

Comparing Cities in Relations

On June 26 2008, Burkina Faso's first large road interchange was inaugurated in the capital Ouagadougou. Partly financed by Libyan funds, it was celebrated by the president as a symbol of the country's modernization. Three days later, the breaking news in local media was that a truck was trapped under the bridge of the interchange. The unfortunate truck driver had not checked the height of the new bridge and realized too late that his vehicle was too high to pass under it. A few months later, a friend in Ouagadougou told me about her cousin who had fallen from the same bridge on her motorbike and was badly hurt. Later, a taxi driver told me about his sophisticated tactics for avoiding the celebrated new infrastructure. These are some of the numerous "interchange stories" that have been circulating in Ouagadougou since the summer of 2008.

In October 2011, after having participated in a workshop on public space policy in Vietnam, I was walking at night with a group of other participants and organizers in the streets of Hanoi. At one point, one of us – the former director of Bogotá's Parks and Sports Department, now an international consultant – burst out criticizing the invasion of sidewalks by motorbikes. "It's easy though," he said, "we should do here what we did in Bogotá: reclaim the sidewalks for pedestrians and put obstacles that will make motorbike parking impossible."

A few days later, I was sitting in the office of one of Vietnam's largest construction companies interviewing a Hanoi architect on the recently

emerging “starchitecture” in the city. My interviewee was explaining how he had contacted Foster and Partners on behalf of the CEO of a large Vietnamese bank to build their new headquarters. At that point two “Foster” engineers entered the room for a videoconference with their London office on technical aspects of this building, in construction at the time.

What these three stories about two cities have in common is probably not immediately obvious, but this is precisely what this book is about. These stories each tell us something different about how transnational relations feed into the ways of life of two globalizing cities of the South. The truck trapped under the Ouagadougou interchange shows how “imported” built forms shape new ways of getting around the city. The solutions of the Colombian consultant for Hanoi’s sidewalks show how an increasingly dense web of inter-urban policy connections influences local urban policies. And, finally, the examples of the Hanoi “broker in iconic architecture” as well as the “Foster” videoconference with London, point to the processes through which urban landscapes are increasingly shaped by design processes that stretch across space, moving ideas, built forms, and symbolic capital from place to place. So, to put it succinctly, this book is about *cities in relations*. It looks at how relations across borders, rather than resources in place or in cities’ hinterlands, make cities the way they are today.

In order to explore these different dimensions of urban relatedness, I look at two cities which, not long ago, were “relation-poor.” Cities have, of course, always been in relation with distant elsewhere, but in some periods of their development, they can be more isolated, more marginal. This happened to Hanoi during the Cold War and Ouagadougou during Burkina Faso’s revolutionary socialist regime in the 1980s. In the 1990s, both of these cities became re-connected to a variety of global flows. As a result, the pace and intensity of change in different aspects of urban life have been very spectacular in the period during the past two decades both in Burkina Faso’s and in Vietnam’s capital. Hanoi and Ouagadougou are therefore interesting places – real laboratories – in which the role of transnational relations in urban development can be observed.

There is second reason why these two cities are particularly interesting to research and compare: since 1990 they have followed different trajectories of globalization. In Ouagadougou, a city very dependent on foreign donor countries and city-to-city relations, political connectedness has been central, whereas in Hanoi economic connectedness, through foreign investments, international trade, and migrant remittances, has been the major factor of urban change. Moreover, the orientation of their cross-border relations is different: Ouagadougou looks

to Europe, North Africa and other West African cities, whereas Hanoi has increasingly developed its connections with its Asian neighbors (Indonesia, Japan, South Korea). This means that the two cities differ not only in specific variables, such as economic productivity, but also in their relatedness with “elsewhere” and in how this has evolved through time. This is what this book proposes – a relational comparison: it takes relations, their evolution, form, intensity, and orientation as the elements of comparison.

By doing this, on one hand, the book tries to advance theoretical and methodological debates about relationality and comparative urbanism and, on the other, it makes an argument about the increasingly transnational and translocal dimensions of urban development.

First, *Cities in Relations* argues that a relational analysis of cities requires that we abandon abstract conceptions of relations as “swirls of flows” to consider them as historical products, moored in material forms and generating change through power-mediated processes. I also argue that we need to widen our imagination regarding what city relations are made of. Drawing on the distinction in French between *globalisation* (economic globalization) and *mondialisation* (the different aspects and effects of global interconnectedness), this book thus moves beyond the economic reductionism of most world-city literature. It looks at how policies, urban forms, and people’s urban practices are shaped by relations with elsewhere according to distinct logics. I thereby develop a set of grounded narratives of urban *mondialisation* – staging for instance the role of traditional chiefdoms in Ouagadougou or the Communist party in Hanoi – that are not easily captured by the mantra of neoliberalization.

Second, I bring an innovative way of seeing and making urban comparison. Pushing further recent discussions on relational comparison I focus on cities’ worlds of relations – defined by their type, intensity, and orientation. This book shows that if we want to understand the role of city relations, we need to compare not only cities but how they are inscribed in worlds of relations and how these relations shape urban development in different ways. This comparative strategy results in the cases of Hanoi and Ouagadougou in the identification of distinct trajectories of urban globalization where we would normally describe quite similar “transitions from socialism to free market.”

Third, this book shows how these relations are appropriated and what their effects are on the ground. On the one hand, this brings to the fore the mediating role of state or non-state actors and the fact that urban politics today is often a battleground where different transnational relations (and their “embedded” political programs) are played against each other. On the other hand, it highlights that traditional

categories of analysis – city branding, capital accumulation, domination, resistance – quite often do not suffice to make sense of urban development, notably in cities of the Global South. In my narratives about Hanoi and Ouagadougou I therefore borrow or develop a set of concepts and methodologies – object biographies, ethopower, design in the wild, script, affordance, etc. – in order to enlarge the lexicon of world-city literature.

Finally, on a political level, I argue that relations are not only pervasive in cities today but that they also constitute important resources for urban development. Here as well, a wider imagination regarding city relations is called for. In order to conceive development strategies that do more than try to imitate cities at the top of world-city rankings, cities need to use the full potential of the dense web of relations in which they are situated today. I believe that exploring the *mondialisation* of cities is necessary not only for the advancement of urban studies but in order to mobilize relational resources for context-relevant policies, or, what I call, drawing on Friedmann (2007), an assets-based politics of city relatedness.

Relating Hanoi, Ouagadougou ... and Palermo

When I chose to work on Hanoi and Ouagadougou, I was finishing a book on the city of Palermo in Sicily (Söderström et al., 2009).¹ Together with a team of Italian colleagues I had studied how the city had “cosmopolitanized” since the early 1990s. In 1993, in the wake of the assassination of the two anti-Mafia judges Giovanni Falcone and Paolo Borsellino, a new (anti-Mafia) mayor, Leoluca Orlando, was elected. As a result, the city opened up in many ways: more tourists arrived, a young cultural elite was attracted by the city’s unusual charm, and new models of urban development were “imported” from abroad. To grasp the logic of these changes, we studied the recent history of urban policies and focused on a sample of twelve places created after the regime change. We wrote the “biography” of these places by studying, on the one hand, the transnational relations embedded in their design and, on the other, the discourses and practices of their users. Because the new local government had developed a progressive program breaking with decades of Mafia domination, writing this geo-history of Palermo since 1990 led us to produce a narrative of urban globalization that was more complex than the account of a simple conversion of the city to the neoliberal urban *doxa*.

Building on the experience of this research and wanting to expand the understanding of globalization in cities rarely studied in urban research, I decided to apply a similar methodology in two cities of the

South having a similar recent history of re-connection to global flows. In order to confront trajectories of urban change in very different contexts, I chose two cities situated in countries in economic transition since the early 1990s: Hanoi, the capital of a fast-growing Asian country, and Ouagadougou, the capital of Burkina Faso in Africa, one of the world's poorest countries.

