Chapter 11
Urban Education: Challenges and Possibilities

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11.1 Introduction

As a field of study, urban education—at its most basic, education as it takes place in major conurbations, minor conurbations, or cities or towns, all with high population densities (Government Statistical Service 2016)—has attracted much interest in recent years and has usefully directed attention to the concentrations of poverty and poor educational outcomes that are characteristic of urban contexts in many countries. However, the nature of the 'urban' in urban education policy and in much of the field of urban education research has not often been theorised in any depth. Instead, the urban label has been used as shorthand for whatever manifestations of educational disadvantage happen to be prevalent in researchers' countries and seen most starkly in urban areas. This has had two unfortunate consequences: (i) superficial characterisations of urban education have led to superficial prescriptions for solving the perceived problems therein—for instance, assumptions that poor educational outcomes in urban contexts can be overcome by school reform, privatisation, and accountability-led schooling; and (ii) given that the bulk of literature emanates from the USA, there has been an assumption that the local conditions of urban schools there (characterised, for instance, by racial divides, extremes of poverty, poorly resourced schools) are the same everywhere—or at least that policy prescriptions can simply be transferred from US urban contexts to elsewhere. As a result, there has been a good deal of inappropriate 'policy-borrowing' (Phillips 2005).

To counter this tendency, there have been attempts from time to time to connect the phenomenon of urban schooling with analyses of macro-social forces, which usually means the operation of capitalism and, latterly global capitalism (see, for instance, Grace 2006, 2007; Lipman 2004, 2013). Whilst these have helped locate

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urban education in broader global and systemic theorisations of how poverty and related disadvantages come to be concentrated in particular urban places, and how they then impact on educational experiences and outcomes, they have tended to wash out theoretical ideas about how both general and particular place-specific urban processes can mediate such global and systemic forces. In effect, this has meant that either the same global forces have been held to produce the same effects everywhere or any local variations have been held to be traceable ultimately to global forces. This has resulted in the policy and practice implications of such analyses being seen to be widely generalisable or, indeed, universal, rather than specifically urban and local, with a tendency to focus on fundamental broad social and economic reform.

This chapter responds to such challenges by articulating a newly synthesised discursive conceptual argument about what urban education might mean and how such an argument should become a central way of understanding some of the similar and yet distinct dynamics of education in urban contexts in order to better understand schools' potential to mediate the local spatial dynamics out of which educational disadvantages arise and are sustained. Such an argument builds and distils a body of research produced and orchestrated by us over the last decade that has focused on both practical articulations of place-sensitive urban educational policy and practice reform (Kerr et al. 2014) and on theoretical discussions about how equity and issues of structure, culture, and agency within the urban might be best understood (Raffo 2014). In essence the broad argument developed in this chapter details a theory of the urban that appreciates the global dynamics of urban processes but does so through a historically and locally understood and articulated sense of place. Such thinking is then explored and developed through engagement with a recent empirical study of young people's educational aspirations in two urban contexts in Wales, a constituent country of the UK (Evans 2016). These urban contexts are the Rhondda Valley and Newport, two relatively small ex-industrial urban communities. We have purposely chosen to connect with this study and its locations as it allows us to exemplify, through empirical illustration, our specific thinking about the urban in the field of urban education. More specifically it allows us to explore two similar urban contexts that (a) are not urban in ways traditionally portrayed in the literature—i.e., global and internationally competitive cities—but are, in our thinking, essentially urban nonetheless and (b) enable us to show how ostensibly similar urban contexts can contribute to clear differences in the educational agency and trajectories of the young people who live there. In the final section of the chapter, we exemplify our theory of urban education in a brief and schematic way that demonstrates how such thinking might contribute to the challenges and possibilities of education in Central Asia documented in this book. We do so by focusing on educational pathways to labour market transitions in the city of Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, as a particular case in point.

The chapter demonstrates that urban education needs a set of conceptual tools that go beyond the simple description of particular urban phenomena, give due acknowledgement to macro-level forces, and also explore local variations in urban contexts that have the potential to expose possibilities for action by schools and local education systems. In developing these tools, and demonstrating their application, this chapter makes an original and significant contribution to the field of urban education.

