MONIKA PIETRZAK-FRANGER
NORA PLEßKE · ECKART VOIGTS (Eds.)

Transforming Cities

Discourses of Urban Change

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Herausgegeben von
Gabriele Linke
Holger Rossow
Merle Tönnies

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Monika Pietrzak-Franger, Nora Pleßke and Eckart Voigts (Hamburg, Magdeburg, Braunschweig)

Transforming Cities: Discourses of Urban Change from Victorian London to Global Megacities – An Introduction

Cities are the location for many of today's challenges – cultural, social, political and economic. Worldwide, the majority of people live in cities or metropolitan areas, which – because of growing urbanisation and globalisation – has complex effects on existing urban structures as well as on further social developments. Be it with reference to climate change, energy change, secure jobs, affordable living, sustainable mobility, migration or demographic change – urban transformation is *the* byword of the day.

A recently-opened interactive exhibition in the Museum of London, "The City is Ours", explores the contemporary metropolis through the lens of such transformations. It is part of "City Now City Future", a series of celebratory events running from May 2017 to April 2018, that addresses major characteristics of urban change: "How and why are our cities transforming?"; "What are urban communities around the world doing to improve city life?"; "How can you participate in shaping our cities today and in future?"[1] As these questions acknowledge transformation to be intrinsically inscribed into urban space, they also clearly signal the social responsibility for the development of the metropolis. Yet this perspective also presents urban communities and the individual urbanite as the sole agents of possible transformation, as though urban politics, i.e. planning and administration, and urban economy, i.e. corporations, were hardly responsible for the creation of future cities.

In fact, however, the current developments of the capital city reveal the "insidious" landscape of "pseudo-public spaces" or privately owned public spaces ("Pops"), as well as the rise of both public security and private "defensive" architecture.[2] A consequence of these changes in the urban fabric is, partly and surprisingly, an increase in migration out of the capital, which is due, for example in the case of London, to its "cultural stasis" as the city becomes "increasingly culturally sterile."[3] Sociologist

Saskia Sassen has coined the word "de-urbanisation" to describe these processes:

> Numerically, this means haemorrhaging residents, while metaphorically it relates to the increasing hollowing out of the social and cultural vibrancy of the city. The very things that make up its fabric – the messiness, unpredictability and diversity of urban life – are stripped away.[4]

Bathing, on the on hand, in the self-stylisation of London as a site of initiative-based urban improvements, and wallowing, on the other hand, in celebratory comparisons of the past and present metropolis, the "City Now City Future" event might indeed be conceived as a reaction to this change in the city and urbanity. The twenty-five workshops, such as "Foodcycle", "GoodGym", "Living Streets", "London Cycling Campaign" and "Guerilla Gardening", disclose the ways how "to make the city a better place"[5] by taking up and combining environmental, social and cultural initiatives. These undertakings, which are set to promise a better, more communal and sustainable future for London, are also ascribed to the long genealogy of the city's metamorphoses: "London Votes: Election Day through History"[6] takes the viewers on a journey from the polling stations of the late eighteenth century to present images of urban citizenship that can be shared under #LondonView.[7] Another exhibition at the Museum of London, "The Street Was Our Playground",[8] scrutinises the ways in which children have appropriated the city's public spaces. A number of essays bring these two perspectives to bear on one another. For example, Francesca Perry, in "London's Future [...] Transport", looks back to the "choked streets" of the nineteenth century to ask "what could – or should" we do before "our urban transport system will cease to cope".[9]

It becomes obvious that cities emerge through urban planning or actual architectural activity and migratory patterns or social engagement as much as through cultural imaginary and narratives as discursive constructions. Discourses of urban transformation, such as those employed in "City Now City Future" or that of "Convertible City" shown in the German Pavilion of the 10th International Architectural Exhibition in Venice in 2006, address the "restructuring [of] industrial society, demographic change and an increasingly pluralistic society".[10] In this context, transformation is the *sine qua non* of the urban. While urbanity is seen as an exciting push-and-pull of tradition and modernity, inspiratory negotiation and social contestation of boundaries, adaptational and appropriative practices,

the city is considered as both a transitory site and a necessary space of continuity and sustainability.[11] For an assessment of urban transformations it is, hence, imperative to work with "existing urban structures"[12] and likewise to discover new opportunities for interaction between past, present and future.[13]

