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Publisher: Routledge

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Journal of Change Management

Publication details, including instructions for authors and subscription information:

<http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/rjcm20>

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Version of record first published: 10 Sep 2012.

To cite this article: Kees Boersma & Stewart Clegg (2012): Strategies for Conceptualizing, Organizing and Managing Resilience in the Globalizing City, *Journal of Change Management*, 12:3, 273-277

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14697017.2012.673070>

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Strategies for Conceptualizing, Organizing and Managing Resilience in the Globalizing City

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This Special Issue of *Journal of Change Management* addresses the idea that the development of a society of organizations (Perrow, 1991) is inextricably linked to an increasing prominence of the city. Cities gain their character as much from the organizations that are found in them as from the people who flow through the cityscape. Most significant organizations are embedded in major urban spaces and, even where they are located in more rural settings, they become major agents of change. More than 50% of all people already live in cities. Cities are thus complex sites in which are constituted the organizing and disorganizing of the everyday lives and (mis)fortunes of half the world's population. Future scenarios suggest that in the next 50 years the number of people living in cities will increase up to 75%, with most living in mega-cities of more than 20 million (Burdett and Sudjic, 2008). The city is increasingly the crucible of change in which organizations organize and are contested, where social movements articulate resistance and mobilize, where public policy issues are hammered out, agendas set and issues defined, where governance approaches are tried and tested, where businesses form networks, innovation occurs and ideas circulate with increasing velocity.

Not surprisingly, cities attract a lot of attention from policy-makers, sociologists and economists. It is only relatively recently that organization scholars have taken an interest in the city (Czarniawska, 2002 being one of the first). In *The Endless City* (Burdett and Sudjic, 2008; Boersma, 2010), it is argued that the twenty-first century will be the age of urban development. The success of the city and

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its connection to globalization is undeniable and – as many argue – unstoppable. Critics of the globalizing city, however, have called for a reflexive attitude towards these changes: the urban fabric should be seen as a central site for conflict and polarization, they suggest, with the futures not yet determined (Sassen, 1991). Cities are also crucibles for the intensification and proliferation of mundane experiences, as well as the concentration of political and commercial activity.

There is a great need for reconsideration and a return to foundational studies of how the city is organized and organizes, such as we find in Caro's (1974) neglected masterpiece. Living in the city, we tend to take its organization and disorganization for granted; it provides the backdrop to action whose organization by the materiality of the city is often neglected. As Caro (1974) shows, the city is organized; it intersects lives and possibilities, and conducts flows of communication. Its materiality organizes classes and ethnicities, and ethnicities and classes organize this materiality in return. The city is manifestly materialized as property and all the relations of ownership and control that property implies. Property relations are not just opportunities for increasing the velocity of circulation of capital, for proffering opportunities to set agendas, steer issues and shape regulations. As they manifest themselves in stone, concrete, bricks, steel and glass, in spatial and topographic relations, they provide a stage on which the scenes of everyday life can be enhanced with emotion and drama, through staging cues: think of the role that Manhattan plays in movies.

Cities are complex constitutions of social, natural and technological worlds that are becoming more globally interconnected. There has been a strong connection between globalization and city development, urban planning and city networks (Short, 2006). These connections have given rise to a substantial body of urban sociology, urban planning and public administration literature, complementing earlier classic single-site studies, such as Zorbaugh's (1926) *The Gold Coast and the Slum: A Sociological Study of Chicago's Near North Side*, Caro's (1974) *The Power Broker: Robert Moses and the Fall of New York* and Davis' (1990) *City of Quartz: Excavating the Future in Los Angeles*, as well as a literature on global cities, such as Sassen's (1991) *The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo*. Surprisingly, the city as a specific context, location or complex of organizing processes is rarely reflected in organization studies.

Since the first edition of Hall's *The World Cities* in 1966, city development has been placed on the agenda as a complex planning problem, recognizing that cities are experiments in change, both planned and unanticipated. While planners might think that they are the change agents, *par excellence*, Jane Jacobs (1961) has convincingly argued that urban planning should respect local diversity, implying that the development of urban space should not be a matter of top-down strategies, but an outcome of negotiations that go beyond the manipulation of space. Other authors, such as John Forrester's (1989) *Planning in the Face of Power*, have sought to study cities as sites of contestation, resistance and empowerment rather than merely top-down expert planning. It is mistaken, as Rykwert argues, to '... consider the city as an "organic" or "quasi-natural" entity. Too much of it is consciously manipulated by the assorted planners, developers, financiers, and even by architects. The fabric does not grow smoothly – as the notion of producing space implies' (2002, p. 11). Even the look of the city, often conceived

as a form of expression, aesthetics and art, involves complex tensions among economic interests, professional status and architectural products that entail complex organization and relations between developers, builders, politicians, planners and architects. It is these that make the city and its planning an arena rife with conflict, controversy and corruption.

