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From displacement to displaceability
A southeastern perspective on the new metropolis

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Urban displacement has become a central topic in the social sciences. This welcome development, however, appears to focus on the act of displacement rather than the condition of displaceability. *The literature on the subject is dominated by a 'traditional-critical' approach, concentrating almost solely on the impact of capitalism, neoliberalism and gentrification in the global 'northwest'. This critical paper suggests that displacement and displaceability denote wider phenomena, often stemming from different spatial logics of power. It thus highlights the need to use 'southeastern' approaches, which focus on urban dynamics and concepts emerging from non-western societies or populations. These 'views from the periphery' highlight a pluriversal nature of the urbanization process during which several structural logics, such as (but not limited to) nationalism, statism, identity regimes and struggles for human and urban rights, interact with the exigencies of globalizing capitalism to generate new types urban citizenship. Within these settings,* a shift to a prevailing condition of displaceability *and to new assemblages of urban coloniality typifies the rapidly expanding*

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southeastern metropolis and the framing of urban citizenship. The paper maps a matrix of 'displaceabilities' as an important critical analytical tool for the understanding of the changing nature of urban citizenship in the majority of world's urban regions.

Displacement has become in recent years a central topic in urban studies (Brickell, Arrigoitia, and Vasudevan 2017; Elliot-Cooper, Hubbard, and Lees 2019). This welcome development, however, appears to concentrate on the various *acts* of displacement, rather than an expanding *condition of displaceability*, which forms the focus of this conceptual paper. Let us begin by highlighting three vignettes, taken from research projects in Colombo, Tallinn and Beersheba which provide windows to a discussion on the many faces of contemporary urban displacement.

Enumeration Cards in Colombo: The 'enumeration cards' shown above (see Figure 1) are held by J.A, resident of Samagi-watta, a self-constructed neighborhood ('slum'), accommodating mainly Tamils and Muslims at the south-eastern outskirts of central Colombo, Sri Lanka. The card was issued in 1989 by the Colombo Municipal Council as part of a large urban survey. It allows J.A. and family to reside *temporarily* in the area, without receiving most urban services. Samagi-watta is one of the 1,600 sites defined by the Colombo City Council under the euphemism of 'Under Serviced Settlement' (USS). Recent shifts to privatization of public lands and a push for 'regeneration' projects (Avni and Yiftachel 2014, 498) have seen an accelerating rate of evictions. Four decades after establishing the community, Samagi-watta residents live under constant uncertainty, with real prospects of impending demolition and forced displacement.

Figure 1: Residential 'Enumeration Cards,' Colombo, Sri Lanka (Photo: Nufar Avni, by permission).

Figure 2: Russian-language advertisements, for a transport company, the tattoo and piercings, Tallinn, Estonia (Photo: Oren Yiftachel).

Estonization of Tallinn: Figure 2 shows an unofficial 'billboard' on the street of Lasnamae—a neighborhood of dreary Soviet style blocks inhabited mainly by Russians in Eastern Tallinn, Estonia (see Figure 2). The 'billboard' illustrates the informal ways necessary for Russian language advertisement in Tallinn, where official signs in Russian are prohibited since the early 1990s. These policies have formed part of the effort to 'Estonize' the previous Soviet landscape, although half the city's population is still Russian speaking (Zabrodskaja 2014). This is how Vladimir Polischuk, a Russian human rights activist, described the process:

> They removed all Russian signs, billboards and street names … Russian has been displaced from public space … They made us feel like strangers in our own city, where our families have lived for generations. (Vadim Polischuk, personal interview)

Forced urbanization, indigenous Bedouins, Beersheba region

> … For seven years now, we have been facing dozens of house demolitions, police violence and enormous pressure to move to the nearby Arab town of Hura. My uncle was killed by state authorities during demolition struggle last year. We built this community with temporary state approval. But now we are not on the plan, and have become 'illegal'. (Raed Abu AlQian, personal interview, May 5, 2019)

The violent threat to this community, on the outskirts of the Beersheba metropolitan region, is part of a concerted long term effort by the Jewish state to remove Bedouins from their communal traditional lands and urbanize them into 'modern' Bedouin peripheral towns (see Figure 3). This is part of an incessant effort to Judaize and de-Arabize as much land as possible. This has resulted