Responding to these debates, the present collection on *Transforming Cities* seeks to assess contemporary and historical urban change by incorporating the representation of past and present cities as well as the imaginary topologies that have been conceptualised as utopia, dystopia, heterotopia, chronotopia and privatopia. Its focus is on literary and cultural exemplifications of the urban imaginary and its concomitant city tropology. The collection endeavours to compare various discourses of urban transformation – expansion, corruption, renewal, dereliction, adaptation, decline – that have emerged in situations of rapid, and sometimes uncontrolled, change. Moreover, it prepares the way for forging links to architecture and urban planning. As the city of modernity comes into its own with the industrial revolution around 1800, the book explores dialogues between urban discourses located in the nineteenth, twentieth and twenty-first century.

Whereas the collection focusses on the transformation of cities per se, it also writes itself into an existing critical tradition: in a *Guardian* essay from 2011 entitled "London: An Urban Neo-Victorian Dystopia", Patrick Butler notes that

> [b]y 2015, academics had coined the phrase 'urban neo-Victorian dystopia' to describe the dramatic social and spatial changes in the city they had begun to compare, with only a little exaggeration, with the London described by Charles Dickens 160 years earlier.[14]

Indeed, a number of studies have been based on this comparison, thus spotlighting the (dis-)continuities in the discursive patterning and material practices in urban spaces from the nineteenth century until today. Herein, urban spaces have been explored as sites of metaphor and memory.[15] Similarly, many publications have drawn attention to London as an urban site that has transformed from a nineteenth-century imperial metropolis to a twenty-first-century postmodern global city, both in terms of representational and cultural practices.[16] Consequently, the urban has been shown as a nexus of various Victorian influences that are hard to disregard.[17]

In their collection on *Neo-Victorian Cities* (2015), Marie-Luise Kohlke and Christian Gutleben argue that the neo-Victorian metropolis "confronts us with the paradoxical (post)modernism of the nineteenth-century urban milieu and the disconcerting 'neo-Victorianness' of the still unredeemed postmodern city".[18] On the one hand, their single contributions reference persistent ethical dilemmas, such as alienation, precarity, exclusion and Othering, on the other hand, the perpetual reinvention of the nineteenth-century city problematises the urban as a heritage site for preservation or economic exploitation, Gothic fascination and terror or capitalist romance and exchange.[19] Because the nineteenth-century cityscape "laid the foundations of modern urban living", the editors stress, neo-Victorian cities significantly contribute to shaping "our present-day engagements with and understanding of metropolises".[20] Attesting "cities' permanent transience, underwriting their ongoing narrative and physical transformations",[21] the double perspective of neo-Victorianism can therefore serve as an apparatus through which to perceive ideas about transformations in urban societies.

Tracing the development from the nineteenth-century metropolis to the twenty-first-century megalopolis in *Restless Cities* (2010), Matthew Beaumont and Gregory Dart explain that these cities are sites of constant transformation, "of endless making and unmaking; one in which, under the ceaseless influence of capitalist development, identities of all kinds are constantly solidifying, constantly liquefying".[22] Thereby, they mark the metamorphosis of the urban and identify patterns, for instance nightwalking, commuting, recycling, that have defined everyday life in the modern city as a site of potentially transformative experiences itself. Alongside Michel de Certeau's *The Practice of Everyday Life* (1984), this notably underlines not only conceptual but also perceptual experiences of urban transformation.[23]

Mikhail Bakhtin's concept of the chronotope, according to Pleßke, constitutes an important measure of experiences in the living city because it brings to the fore this spatial-temporal character of the metropolis by focusing on the connections of place with history, memory, perspective, movement, rhythm and atmosphere.[24] Understanding urban transformation as an "intrinsic connectedness of temporal and spatial relationships",[25] the city can be narrativised as a chronotope: "Chronotopes are vehicles of motion, progress and transition, return and regression as well as turning points and moments of reversal."[26] This intrinsic

paradox of urban change, namely reconstruction, novelty and future versus preservation, heritage and history, lies at the very heart of urban discourses on transforming cities.