11.2   Why Focus on Urban Education?

Education in the urban contexts of most countries is perhaps where the social inequalities revealed by educational attainment are most sharply differentiated. In these densely populated contexts, elite and often fee-paying private urban schools typically provide for students from the wealthiest backgrounds and achieve the highest attainments, whilst working in close proximity are free public urban schools, serving disadvantaged communities with significant concentrations of poverty, and where attainment is typically lowest (Raffo 2014). These urban contexts are especially interesting because of their concentrations of co-present educational success and failure as measured by attainment scores and the stark spatial inequalities these reveal between neighbourhoods nested within larger urban contexts.

   However, although these mapped inequalities in educational attainments give a spatial sense of educational advantage and disadvantage, understood in relation to children's home, school, and community circumstances, and the factors within these that may or may not support them in doing well, there is no immediate theoretical or empirical reason to believe that there is something inherently urban that explains this state of affairs. Whilst stereotypical urban contexts—for instance, poor inner-city neighbourhoods—may offer the most obvious examples of concentrated and multiple disadvantages, in many countries there are swathes of poverty and educational disadvantage in rural and other 'non-urban' locations. Even in a heavily urbanised country such as England, for instance, where policy-makers have focused intensively on improving educational outcomes in traditional urban areas, they have latterly had to confront the reality that many educationally disadvantaged children live in otherwise affluent areas and in non-stereotypical urban environments such as seaside towns (Ofsted 2013).

   All of this raises the possibility that 'urban education', as usually understood, is based on an ecological fallacy (Spicker 2001)—in other words, it mistakenly assumes that there is something distinctive about the urban that produces educational disadvantage, whereas the reality might be that the apparently distinctive characteristics of urban contexts are nothing more than the aggregated characteristics of the disadvantaged people who happen to live there. If this is considered to be the case, then, arguably, the task of improving educational outcomes for disadvantaged learners is essentially the same wherever it occurs, and a focus on urban problems and urban solutions may be no more than a displacement activity (Rees et al. 2007). Indeed, this stance has been foregrounded, whether tacitly or explicitly, in much educational policy and research, and it has been variously argued that a focus on the urban draws attention away from the challenge of tackling deep social inequalities that appear in all geographical contexts and that it presents schools in urban contexts with 'an excuse' for poor attainment. Relating to this latter argument, there is, of course, a substantial literature on school effectiveness and improvement (Townsend 2007), much of which argues that although working in urban schools may be challenging, those schools, and their leaders and teachers working successfully with children and parents, should be able to resolve such challenges, even though they may require additional supports to do so (see, e.g. Ainscow and

West 2006). This suggests that the key in even the most challenging circumstances is not to address the supposedly distinctive characteristics of the urban but to engage in rather standard educational practices for improving leadership, enhancing the quality of teaching, and developing curriculum and its assessments, recognising, however, that poorly attaining schools in disadvantaged urban contexts may need additional/concentrated supports to be successful (see, for instance, Bryk et al. 2010). All of this implies that there is nothing in the urban per se that is helpful in explaining the problems and possible solutions to educational inequalities; urban contexts are, instead, solely the spatial 'containers' (Hubbard et al. 2004) within which educational inequalities are at their most unambiguous. This is, of course, to present the argument in stark relief, and it is important to acknowledge that, for example, much research in the field of school improvement and effectiveness has developed a considerably more nuanced stance on the specific challenges facing schools in disadvantaged urban contexts (e.g. Thrupp and Lupton 2006). This is not least because the gains made in recent years through the implementation of de-contextualised improvement strategies have been less than anticipated, suggesting that context is more important than was perhaps previously considered (Levin 2008). Nonetheless, for the purposes of this paper, what matters is that there is a deep international debate about whether, in seeking to tackle educational inequalities, there is anything to be gained by focusing on the field of urban education and in trying to understand more deeply what may be distinctive about the urban in shaping patterns of educational inequality.

Based on our evolving programme of thinking and research[1] on urban theory and related ideas of urban education, we believe this chapter makes an important contribution to these ongoing debates. Over the course of the following sections, it will do so by developing what we consider to be the necessary thinking tools for helping to understand how education policy and practice in urban contexts might tackle educational inequalities more effectively.