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Figure 3: Bedouin House Demolition in Beersheba Region, 2018 (Photo: Negev Coexistence Forum by permission).

in the displacement and forced urbanization of more than half the Bedouins of Israel/Palestine. These pressures are accompanied by intensifying 'law-fare' during which most 'unrecognized' Bedouin communities are declared as trespassers to their own traditional lands, laying the ground to a massive house demolition campaign (Coexistence Forum 2019; Jabareen and Switat 2019; Kedar et al. 2018).

Displaceable urbanites

The enumeration card, the Russian 'billboard', and the destruction of Bedouin homes emerge from very different worlds, settings and conflicts, operating on varying levels of intensity and violence. Yet, they are also linked by providing 'windows' to the pervasive existence of *urban displacement* as a major policy instrument. Indeed, 'heavy measures' such as removals, destruction, expulsions, but also the more subtle tools such as cultural erasure, and privatization of occupied state land, have (re)entered the language of mainstream urban policy-makers in recent years. Such displacements have almost routinely accompanied the relentless process of urbanization world-wide, and most notably what is known as the 'global southeast', to which we shall return below.

Urban displacement is defined here as the *involuntary distancing* of residents from full right to their resources and opportunities of their metropolitan region. Displacement may take the form of physical eviction and expulsion; may

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manifest in home demolition and denial of services; may suspend rights and create 'gray spaces' of temporary living; or deny residents use of urban material and cultural resources. *Displaceability* refers to the state of being susceptible to involuntary distancing from these rights and resources. According to most accounts displacement and displaceability are on the rise in most contemporary cities (see Jabareen and Switat 2019; Madden and Marcuse 2016; Rolnik 2019; Roy 2018; Sassen 2014).

This growing vulnerability, as the three examples illustrate, derives from a range of structural forces, such as rising commodification of urban land, nationalist and 'ethnocratic' urban policies, or elite imposition of their power in the name of 'law and order'. These are contested by resistance from residents, communities, minorities and democratic forces attempting to promote equal rights to the city. In previous work, I have explored the manner in which tensions and contradictions between these uneven forces create an ever-increasing presence of 'gray spaces' (Yiftachel 2015) and growing numbers of urban populations defined as 'temporary'. Gray spacing and urban informality, however, do not necessarily lead to displacement, and can often take the opposite direction—to securing housing and community rights (see Bayat 2010; Caldeira 2016; Holston 2008; Parnell and Robinson 2012). Yet, gray spacing is increasingly associated with the rise of displaceability, and with rising 'bordering' between urban populations (Lebuhn 2013; Schling 2019; Yuval-Davis, Wemyss, and Cassidy 2019), as well as widening socio-economic gaps. This typically applies to marginalized groups, such as immigrants, minorities, women, the elderly, and most recently also the young, who are driven away by spiraling land prices.

These processes lead this reflective paper to explore further—empirically and conceptually—the rise of displacement and the expanding condition of *displaceability* and how these reshape urban citizenship and regimes. In that vein, the paper converses briefly with recent writings on displacement and notes some limitations of these 'traditional-critical' positions, and then focuses on the perspectives emerging from the '*global southeast*'. It then links urban displacement and associated struggles with old and new types of coloniality through which property and identity regimes shape the contemporary metropolis. The paper thus continues the task of building up a 'conceptual architecture' and a critical vocabulary for articulating the phenomenon of 'southeastern urbanism' and the manner in which it is studied and conceptualized. This follows the efforts of scholars such as (Abourahme 2018; Bahn 2019; Jackson, Porter, and Johnson 2018; Robinson 2014; Watson 2013, 2014), while also drawing on nearly three decades of comparative research into the making of urban citizenship (see Yiftachel 1994, 2006, 2016).