This Special Issue of *Journal of Change Management* brings together articles that build on theories that have explored possible ways of conceptualizing and organizing cities. The first article, 'Legitimate sovereignty and contested authority in public management organization and disorganization: Barangaroo and the grand strategic vision for Sydney as a globalizing city', co-authored by Judy Johnston and Stewart Clegg, adopts an interpretive view of what 'public management' implies in the context of the strategies and processes involved in the planning and development of a major infrastructure project – Barangaroo – in the city of Sydney, Australia. As a result of planning changes that have moved the docks out of the harbour that is at the centre of Sydney, a large corridor of waterside land has become available for development. Previously the host of a container port and, before that, of docks run on casual labour, the site has seen many conflicts, including the waterfront workers' dispute of the 1990s (Selsky *et al.*, 2003). The docks have now disappeared and all that remains is the tarmacked foreshore where the giant cranes and crates used to be moved. Capital abhors a vacuum in the heart of the city – and the removal of the wharves has created a prime site for western extension of a central business district that occupies a narrow and congested finger of land. Using Clegg's (1989) ideas of 'circuits of power' the authors develop an analytical framework to study the processes of public management in the context of a large economic infrastructure development. The planning process, especially when government is attempting to position a city globally, proved to be far more complex and political than the prevailing rhetoric of the New Public Management, with its account of considered rationality, would suggest.

The second article, 'Citizens engaged to improve the sustainability and quality of life of their cities: the case of *Nossa Sao Paulo*', co-authored by Marlei Pozzebon and Chantale Mailhot, focuses on the emerging phenomenon of citizen participation in civil society movements at the municipal/city level of Sao Paulo, Brazil. The authors have been able to unravel a city network called 'Latin-American network of cities' that in 2011 links more than 50 Latin American cities, including Buenos Aires, Santiago, Lima, Quito and Rio de Janeiro. The manifestation of the movement that they research, located in Sao Paulo, is called *Nossa Sao Paulo* (Our Sao Paulo), and it seeks to mobilize citizens representing more than 600 organizations of varying kinds. In their contribution, Pozzebon and Mailhot describe the means employed by Sao Paulo civil associations to create a space for debate and action. The social movement eventually created a space in which common principles and goals were articulated between divergent interests, leading to a concrete influence on municipal change programs and political decisions. In many ways, *Nossa Sao Paulo* prefigures a new kind of politics of urban change in which citizens do not simply react or are merely consulted, but are directly engaged.

The third article, 'Changing La Chureca: organizing city resilience through action nets', co-authored by María José Zapata Campos and Patrik Zapata, addresses a

collective process of organizing by the marginal and the dispossessed, those who dwell on the dark side of urbanity and live off its detritus. La Chureca is the garbage dump of the city of Managua, Nicaragua; it is also much more than this, however. Through its translation into a global spectacle of degradation, La Chureca has become a flagship for urban change projects. The article shows La Chureca to be an example of what the authors term an ‘uncanny place’. La Chureca has proven to be a space in which social movements and organizations, sometimes working in concert, sometimes not, have forged significant urban change and capitalized on situated resilience. The authors describe the role of urban movements as agents of change in the processes of urban governance and managing resilience.

The fourth article by Dima Younes concerns ‘Choosing the industry of an industrial cluster in a globalizing city’. In this article, Younes notes that, in the fashionable policy world of industrial clusters, selecting industries is a critical issue for promoting cities globally. The focus of her contribution is the implementation of a high-technology cluster in the greater Paris region. The most important finding is that multinational corporations are shown to connect with the government through interpersonal networks, and to use their existing interorganizational relations to co-opt the participation of small and medium enterprises and academic institutions. At the same time, competition among multinational corporations places French government bodies in the role of legitimate arbitrators, allowing them to influence the decision-making process. Rather than a bottom-up emergence of entrepreneurial energies, the industrial cluster becomes characterized by the policy preferences of political and organizational elites.

The fifth and last article ‘Contesting the Champs-Élysées’, by Xavier Deroy and Stewart Clegg, is about how the Champs-Élysées in Paris is fragmenting into anonymous subspaces that raise the risk of it becoming a non-place. The authors describe the role of the Comité des Champs-Élysées, the institute that seeks to preserve the site despite the heterogeneity of its members. The article reveals that there are two strategies that emerge from their actions: the deceleration of the flows of people is sought to slow and channel people on the Avenue within a modernized iconic space, while the constitution of events seeks to combine different sights and make them coexist together as a mosaic of experiences. The authors conclude by showing the limits of influence of regulation that leaves the future of the space undetermined.

These five articles, each in their own right, illustrate different aspects of the proposition that cities are forever contested and negotiated spaces in which a large number of different stakeholders organize themselves. Ranging from the deserted and derelict waterfront of Sydney, through the huge mega-metropolis of Sao Paulo, the garbage tip of Managua, the Champs-Élysées, to the Parisian suburbs, these contributions chart the city as a contested crucible of change. They have a fundamental impact on the individual, organizational and societal. As Simmel (1969) put it, the city transforms human values from those of ‘the general “human being” in every individual’ to an emphasis on ‘qualitative uniqueness and irreplaceability...It is the function of the metropolis area for this struggle and its reconciliation...The metropolis reveals itself as one of those great historical formations in which opposing streams which enclose life unfold, as well as join one another with equal right’ (p. 60).

We hope that this Special Issue will contribute to the growing debate on Organizing Cities.

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