The coexistence and juxtaposition of signatures from the past with contemporary readings and writings of the city expressing "the multi-layered chronotopic character of the urban",[27] has lately been best understood with the concept of the palimpsest.[28] While, according to Pleßke, the palimpsestic cityscape "emphasises the nature of the metropolis as becoming", it likewise "demands a continuous process of revision and retranslation."[29] It is in that sense that the city as palimpsest embodies "perpetual openness necessary for the reassessment of urban history and its present as well as future survival".[30] As this urban master metaphor conveys ideas of transformation, it reveals ways in which the knowledge of the city is formed, mediated, destabilised, superseded and reactivated.[31] For example, Kohlke and Gutleben mark the centrality of the palimpsest in neo-Victorian representations of the metropolis: here, self-reflexive processes of adaptation in "[p]hysically or imaginatively rebuilding, rewriting, and rereading Victorian cities"[32] offer a further dimension to the idea of transforming cities. As the semiotic system of the urban is in a state of constant flux, Pleßke argues, "its permeability and relationality can be read as an indicator of the transformation of mentalities."[33]

The trajectory of this book follows these recent insights and thus focusses on urban-specific infrastructures and buildings but also on urban cultural practices and urban mentalities. In this way, it mines both the literary, cultural and architectural imagination to examine visions of legible and unintelligible, inhabitable and inhospitable, visible and invisible cities, euphoric and expectant as well as depressed and disappointed versions of city developments. The single methods of investigation vary greatly, since the so-called Spatial Turn has become one of the most vibrant fields in Cultural Studies. However, a common stereoscopic vision lies at the core of *Transforming Cities*, which aims to draw attention to the types of transformation that have been recorded in the last two hundred years of urban change as negotiated in literature, art, film and in developmental practices.

During the nineteenth century, cities such as London transpired as turbulent icons of a new urban modernity, quite parallel to the way in which contemporary megacities in Asia have been seen as icons of globalised twenty-first-century culture. In Victorian Britain, as

classic socio-historical studies have made clear, pressures on cities mounted in the wake of growth, overcrowding, displacement and massive migration as well as a "sharp break"[34] with industrial techniques and work organisation of the past. On the surface, these problems actually seem quite similar to contemporary megacities: ghettos, housing, sanitation, transport, crime, prostitution and dealing with sprawling expansion and fragmentation.[35] Even the metaphors applied to Victorian urban expansion recur in contemporary discourses, for instance when Ulrich Beck describes Asian megacities as the "Babylonian heart of world society".[36] Both, Victorian and contemporary metropolises, therefore suggest a heterogeneous, palimpsestuous modernity, conjoining ancient and contemporary worlds and juxtaposing the archaic with the futuristic.

On the other hand, the actual challenges are quite different: strictly speaking, Victorian cities do not qualify as megacities (a term reserved for cities of more than ten million inhabitants). The expanding British cities were dominated by visible and hidden networks of eclectic sewers and railways, but communication networks such as the 'Victorian Internet' (telegraphy) have been replaced by mobile communication in digital media. Processes of suburbanisation facilitated by new mobilities have intensified, reflected in neologisms such as "métapolis", "arrival city", "exurbs", "edge cities" or "edgelands".[37] Ethnic and cultural diversity has sharply increased as a consequence of globalisation, spawning urban-inflected neologisms such as "diverCity" (highlighting the differentiation of identities), "specifiCity" (accounting for regional differences), and "synchroniCity" (pinpointing the similarity of global cities as networked cultural nodes).[38] Dionne Brand's 'black' Toronto in *What We All Long For* (2005), Chang-rae Lee's *Native Speaker* (1995), a story of Korean-American immigration to New York, and Karen Tei Yamashita's fragmented Los Angeles in *Tropic of Orange* (1997) serve as case studies in Melanie Pooch's recent study. Scopic regimes, as analysed by Henri Lefebvre (1991), Michel de Certeau (1984) and Michel Foucault (1984), that were established to represent, map and govern the new cityscape during the nineteenth century,[39] have become pronounced in the age of surveillance, spectacle and simulation.[40]