11.3   An Overview of Urban Education and Our Engagement in the Field

Our engagement with the field of urban education over time suggests that historically this research/policy field has often started with the problems of urban schooling and then sought explanations/interventions for those problems. As we have argued (Raffo and Dyson 2007), whilst such writings have taken account of the impact of material poverty, the focus has often been on cultural processes that relate to children's engagement with and experiences of schooling. Much of this culturally inspired analysis has been suggestive of deficits in the culture of the working class

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[1] The authors of this chapter work in the Disadvantage and Poverty Research Group at the Manchester Institute of Education, a group that is also affiliated to the Manchester Urban Institute's Spatial Inequalities and Poverty signature theme.

urban poor that relate to issues such as the lack of parental support for education, lack of school readiness, lack of aspiration, and a historic reproduction of failure. More recently, we have suggested (Raffo 2011) that little of this literature explores the dynamics of the urban, in particular how macro-level structures and cultures interconnect with urban environments to create conditions of inequality and disadvantage. In particular, although such studies often articulate an urban rhetoric, they often lack a substantive argument about how the urban within a capitalist society—particularly in the context of globalisation and the rise of 'information'—is creating the conditions for educational and more general socio-economic disadvantage (Grace 1984). Although our work suggests that much of the literature in urban education has a cultural deficit default position, we do recognise, however, that there have been writers in the field who over time have taken a much more critical stance. Grace's work in the mid-1980s (as highlighted above), particularly in his book *Education and the City*, is one such notable endeavour. However, there have also been more recent studies that have explored a whole host of educational concerns in urban contexts. These include parents' classed identities in urban schools/contexts (Reay et al. 2011; Ball 2003), the workings of primary schools that are embedded in broadly contextualised understandings of the urban (Maguire et al. 2006), an exploration of the diversity of educational concerns within a global city (Brighouse and Fullick 2007), and explorations of young people's educational identities with regard to race, gender, place, and schools in urban areas (Archer et al. 2010). Many of these studies are based in the UK, and yet in many respects they are complemented by international comparative literatures on urban education. The fullest articulation of such work is perhaps best exemplified by the *International Handbook of Urban Education* where Noblit and Pink (2007, and also in the latter second edition Pink and Nobli 2017), in their introduction, attempt to synthesise conceptually some of the key issues that appear to pertain to urban education systems across the world. They recognise the centrality of globalisation and the informational society, developing a conceptual framework that focuses on the interconnected issues associated with these terms, in particular issues of multiplicity, power, difference, and capital and change, and how these can be synthesised through notions of intersectionality. In brief, their ideas about multiplicity refer to the multiple interpretations, multiple arenas, and multiple actors within urban contexts and the extent to which these are imbued with notions of power and struggle, particularly for individuals and communities made poor (Thomson 2002). Difference for Noblit and Pink relates to the way knowledge and understanding reproduce multiple patterns of difference in urban communities made poor. In particular, they argue about the disparities in cultural, social, and symbolic capital that together provide differential opportunities for families and communities to develop economic capital. Change relates to issues of migration and other demographic features and in particular the history of that change. Finally, intersectionality recognises the social construction of reality that reflects how urban life is experienced differently because of the way individuals reflect multiple characteristics such as gender, age, ethnicity, class, and disability. This way of thinking about the urban is also supported by Campbell and Whitty (2007) who, writing specifically about the UK, suggest a concentrated commonality of issues relating to urban education:

> …the dominant notion of urban education in the UK is concerned with the complexities and
> contradictions of experiences associated with the concentration of economic, social, racial
> and cultural conditions in, and surrounding, inner city schools. (p. 931)

These complexities and contradictions find specific articulations in the latest edition of the *International Handbook of Urban Education* (2017), which reveals the sheer diversity of issues and understandings currently encompassed within the field of urban education. In the contributions to the Africa section, for example, urban education is understood by most of the contributors as focusing on the extent to which schools are more or less inclusive with regard to issues of disability. In the Asia section, notions of the nation state, globalised migration flows, and urban growth, and how these relate to mainstream multicultural education and their post-colonial theoretical critiques, are much in the ascendancy. For Eastern Europe, the focus is on geographical concentrations of migrated disadvantaged people, their forms of linguistic identity, and implications for educational curriculum and pedagogy. And in Latin America, the writers focus on the urban as places of concentrated educational inequalities that reflect stark material differences between those most affluent and those most poor living in close proximities and yet being educated separately.

