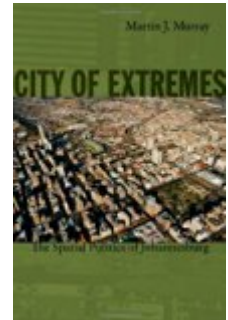**Martin J. Murray.** *City of Extremes: The Spatial Politics of Johannesburg.* Politics, History, and Culture Series. Durham: Duke University Press, 2011. xxix + 470 pp. $27.95, paper, ISBN 978-0-8223-4768-2.

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City of Extremes: The Spatial Politics of Johannesburg, Martin Murray's second book on Johannesburg, South Africa, is a critical portrait of contemporary Johannesburg, or more exactly of the spatial dynamics that have been and are shaping the city. Murray's main argument is that the inherited spatial inequalities, which used to divide Johannesburg along racial lines during the colonization and apartheid eras, not only are far from being overcome, but also have been reactivated and remodeled by new socioeconomic inequalities, generated by real estate capitalism. Built environment is thus understood as a reflection and a result of the contradictions of real estate capitalism through time. Tacking on the issue of socio-spatial fragmentation, Murray offers thus an interesting reading of the "spatial politics" that are at work behind urban forms in Johannesburg but also, more generally, in many contemporary cities all over the world.

Based on about ten years of ethnographic fieldwork, including participant observation and interviews conducted in the "city of gold" as Johannesburg is often referred to, this book is a well-documented, well-illustrated, and dense study that aims to bring together three main bodies of literature, namely, urban studies, architecture and planning, and (less obviously in my view) sociocultural geography. Building on both historical overviews of the city previously written by urban geographers and architects, such as Keith Beavon (*Johannesburg: The Making and Shaping of the City* [2004]) and Clive Chipkin (*Johannesburg Style: Architecture and Society, 1880s-1960s* [1993] and *Johannesburg Transition: Architecture and Society from 1950* [2008]), and on more specific sociopolitical explorations of the city that were undertaken by several authors in the aftermath of the end of the apartheid, Murray continues the discussion about the development of Johannesburg, after and beyond apartheid, by focusing primarily on its built environment, that is to say, on its materiality rather than on its elusiveness.[1]

The book is divided into three parts that are chronologically oriented (part 1, from the 1890s to the 1960s; part 2, from the 1970s to the 1990s; and part 3, nowadays), even though they are structured to explain current urban dynamics. Each part is subdivided into two or three chapters, organized chronologically (part 1) or thematically (parts 2 and 3). The first part of the book, "Making Space: City Building and the Production of the Built Environment," is devoted to the analysis of the construction of the city of Johannesburg as a modern city, from its establishment in the late nineteenth century to the 1960s. Stressing the continuities of the different narratives that have been producing the metropolis, Murray shows how Johannesburg has been, from its beginning, a (real estate) capitalist, fragmented, and aspirational global city.

The second part of the book, "Unraveling Space: Centrifugal Urbanism and the Convulsive City," focuses on the dissolution of the modern and even the high-modern city from the 1970s onward, due to the decline of the inner city on the one hand, and to urban sprawl on the other hand. The decline of the inner city is analyzed by Murray as a process of ghettoization, which contributes to legitimize both the development of fortified enclaves in the northern suburbs, and public and private interventions in the inner city that are supposed to restore its former glory. The latter point regarding the ways the discourses about the inner city decline are used to justify public and private actions in the inner city as well as in the suburbs is particularly stimulating. Nevertheless, the use of the term "outcast ghetto" defined as "a territorially stigmatized place that operates as a site of spatial confinement and control over those with no place in the city" to characterize the entire inner city is rather problematic (p. 149). Indeed, if the ghettoization of some places in the inner city at some point in time, such as Hillbrow, Berea, or Yeoville in the 1990s, could be patent (and even this point is contested by some),[2] it was surely not proven to be true for all the places of the inner city at all times, from the 1980s onward. Murray, in the third part of the book, refers to some areas of the inner city where private companies continuously stayed, proving that the inner city as a whole was never completely abandoned, nor isolated. In that sense, if the process of ghettoization was, and maybe still is, at work in some parts of the inner city, it was never achieved. In comparison, the process of deliberate isolation of the wealthiest suburbs from the rest of the city might appear far more advanced, even if Murray does not use the term "ghettoization" in that context. In any case, the decline of the inner city and the development of the suburbs are, as clearly demonstrated by the author, two sides of the same coin that contribute jointly to the coming of a polynucleated metropolis, which is even more socially and spatially fragmented than the functionally divided but yet relatively centralized modernist city was.