The nineteenth-century city, then, is necessarily a remembered, reconstructed city – a place that by definition is a metaphorical memory space. In this view, cities provide a "matrix of routes, junctions, and structures" and "function as a compelling metaphor for memory" as "buildings and

space configure forcefields of memory".[41] As Kohlke and Gutleben note on the protean changes of the urban imaginary, cities "are spaces in which memory is not just communally fostered, produced, and preserved, but also contested, deconstructed, and sometimes deliberately distorted or fabricated".[42]

While one might ask, more generally, how the nineteenth-century metaphorisation of the metropolis described by Briggs, Nead, Walkowitz and others compares,[43] for instance, to Mike Davis' *Planet of Slums* (2006) or the 'domicide' of the Chinese megacity as diagnosed by Qin Shao in her book *Shanghai Gone* (2013), some historical reference points in contemporary city discourses are quite specific: when Katherine Boo portrays slum-dwelling in a Mumbai 'undercity' next to the airport, in her prize-winning New York Times Bestseller *Behind the Beautiful Forevers* (2012), she invokes the urban ethnography of Henry Mayhew in *London Labour and the London Poor* (1851). When Sam Miller explores contemporary Delhi in his *Delhi: Adventures in a Megacity* (2009), he deliberately uses the figure of the solitary walker as his structural device: "Once upon a time cities were designed for the convenience of walkers, biped and quadruped. [...] Now this may be some lingering memory of the days before the automobile [...] I love to walk in cities."[44] As he imitates the famous French nineteenth-century flâneurs, such as Baudelaire and Gerard de Nerval, he claims that "if you don't walk in Delhi, large parts of the city will be invisible to you" and "unlike so many western cities, so much of life is lived in the open"[45] – another feature twenty-first-century Delhi shares with nineteenth-century London. Thus, contemporary city discourses are inevitably dominated by tropes of change, whether they cast contemporary urbanity as a monstrous misery of survival in a Hobbesian jungle or as a free space of cosmopolitan citizenship and unrestricted global consumption.

Transforming Cities thus analyses how both nineteenth- and twenty-first-century urbanism register in public discourse as fiction, material culture as well as cultural practices. The urban imaginary is refracted by differing disciplines, genres, media and protocols as much as by the diverse viewpoints of city novelists, filmmakers, city planners, flâneurs, tourists and citizens. Without claims to completeness, the present book spotlights a number of discourses which have been influential in the production and promotion of the city as a site of transformation. It brings together recent research in the areas of Urban and Media Studies, nineteenth- and

twentieth-century urban fiction and Victorian and Neo-Victorian Studies addressing these tendencies in five conceptual sections of the book: 'Bio-City', 'Urban Perceptions', 'Gendered City' , 'Postcolonial City' and finally 'Neo-Victorian Cities' .

The chapters concerned with the 'Bio-City' centre around the tensions produced by the conflicted relationship of the urban and the natural. Vanessa Carlow, licensed architect and urban planner, takes into view the London Green Belt and its contemporary function within the metropolis. Originally conceived as a successful urban containment strategy, she argues that the Green Belt has offered space to adapt to recent changes and respond to the needs of a global city. As the London Green Belt, then, represents a central site of future metropolitan transformations, a main task for urban planners is to find and/or generate alternatives when spatial resources like the Green Belt are not available. Carlow thereby shows that transformation is not only a central concept to understanding the modern city, but that "transformability [...] can be considered a key to sustainable development." (28) This preoccupation with the cultural, social and industrial practices of the day is followed by a discussion of literary New York as a place of negotiation where the natural is imagined as intrinsic to the urban fabric. Julia Faisst's article is concerned with John Dos Passos' paradigmatic modernist work *Manhattan Transfer* (1925) as a blueprint to Teju Cole's ecocritical novel *Open City* (2011). She shows how contemporary eco-fiction takes on the tropes of modernist wandering and its kaleidoscopic perspective to contemporary experiences of an "expanded diversity and sustainability" (44). While these are not only employed to address "ecological matters but also historical, racial and class-based ones" (44), the increasingly ecocritical flâneur is also characterised by a pronounced sensual perception.