Important as these more specific and critical contributions are to the field, they still lack a clear focus on what it is about the urban per se that is central to the analysis of urban education. We are still left wondering how, and in what different ways, the urban becomes implicated in the concentration of complexities and contradictions, multiplicity, capital, power, change, and intersectionality in particular places—and how these relate to spatial educational inequalities revealed in urban contexts. Consequently, the field lacks detailed and robust theoretical understandings about how and why particular urban contexts are suggestive of specific classed, ethnic, or gendered identity relations and their impact on education. We also found little scholarly work focused on developing such understandings when we examined the titles and abstracts of articles over the last 10 years in the two most influential international journals on urban education—*Urban Education* and *The Urban Review*. Here again, the focus tends to be on 'problems/challenges' that relate to education in urban contexts, such as issues of race and poverty, teacher preparedness, and development for working within the urban related to issues of race, the deficit/assets of urban parents and communities, the lack of financial resources of schools in the urban, and the leadership and governance challenges of urban schools, with almost no reference to urban theory. In summary, within much of this critical urban education literature, there are precious few articulations about what it is about the urban that generates the various themes and issues that appear to substantiate the notion of urban education.

In many respects, such questions about the nature of the urban in urban education have been left to a subset of educational researchers whose main focus has not been on the problems/challenges of schools per se in urban contexts but on the ways that young people understand and engage with schooling and education more generally and how these relate to the history and dynamics of their lives in particular urban contexts. So, for example, the focus on the spatial turn in education in the work by

Gulson and Symes (2007), the development of cultural geography in Dillabough and Kennedy's (2010) study of youth identities in Toronto and Vancouver, in Lupton's (2016) exploration of young people and schooling in an ex-steel town in the North of England, and in Thompson's (2002) study of the impact of local geographies on schools in disadvantaged areas of post-industrial ('rustbelt') cities in Australia, or Allen and Hollingworth's (2013) ideas of a place-based urban habitus and its influence on classed positions of young people in urban contexts, all take very seriously how urban places, and in particular how the everyday relational/societal activities that make up urban places, which include schooling and education, are both implicated in and yet at the same time produced by the interconnected totality of people's lives as they live them in those places (Roth 2016).

Our research that has explored issues of place and space in educational policy and practice (Kerr et al. 2014) demonstrates that the latter studies highlighted above, and the many like them, are often hidden from mainstream thinking in urban education and yet are central to a deeper contextual and holistic understanding of how urban schooling might be experienced by young people in different places. This current chapter builds on our previous work and on this wealth of important complementary work but in a way that goes further and provides a set of thinking tools which are more specifically about the urban in urban education. Whereas much of our previous work, and many of the studies highlighted above, provided a thick description of the way macro-global processes come to be articulated in particular urban places, and how these are implicated in young people's educational experiences, we and they have done much less to develop explicit theorisations about how urban processes more generally can be understood to relate to young people's agency and emerging identity/personhood of which their educational practice is but one constituent element. The argument we make in this chapter is that there is something about distinctive urban dynamics in general and the differential local urban articulation of such dynamics in particular, which together help explain such patterning. In taking this approach, we are supported by writers in the field that explore education within the political economy of cities, such as Lipman (2011). Here the focus is often on issues of privatisation and markets and new articulations of race, class, and urban space in the exploration of the relationship between education policy and the neoliberal economic, political, and ideological processes reshaping global cities. However, although such writers come close to explicating the general and contextually specific dynamics of urban processes, it is still the case that the urban is viewed/utilised as particular spaces/places where global ideological concerns associated with neoliberal agendas of capitalism are played out in and through the discourses and decisions of powerful city elites. In differentiating our work from such important contributions to the field, key questions for us, therefore, are focused on what explanatory power urban theories themselves might have, firstly, to explore how macro-global forces might be differently shaped and articulated in particular urban contexts and, secondly, with regard to urban education more specifically, how these might be manifested in the specific complexities and contradictions of urban structures and cultures that then account for the way young people understand and experience education in those contexts. In developing this line of theorising in this

chapter, we also wanted to ensure that appropriate guiding principles could be derived from such thinking about how educational policy and practice might be developed in particular urban places.