The paper advances two main points. First, that the pervasive 'gray spacing' of urban regions, and the multiplicity of anti-eviction struggles should now be recognized as an emerging new foundation of urban citizenship, based on the common condition of displaceability. Second, that a 'southeastern' perspective is needed in order to account for this phenomenon, and develop alternative routes for an inclusive and just urban society, as these terms are perceived in their variegated settings. This perspective is guided by a view 'from the urban and global peripheries' and by keen attention to 'pluriversal' forces shaping urban dynamics. In particular, the paper draws attention to the dynamic assemblages of capitalist-developmental, governance and identity-gender regimes, as powerful logics

which shape in their interaction patterns of displacement and resistance. The pluriversal approach, termed also as the 'Aleph epistemology' (Yiftachel 2016), attempts to decolonize the production or knowledge, drawing on the immense and diverse experience emerging from the vast majority of global cities that lie well beyond the northwestern experiences of Europe and North America and their imageries (see also Bahn 2019; Jabareen and Switat 2019; Watson 2014).

Incomplete theorization

Rich and insightful scholarship on urban displacement has emerged in recent decades, typically interpreting urban displacement as linked to the exigencies of urbanizing surplus global capital and associated rising land prices (Harvey 2008; Lees, Shin, and Lopez Morales 2017; Shin, Lees, and López-Morales 2015; Slater 2011). In recent years, this process is closely associated with a critique of the 'neoliberal city' which has promoted large scale urban redevelopment spawning growing circles of eviction and expulsion (Sassen 2014). Under this dominant critical view, displacement occurs through a relentless process of capital investment, speculation and redevelopment. It uproots people from their homes and communities as the new form of class war and 'urban warfare' (Rolnik 2019), and as part of a process of accumulation through dispossession (Harvey 2008; Smith 2002). Loretta Lees (2016) conceptualizes a process of 'planetary gentrification'—which gives rise to 'accumulation through displacement'. Even advocates of urban 'regeneration' and global investment now observe a growing crisis of urban accessibility and rights (Florida 2017; Gallent 2019).

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There is much to the above explanations, of course, as commodification and financialization of land and housing projects continue unabated in most urban areas (see Brenner, Marcuse, and Mayer 2012; Madden and Marcuse 2016; Rolnik 2019). Yet, from the perspective of cities of the global southeast, this insightful account is incomplete, leaving too many aspects unexplained. On one level, empirically, much displacement, eviction, expulsion and deportation are propelled by forces other than capital accumulation or class struggle, including infrastructure development, security concerns, legal formalism, national identity, religious or gender domination, or environmental pressures. These forces are often related, but cannot be reduced to subsets of global capitalism or gentrification, and at times even work against the interests of capital.

Notably, the 'capitalism-neoliberal-centered' view—which has dominated the urban studies literature—derives mainly from 'northwestern' scholarship. This approach, which may be termed 'traditional-critical', relies naturally on the conditions and assumptions prevalent in North America and Western Europe, such as universal citizenship, liberal democracy, and a privatized and orderly land and housing systems, a stable rule of law, and central role of urban planning. These hidden assumptions are often overstretched to account for societies, regions and cities which operate very differently (Leitner and Sheppard 2015; Watson 2013). The dominance of 'northwestern' thinking has already been criticized in recent years by critical scholars across the social sciences and humanities, in what some have labeled 'a Southern turn' led by feminist, post-colonial and indigenous scholarship (among many, see: Bahn 2016; Connell 2008; 2014;

Lawhon and Truelove 2019; Leitner and Sheppard 2015; Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Miraftab 2016; Santos 2014; Watson 2014).

The differences between these perspectives became clear during a 2019 workshop on 'Revisiting Displacement in Urban Studies' at the London School of Economics.[1] The speakers dealing with urban regions in the Global southeast (located in Indonesia, China, and Cambodia) concentrated on displacement pressures at the urban fringe, and analyzed a range of eviction struggles involving squatters, traditional land owners, labor unions, ethnic minorities, indigenous peoples and women. There was a rich plurality of logics involved in these analyses. At the same workshop, scholars discussing northwestern cities (mainly London and New York) focused on the inner city and on a single logic of capital accumulation through urban redevelopment. This brought to light the empirical and conceptual differences between the two approaches, and also showed the need for the conceptual sophistication of southeastern scholarship to influence northwestern research.

