CITIES FROM ELSEWHERE

Chronic Homelessness and Globalising Urban Policy

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The thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma in any university or other tertiary institution and, to the best of my knowledge and belief, contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference has been made in the text. I give consent to the final version of my thesis being made available worldwide when deposited in the University’s Digital Repository, subject to the provisions of the Copyright Act 1968.

T. Baker
21st October 2013
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Abstract
Urban policy has become increasingly global in constitution. Tales from distant ‘elsewheres’ regularly reverberate within urban policy-making and attendant political debate. Mobile policy ideas circulate restlessly, shuttled along by expert testimonials and technologically-mediated success stories, while international conferences and study tours are almost standard elements of the policy-making process. Yet amid all this activity, urban policy remains persistently local and territorial, while, simultaneously, it is intensely global and relational.

In such a context, this thesis seeks to understand the phenomenon of mobile policy and its relationship to contemporary urban politics and policy-making. Focusing on a New York City policy model designed to address chronic homelessness, I follow the people, sites and places involved in selecting, communicating and implementing the model in Australian cities. I argue for a theoretical approach that bridges political economy and post-structuralist treatments of urban politics, and that incorporates scaled and networked understandings of urban spatiality. Critical of the political science ‘policy transfer’ literature, I advocate for a ‘policy mobilities’ approach, conceptualising policy movements as socially constructed, practiced and spatially dynamic. To activate these positions, I explore what an assemblage methodology offers the study of policy mobilities, demonstrating how its grasp of multiplicity, process and the purposive labour involved in mobilising policy opens productive analytical pathways. Seeking to refine scholarship on policy mobility and extend its reach to the empirical domain of urban homelessness, this thesis offers insights into the opportunities and tensions facing contemporary research on cities and policy-making.