Questions of urban perception and its transformation over the last two centuries are further scrutinised in the next two contributions. Susanne Gruß and Nadine Böhm-Schnitker connect to the concept of the flâneur by exploring the action of walking and the topic of registering urban change. While Gruß positions Peter Ackroyd's *Dan Leno and the Limehouse Golem* (1994) as the starting point of neo-Gothic psychogeographical detection fiction which combines the depiction of London as a Gothic space that is continually in the process of transformation, Böhm-Schnitker takes on Michel Faber's classic *The Crimson Petal and the White* (2002) and its self-referential and immersive

strategies of vicarious kinaesthesia. Both spotlight the city-walker's relationship to the city as a particularly poignant site of psychological and spatial transformation, as well as a moment where the negotiation of past and present conflicts takes place. Although Gruß shows that psychogeographical elements in neo-Gothic detection fiction are used to project social criticism into our present, she argues that radical and counter-critical characteristics of the mode are largely missing after Ackroyd which attests to a growing "literary commodification of London" (69). In accordance to that, Böhm-Schnitker exemplifies how Faber's fictional world offers an experience akin to sex-tourism in providing "a medially calibrated metropolis for consumption." (76-77)

Böhm-Schnitker's contention that readers become "immersed in a reconstructed 'pornogeography' of London" (77), elicited to reflect on their own complicities in globalised forms of consumption, ties with the findings of Sarah Artt and Joyce Goggin, who are concerned with issues of prostitution and urban politics of gender. Artt regards the sex-worker as an anti-flâneuse in her analysis of the television series *Maison Close* (2010-2013). In contrast to French art from the nineteenth century, in which the prostitute appears as the ultimate Other of the flâneur and a mere object of his male gaze, contemporary fictional treatments in which the prostitute is often the centre of the narrative, according to Artt, bring into perspective the gaze of the female brothel worker. As, for her, this presentation "constitutes a creative intervention in terms of the city's relationship with the sex trade" (91), it might also lead to a transformation of how we consider "the cultural meaning of Paris as a city associated with sexual license." (92) Actually, it is the use of Amsterdam's Red Light District as a metonymic description for the city, respectively the century-long connection of the port city with prostitution, which Goggin explores in her article as having greatly influenced both cultural productions on and in Amsterdam. She assesses seventeenth-century Dutch genre painting as well as contemporary perceptions/conceptions of the area's 'vice' between poles of tolerance (i.e. open to global commerce) and control (i.e. moral order). In this respect, Goggin considers how both cultural and geographical modifications have been undertaken in order to keep Amsterdam in step with the demands of rising globalisation and accompanying dynamics of urban renewal (i.e. gentrification) and city branding (i.e. tourism).

Besides Paris and Amsterdam, the global impact of urban transformations in light of urban heritage culture also becomes apparent in

both Antonija Primorac's and Elizabeth Ho's contributions which focus on Dublin and Hong Kong from a postcolonial perspective. Primorac deals with the Irish capital as London's screen double in neo-Victorian TV-series, such as *Ripper Street* (2012-2016) and *Penny Dreadful* (2014-2016). According to her, this televisual practice turns Dublin into a peculiar simulacrum of Victorian London which gains spectral life of its own: an onscreen "*Doppelgänger* that haunts, disturbs and transforms" (141) the viewers' received ideas about the Victorian city. On the one hand, these examples of neo-Victorianism on screen expose "the paradox at the heart of period dramas' fervent quest for authenticity" (132). On the other hand, concerning the dynamics between colonial periphery and the metropolitan centre, Primorac rates this 'writing back' as similar to the project of postcolonial literature, when, ironically, the perceived greater 'authenticity' of Dublin's architecture results directly from a lack of modernisation due to colonial exploitation. As Elizabeth Ho argues in her article, the handling of Victorian heritage today "often exposes how contemporary urban planning and redevelopment still mimic the colonial extension of power" (150). Analysing Dung Kai-cheung's *Atlas. The Archaeology of an Imaginary City* in the altered interpretative context of its original publication in 1997, the year of Hong Kong's handover to China, and the book's English translation in 2013, just prior to the student-led protests of the Umbrella Movement, Ho outlines the relevance of maps to write 'postcolonial' Hong Kong, but also shows how alternative strategies of emotion destabilise conventional narratives of mapping the city and thereby disrupt the power dynamics that entrap the metropolis.