A Brief Introduction to Two Distant Cousins

There are striking parallels in the recent history of Burkina Faso and Vietnam, where the two cities are situated. First, they are both former French colonies (until 1960 for the former, 1945 for the latter), maintaining important relations with the former metropole. Second, their landscape and legal apparatus have been deeply influenced during the second half of the 20th century by revolutionary socialist regimes: Vietnam became (and still formally is) a socialist republic in 1945; while Burkina Faso had a (much shorter) revolutionary phase during the government of Thomas Sankara (1983–1987). Land property was nationalized under these regimes and the urban built environment was largely state produced, with the purpose of creating a new form of society. Third, in the early 1990s, land ownership was progressively privatized and the economy deregulated under external pressure (mainly the end of USSR support in Vietnam and the conditional aid of the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank in Burkina Faso).² Fourth, Vietnam and Burkina Faso are experiencing intensive urban transition. According to the United Nations' Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the estimates of urban growth are 3 percent for the period 2010–2015 for Vietnam and 6 percent for Burkina Faso. However, in 2009, the Vietnamese Ministry of Construction predicted 6 percent growth over the next 25 years (Labbé, 2010). Lastly, both countries are also close in terms of globalization indexes. For instance, according to the indexes calculated in 2012 by the Swiss Institute of Technology in Zurich – which I discuss in more detail in the following chapter – Vietnam is ranked 130th and Burkina Faso 140th out of 208 countries in the world. Although geographically very distant, these two countries share a series of common features, and these family resemblances at national level are partly to be found also at city level, as we will now see in this brief introduction to the two cities (a more detailed comparison is provided in Chapter 2).

With 6.56m inhabitants in 2010, Hanoi is Vietnam's second largest city (after Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) with 7.39m). It is the capital of a poor country, ranked 127th (out of 186 countries) on the United

Nations' 2013 Human Development Index (UN HDI), but with one of the world's fastest-growing economies. Hanoi's population more than doubled in 2008 when the government decided to extend its boundaries, including different adjacent areas, among which was the entire Ha Tay Province.³ The city is situated in Northern Vietnam's interior at the head of the Red River Delta, a mainly flat area of rice-fields subject to flooding (Figure 0.1). It was founded in 1010 when the Emperor Ly Thai To defeated the Chinese – who had dominated the region for a thousand years – and established the capital of his empire next to the Red River. The city was initially organized around the imperial citadel and the trading streets, comprising what is today the historic center (Figure 0.2). From this time on, with the exception of the period between 1802 – when the capital was moved to Hue by the Nguyen dynasty – and 1945, Hanoi was the small capital of an agrarian country. When the French seized the city in 1874, it was a modest city of less than 100,000 inhabitants. Colonization had a deep impact on Hanoi: the French expanded it, and between 1902 and 1953 planned a modern regional capital for French Indochina. They constructed infrastructures (the railway, a tram, a bridge across the river) and built a new area south of the historic center, in the form of a grid of wide streets, administrative buildings, housing blocks, and villas (now the French quarter) (Logan, 2000). On September 2 1945, Ho Chi Minh declared independence and made Hanoi the capital of the Democratic Republic of Vietnam. This declaration, rejected by the colonial power, led to the First Indochina war (1945–1954). Two years later, the Vietnam War began (1956–1975). Twenty-eight years of war, consuming a large part of the country's resources, combined with a strict regulation of rural–urban migration, severely limited the city's post-World War II development.

The economic reforms (*Doi Moi*) that started in 1986, together with the ability of people to move freely within the country, led to important transformations. Hanoi's population grew rapidly, the city was renovated and began to sprawl outwards. As there were pressing housing needs and little alternative for investment in the 1990s, private capital accumulated by the emerging middle and the upper classes was invested in real estate, either through self-construction for households' own needs or for the purpose of speculation. In a second post-*Doi Moi* phase of urban development, after 2000, the Vietnamese state created the institutional conditions for large national and foreign companies to develop vast residential or mixed-use developments on the periphery of the city (Labbé and Boudreau, 2011). In 2005, Hanoi thus had “137 new urban areas, responsible for 2.1 million square meters of new dwelling space in the city” (ibid.: 282). Since the end of the Vietnam War and the reunification of the country, there has been an urban division of labor:

Ho Chi Minh City (HCMC) was Vietnam's largest city and its economic center, while Hanoi was its political center. Thus, the output of HCMC's industry represented 25 percent of the country's total in 2008, compared to Hanoi's 13 percent, while 9 percent of Hanoi province's workforce was employed by the government, compared to 6 percent in HCMC (Labbé, 2010: 8). However, this situation might be changing. First, because the economic growth of the city has been very strong (10 percent GDP growth in average between 2000 and 2010); second, because the government aims, with the creation of a metropolitan region and a knowledge-based development strategy, at making Hanoi a competitive world city (Logan, 2009).

The question, as in many other cities across the world, is to what extent this growth strategy will be compatible with the resolution of the city's old and new problems. Old problems are: a housing shortage, which continues to be a major problem for the poor for whom no affordable housing is produced and who continue to live in very densely populated areas and precarious conditions (UN-Habitat, 2008: 11); infrastructure such as piped water – inaccessible for 22 percent of the city's population in 2003 (UN-Habitat, 2009: 273); waste water treatment and solid waste collection; and in addition, an inefficient and corrupt system of urban governance. New problems are: rapidly increasing levels of sprawl; socio-economic inequalities; traffic congestion; and water and air pollution. Many of these problems are shared by the other city I study in this book and to which I now turn.

Ouagadougou is the capital of the African country of Burkina Faso, one of the world's poorest countries, ranked 183rd on the 2013 UN HDI. The city is situated on a flat plateau roughly in the center of the country, in the province of Kadiogo (Figure 0.3), and in 2010 had a population of 1.91m inhabitants. There are only oral historical sources concerning the city's precolonial history. According to these sources, it was founded in the 11th century AD and then became the capital of the Moaga kingdom in 1441. The city, organized around the royal palace and the market, gained in importance from the 18th century onward, when it became the place where the new king was enthroned and buried (Fourchard, 2001). The first map, drawn in 1887 by the French captain and explorer Binger, shows a settlement that resembles a village more than a city (Dekeyser, 1998). Ouagadougou had some 5,000 inhabitants at the time and the residence of the king, the *Mogho Naaba*, consisted of three rather modest houses (Binger, 1892). The region was colonized in 1896 by the French, who settled in the city in 1904 and made it the capital of a newly created territory, the Haute-Volta, in 1919. The city's nickname until the 1950s was "Bancoville" in reference to the predominance of buildings constructed with dry mud bricks

(“banco” in Francophone Africa). As they did in Hanoi during the same period, although with far less financial and technological investment, the French applied a segregated and rationalist urban development: next to the old center, they created a new European sector with large orthogonal boulevards, villas and infrastructures (schools, a hospital, a new market) (Fournet et al., 2009). After a period of decline before World War II, the city developed in the 1950s with the construction of transport infrastructures: the airport in 1952 and the opening of a train connection to the coastal Abidjan in the Ivory Coast two years later.

When the country gained its independence in 1960, Ouagadougou numbered 57,000 inhabitants. During the half-century since then, rural migrations, accelerated by two severe droughts in 1973–1974 and 1983–1984, have caused rapid demographic growth – up to 12.5 percent per year. The population grew to 172,000 in 1975 and to 441,000 inhabitants in 1985 (Jaglin, 1995). During this period, because of a weak system of governance torn between municipal power and customary chiefdoms, the city sprawled without following any coherent plan (Biehler, 2010). As a consequence, large zones of settlements were created beyond the colonial grid system. The socialist regime of Thomas Sankara (1983–1987) tried to break the power of chiefdoms, to democratize access to land ownership, and provide housing for all. The allocation of a land plot to each household formalized the development of the periphery but also favored a system of land speculation based on the reselling of plots. Modern social housing as well as new infrastructures were built by the socialist regime, but this development policy ended with the coup by the present head of state, Blaise Compaoré, against his former ally Sankara in 1987. Since 1991, the government’s entrepreneurial development strategy has involved the creation of a business-oriented city center, the development of a new urban area for the elite to the south, and the construction of conference facilities (Figure 0.4). This strategy is complemented by (and, as I show in Chapter 3, sometimes in contradiction with) the initiatives of the mayor, Simon Compaoré,⁴ elected in 1995.