11.4   Engagement with Urban Theory

In order to answer these questions, and with an end view of enhancing our guiding principles to support local educational policy and practice in urban contexts, we start by examining theorisations of the urban. In so doing we discuss: (a) what aspects of such theorisations offer explanations of how macro-social and global forces operate in urban contexts; (b) what aspects help explain how those forces operate differentially in different urban contexts; and (c) in what ways do such *glocal* theorisations interrelate with cultural accounts of the urban in explaining the positions that individuals and groups might take with regard to their lived worlds of social practices (Dreier 2008) and in particular their lived educational worlds. In order to develop our arguments about what we view as the most central urban theory(ies) to urban education, we need to connect such thinking to the history of thought in the field and in particular to its latest paradigmatic articulations. In so doing we do not claim to be exhaustive but rather note the main shifts and arguments that have given shape to the field and upon which current conceptualisations have evolved and which provide the basis for our own approach.

The early/mid decades of the twentieth century perhaps provide a key modern starting period around which an orthodoxy of urban analysis emerged. The Chicago School of Urban Sociology, and in particular classic studies by Park et al. (1925) and Wirth (1938), generated a view of the city that suggested a drawing together of a disorderly collection of socio-economically different neighbourhoods into an ecological whole that manifested particular and associated cultures and behaviours. It was premised on biological processes/concepts to the social world where the city was seen as a social organism with distinct parts bound together by internal processes that together provided a contrast to certain imagined ideas of the urban represented by chaos and disorder. It focused on the physical form of the city and human's cultural adjustment to the ecological conditions of urban life. However, in the early 1970s, such thinking was critiqued by Marxist inspired arguments (Castells 1972; Harvey 1973; Lefebvre 1970) who suggested that the Chicago school had failed to locate the urban in the study of capitalist interest where, it was argued, the urban manifested itself as the strongest functional form of capitalism that generated classed, raced, and gendered stratification. Such cultural accounts of the urban, in other words, lacked a clear articulation of capitalist power and how this concentrated poverty and disadvantage in particular urban places. Building on, and perhaps critiquing elements of this thinking, the 1980–1990s in essence witnessed the emergence of three main strands of urban thinking. Firstly, there were writers that focused on cities and difference, from the gender dimensions of cities (Massey 1991) to issues of ethnicity, race, and class (Jackson 1989; Waldinger and Bozorgmehr 1996), providing insights into the way cities spatially sorted socially

differentiated groups of people. Secondly, there was a strong focus on globalisation and its impact on the internal structures of cities. For example, Sassen (1991), in her earlier work, emphasised the formation of cross-border dynamics through which global cities began to form strategic transnational networks. Thirdly, claims about the urban focused on issues of urban governance and polities, and in particular the changing scales of governance brought about by global neoliberalism that moved the empirical focus from cities to nation states then to global, as well as understanding how the latter two were present in the urban (Cochrane 2006; Harvey 2007, 2012).