This "affective register" (152), based on urban politics and poetics of solidarity and emplacement, also lies at the heart of the following two chapters that address ethical concerns related neo-Victorian images of the slum: Christian Gutleben and Marie-Luise Kohlke pick up on central ideas of victimisation and vulnerability or sexualisation and sensationalism expressed in their 2015 collection to scrutinise urban politics in the light of the becoming of contemporary cities.[46] Gutleben acknowledges that the postcolonial branch of neo-Victorianism, as explored by Primorac and Ho, is more overtly political, but he criticises the eroticisation of derelict districts which conveys a voyeuristic, spectacular or even sensationalist dimension in these slum narratives. This inevitably weakens their socio-political impact on contemporary 'residual cities'. While the

sexualisation and commodification of the Victorian is discussed in various preceding articles in the present contribution, Gutleben directly pinpoints the problem of discourse which lies at the core of many postmodern Victorian stories. In Sheri Holman's *The Dress Lodger* (2000), however, he detects a system of enunciation and addressive rhetorics that "force the reader into an active awareness of social inequalities and failing urban politics, thus manifestly implementing an ethics of responsibility" (176). Although the political dimension and reformist vein seems to be missing in the bulk of neo-Victorian city fiction, he nevertheless attests an ethics of alterity, truth and vulnerability in these representations. Kohlke once more scrutinises televisual reconfigurations of the Victorian metropolis in *Ripper Street* and *Penny Dreadful*, analysing the city's representations as a "Chamber of Horrors" (181) through tropes of slums and slumming. She argues that veering between sensationalist tourism and ethical witness-bearing, these on-screen depictions mediate a socio-political critique of persisting urban blight as well as the abiding fascination with the Urban Gothic. Problematically, Kohlke argues, these discursively and fictionally produced "monstrous simulacra of depraved Victorian London" (190) are naturalised as an assumed historical fact and presented as a "'real' and 'authentic' urban Otherness" (199) to be enjoyed by an audience of armchair trauma tourists.

The final contribution by Nora Pleßke takes a different look at urban viewers-consumers, sensationalist amusements of the city and commodification of the metropolis. While urban overgrowth is traditionally connected to spatial confusion, social blight and mental disintegration, she demonstrates that the interconnections between infrastructural improvements and mass entertainment also bring into perspective the potentials of urban transformation. Comparing Regency Improvements and subsequent Victorian developments with the recent London Renaissance, she exemplifies how changes in the urban fabric go hand in hand with new forms of amusement as well as scopic regimes. As London's geographies of entertainment feature spectacles which promote the city as an epitome of transformability, she concludes that contradictory images of urban decline and renewal function as a dramatisation of urban change in which "transformation seems to constitute the greatest entertainment of all." (234)

Consequently, *Transforming Cities* addresses contemporary and historical challenges of changing urban structures considering urban transformation, investigating city spaces as a site of sustainable change and

renewal, through images of modernisation and innovation, crime and reformism, urban entertainment and spectacle, perception and production, gendered and postcolonial urban spaces or cultural heritage and the future of cities. It engages the generic and medial modes of urban imagineering and re-imagineering in cities memorised, experienced and envisioned.

Chisholm and Brazeau argue with respect to metropolitan improvements that "discourse of urban history foregrounds progress in terms of development",[47] such as rationalisation, circulation, gentrification, and that phantasmagoric representations of this civilisatory progress again and again underscore its paradox of catastrophic advance.[48] Although urban renewal is taken to counter forms of decline and degeneration, these are often heightened in the process. Just as cities are in a process of constant evolution and reinvention, they experience disintegration and decline. This inherent urban ambivalence, a fundamental paradox of the city, in reference to Slavoj Žižek, is called the "*parallax gap*" by Nick Hubble and Phil Tew, describing the "confrontation of two closely linked perspectives"[49] – here in the city's ongoing transformations.

Without simply falling prey to a re-iteration of Dickensian urban visions of attraction and repulsion or a simple re-categorisation of pro- and anti-urban discourses, the aim of this book is to think transformability of the city in order to retain the further development of the urban. There are, to the editors' minds, two themes that resonate in all contributions on transforming cities, and thereby seem to outline major concerns of recent and/or future changes of the city.