Today, the city is the political and economic center of the country, and is where 70 percent of its industrial activity is concentrated. Present-day Ouagadougou comprises three main residential zones: one of modern housing, with villas; a second of formal popular housing; and a third of informal, “spontaneous” housing. Large parts of the second and third zones – which together accounted for 73.8 percent of the city’s total population in 2005 – are under-equipped in terms of access to drinkable water, sewage, drainage of rain water, roads, and energy (Biehler, 2010: 181). In 2003, a quarter of the population did not have access to drinking water (UN-Habitat, 2007: 10). These inequalities follow (apart

from two exceptions in the east and south of the city) a clear center-periphery pattern, with the comparatively well-off in the center. The city faces problems that are characteristic of a city of the Global South: lack of infrastructure, inequality, poverty, and pollution due to the increase of motorized traffic (Beall and Fox, 2009). The government and the municipality consider, for good reasons, demographic growth and sprawl as particularly important urban problems: between 1996 and 2006 Ouagadougou's population grew at an average of 7.6 percent and, in 2008, the city covered 268 square km – 50 percent more than in 1990 (Boyer and Delaunay, 2009: 31).

The two cities I have briefly introduced above have low to insignificant citation indices in world-city literature and do not appear to be given much attention in literature that purports to examine, and make general claims about, global urbanization processes. Studying their recent transformations, I choose to look at cities beyond the too-narrow focus in world-city literature on large economic and political centers, or beyond “metrocentricity” (Bunnell and Maringanti, 2010). In what follows, I situate this book within a broader field of urban research and explain my approach.

World-city Research Beyond the West

The first 15 years of research on world cities since Friedmann's (1986) path-breaking work primarily dealt with cities of the Global North and had a strong ethnocentric bias. This important body of work focused on cities that are the main command centers of the world economy and largely equated urban globalization with what happened within and between them (Sassen, 1991; Taylor, 2004). Cities in the South were “off the map” of urban studies (Robinson, 2002). Since then, there has been a growing literature on urban globalization in the South (Gugler, 2004b; Segbers et al., 2007); “other” global cities (Mayaram, 2009); the specific Asian ways of being global (Roy and Ong, 2011); interconnected everyday lives in African and Southeast Asian cities (Simone, 2010); and urban theory beyond the West (Edensor and Jayne, 2011). It is not my intention to review in detail this now vast body of research, but instead I focus on a series of volumes that help to explain and position my approach in this book.

The volume edited by Josef Gugler (2004b) is important as it is the first to systematically study 12 cities in the South that can be characterized as world cities across four continents (Bangkok, Mumbai, Cairo, Hong Kong, Jakarta, Johannesburg, Mexico City, Moscow, São Paulo, Seoul, Shanghai, and Singapore). It is innovative as well in that it moves

beyond economic reductionism by paying attention to the role of the state and civil society in the processes of urban change. The three main findings of this collection of studies are that: these cities do not converge around a unique mode of development but, on the contrary, display an extraordinary diversity; their centers tend to become elite enclaves; and the role of the state, though little discussed in the classics of world-city literature, is important everywhere. Similarly, focusing on the making of global city-regions in the South – Johannesburg, Mumbai, São Paulo and Shanghai – the volume edited by Segbers et al. (2007) focuses on the role of political elites. Its most interesting, and for the editors “unexpected”, finding concerns the role of world-city discourses in these political strategies, both “to mobilize the city internally and to create an identity for the city vis-à-vis the outside world” (Segbers et al., 2007: 11).

Both volumes are heavily influenced by the categories and hierarchies of Sassen (1991; 2002) and Taylor (2004): Gugler (2004a), for instance, justifies the choice of cities by stressing the importance of studying “second-tier” world cities. In contrast, my work in this book follows King’s (1990: 82) formula that “all cities are world cities.” *Cities in Relations* is not about a specific category of places playing a major role in world economy or polity, but about globalization happening in quite “ordinary cities” (Robinson, 2006). Moreover, it is not interested in questions of ranking (except as an emic category of local actors) and focuses, as I develop below, on the role of different forms of relatedness rather than on specific indicators of globalization and processes of change.

Beside such economic and political analyses of urban transformations in the South, we also witness an “ethnographic turn in global metropolitan studies” (Roy and Ong, 2011: XV) with work focusing on everyday practices and discourses. Simone’s work (2004a; 2010) in particular, focusing on informality and livelihood in African and Southeast Asian cities, looks at relations beyond the much-discussed financial flows between global cities. Refusing to rehearse once again the dystopian accounts regarding the failure of urban development in rapidly urbanizing contexts, his street-level analyses rather show how people develop coping or survival strategies and how, despite the lack of infrastructure and state services, they make cities work. However, Simone studies social relations within these cities rather than inter-urban relations. Although he speculates in interesting ways on “which connections between cities across Asia and Africa could be envisioned” (Simone, 2010: 267), he does not examine in detail the forms of actual transnational and translocal relations to which my analysis is devoted. So, while I share Simone’s (postcolonial) principle that we should look at those cities as spaces of everyday life beyond the gloomy reports of international organizations, I have chosen here to pay less attention to informality and

survival strategies and to focus instead on how such connections with elsewhere generate changes in urban practices (see Chapter 6).

Finally, within this ethnographic turn, I am sympathetic to the perspective developed in the collection edited by Roy and Ong (2011) on practices of “worlding” in Asian cities. Drawing on Gayatri Spivak, Ong (2011: 13) defines worlding practices as “constitutive, spatializing, and signifying gestures that variously conjure up worlds beyond current conditions of urban living. They articulate disparate elements from near and far; and symbolically re-situate the city in the world.” I share with Roy and Ong an interest in how “elements from near and far” are articulated, and in the different ways of being global by investigating the following in this book: transnational urban policy making (Chapters 3 and 4); transnational architectural design (Chapter 5); and the mundane practices and discourses of city dwellers (Chapter 6). I also share, as I explain below, Ong’s (2011) desire to narrate urban change in the South without being confined to the two dominant tropes of political economy, with its focus on the diffusion of neoliberalism, and postcolonialism, with its focus on resistance.⁵ However, while drawing on these approaches, in this book I take an explicitly comparative perspective. In sum then, this book looks at cities beyond the West, beyond the large metropolises and beyond economicism to show that transnational relations matter even in marginal cities in the South but each time in quite specific ways.

So, what is precisely the meaning of a comparison between Hanoi and Ouagadougou? If I compare the two cities according to different variables, I can of course situate their respective levels of economic productivity, levels of revenue, and so on. However, this is of limited interest and necessitates little more than retrieving tables from online resources. More interesting is to compare processes of economic and political transition in order to understand how, with similar points of departure – a socialist revolution – but in quite different contexts and during the same period of time, two cities are managing a transition to liberalism. This processual comparison is what I briefly carry out in Chapter 2 in order to provide a background for my analysis. But what I principally aim at in this book is to compare the two cities’ relations with elsewhere, or, in other words, a *relational comparison*. The idea of relational comparison builds on recent discussions on comparativism in urban studies. Therefore, I now first turn to the idea of relational geographies, and then to relational urban comparisons. I argue first for a relational geography that, on the one hand, does not evacuate history, the relative boundedness of places and regions and the role of power and, on the other, emphasizes the innovations brought by geographical relatedness. I secondly develop a relational comparative framework that takes cities’ worlds of relatedness as bases of comparison.

