



Invitation  
to the 10th IRS International Lecture  
on Society and Space

## Assembling urban policy as an exercise in worlding the city

Prof Kevin Ward, School of Education, Environment and Development and  
Director of the Manchester Urban Institute at the University of Manchester

### Abstract

How are we to understand the current urban juncture, in which cities are regularly being compared and referenced against each other? There seems to be an unending number of benchmarks, measures, metrics, and rankings produced by various sources, from international and national state agencies to NGOs, from activist groups to consultants and media outlets. All seek to position cities within a global frame. In some cases the coordinates used to put cities in their (global) place are 'aspirational', highlighting certain characteristics or features that cities should exhibit. In other cases, these metrics can be 'disciplining', highlighting absences that are defined as problematic.

Cities play a central role of locating themselves in the world through their approach to the making of urban policy. Its comparative and extrospective nature is one that has demanded our attention in recent years. From aging to creativity, climate change to drugs, education to transport, urban policies in different spheres have been rendered mobile. There is work of adaptation, mediation and translation that has to be done to move policies from one location to another of course. In some cases these policies appear in a range of locations, while in others they do not, a reminder – if one was needed – that those involved in the making up of policy are not always able to render all elements of the future under their control. This focus on the relational and territorial geographies of global urban policy-making captures some of the issues facing those who lead cities, as they seek to project their cities into the world, emphasizing the imaginaries through which cities come to be positioned in cartographies of power.

Discussant: Prof. Dr. Kristine Kern, IRS, Research Department Institutional Change and Regional Public Goods



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### Vita

Kevin Ward is Professor of Human Geography in the School of Education, Environment and Development and Director of the Manchester Urban Institute ([www.mui.manchester.ac.uk](http://www.mui.manchester.ac.uk)) at the University of Manchester, England. He is an Adjunct Professor in the Department of Geography at Simon Fraser University, Vancouver and a Visiting Professor at the City Institute at York University, Toronto. His research focuses on the geographies of urban policy making, state re-organization, and the politics of urban and regional development. Author and editor of numerous books and journal articles, he is currently an editor of *Urban Geography* and next year will see the publication *Cities under Austerity: Restructuring the U.S. Metropolis*, his edited collection with Mark Davidson (Clark University).

We kindly ask all participants to register [here](#). Thank you very much.