Firstly, in the light of contemporary urban reconstruction projects, a major question deals with the issue of heritage: Does regeneration destroy spaces of memory and social communal structures? In how far does urban preservation, or related aspects of commercialisation or privatisation, retain old power structures (Ho), enhance simulation (Kohlke, Pleßke) or even obstruct necessary social reforms (Goggin, Gutleben)? But also, to what extent are these urban legacies of relevance to contemporary reassessments (Artt) and future transformations (Carlow, Faisst)? For example, Antonija Primorac's article brings to attention that Dublin's transformation was a result of the recognition of complex meanings of its heritage combined with a changed understanding of the city itself – namely a lived space of plural histories (cf. 135). This ties in with a strong focus on authenticity: most essays show that discourses of urban transformation, whether concerning the 'real' and physical city or an imagined 'original'

city, often concern issues of retaining, reviving or reconstructing an older version of the city that seems 'truer' to its idiosyncratic character. Paradoxically, while this negates the intrinsic transformability of the urban, the initiated changes to the city thereby only further the metastising of the metropolis. And once more, the commercialisation and commodification of the past city might just re-evoke signs of urban decline – particularly in urban culture and urban atmosphere – instead of leading to an anticipated urban renaissance.

Secondly, in this phase of intensified emotionalisation of the urban fabric, however, many of the articles pay tribute to the recognition of urban emotionality, from the pronounced sensual perceptions of the flâneurs in Faisst's, Gruß's and Böhm-Schnitker's analyses, to the politication of emotion and space (Ho), notions of vulnerability (Gutleben) and trauma (Kohlke). The latter certainly hark back to previous findings in *Neo-Victorian Cities*, in which Elizabeth Ho already outlined how public space may feature and intimate public by emotional contact.[50] And Jean-Michel Ganteau argued how in challenging the citizen as idealised, vulnerability might actually proof useful for urban politics.[51] In the chapter on "Urban Emotions" in her book on Victorian materiality, Sabine Schülting has recently shown that whereas "visceral emotions" – for example in the light of urban degradation – is a sign of abjection, these "affective economies" might also lead to social cohesion.[52] Thus, these approaches do not centre on the physical city and its transformability, but rather on the socio-cultural – the urban way of life, in which emotion might create compassion and a novel form of urban sociability. While this is not necessarily political, it nevertheless premonitions a new ethics of urban change. The ecocritical flâneur, the psychogeographical detective, and the synesthetic kinaesthesia of the literary tourist all emphasise the reciprocal influence of city and walker of the city in spatial, psychological and ethical terms.

In this regard, the apocalyptic fire on 14 June 2017 at the 24-storey Grenfell Tower block of council flats in London, which caused the death of 80 people, is not only the result of austerity budgets, neglect, deregulation, underinvestment, and social division in the light of a neoliberal economy. Rather, it also implies the problems of an approach to urban planning, in which altered urban structures were to have a long-term impact on communal systems as well. The community responses after Grenfell and those of London's recent terrorist attacks throw into sharp

relief how relevant the urban affective register is for the future of an ethical city.

Hence, both meta-discourses of urban transformation deal less with the differentiation between good or bad and successful or failed change, nor do they explicitly counter notions of urban decline, but rather focus on the urbanite and his or her position in this new 'ethical' transformation of the city. In the words of Julian Wolfreys, the city needs to be "understood as *becoming* constantly" and is in fact also "a continuum for, and between subjects".[53] Indeed, the correlation between urban and human bodies has long been recognised in the history of the city.[54] In his seminal *Flesh and Stone* (1994), the sociologist Richard Sennett not only argues that the development of the city is told through people's bodily experience, but also how urban architecture is produced in parallel to the bodily experience of the specific period.[55]

In that sense, it seems quite ironic that the London Plan of 2016, the metropolis's strategic development plan, only now puts "[a] *new* focus on quality of life", registering the "perceived tension between demands of growth and the conditions for a good – and improving"[56] life in the city. The programme encompasses ten key trends identified as facing London's development until 2036: ensuring affordable housing, tackling deprivation and exclusion, protecting its natural environment, ensuring vibrant town centres, provisioning healthy food, securing efficient transport, realising benefits of green and open spaces, accessibility of cultural facilities, protection from terrorism and crime, enhancing distinctiveness of neighbourhoods.[57] In order to reach those developmental plans, the urban government vouches to change its planning system which "will focus more on delivery of agreed and shared objectives, less on process or structure."[58] It will "take a new, more consensual approach to planning for London growth" based in the "need for engagement, involvement and consultation".[59] Time will show whether the running interactive London event, "City Now City Future", will proffer new solutions for these pressing questions of contemporary 'Transforming Cities' worldwide.