Relational Geographies

The conceptualization of geography (my disciplinary “*port d’attache*”) as dealing with relations between different entities is premised on a specific understanding of space. Departing from conceptions of space as either absolute, in which space is a container of phenomena; or relative, in which space is relative to the objects considered in space and time, a relational concept of space, in its broadest sense, conceives space as the product of relations. In philosophy, such a relational view is generally considered as having been pioneered by Leibniz (but see Malpas, 2012). It “implies the idea of internal relations; external influences get internalized in specific processes or things through time [...] an event or a thing at a point in space cannot be understood by appeal to what exists only at that point” (Harvey, 2006b: 124–125).

In geography, there are various ways of considering space as a relational construct. For the Swiss geographer Raffestin (1986), territory and human territoriality rather than space are the objects of geographical knowledge. Territory is the product of the appropriation of space by human territoriality, itself made of relationships with others and with exteriority mediated by labor, territory, and language (Klauser, 2012; Raffestin, 1986). Inspired by Raffestin and extending his perspective, the Italian geographer Angelo Turco (2010) has developed a theory of the sociohistorical process of territorialization. In this tradition, relational geography, indebted to Foucault, Deleuze, and the semiotics of Juri Lotman, focuses on the role of mediators, such as linguistic codes, in the production of geographical space.

In Anglophone geography, different variants of a relational view have been articulated around flows, movements, and connections rather than around mediators (Amin, 2002; Massey, 2005; Thrift, 2006). Developing a view that is closer to Leibniz than Raffestin, they share an insistence on the mutual constitution of spatial objects through their relations. Drawing on authors such as Deleuze and Latour, the project of relational geography is here, as Jones (2009: 412) puts it succinctly, “to replace topography and structure-agency dichotomies with a topological theory of space, place and politics as encountered, performed and fluid.” Attempting to reconstruct the discipline’s ontology and vocabulary, this perspective emphasizes networks instead of territories and scales (Marston et al., 2005); openness instead of boundedness (Amin, 2004); topology instead of topography (Allen and Cochrane, 2010); and redefines places as nodes in complex networks and flows (Massey, 1991). Under the impulse of authors such as Massey (2005), Allen (2008), Amin (2002) and Thrift (2008), this theoretical stance has become very popular since the 1990s in Anglophone human geography and beyond.

As a consequence, geographical space, long seen as a nested hierarchy of different containers of phenomena, subjects, and objects, is now seen as “a swirl of flows, networks and trajectories, as a chaotic ordering that locates and dislocates, and as an effect of social process that is itself spatially dispersed and distributed” (Malpas, 2012: 228).

However, not all Anglophone relational human geography is captured by Malpas’s nearly apocalyptic description in the quote above. It rather corresponds to one of its poles, the poststructuralist one. There is also, as Jacobs (2012) points out regarding urban geography, a neo-structuralist relational geography examining the urban as a hierarchically ordered world system of city-networks (Derudder et al., 2011; Taylor, 2004). In this second version, we find the same emphasis on networks (of service firms in particular), connectivity (of the same firms), and flows (such as airport passengers), but instead of conceiving space as being in continuous becoming and re-ordering, these authors retain the idea of an underlying “architecture” of space produced by the location and connections of economic activities. This is particularly clear in Taylor’s arguments (2004: 57) about the four “key agencies” producing world-city networks and in his central thesis that cities in “the new global pattern of inter-city relations are ultimately the result of the recent rise of large numbers of global service firms” (Taylor, 2004: 60). Still other forms of relational geography can be located between the structuralist and poststructuralist pole, such as the proposal by Jessop et al. (2008) to move beyond uni-dimensional approaches that focus either on networks, or places, or scales, or territories. Jessop et al. argue that instead of being opposed these different dimensions of geographical space, related to different conceptions of what makes the geography of societies, should be seen as mutually constitutive and articulated in systematic ways.

Thus, if we look at this complex theoretical landscape, we have to observe that “there are urban geographies making claims to relational thinking that are radically incompatible, and live not in relation but in parallel universes” (Jacobs, 2012: 1). I need therefore to explain how I envisage the relational character of cities. The best way to do so is to discuss recent critiques of this perspective.

Critiques of relational geographies

Critics argue that relational thinking “insufficiently problematizes boundedness, inertia, power and time” (Jones, 2009: 499). Let me unpack these different points. For Malpas (2012: 233), the problem lies in a lack of serious engagement with the concept of space itself. On the basis of a historico-philosophical interpretation of the concept, he contends that any thinking of space and place should refer to

three fundamental aspects: boundedness, openness, and emergence. A relational geography celebrating openness and the disappearance of boundaries is problematic, he argues, as “all relations presuppose boundaries while the boundary is properly that on which the possibility of relation is dependent” (Malpas, 2012: 238). This fundamental argument – that entities in relation need to be limited in some way in order to be considered and studied as being in relation – is well-taken. And indeed, when geographical research moves from abstract ontological discussions to empirical work, relational approaches always necessarily study connections between territorialized actors, administrations, or things. The study of mobile policies – to take an example of poststructuralist geographical analysis – looks at phenomena that, even though they “change in the movement” and might originate from a number of different places, always create relations between locales defined by their boundaries (McCann and Ward, 2010). This argument on boundedness is also taken up and expanded by Jessop et al. (2008) in their previously mentioned critique of uni-dimensional geographies and their call “for a more systematic recognition of polymorphy – the organization of sociospatial relations in multiple forms and dimensions – in sociospatial theory” (Jessop et al., 2008: 389). In other words, geographical phenomena, they argue, cannot be reduced to a view of the world centered exclusively on either networks (or relations), scales, places, or territories.

The other aspects mentioned by Jones (2009) – inertia, power, and time – are all connected in the neo-Marxist critique of radical relational thinking. The analysis of the role of place-based specificities in the making of global cities (Sassen, 2002) and of the necessity for capitalist investors to fix surplus value in specific material forms (Harvey, 2001) are two different aspects of spatial inertia contradicting a perspective putting too much emphasis on the “swirl of flows.” Sassen’s and Harvey’s works also illustrate the power of states and capital in the production of geographical space: how, in particular, (capital) flows are channeled and constrained, and how historical legacies – time, in other words – provide a former colonial metropole like London with competitive advantages in the age of financial markets.

Although these critiques of relational thinking can at times appear as caricatures, selectively picking some of the most bombastic or provocative citations of relational geographers – such as Thrift’s (2006) “there is no such thing as a boundary,” (quoted in Malpas (2012: 229)) – I share the rejection of a celebration of fluidity. This is why in my analysis, I describe how flows and mobilities are related to historically evolving national and local policies (Chapters 2 and 3); how relations are productive of specific material forms (Chapter 4); and how they constrain

(but also enable) ways of life in globalizing cities (Chapter 5). Moreover, in each chapter I try to discuss and balance (as I briefly develop in the following section), the relational *and* territorial dimensions of urban change. In the analysis of transnational design processes in Hanoi and Ouagadougou, for instance (Chapter 5), I show, on the one hand, how both cities are related to different spatial circuits of design, and on the other, how design is locally grounded and translated into built form. In other words, I study relations between cities as constrained, specialized and dependent on moorings in material forms and consider, therefore, that thinking cities relationally does not imply an “everything flows” perspective.⁶

Finally, there is another – and for me, quite central – aspect of the critique of relational geographies I want to address in this book. Relational thinking has been criticized for being too vague about how relations work as mechanisms of space-production and for not providing sufficient answers to the question: “What is it, exactly, that they relate?” (Jones, 2009: 495). It seems to me that the abundant recent literature on policy mobilities provides replies to this query by showing how relations generate policy change (McCann and Ward, 2011a; McCann and Ward, 2012; Peck and Theodore, 2010a; Robinson, 2013). However, as I explain in more detail below, I want to push this further by exploring different *generative* characters of relations and how different relations produce specific features of urban development. But let me first develop this general point on relations and change.