Northwest, southeast

Let us pause for some definitions. In this essay, the adjectives 'southern' and 'eastern' denote both an empirical-geographic reality and an ethical-political perspective on the production of knowledge. The empirical reality draws on diverse urban spaces existing in the post- and neo-colonial global 'southeast', or inhabited by colonized populations elsewhere (see Bahn 2019; Lawhon and Truelove 2019; Watson 2014). The approach holds that one cannot 'theorize from nowhere' or separate knowledge from its context. Hence, southeastern theorization highlights *the degree* in which a set of what we call 'southeastern' conditions (anywhere) frame the understanding of urban society, rather than present a dichotomous opposition to 'northern' approaches.

Knowledge production alludes to the ways in which conceptual and policy knowledge about these cities is produced, and by whom. The 'southern turn' in urban studies provides a critique of the common privileging of academic and professional knowledge produced by the dominant global northwest. It is particularly critical of the way such knowledge is often portrayed as universal ('the city', 'the planet' etc.), although it draws on the conditions, assumptions, norms and frameworks specific to societies in Western Europe and North America (Robinson 2014).

Hence, 'southeastern' perspectives take urbanism developed in the global southeast (itself of course immensely diverse and dynamic) as empirical points of departure (rather than a fixed reality), from which to understand contemporary urban societies. It thereby studies the city from vantage points of global and urban peripheries (see Leitner and Sheppard 2015; Bahn 2018). Although the approach is critical of canonic northwestern theories, it mainly attempts to *add and diversify* to conceptual debates, rather than pose a binary opposition to existing paradigms.

Instead of universalist and uni-dimensional understandings, rife among leading theories of the city (see Storper and Scott 2016), it offers the analytical concept of 'dynamic structuralism' (Yiftachel 2016) alluding to the parallel existence of several structural systems which cannot be reduced into one another. This

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approach holds that the logics of these systems constantly interact and clash, creating assemblages of power, space and society which cannot be pre-determined by a universal logic. Significantly, under this approach, the 'southern' and 'eastern' adjectives may function as *temporary* signifiers, taking into account the future transformation of cities, as the examples of Singapore and Dubai starkly show.

The interaction of logics is particularly important for the pluriversal 'aleph' approach. For example, in Colombo, Tallinn, Beersheba and Jerusalem discussed above, the dominant model of 'global neo-liberal urbanism' cannot explain the very different nature of urban regimes, citizenship and conflict in these cities. Aspects such as role of the state, ethnic conflict, gender relations, ethno-class tensions, public spaces and the housing markets are vastly different in those cities, which are all putatively 'neoliberal'. This illustrates the crucial importance of other systemic powers that shape urban societies beyond capitalist urbanization.

Q9 Q10 In such structural-dynamic settings, the southeastern perspective also presents an ethnic choice, as it foregrounds the experiences and logics of marginalized populations often left invisible in the sweeping generalizations typical of northwestern theories, such as 'the global city' (Robinson 2006), 'the postmetropolis' (Soja 2002), 'the postpolitical' city', (Swyngedou 2018) or 'planetary urbanization' (Brenner and Schmidt 2015). Hence, there is no one theory of 'southern' or 'eastern' urbanism, but rather a series of meso level conceptualizations that account for the nature of urban societies in post- or neo-colonial settings (Yacobi and Tzfadia 2017), and to conceptualize from them about the nature of contemporary urbanism.

Q11 'Southern' and 'eastern' urbanisms are thus marked by pervasive legacies and the presence of colonial oppressions and inequalities and by the wide presence of urban vulnerabilities, often exacerbated and expanded by indigenous post-colonial regimes (Bahn 2019; Simone and Pieterse 2017). The southeastern perspective highlights these features of the contemporary city, while attempting to decolonize the uneven power relations in the production of scholarly knowledge, and bring into the project of theorizing the city perspectives that emerge from cultures and regions outside the global northwest (Jazeel 2017; Leitner and Sheppard 2015; Mignolo and Walsh 2018; Santos 2014).