Notes

1 Museum of London (n. d. c) The exhibition was originally created by Universcience, Paris, and displaced at the Cité des sciences et des industries, Paris from 14 June 2016 to 5 March 2017.

2 Michael et al. (2017)
3 Hardy and Gillespie (2017: n. pag.).
4 *Ibid*.
5 Museum of London (n. d. a).
6 Cf. Collinson (n. d.).
7 Cf. Museum of London (n. d. b).
8 Cf. Fenner (n. d.).
9 Perry (n. d.).
10 Grüntuch and Ernst (2006: 3) that present distinct challenges to architecture and urban planning. The "Convertible City" is further explored as a thematic focus at Technische Universität Braunschweig: "Stadt der Zukunft".
11 Cf. *ibid*.
12 *Ibid*., 1.
13 Cf. *ibid*., 3.
14 Butler (2011: n. pag.).
15 See, for example, Phillips (2006) and Murray (2007).
16 See, for example, Newland (2008), Beaumont and Dart (2010) and Kohlke and Gutleben (2015).
17 See, for example, Wolfreys (2004) and Wolfreys (2012).
18 Kohlke and Gutleben (2015: 37).
19 Cf. *ibid*., 3, 33.
20 *Ibid.*, 2-3.
21 *Ibid.*, 7.
22 Beaumont and Dart (2010: x).
23 Cf. Certeau (1984).
24 Cf. Pleßke (2014: 175-176).
25 Bakhtin (1998: 84).
26 Pleßke (2014: 173).
27 *Ibid*., 304.
28 See, e.g., Launchbury and Levey (2014) and Marshall et al. (2017).
29 Pleßke (2014: 350).
30 Cf. *ibid*., 311. Marshall et al. begin their assessment arguing "that the palimpsest metaphor is useful for visualizing how new urban forms and ways of life are inscribed upon existing spaces and habits. All cities undergo processes of palimpsestic decay and reconstruction, and, in any city, urban planners promote and protect exemplary forms of 'heritage' while neglecting or destroying other urban histories." (2017: 2)
31 Cf. *ibid*., 348.
32 Kohlke and Gutleben (2015: 9).
33 Pleßke (2014: 172).
34 Briggs (1963: 18).
35 Cf. Walkowitz (1992).

36 Beck (1998: 45). See Nead's *Victorian Babylon* (2000).
37 Ascher (1995), Saunders (2013), Farley and Roberts (2012).
38 Pooch (2016: 37-55, 205-210).
39 Cf. Nead (2000: 7). See also Lefebvre (1991), Certeau (1984) and Foucault (1984).
40 Cf. Baudrillard (1997) and Debord (1994).
41 Curtis (2001: 62-63).
42 Kohlke and Gutleben (2015: 7).
43 Cf. Briggs (1963), Walkowitz (1992) and Nead (2000), and see, e.g, Arnold (2000), Hunt (2004), Robinson (2004), Freeman (2007) and Hwang (2013).
44 Miller (2010: 5).
45 *Ibid*., 7.
46 Cf. Kohlke and Gutleben (2015: 23).
47 Chisholm and Brazeau (2002: 3).
48 Cf. *ibid.*, 4.
49 *Ibid*., 2.
50 Cf. Ho (2015).
51 Cf. Ganteau (2015: 172).
52 Schülting (2016: 118, 10).
53 Wolfreys (2004: 21), emphasis in the text; Wolfreys (2015: 144).
54 See, e.g., Mumford (1997), Ackroyd (2001).
55 Cf. Sennett (1994: 15).
56 Mayor of London (2016: 26), our emphasis.
57 Cf. *ibid*., 26-27.
58 *Ibid*., 27.
59 *Ibid*.

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