Relations, novelty and territoriality

Relations between cities can be seen as instruments of spatial standardization as well as creators of novelty. In urban studies since 1990, there has been a focus on processes of standardization and convergence as research has dealt predominantly with the spatial diffusion or transfer of neoliberal policies (Harvey, 1989; Peck and Tickell, 2002; Prince, 2010). As Brenner et al. (2010) have argued, neoliberalism is far from being immutable: it is structurally hybrid and continuously reinvents itself to thrive. Nonetheless, the focus on entrepreneurialism and neoliberalism leads research to look primarily for sameness (as a result of relations), rather than novelty, and to findings that either confirm convergence – in urban policies, landscapes, or socio-spatial structures – or identify some variations therein.⁷ There is here a striking contrast with the work in global urban anthropology that developed in the 1990s, where the focus was on novelty, and culturally creative transnational and translocal connections (Appadurai, 1996; Burawoy, 2000; Hannerz, 1996). I want to reconnect urban studies with that tradition.

I am not disputing here the importance and achievements of studies of neoliberalization. In a period during which, since the late 1970s, states, cities, societies, and subjects have been profoundly reshaped by the neoliberal *doxa* (Harvey, 2006b; Harvey, 2007), such work is, of course, crucial. But, as urban anthropologists have insisted, inter-urban relations cannot be reduced to that sole dimension. Therefore, I focus in this book on relations in a Deleuzian perspective in so far as all Deleuze's work from his early studies of the history of philosophy to his later work on politics and aesthetics revolved around novelty, creativity, and their conditions of emergence (Bouaniche, 2007). Deleuze's thinking, like Foucault's and Latour's, belongs to a tradition oriented towards the understanding of innovation, of how new phenomena emerge, how society transforms itself rather than – à la Bourdieu for instance – how society reproduces itself. This is what my present book is doing: studying how relations bring novelty and change to different dimensions of urban life, and how, more specifically, they reorganize urban policies, architectural design, and urban practices. Continuing down the “Deleuzian path,” this means looking at how relations reassemble cities. This concept of *agencement*⁸ – Deleuze and Guattari's (1986; 1987) main analytic tool for dealing with relations in *A Thousand Plateaus* – has recently become the subject of vigorous debate in geography and urban studies.⁹ Because it would not add anything substantial to my analysis, I will not rehearse this debate here and only very occasionally use the concept subsequently in the book. However, I want to retain the Deleuzian orientation towards (progressive) novelty. This means a curiosity and orientation towards what relations bring to globalizing cities and skepticism towards traditional ways of framing the study and the interpretation of findings. Thus, in my study I focus on policy relations of policies that are not typically neoliberal (while recognizing their presence and importance); I emphasize in my examination of architectural design, transnational conception *processes* rather than only branding and logics of capital accumulation; and, finally, I look at new built environments as providers of new possibilities of action (*affordances*) and self-positioning for urban dwellers, and not only as sites of resistance or ways of producing neoliberal subjects.

Other geographers share this interest in relations as factors of novelty (McCann and Ward, 2011b; Robinson, 2013). In particular, studies of urban infrastructures and forms of learning in and across cities (Farías and Bender, 2010; McFarlane, 2011) have begun to change the balance within relational urban geographies between a focus on reproduction and a focus on innovation. McFarlane's (2011: 62–91) study of how Slum/Shack Dwellers International developed its reflection and action through exchanges and encounters between activists in different cities of the Global South shows, for instance, how translocal relations have

been crucial for the emergence of a new type of urban social movement. This example points to the importance of studying not only novelty, but more specifically *progressive* forms of novelty in which relations aim at developing, for instance, fairtrade (Malpass et al., 2007), politics of asylum (Darling, 2010), or translocal solidarity (Massey, 2011).¹⁰

A focus on how relations generate change naturally leads to an attention to how relations are territorialized. In the abstract terms of Deleuze and Guattari (1991: 66), novelty stems both from a process of *detrterritorialization* – through which people or things cease to work the way they did – and a process of *reterritorialization* – through which they come to play a new role: what was for *homo erectus* formerly a foot becomes, for instance, a hand with which she/he can grasp a branch. Translated in urban geography, this means that urban change cannot be understood by the mere observation of existing relations, say between Indonesian and Vietnamese planners, but by the analysis of how these relations end up creating a residential neighborhood in Hanoi through the mediation of territorially specific planning rules as well as political and historical circumstances (see Chapter 5 on this particular case). Urban change should thus be understood, to extend McCann and Ward's (2010: 176) argument about policy mobility, "as both relational and territorial." This is a fairly obvious statement, but necessary to make in a context where, as Malpas (2012) rightly observes, geographers have seemed overly enthralled by flows and connections *per se*. So although this book focuses on city relations, it does not evacuate the stubborn realities of territories. It pays attention to how change is embedded in place, but also to how territorial logics are dialectically related to relational ones. Indeed, a number of recent urban developments today in Hanoi and Ouagadougou, such as new national architectures, have been reactions to a greater global connectivity of the two cities.

Studying relations and their territorialization can be done from the point of view of a single or of several cities. Here, I compare the relatedness of two cities. I look at how, from a starting point in 1990 that was similar in many respects, they evolved through developing and orienting their relations in different ways. This is a specific way of understanding comparativism and relational comparisons to which I now turn, arguing that we need to move beyond theoretical positioning and propose a methodology of relational urban comparativism.

Comparing Cities

Comparing cities has always been a discursive means of putting them in relation. Comparison is, for instance, one of the rhetorical tools for

explaining the diversity of the ecumene and its cities in Herodotus's *Histories* (Jacob, 1991). There is also a long history of pragmatic or "actually existing" urban comparativism developed by municipalities in order for them to situate their achievements and to learn from others. As Clarke (2012a) remarks "this activity has been heightened since at least the 19th century when European colonialism placed cities as sites of encounter between different planning cultures or sites of production for new planning knowledge and techniques."¹¹

On a global scale, such action-oriented comparisons have been promoted since 1990 by different bilateral and multilateral agencies, local authorities, and NGOs: since 1997, the creation of UN-Habitat's Best Practices and Local Leadership Program has developed South-South partnerships; while in 2004, the creation of United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG),¹² which brings together already-existing city networks, has opened up new routes for decentralized North-South cooperation. These are the forms of comparison that municipalities do through being in relation. But of course, the type of comparison I develop is a strategy aiming at understanding urban development rather than producing it.

Comparative strategies

As a series of authors have noted, there has been a renaissance of comparative studies and especially a development of reflection on comparative urbanism in recent literature on urban policies (Boudreau et al., 2007; Clarke, 2012a; Nijman, 2007; Ward, 2008). In this context, political scientists Kantor and Savitch (2005) have provided interesting guidelines for a systematic comparison of urban politics. Comparison, they argue (2005: 136), should: (a) be governed by an explicit theoretical framework; (b) use common categories; and (c) make comparisons throughout the work. Their own comparative study looks at cities' bargaining strategies aimed at getting political support for, and capital investment in, their development (Savitch and Kantor, 2002). The cities they compare are all situated in Western liberal democracies (UK, France, Italy, Canada, US) and they identify variations between what are – seen from a global perspective – similar types of cities.

If we broaden the scope, we can situate this form of comparison within a typology of different comparative strategies. Brenner (2001), Ward (2010) and Robinson (2011a) have all used and reworked Tilly's (1984) typology of ways of comparing in the context of urban studies, distinguishing between individualizing, universalizing, variation-finding, and encompassing strategies. Both Ward (2010) and Robinson (2011a) have offered an important critique of these traditional ways

of envisaging comparativism. For Ward, they present three weaknesses: first, an insufficient problematization of scale, which is generally taken for granted; second, the treatment of cities as “discrete, self-enclosed and analytically separate objects” (Ward, 2010: 479); and, third, a conception of causation relying on empirical regularities instead of the explanation of processes. On the basis of this critique, Ward, drawing on Hart (2002; 2004), suggests that we develop relational comparisons “stressing interconnected trajectories – how different cities are implicated in each other’s past, present and future” (Ward, 2010: 480).

