

Chapter 2

The Rescaling Process of the Capitalist State and Its Attendant Challenges in Theorizing the Urban Policy Process

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ABSTRACT

This chapter does not pretend to offer an exhaustive treatment of the state rescaling process under capitalism. However, it introduces the operational logic of the capitalist state as a backdrop to understand the rescaling process, which, beginning from Manuel Castells' notion of the 'urban question', has radicalized and sired a plethora of theoretical developments in urban theory. The essay brings the concept of governance onto the scene and argues that the gaps, layers, and hierarchies created as a result of state reorganization can be understood if the notion of urban governance is successfully unpacked. In analysing the challenges that the rescaling process brings to theorising the urban policy process, the distinct phases of the policy process were analysed with reference to urban-rural mobility and public transportation, while giving credence to certain examples and experiences across Nigerian cities.

INTRODUCTION

For the modern academic community, it is conventional wisdom that the only way to understand the present is to first understand the past. It is against this background that it needs mentioning, the role Manuel Castells played in popularizing the ‘Urban Question’ in the 1970s, at a time when debates on urban problems became “an essential element in the policies of governments, in the concerns of the mass media and, consequently, in the everyday life of a large section of the population.” Castells argued that there needed to be a transcendence of the urban question above the ideological tenets of a paradigm (in this case, against the creed of the Chicago school of urban sociology) where the historical precision of the urban form under capitalism had not been fully grasped. Dismantling this prevalent urban ideology of the 1970s, Brenner (2013) reminds one of the geniuses of Manuel Castells and Henri Lefebvre in socially re-conceiving the urban system within the capitalist mode of production as having on the one hand, a scale and function dimension, and the ‘implosion-explosion’ of urbanization on the second hand. An expose on the implosion-explosion of urbanization is no doubt a distraction at this point, nonetheless, it is important to go over some salient issues. First, urbanization is not limited to the glib notion of inherited assumptions regarding the morphologies and territorializations of urban forms. Far from that, David Harvey avows that it should be regarded as a ‘spatially grounded social process with different actors, interests and agendas’ (see Harvey, 1989). These actors whilst interacting in a class-bound society such as capitalism, do so by contesting the accumulation and circulation of capital, offering the reproduction of labor power, challenging the legitimacy of state power, and opposing the hegemony of political regimes perpetuating a non-egalitarianism of class relations.

It is needless rehashing the *vox populi* of urbanization evident in the triad orthodoxy of sociological properties – large population size, high population density, and high levels of demographic heterogeneity. However, it should be pointed out that beyond the *prime facie* analytical contouring of the urban as pursued by Louis Wirth¹ in the 1930s – 1960s (see Louis Wirth’s ‘Urbanism as a way of life’²), there is a completely different narrative today as urban centers have now become political battlegrounds where power resides to control and manage the affairs of the urban. In another word, it is useful to steer urbanization away from the outmoded docks where Castells’s and Lefebvre’s theorizations harbored, towards a spotlight where the erosion of urban and rural binarism not only becomes a less useful analytical endeavor in policy making, but also a very visible one. Apropos this, the nexus between the urban and, its significance to a capitalist state becomes visible. Therefrom, the article shall problematize this relationship and then narrow the discourse to the administration of public policy in the pursuit of urban governance in a state. Consequently, the chapter contrives a scrutiny of the potential problems inspired by the re-scaling process of the state to the urban policy process from the lenses of the different stages comprising the policy process. It is this *thématique* development central to the preceding argument that this chapter wishes to pursue – via a reflection on some topical articles and research-based findings on bottlenecks to urban policy process by the re-scaling process of a capitalist state. This paper does not pretend to offer an exhaustive treatment of the state rescaling process under capitalism. However, following this prologue, the article introduces the operational logic of the capitalist state as a backdrop to understand the rescaling process which beginning from Manuel Castells’ notion of the ‘urban question’ has radicalized and sired a plethora of theoretical developments in urban theory. On this premise, the article shall engage the framework illustrated in figure 1.

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