A further move in the perspective offered here entails a distinction between '*southern' and 'eastern*' perspectives. This has the aim of further decentering and destabilizing a uniformity and binarism implied by categories such as global 'north' and 'south'. This move attempts to highlight the '*pluriversal*' understanding of urban change typical of 'southeastern'. This distinction draws on differences between the two prevalent axes of power relations: the north–south axis denotes mainly economic exploitation and stratification, the 'east-west' (Occident-Orient) axis alludes mainly to a gradation of identities and cultures. Needless to say, these are not discrete or binary economic-cultural categories, but rather dynamic 'assemblages' of domination, through which urban societies and relations have been shaped and stratified. Hence, the spatial categories echoed in these terms derive from post-and neo-colonial regions, but are also analytically 'mobile'. Hence, one can find 'southern' and 'eastern' urbanism elsewhere, as in works such as Sandercock (2003) or Hall (2017) who study European and North American cities from the vantage point of their peripheries, often treated as 'disposable' (Schling 2019). This partial mobility resembles other key

categories of analyzing human society, such as 'female-male' or 'centre-periphery', which have been often distanced from their original spatial meaning.

The importance of the southeastern perspective on displacement is further highlighted by the 'stubborn' empirical reality (Watson 2013) whereby most evictions and expulsions take place in the southeast. This reality shows no signs of abating in the face of massive, often informal, self-constructed urbanization. Yet, these practices and concepts 'migrate' rather rapidly from the southeast to the northwest, creating new realities and deep anxieties in the global northwest. Therefore, understanding southeastern urbanism is increasingly becoming important for accounting for new urban phenomena in the northwest, not least the centrality of identity regimes and colonial relations.

Old and new colonialities

Identity regimes occupy a structural sphere of power where the status, resources and visibility of groups are determined, negotiated and challenged. Yet, theories regarding the power of identity regimes rarely find their way into urban studies (see Harb and Deeb 2013). Southeastern perspectives take identity regimes seriously, as the latter draw enormous potency from an international system that links identity with sovereign national power and with the legacy of European colonialism and group essentialization. Southeastern approaches acknowledge the structural power of identity regimes, accounting for the recent rise of refugee flows, xenophobia, racial unrest and growing assertion of indigenous people and marginalized minorities.

Rather than 'celebrating diversity' as is commonly advocated by liberal and multicultural planning theorists, or overlooking categories of identity as does most 'traditional-critical' scholarship (using, among others, Marxian, Foucauldian or Deleuzian approaches), southeastern perspectives note that collective identity is a major sociopolitical force shaping patterns of urban space and society. At times, the outcomes of uneven identity conflicts resemble the remaking of a colonial city, with deepening forms of exploitation, widening ethno-class disparities, clear group hierarchies, and the construction of *essentialized boundaries* on the grounds of race, ethnicity, religious, sexuality and gender. Under such regimes displacement is rarely color-blind or purely legal or economic, as the examples from Colombo, Tallinn and Beersheba showed at the beginning of this essay. More often than not, the depth of displaceability is related to the *regimes of identities*, as formed by a combination of state, urban, civil and private forces.

As Abourahme (2018), Blomley (2003), Coulthard (2014), Hern (2017) and Yacobi and Tzfadia (2017) vividly remind us, a fundamental and persisting 'vector' of colonization underlies the workings of many contemporary cities and regions. In this process, indigenous groups have been thoroughly displaced, often through cultural and physical genocide, losing their lands, natural resources, economic self-reliance and culture. As Coulthard (2014) and Hern (2016) show, and as highlighted by my own research (Yiftachel 1994, 2017), the colonizing process continues to this very day, albeit in forms which typically exploit the more 'neutral' appearance of law (current and ancient), markets and planning.

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Displacement, however, is hanging over far wider circles of urbanites. The older system of colonization which ruptured state borders through conquest and settlement has shifted during post-colonial geopolitics and during the urban age. Colonizing forces, however, have continued in recent decades to dominate and plunder using new processes that can be conceptualized as 'inversed coloniality'. Under this process the spatial 'vector' of colonization is reversed. Rather than the colonizing powers expanding their control over new territories and groups, marginalized groups who lose their lands are controlled by colonial-like forms of exploitation and segregation (Porter and Yiftachel 2019). This perspective extends the approach found in most post-colonial theories by referring not only to the persisting legacies of White colonization, but to new formations of southeastern colonialities appearing in the 'separate and unequal' political landscape of most major urban societies, as identity regimes interact and clash with the logic of urbanizing capitalist accumulation.

