

# CALL FOR PAPERS



**The Center for Black Diaspora (DePaul University) and WISER - Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research (University of Witwatersrand, South Africa) announce a Call for Papers**

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## **Megacities / Urban Subjects of the Global South**

This month marks the 15<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the publication of Robert Kaplan influential essay in the *Atlantic Monthly* (1994) which provided a terrifying and unambiguous portrait of megacities of Africa, Asia and Latin America where chaos has become the order of the day. Borrowing an image from Thomas Fraser Homer-Dixon, Kaplan positioned his Western readers as passengers in a comfortable stretched limousine cruising the streets of the megacities of the South filled with the violent, the diseased, the hungry, the criminal, the deviant, the poor, the corrupt, and the uneducated. In his view these allegedly dangerous classes pose a serious danger not only to those who are inside the limousine but also to the millions of middle and upper classes in North America, Europe and the Pacific Rim (Besteman, 2000). Kaplan warned his readers that those desperate people outside the limousine are going to take the readers down with their anarchy and indeed destroy Western civilization. This dystopian vision are repeated other writers claimed that the dawn of a new post cold war era would lead to “Clashes of Civilizations” (Samuel Huntington, 1993) and the “End of History” ( Francis Fukuyama 1992). In this arrestingly simple and nightmarish vision, the social, environmental and political crisis facing the globe in the new millennium will gestate and mature in megacities of the South.<sup>1</sup>

In the contemporary context of neoliberalism and the expansion of global capitalism, the megacities of the South face new challenges characterized by stymied economic development, unprecedented urban poverty, crumbling infrastructure, massive rural to urban migration, environmental degradation and bitter social and ethnic strife of varying intensity and state violence directed to control massive social movements for the “right to the city”.<sup>2</sup> They also face varying problems associated with complying with externally imposed schemes of structural adjustment programs, privatization of state-owned industries, rising urban unemployment, and withdrawn of state’s from already limited and circumscribed social welfare functions and provisions of basic infrastructure and services. Despite the proliferation of a considerable number of descriptive accounts and dystopian narratives of megacities of the South, they remain under theorized.

**We are interested in papers that address the following topics and themes:**

- **Floating Lives and Urban livelihoods**

The phenomenon of informal urbanization has been the single most pervasive element in the production of megacities of the South. Large scale migration fueled by rural poverty, economic insecurities, agrarian crisis, draught, war and political conflicts and the physical violence of the state has swelled the ranks of already over

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<sup>1</sup> Davis, Mike. 2004. “Planet of Slums: Urban Involution and the Informal Proletariat,” *New Left Review*, 26, p. 5-6.

<sup>2</sup> UN Population Division. 2002. *World Urbanization Prospects, the 2001 Revision*, New York

burdened postcolonial cities. Unable to find shelter, work and livelihood, many of the new migrants join millions of squatter settlers and the urban poor in the informal settlements beyond the direct control of the state and fashion a social and material world beyond the logics of the postcolonial city. The imposition of a neoliberalism policies through the state has led to a proliferation of ingenious local responses of survival strategies among a wide section of the urban population to the increasing social immiserization, violence and social exclusion in seemingly dysfunctional megacities. We invite papers that examine floating lives and urban livelihoods in the informal settlements of megacities of the South which are connected to political upheavals, economic deregulations and migratory movements.

- **Spaces of Hyper Consumption and Exclusion**

In the last three decades, megacities in the South have witnessed a major transformation as a result of their further integration into the global economy through globalization and neoliberalism resulting in a new form of urbanism characterized by both spatial fragmentation and disaggregation into separate “micro-worlds” where hyper-consumption, crime, segregation and social exclusion recast urban cultural fabric and reordering everyday life. We invite papers which focus on the city as a site for the intersection of global networks, hyper-consumption practices and social exclusion.

- **Urban Governmentalities**

In recent decades, megacities of the South have played a crucial role in the rescaling of the state and the decentralization of government apparatuses under the direction of the World Bank and IMF as part of the broader strategy to rejuvenate the productive capacity of the market and reduce the role of the state.. New set of rules were imposed by both these institutions across a broad range of megacities to remove institutional constraints, legal barriers, state control apparatuses to make market function efficiently through deregulation, privatization and other policies to recasting the state-civil society relations. We invite papers that examine the role of the neoliberal state in the contemporary urban realm that speak to various agents and processes that challenge the managerial sovereignty of the state at the national and local levels.

- **Contesting the Neoliberal City**

The imposition of a neoliberalism has given rise to a multitude of urban social movements in the megacities of the South challenging the “rule of law” regarding private property by squatters, poor peoples movements and others. We invite papers that explore the multitude of ways in which popular groups contest the neoliberal city.

**Deadlines: submission of Abstracts, November 20, 2009 and submission of full papers, May 30, 2010.** Authors of accepted abstracts will receive e-mail notification no later than November 20, 2009.

**Papers will be published in *Journal of Developing Societies*, (March 2011)**

**Guest Editors**

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