In a similar vein, but within a more elaborate postcolonial agenda, Robinson (2011a) suggests opening up the world of comparisons. Very often, she argues, it is considered that cities of the North and South are too different in their resources and functioning to be compared in any significant way. But, “with growing assertions of convergence and connections across urban experiences in a globalized world [...] the argument that there are few commonalities to explore across certain kinds of cities would be hard to support” (Robinson, 2011a: 5). She therefore encourages the comparison of very different cases, in order to develop a “revitalized and experimental international comparativism that will enable urban studies to stretch its resources for theory-building across the world of cities” and provoke “hopefully unsettling conversations about the nature and future of cities in the world” (Robinson, 2011a: 19). For Robinson (2011b: 126), there is not only a colonial past in comparative urbanism, but a colonial present “in which the structures of knowledge production grants a very few places power and authority.” The issue at hand, therefore, is to develop a truly cosmopolitan comparison. Like Ward, she suggests a rethinking of the units of comparison, shifting from the supposedly bounded spatial units of cities to relations, connections, and circulations between cities. Finally, along the same lines, McFarlane (2010: 733) considers comparison across the North–South divide as a strategy of critique, whereby not only cities can be understood differently but also “the ontological and epistemological framings that inform how the world is being debated, how knowledge is being produced and questioned.”

The form of urban comparison developed in this book draws on these recent discussions as it bears on two very different cities, set in very different contexts. The main aim of this comparison is, therefore, not to look for variations between similar cases or to aim at a general explanation of urban change in globalizing cities, but instead to expand our understanding of the different trajectories of globalization followed by these cities. However, I do not circumvent the benefits of traditional comparative strategies and I also establish, in Chapter 2 with a series of diachronic data, the differences and variations in time between

these cities. Central to my comparative strategy is the idea of relational comparison. For Ward (2010: 481–482), in such a comparative strategy “cities have to be theorized as open, embedded and relational,” “city’ scale has to be understood as a dynamic evolving scale,” and “comparing cities has to be attuned to the challenges of ‘theorizing back,’” in the sense of rethinking our ways of knowing the city. Entanglements, co-construction, or co-dependence become here the focus of analysis.

However, relational comparison in the work of Ward, Robinson, and McFarlane is still couched in quite general terms. There are very well-articulated reasons for redefining comparison as relational comparison, but there is little yet on where the comparison actually lies and on what to compare when it comes to empirical work. Thus, relational comparison is, in its present formulation (except for Hart’s work, see below), primarily a critique of traditional comparison and as a consequence puts the weight on relation rather than comparison. I suggest here a form of relational comparison where both terms are equally addressed. While Ward proposes analyzing relations between the cities “compared,” I suggest comparing the respective “world of relations” of the cities considered in general (including the possible relations between the cities considered), i.e. the numerous connections in different domains relating cities with other places abroad. Consequently, this book is not about the relations between the two cities of Hanoi and Ouagadougou but rather it compares how these cities are situated within worlds of relations and how these worlds have changed since the early 1990s.

Hart’s (2002) innovative work goes in that direction. Grounded in a longitudinal empirical analysis (1994–2001) of political change in two South African towns – Ladysmith and Newcastle – her analysis focuses on the different ways Taiwanese industrialists, active in these two towns of KwaZulu Natal, operate not only in South Africa but also in places such as Southern China. Taking as a starting point the situation of these two South African towns, she compares different forms of transnational relations between Taiwan and elsewhere, as well as different histories of rural industrialization in South Africa and East Asia. While Hart’s work looks at relatively small places where the Taiwanese connection stands out and is therefore the main object of inquiry, I deal with large cities shaped by a number of different transnational relations and look at the intensity, type, and orientation of their world of relations.

The underlying idea of this book is that transnational relations constitute an important dimension of cities’ resources – a network capital – and are as such important factors of economic, political, and social change. It is thus necessary to analyze the *intensity* of these relations and its variation in time drawing on classical indicators of urban globalization such as FDI’s (Foreign Direct Investments) or airport arrivals. However, intensity of relations alone is a crude factor for comparing

cities. Relations need also to be compared in their diversity and orientation. Various *domains* of relatedness – political, social, cultural – need to be compared if we want to overcome the economic reductionism of much urban research. Finally, it is important to monitor the *orientation* of these relations: with which other cities and countries are relations established, and how does this orientation change in time? Comparing the orientation of relations brings a better understanding of the changing geopolitics of urban relatedness and how they have moved far beyond simple North–South relations. The Hanoi case shows, for instance, how since 1990 inter-Asian relations have in many domains supplanted relations with Europe and North America; while since 2000 Ouagadougou has come to play an important regional role in Africa. Through such comparative strategy, this book delineates distinct trajectories of urban globalization and shows the necessity to be specific about the forms and effects of city relations.

In summary then, the relational comparison I propose asks the following questions: How does the intensity of cities' relations vary through time? How do cities' relations to elsewhere vary across different dimensions (economic, political, social, and cultural)? What is the orientation of these relations and how does it change through time? What are the different generative characters of these relations? To answer these questions a very substantial research program is needed, requiring both quantitative and qualitative methodologies. Within this broad research program, I carve out below a series of aspects corresponding to what was feasible for us to accomplish during fieldwork and for my (far from comprehensive) interpretive competences.

What to compare

The timeframe for this comparative study is the period 1990–2010. This is determined by the fact that economic transition began in both cities in the early 1990s. However, some of the material covers 2010–2012 or, when necessary as historical background, periods before 1990.

I study first the intensity, dimensions, and orientation of Hanoi's and Ouagadougou's transnational relations by using available comparable statistical data. This allows me to describe and compare the trajectories of globalization of these two cities since 1990 (Chapter 2) and to provide a background for the following thematic chapters (Chapters 3–6), concentrating on how relations generate urban change.

Poststructuralist relational geographers have been concerned mainly with one theme: *policy* relations (McCann and Ward, 2011a; McCann, 2008; McFarlane, 2009; Peck and Theodore, 2001; Robinson, 2013; Ward, 2006). This is not surprising given that the proponents of a renaissance and rethinking of comparative urbanism are policy scholars.

This book pushes relational comparison further by looking at city relations beyond urban policy mobility. In doing this, I compare relations embedded in and generative of three aspects of urban life:

Urban policies. I compare here the two cities' transnational urban policy relations since 1990 focusing first on the role of foreign experts and expertise in master-planning and second on the more specific question of urban public space policy. This choice is motivated by the fact that most research in urban policy circulation has looked at typical neoliberal policies such as Business Improvement Districts (Ward, 2007) or "creative cities" policies (Peck, 2011a). Looking at public space policies can mean (potentially at least) looking at more progressive policies in motion.¹³

Urban forms. I draw here on the analysis of a sample of 16 newly created places (buildings, public spaces, infrastructures) in each city. As we have shown elsewhere with Michael Guggenheim (Guggenheim and Söderström, 2010a), not only policies but built forms increasingly travel as a result of processes such as increasing inter-urban competition, the globalization of architectural firms and cultural connectedness (Guggenheim and Söderström, 2010b). I more specifically focus here on transnational architectural design, or how design increasingly takes place in "stretched spaces" (Faulconbridge and McNeill, 2010).

Urban practices and discourses. Changes in urban forms take their meaning and get their efficacy only through social practice and discourse. I study here how city dwellers reposition themselves through the use of these new urban places in Ouagadougou and Hanoi. In other words, I look at what these forms do, and focus on how they work both as pedagogies of urban modernization on the one hand, and as sites of opportunities for self-chosen new urban practices on the other.

The different aspects of this relational comparison use different methodologies – the product of collective work¹⁴ – that I explore below.

How to compare

This book combines both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, as I believe that a comparison of cities' relations with elsewhere needs to complement an extensive (and necessarily superficial) investigation with in-depth fieldwork. Quantitative data are used to capture and compare general trends and more specifically the form and evolution of cities' relations. Data generated via qualitative methods are used to understand mechanisms of urban change both at a general level – the

changes in urban governance – and at the level of specific dimensions of change (urban policies, design processes, cultural change).