The third and last part of the book, "Fortifying Space: Siege Architecture and Anxious Urbanism," analyzes the spread of enclosed, privatized, and secured spaces across the metropolis. This trend, which reflects the fear and the antiurban sentiments of the upper and middle classes, leads once again to further fragmentation, not only of space but also of power. Three main urban forms resulting from that fortification of space are more closely looked at: "postpublic spaces," public-private partnerships, and gated communities. The case studies chosen to investigate the rise of what Murray refers to as "postpublic spaces" (that is to say, hybrid spaces that are no longer public, nor private) are particularly original (p. 216). Indeed, instead of looking at commercial places, such as shopping malls or residential areas with gated communities that are almost canonic examples when speaking of the privatization of public spaces in South African cities and beyond, Murray focuses on the creation of so-called public spaces inside office complexes. If this particular analysis of what one can call social public spaces within privately owned ones is interesting in itself, it could

have been more explicitly put in regard to the concomitant conquest of public-owned spaces by the private sector, notably, as part of the public-private partnerships and gated communities developments that are examined in the following chapters (respectively chapters 7 and 8). Nonetheless, Murray strongly demonstrates throughout this part how these fortified urban forms contribute to the continuation as well as the transformation of the past segregative dynamics. The emergence of defensive urbanism is thus seen as a way to keep the "Other" at a distance, even if the criteria on which this separation is grounded are not necessarily the same: through time, segregation tends indeed to be primarily socially based, instead of being primarily racially based as it used to be during apartheid. Nevertheless, although this point is made clear by Murray toward the end of the last chapter, it might have been clarified from the beginning of the chapter. This precision is even more needed as the rise of the black middle class and its residential mobility in the direction of the northern suburbs are not really addressed.

In conclusion, Murray stresses the fact that despite the two main strategies implemented by urban planners to reinvent Johannesburg as a "world-class African city," that is to say, regeneration of the inner city on the one hand and containment of urban sprawl on the other hand, privatization and fragmentation are still at work in the metropolis. Today as (or maybe even more than) yesterday, Johannesburg is thus a "discontinuous patchwork of fragments" (p. 327). The causes and the logic at work might be different now and then, but the resulting uneven urban forms are quite the same.

And surely, this is one of the main inputs of Murray's book: to highlight the absence of real rupture regarding the ways the city has been shaped, before and after apartheid. If the racially based organization of the city as systematically implemented by the apartheid regime is compre-

hended as an explanatory factor of the current socio-spatial fragmentation, it is never understood as the mere and only one. Mainly because Johannesburg has always been a city of capital, uneven urban development was already at work before apartheid, and is still at play nowadays. In that matter, the stress put on the analysis of the spatial dynamics that give shape to the urban forms of Johannesburg is undoubtedly another important perspective of the *City of Extremes.* It reminds us that space is not given but produced by processes that are often contradictory. In the case of Johannesburg, the succession, if not the superposition, of diverse urban narratives (such as the ones conveyed by colonization, apartheid, or globalization) in and on the city, and their resulting urban forms, seem to have all concurred in the deepening of socio-spatial fragmentation.

Still, while reading the *City of Extremes*, one wonders how to go beyond that kind of binary vision of the city that is constantly opposing different extremes (the rich and the poor, the black and the white, etc.). Of course Johannesburg is (and maybe more than any other city in the world) a "city of extremes," a "schizophrenic" city as put by Murray. But despite or even because of that, it might also be useful from time to time to look more closely and more carefully at the relations, rather than at the divisions, that exist between these different spaces. In the *City of Extremes*, it is precisely the in-between spaces that are somehow missing, but they are not the only ones. Strangely enough the other almost missing spaces in the *City of Extremes* are the townships. By focusing mainly on the simultaneous spatial dynamics that have been (re)shaping the inner city and the suburbs, Murray seems indeed to undermine the past and current dynamics that have been occurring in the townships. As shown in particular by Beavon, the mere existence of the inner city as well the suburbs was not conceivable without workforce reserves from the townships. Because Murray poorly takes into account these spaces, the spatial dynamics that are happening there (be they spe-

cific to these places or similar to the ones observed elsewhere in the metropolis) are overlooked. Similarly, and maybe because the analysis proposed by Murray is economically driven before being socially, culturally, or politically oriented, some of the dynamics that are currently transforming the inner city are not mentioned. What about, for instance, the culturally based urban regeneration, if not gentrification, processes that are reconfiguring some parts of the inner city, such as Braamfontein or Jewel City?

Finally, as a geographer, if we appreciate the quality of the maps provided, we can only find regrettable the absence of scales on those. Likewise, since the introductory sections at the beginning of each part are very useful to clarify the author's intents, concluding remarks at the end of the different parts could have offered additional insights.

Despite these reservations, *City of Extremes* is a valued book to understand the contradictory dynamics that are shaping Johannesburg today. Academically oriented, it will nevertheless appeal to anyone who is interested in Johannesburg, and more generally in the spatial dynamics of contemporary cities.

Notes

[1]. On sociopolitical examinations, see, for example, Jo Beall, Owen Crankshaw, and Susan Parnell, *Uniting a Divided City: Governance and Social Exclusion in Johannesburg* (London: Earthscan, 2002); and Richard Tomlinson, Robert Beauregard, Lindsay Bremmer, and Xolela Mangcu, eds., *Emerging Johannesburg: Perspectives on the Postapartheid City* (New York: Routledge, 2003). See also Sarah Nuttall and Achille Mbembe, *Johannesburg: The Elusive Metropolis* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2008).

[2]. See, for example, Alan Morris, *Bleakness and Light: Inner-city Transition in Hillbrow, Johannesburg* (Johannesburg: Witwatersrand University Press, 1999); and Beall, Crankshaw, and Parnell, *Uniting a Divided City*.

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