Under this emerging urbanizing system, the status of the urban newcomers is often precarious and temporary, as they are subject to policies of marginalization and potential eviction. These policies are commonly rationalized and marketed using Orwellian terms, such as 'national sovereignty', 'regional traditions and cultures', or—more technocratically—'public health', 'urban amenity', 'slum clearance', 'regeneration' or 'the public interest' as perceptively shown by Guatam Bahn (2016). Lees, Shin, and Lopez Morales (2016) also demonstrate well how market mechanisms typically amplify these tensions, focusing redevelopment to 'ripe' (that is, neglected and blighted) urban areas typically accommodating peripheral identity groups. In other settings, the patterns of development and displacement often resemble 'racial banishment' (Roy 2018).

Displacement and displaceability under these settings are hence surface expressions of new and unarticulated forms of urban coloniality, recreated within the geopolitical conditions of the 21st Century. Instead of holding a false vision of open, democratic, 'creative' society held in capitalist-liberal cities (as do scholars such as Barber 2013; Florida 2002; Glaser 2012), critical southeastern scholars thoroughly examine the nature of emerging urban social relations, and trace the rise of the new urban regime, where governments, legal authorities and planners use their version of 'the public interest' to force massive relocation and displacements. This is not to say that urbanization does not have the potential, and the occasional success, in creating a more democratic and free society. Such potential does exist particularly for women, racial and sexual minorities in oppressive and religious societies (see: Tajbakhsh 2003; Sandercock 2003). However, in many cases, violent (and 'legalized') displacement has recently become a signifier of the new ways in which colonized urban citizenship is re-constructed as 'separate and unequal', under a constant shadow of displaceability.

From displacement to displaceability

Empirical documentation and analysis of evictions and displacements—important as they surely are—may not be sufficient for a new critical conceptualization of the contemporary city. I suggest here that an additional step should reframe

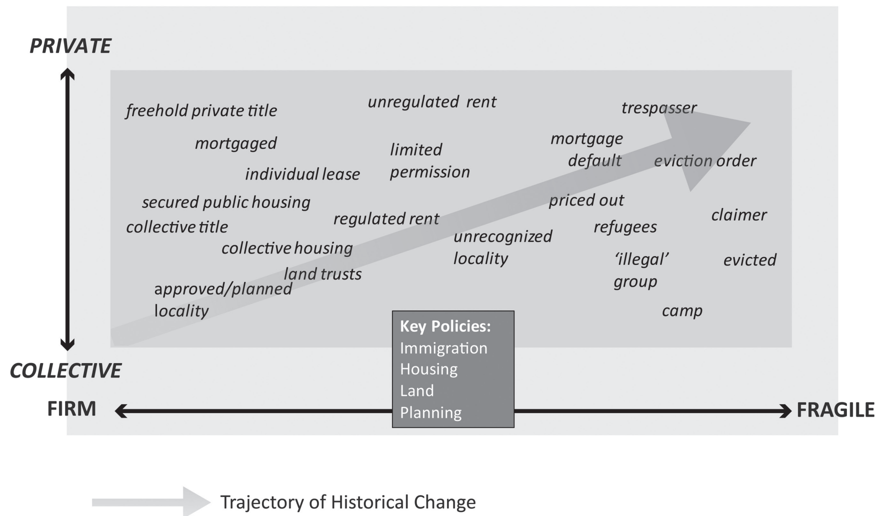

Figure 4: The Displaceability Matrix. Mapping Urban Fragility (Source: Oren Yiftachel).

the phenomenon within the broader condition of displaceability. This concept expands the understanding of displacement from a policy act to a systemic condition through which spatial power is exerted by policy, legalities and violence. Displaceability holds large parts of urban society in suspense, often living on borrowed time in conditions of growing vulnerability and uncertainty.