Which relations to observe is, of course, a crucial question for a relational comparison. By “relations to elsewhere” in this book I mean transnational relations. I use that term to describe cross-border exchanges that generally go both ways; for instance, when two architects collaborate in two different countries on the design of a building.¹⁵ I also often use the term “translocal,” when these transnational relations connect places more than countries. City networks in which two cities cooperate on a specific project, such as waste management, is a good example of such relations.¹⁶ When dealing with data on migratory movements or policy change, therefore, I have focused on transnational migrations and circulations of ideas, though I mention intra-national relations when they are relevant.

The collection of statistical data to describe the trajectories of globalization (Chapter 2, Part 2) of both cities was done by compiling data from very different sources: international organizations; national statistical offices; municipal offices; existing studies; and newspapers. The analysis of changes in urban governance (Chapter 2, Part 1) rests on 38 interviews with professionals and others concerned with the built environment (architects, planners, city officials, government officials, officials of international organizations, social scientists, activists, artists) – 20 in Hanoi, and 18 in Ouagadougou. These rather traditional methods are useful for the study of general aspects of urban change, including changes in policy. We also used another methodology – object biography – to better grasp the generative character of transnational relations: object biographies provide the material for Chapters 4, 5, and 6, and I now examine this method in more detail.

Object biographies

There are many possible ways to show how relations shape cities anew. I have chosen to focus on urban forms, because I see them as strategic sites where the various aspects of urban change – investments, planning regulations, design processes, and urban experience – coalesce. Pivotal to my analysis is, therefore, the study of changes in urban form, and more precisely, the “biographical analysis” in each city of a sample of recent interventions representative of urban change as a whole in the two cities since 1990.¹⁷ I do not mean that a morphological analysis of cities synthesizes processes of urban change, but that object biographies offer a means to study different dimensions of relation-generated change.

Biographies of things is not a new methodology in the social sciences. Marx’s analysis of commodities, in Volume 1 of *Capital*, suggests a form

of object biography that unveils the social process of the production of commodities. More recently, Appadurai's (1986: 5) influential edited book, *The Social Life of Things*, develops the spatial and anthropological dimensions of Marx's analysis, suggesting following "the things themselves, because their meaning is inscribed in their forms, use and trajectories." In contemporary human geography, to follow the trajectories of things has become a countersign for cultural economic studies (Cook, 2004; Crang et al., 2003; Freidberg, 2004).¹⁸

In urban studies, this interest in material forms in general and the biography of mobile forms in particular has been less sustained: the built environment is often considered as a secondary dimension, a mere reflector of societal processes. In contrast, I consider, together with some other authors (Fariás and Bender, 2010; Guggenheim and Söderström, 2010b; Jacobs, 2006; King, 2004), that "urban spatial forms actually constitute as well as represent much of social and cultural existence: society is to a very large extent constituted through the buildings and spaces that it creates" (King, 1990: 1). Object biographies retracing the life of built forms are thus a powerful means to understand changing socio-economic relations across space (Blunt, 2008; Jacobs et al., 2007).

In contrast with previous work dealing with the circulation of building types and forms (Guggenheim and Söderström, 2010b), I focus here on forms as *resulting* from the mobility of people, capital, and ideas. Therefore, instead of following the forms, in the studies of Hanoi and Ouagadougou we followed the relations associated with the creation and use of forms. We selected 32 objects (buildings, public spaces, parks) built (or sometimes renovated) during the period of study, i.e. since 1990. They were selected to represent the different types of operation or program in the changes to both cities over these years. Both the types of intervention and the specific objects were chosen on the basis of the interviews carried out with "urban experts."¹⁹

Seven of these programs are common to both cities: housing blocks, shopping malls, small commercial structures, hotels, office towers, interventions in public spaces, and heritage preservation. For each program, we chose two to three interventions we knew had some transnational dimension, related to the building type, the origin or experience of the architect, or of the client or investors. The types of intervention are not similar in each city as the level of economic development and urban policies differ, as I show in detail in Chapter 2. New road infrastructures, studied in Chapter 6, are, for instance, a more important aspect of recent urban change in Ouagadougou than in Hanoi.

These 32 object biographies have two sides: the first concerns the process of design and the form of the object itself; the second how these

objects are used. The aim of the first part of the biography is twofold: to grasp the role of transnational relations in the design process and to study how these relations are translated in the form and style of the objects. For this purpose, we conducted a total of 79 interviews with architects and their clients (30 in Hanoi, 49 in Ouagadougou). The interviews were semi-structured with a length varying between 20 minutes and two hours. We also created visual documentation of the objects (by taking photographs and collecting architectural plans).

After a first analysis of all the objects, we chose 16 objects (eight in each city) and interviewed users. We based our choice on feasibility and relevance: some objects are interesting for their design process, but, for instance, are not accessible to the wider public and were discarded. The aim of this second aspect of the biographies is to understand how new forms of social practices (like jogging in a park) and new identity positionings (such as new forms of social distinction) are articulated within these new urban places. In other words, we looked at how newly built transnational forms shape the urban culture of these two cities. In total, 137 (64 in Ouagadougou, 73 in Hanoi) user interviews were carried out based on the same interview guide. These were usually short interviews of around ten minutes, and where feasible we complemented these interviews with the observation of practices based again on a common guide.

In this book, I am only using a part of this empirical material. In Chapters 4, 5, and 6, I focus on objects relevant to developing in each case a specific argument on transnational policy connections, processes of architectural design, and changing urban cultures.

In summary, this book argues that cities' "worlds of relations" play an increasing role in contemporary logics of urban development. To substantiate this argument it analyzes the role of transnational connections in the development of the two – marginal and until recently relation-poor – cities of Hanoi and Ouagadougou between 1990 and 2012. From a theoretical point of view, I claim that we need to open up our conception of the role of these relations beyond the hypothesis of the diffusion of the same (urban policies, morphologies, or practices) and look more closely at how they bring novelty. Therefore, in terms of empirical analysis, I show how transnational connections generate change and novelty in different domains of urban life. Focusing on the generative power of relations has meant paying particular attention to how relations are territorialized through different means: planning and building regulations, power games between local actors, everyday practices of city users. From a methodological point of view, this book takes debates about comparative urbanism further by developing new forms of relational comparison. Throughout the different chapters I compare the worlds of relations of two cities through time – instead of focusing

on the relations between them – and how they have generated crucial changes in both cities.

Comparing relations and how they are territorialized brings a nuanced understanding of how ordinary cities have developed during the past couple of decades, beyond rehearsed and generic narratives of “transition” and “globalization”. Comparing the intensity of relations shows how quickly since the early 1990s both cities, but especially Hanoi, have been brought into a much denser “swirl of flows.” Comparing the domain of these relations shows how economic connections (in the case of Hanoi) and political ones (in the case of Ouagadougou) have shaped very different trajectories of urban development. Comparing their orientation brings to the fore important geopolitical changes – the development of South–South relations and the provincialization of Europe and North America in Hanoi’s case – but also an enduring dependence on old colonial links with France in a city still highly dependent on foreign development aid like Ouagadougou. Finally, the fine-grained study of transnational connections in master-planning, public space policies, and architectural design that compose the bulk of this book shows, *contra* a tendency to debate vaguely about flows and relations in contemporary human geography, that different politics of relatedness and territorialization are at play in these different domains.

The Structure of the Book

In each chapter of the book, I strive to balance a study of Ouagadougou’s and Hanoi’s relations with elsewhere with a study of their territorialization. As argued in this chapter, it is only by analyzing the relational and the territorial together that relational geographies can make sense of urban change.

In Chapter 2, I describe and compare the trajectories of urban change in the two cities. I look first at territorial aspects, analyzing shifts in urban governance since 1990 and then examining indicators of relatedness. I show that there are important similarities in their transition from socialism to a liberal economy. However, the form, intensity, and orientation of their transnational relations vary significantly: Hanoi has changed within a stable political structure, through increasing economic connectivity with the rest of Asia, whereas in Ouagadougou, transnational relatedness is primarily political and oriented towards Europe and North Africa.

