arguing that the cities have a crucial role to play in managing pluralism while also promoting social cohesion.

Following on from the theoretical perspectives, the fourth part foregrounds the praxis of creating humane spaces. The section consists of five inspiring cases of civil society actors who work to address the challenges in different geographical, policy and infrastructural contexts. Stephan De Beer's focus is that of post-apartheid cities, with their challenges of spatial (re)segregation, homelessness and precarious housing. His imperatives for theological action are drawn from his deep practical engagement with this issue. Georg Stoll meanwhile discusses

how such trends re-focus the activities of NGOs like MISEREOR in global megacities, while Zárte discusses the inspirational work of the Habitat International Coalition which has been working for forty years to defend the rights of individuals to have a safe place to live with dignity and respect. Marco Kusumawijaya's perspective from Indonesia reflects on his role as an architect and urbanist and speaks to the challenges of creating an eco-social development. Luiz Kohara's essay completes the praxis-focus with a discussion of the role and impact of the NGO Centro Gaspar Garcia in São Paulo, which he co-founded, and which works for social inclusion amongst the most marginalised of the urban population.

Contrary to what has been long held, the world has not become a global village, rather it has become a global city. How this city continues to develop will depend not only on its diverse heritage and the existing structures and institutions, but also on how well people from the various continents succeed in exploring joint ways of living together, and in the process, creating new identities and solidarities that enable a good life for all.

Our issue concludes with an extended Forum essay that charts the recent change in the Catechism regarding the Catholic church's position on the death penalty. Presented by Michael Seewald the essay analyses the Catholic Church's position on the death penalty in its historical and theological dimensions. Moreover he highlights how Pope Francis' position represents a doctrinal innovation and concludes with a searching and provocative question about how this theological and doctrinal innovation on the death penalty coheres with the self-image of the magisterium of the Catholic church.

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