Given the recent global rise in housing, economic and political insecurity, this threat can be seen as a 'silent foundation' of contemporary urban citizenship (see Lebuhn 2013; Varsanyi 2006). Accordingly, one may observe that the greater the threat of displacement, the weaker the urban citizenship. Displaceability adds a critical dimension to the understanding of the 'package' of rights, capabilities and threats that make up contemporary citizenship. This is particularly relevant in urban regions of the global southeast (itself of course highly diverse); where formal citizenship is often secondary in importance to the actual, material, share in urban life.

Hence, as indicated in Figure 4, critical analysis in the current urban age may be greatly assisted by mapping the depths of individual and collective displaceability, as a framing condition of urban citizenship. The intensity of threat may also be related to diverse issues such as territorial group struggles; mortgage and public housing policies; speculative land prices, or threats of environmental disaster. The chart presents a preliminary 'sketchy; formulation, which needs further elaboration and explanation—planned for a separate paper. For the current discussion suffice it to note that the two main axes of displaceabilty are (a) property (individualized), and (b) identity (collective) regimes (see Figure 4).

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In effect, this mapping adopts a 'continuum' of approaches to land rights, which reject the binarism typical of capitalist-legal property systems (private–public; legal–illegal). This approach is also linked to policy efforts in the global southeast to respect and revive collective, non-profit systems of land organization in an effort to secure accessibility to housing and urban security to all (see also Blatman and Porter 2019; Gitau 2018; Whitall 2014).

Notably, therefore, the chart does *not* equate urban membership and security only with the capitalist freehold system of property rights, as commonly assumed in northwestern scholarship. It shows that individuals and groups may be highly secure through other urban spatial arrangements, using public lands, land trusts, controlled rents, public, council, union and community housing, as well as through tribal, collective or voluntary systems of spatial organization, rife around the global southeast. In addition, the chart highlights the importance of planning and development policies, deriving from state, urban and private entities, which can, at a 'stroke of a pen', secure, ignore or ruin entire urban communities. The mapping presents a multitude of paths to rethink, critique and amend the growing prevalence of urban displaceability.

The condition of displaceability also highlights the importance of *timescapes* to the understanding of urban society. Timescapes refer to the manner in which urban rights and capabilities relate to the valorizations and institutionalization of past, present and future. These include historical roots or claims (Degen 2019; Fenster and Misgav 2014), current possession and legalities, and future plans for urban continuities or ruptures. The study of urban displaceability, then, with its direct relation with the management of urban temporality, introduces consideration of time into the heart of spatial policies and development. This can usefully draw on the experience of southeast societies, where time is constantly debated, contested, negotiated and reformulated (Jamal 2008; Yiftachel 2016). Under such circumstances planning emerges as a key player in the shaping of urban citizenship by taking a key role in the process of 'temporal spatialization' which anchors specific times in the formal making of urban future.

A glance ahead

To close, let us return to the three vignettes with which we opened—located in Colombo, Tallinn and Beersheba. The task of critical researchers, this paper argues, is both to understand the multitude of manoeuvres, materialities and politics which frame urban displacement(s), and to conceptualize some common grounds, to enable more systematic resistance and decolonization of displaceable populations.

The assemblages of control and marginalization prevalent in these three vignettes (and thousands of other cases), the paper argues, obviate the need for a set of 'southeastern' tools of analysis of the new metropolis. Intertwining regimes, identity, statism, capitalist developmentalism, administrative governance and other structural logics combine to create the matrixes of powers, within which displaceability becomes a major tool in the management of urban space and society. The further unpacking of these oppressive powers provides a major agenda for critical urban scholars in the coming years.

Space does not permit a serious discussion of the mobilization and resistance required to combat the expansion of urban displaceability. Suffice it to note, finally, that informing and facilitating the struggle against this ominous phenomenon of massive displaceability is surely one of the most urgent tasks for scholars and activists committed to a more just urbanization in the global north, west, east and south.

Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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Note

1 See—http://www.lse.ac.uk/seac/events/2019/revisiting-displacement-in-urban-studies.

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