In Chapters 3 and 4, drawing on recent literature dealing with policies in motion, I examine the increasing transnationalization of urban policies. I focus first (Chapter 3) on how foreign expertise and

inter-municipal networks have shaped the planning agenda of Hanoi and Ouagadougou. I show that transnational policy relations are more than simple vectors of neoliberalism: they produce contradictory development options and their efficacy is highly dependent on local institutional strategies. Chapter 4 focuses on the more specific question of public space policies in order to further understand how circulating policies are territorialized. I show how both cities share difficulties related to the translation of policies developed in the context of post-industrial cities of the Global North to cities with quite different cultures of public space. I also show how they differ in their relatedness: one (Ouagadougou) being primarily connected with its former metropole, while the other (Hanoi) is the stage for competing public space policies brought by different transnational connections.

In Chapter 5, drawing on recent work on geographies of architecture, I look at how transnational relations transform the process through which urban landscapes are produced. The cases of Hanoi and Ouagadougou allow me to move beyond a traditional emphasis on global architectural firms and global cities to identify different types of transnational design processes. I thus show that Hanoi and Ouagadougou belong to different circuits of architectural design. Hanoi, more attractive for foreign capital, recently entered the circuit of “starchitecture” and master-planned neighborhoods, while Ouagadougou did not. However, I show that, especially in Ouagadougou, transnational design cannot be reduced to any straightforward logic of branding and capital accumulation. Finally, I analyze in both cities how, in an age of geographically “stretched” design processes, the state uses its control over the design of public buildings to maintain the role of architecture in the reproduction of nationalism.

In Chapter 6, I explore the relation between new urban forms and everyday life, focusing on how “traveling” urban types – such as road interchanges or shopping malls – are politically and socially appropriated. Using concepts from governmentality studies and Actor-Network Theory, I argue that built forms should be considered beyond the discipline/resistance pairing. I show that built forms make everyday urbanism more amenable to business and economic growth, but that they also provide urbanites with new affordances and possibilities for autonomous action and self-reflection.

Each chapter can be read independently: Chapter 2 provides a general background for readers interested in understanding the recent developments of the two cities, while subsequent chapters address specific dimensions of their (relational) transformation. Traversing the different chapters, there is a theoretical and methodological ambition. Every chapter is therefore introduced by a section where I situate my analysis within a specific research field, such as policy mobility studies

or geographies of design. What I try to do in each case is to bring some added insight to these discussions, using my non-canonical case-studies as laboratories for thought. I use them to “think back” or think anew what we know about the different dimensions of urbanism addressed in each chapter.

In the conclusion, I pull the threads followed in the different chapters together synthesizing the analysis of the two cities’ different trajectories of globalization and the different analyses regarding how transnational relations generate urban change in different domains. I argue that the different comparative strategies used in the book lead us to see these cities differently. When we compare their processes of change through time, we encounter many parallels in a path from socialism to neoliberalism. When we compare their relatedness across time and space, important differences appear in the intensity, type, and orientation of their transnational relations: Hanoi’s trajectory, with its fast-growing emerging economy primarily connected to its Asian neighbors, is in clear contrast with Ouagadougou’s Official Development Assistance (ODA) supported economy and political connections with Europe. Finally, when we compare what these relations actually do in different domains of urban change, the picture becomes much more complex, not reducible to simple notions such as “economic transition” or “trajectories of globalization.” Because, when we observe what it is that relations generate, we are inevitably confronted with institutional strategies and human agency that territorialize these relations in often unpredictable ways. This form of comparison brings to the fore the effect of the hegemony of the Communist Party in Hanoi, the tensions within the state apparatus in Ouagadougou, as well as in both cities, the role of the agency of state officials, entrepreneurs, and ordinary citizens in the shaping of urban development.

To conclude, in reflecting on the two cities’ contrasting trajectories of urban change, I return to Friedmann’s (2007) plea for an endogenous urban development strategy. Hanoi’s development, in particular, and especially since 2000, is “ranking-based” rather than, as Friedmann advocates, “assets-based.” The Vietnamese government explicitly aims at making the capital a world-city, with the usual suspects of city rankings (London, New York, Singapore) as role models, and pays only occasional attention to Hanoi’s environmental and cultural resources. A more “grounded” development strategy would avoid the present rapid destruction of its natural and cultural resources. However, drawing in particular on Ouagadougou’s experience, I argue that endogenous development strategies should not be simply advocated in opposition to relation-based ones, but that we should strive for the development of assets-based “politics of relatedness.”

Notes

- 1 The book was written in Italian. A paper in English (Söderström, 2010) presents some of the book's results.
- 2 Vietnam's economic reform (or *Doi Moi*) was launched in 1986, but only became effective after the 1992 reform of the Constitution and the end of the US embargo in 1994. In Burkina Faso, economic reform, imposed by IMF structural adjustment programs, took off in 1994.
- 3 Its territory was expanded from 900 to 3,300 square km.
- 4 Despite the name, he is not a relative of the president.
- 5 But see Young (1998) for postcolonial theory beyond resistance.
- 6 This discussion echoes the debate in mobility studies on mobilities and moorings and the possible romanticization and overstatement of mobile phenomena (Adey, 2006; Söderström et al., 2013; Urry, 2007).
- 7 I return to this discussion in the introduction to Chapter 3.
- 8 Poorly translated in English as "assemblage," a term that does not convey the active work implied in assembling heterogeneous elements together.
- 9 The frenetic publication of (often interesting) papers and theme issues around the concept of *agencement* is certainly the best recent example of the worrying extent to which Anglophone scholarship is shaped by competition and micro-distinction strategies. See, among other publications, the themed issue of *Area* (Issue 2, 2011) and the four (!) themed issues in the journal *City* (Issues 2, 3–4, 5, 6, 2011).
- 10 Doreen Massey's influential work on the geographies of solidarity has been recently particularly important in pushing this research agenda (Barnett et al., 2010; Massey, 2004).
- 11 In Europe, inter-city learning has been institutionalized since 1870 through the constitution of transnational municipal networks. Those networks have been through different phases of development (Ewen, 2012): the first (1870–1913) characterized by visits to other cities to learn about infrastructures; the second (1913–1970) during which administrative practices were exchanged through associations such as the International Union of Local Authorities; and a third (since 1970) where municipalities active in different thematic networks (around energy, sustainable development, and so on) are back as the central actors of the process.
- 12 The UCLG defends the interests of local governments on the world stage. Its mission is to be the world advocate of democratic local self-government, promoting its values, objectives and interests through cooperation between local governments, and within the wider international community. Over 1000 cities across 95 countries are direct members of UCLG (www.cities-localgovernments.org).
- 13 I discuss the literature on policy mobilities at greater length in Chapter 4.
- 14 See the acknowledgements in the Preface.
- 15 I also use the term "globalization" as a shorthand for the increasing interconnectedness and interdependence of places in the world. But I try to use it with parsimony because it is often misleading. In particular, it tends to imply two things. First (as Massey (2007) argues), that the source of

economic and social change is an external and somewhat mysterious force hovering above the world and not a set of concrete ideas, actions, and connections. Second, that “the global” is everywhere, while cities globalize unevenly: they contain highly connected “islands of globality” and also areas that are very local in the way they work. In other words, interconnections create specific networks or spheres of globality (Latour, 2009; Sloterdijk, 2004), rather than homogeneous globalized entities. This is why *relation* and not *globalization* is the keyword in this book.

- 16 There is a vast literature on translocalism and even more on transnationalism. Two key references are Smith (2003) and Vertovec (2009).
- 17 The sample was constituted through the above mentioned expert interviews.
- 18 See also www.followthethings.com.
- 19 The expertise of the research team was also important here. In Hanoi, the research leader, Stephanie Geertman, had recently completed her PhD on urban change in Hanoi when she started the project and had an excellent knowledge of the 1990–2010 period (Geertman, 2007). In Ouagadougou, Alexandra Biehler, who finished her PhD during the period of the project, was our main consultant for the choice of objects (Biehler, 2010).