Crisis, Civility, Imaginaries and Revolt: New Politics for the Global City?

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Convenors: Shameem Black and April Biccum

The nineteen nineties witnessed an avalanche of scholarship on globalization. These included work on the networked nature of imaginaries, media and communication, and the material and economic geographies of global cities. Saskia Sassen drew scholarly attention to the term Global City in 1991 with her text, The Global City: New York, London, Tokyo. With the consolidation of conurbations in many regions throughout the 1980s, and the growth of finance and the global service economy, the Global City took on both an analytic hue and a status of desire signaling a new kind of geographic power in the global economy that lent weight to the idea that state boundaries were eroding in favor of new kinds of global connections through trade, services, finance and migration. In 2001 Sassen updated the terrain of engagement with her edited volume titled Global Networks, Linked Cities which examines how cities in the Global South are displaying some of the indices of the Global City previously reserved for advanced post-industrial economies and thereby generating new socio-economic patterns that threaten to shift the balance of the Global Economy.

The rise to prominence of Brazil, India, and China and the context of the Global Financial Crisis make for a real possibility that the centres of gravity in the global economy could radically shift. Cities that were previously under the radar of global-talk have entered the global imaginary via the American occupation and popular uprisings of the Middle East. Cities like Kabul, Kandahar, Baghdad, Basra, and Homs for obvious reasons may reflect the inverse of the indices of the Global City, but their nightly appearance on the evening news contributes also to a shifting global imaginary. New modes of artistic representation, emerging from both elite media and popular culture, have helped to stretch the concept of what a global city is and can be. The Occupy movements in the wake of the Global Financial Crisis have also shifted the parameters of urban civility, civic engagement, democratic politics, and resistance as they try to reconfigure the uses of public space and open the terrain of the politically possible in the name of the 99%. Indeed the Global Financial Crisis itself, with bank closures, bail-outs, the sovereign debt crisis, the threat to the existence of the Euro-zone, urban resistance to austerity and the resurgence of far-right politics in many European cities are daily challenging the notion of a Global City as the hub of globalization. This conference seeks to explore these themes and examine the present and futures of the shifting Global City. We invite papers and panel proposals on the following themes:

- Cities in emerging economies
- The impact of the GFC on Global Cities in the global north or south
- The Arab Spring and new geographies of resistance
- History and the Global City
- ‘Planet of Slums’, urban migration and unevenness
- Modern day slavery and the shadow economy
- The Occupy Movement and new imaginaries of resistance
- The role of art, literature, and popular culture in defining Global Cities

Abstracts of 300 words and a short bio (100 words) are due by 25th April 2013. Please send them to either april.biccum@anu.edu.au or shameem.black@gmail.com