Of late, there has perhaps been a burgeoning of the field with quite distinct understandings of urban processes. In providing an overview of urban studies, Storper and Scott (2016) point to three particular urban theories that seem in many respects to sum up, and yet at the same time vigorously contest the field. These theories are generally referred to as postcolonial theories, assemblage theories, and planetary urban theories (see Storper and Scott 2016 for a detailed articulation and critical review of such literatures). Although there is much debate both within and between these broad theoretical categories, one can point to some distinctive similarities that are suggestive of an anti-foundational approach to a generalising urban theory as an overarching analytical tool for urban investigations. So, for example, planetary urbanisation (see, e.g. Brenner and Schmid 2015) in general terms argues for the assimilation of the urban into a worldwide space economy as boundaries associated with notions of the city become increasingly meaningless in the sprawl and diversity of the urban. Its intellectual origins lie with the work of Lefebvre (1970). Assemblage theories (see, e.g. DeLanda 2002 and Latour 2005) focus on a view of the world conceived as a mass of networks or finely grained relationships constituting the fundamental character of a cosmopolitan diverse reality of living that is critical of reified arguments associated with structural and cultural elements of classic urban theory. The last decade has seen the attention of these theories turn towards the urban and in particular understanding of how urban phenomena are assembled and how they might be disassembled or reassembled (see, e.g. McFarlane 2011). Postcolonial theory (see, e.g. Said 1978 and Spivak 2008) argues for an approach to urban studies that, although focused on the site of the city, is 'simultaneously provincial, comparativist and focused on difference, which in practice means particularity' (Storper and Scott 2016, p. 1131). Given such a focus on the specific urban contexts of the Global South and its diversity, much postcolonial urban theorising, even within its own terms of reference, appears unable to generate distinctive analytical understandings of urbanism that can then be contrasted to those of the Global North. Together, such approaches aim to theoretically dilute or, in more extreme forms, vanquish the analytical and foundational centrality of the urban as a planetary phenomenon and spatial reality. Each in their own way argues that the complexity and enormity of urban development and formations linked to the melting of boundaries, the hyper-diverse world of connectivity, movement, and settlement disallow such theorising. Although at first glance potentially seductive in terms of the narratives of complexity and change developed in such thinking, such theorising seems to perhaps do a disservice to people's concrete lived realities of urban life that are reflected in the urban.

Our own research in the field of urban education has over time recognised the impact of contextual worlds of different urban settings in the lived educational lives of young people and their families (Kerr et al. 2014). Our evidence suggests that young people develop culturally constituted personalities/identities that relate strongly to a concrete historical articulation of specific urban place (and its educational provision); that in many respects relates to its economy, past, and present; and that is reproduced and transformed in many ways by evolving patterns of demographic classed, ethnic, and gendered stratification that taken together connect strongly to particular forms of local urban political government/governance. Our research points to diversity in such experiences and yet a diversity that can be grouped in ways that coalesce around the specifics of urban place (Kerr et al. 2014). We argue therefore that our ongoing research requires a foundational and analytical set of thinking tools that enable us to understand more clearly the urban processes that are both common and yet particular in the lives of young people in different urban contexts. We need an overarching urban theory that helps explain why, for example, young people in neighbourhoods made poor in different urban contexts experience and understand education and diversity in different ways. Such a theory would therefore need to recognise that, for poor young people in Harpurhey, a neighbourhood of the city of Manchester, notions of structured grouped identities associated with ideas of urban multiculturalism (see, e.g. Box 4.3, Educational disadvantage: A North Manchester, case study in Rubery et al. 2017, p. 58) are likely to be more useful analytically than concepts such as fluid autonomous cosmopolitan identities linked to super-diversity that might have stronger explanatory appeal for poor young people's educational lives in Hackney, a neighbourhood of the city of London (see, e.g. Wessendorf 2016).[2] And hence this is why we have been persuaded by the work of Scott and Storper (2015) that, in many respects, provides a set of foundational tools for thinking about the urban that combines general economic theory of urbanisation with a cross cutting set of analytical tools related to historical, institutional, demographic, and political factors. Taken together, these ideas provide an explanatory way of analysing the variegated, diverse, and complex articulations of particular urban places. And contrary to some rather simplistic and, in our view, incorrect critiques of Scott and Storper's work as economically deterministic (see, e.g. Mould 2015), we see their ideas as providing for an altogether differentiated and analytical understanding of urban life. And yet, although we recognise that their thinking provides a solid and appropriate theoretical foundation for the urban on which to build our own discussion of urban education, we do recognise that such thinking does not include a specific remit for exploring how urban processes translate into the potential structural and cultural arrangements of social

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[2] The argument about differently constituted experiences of urban place, identity, and diversity is well documented by Allen and Hollingworth (2013). In many respects, such research, and our own thinking, critique Beck's argument (2011) that we need to move wholesale conceptually and methodologically from analytical notions of essential grouped identities linked to multiculturalism to methodological cosmopolitanism. What Beck perhaps fails to recognise is how urban theory can account for analytical differences in diversity generated by the differences in urban processes.

practice that are close to the personality/identity and hence agency of individuals in such contexts. In order to enable such thinking, we have added a number of sociological and cultural psychology insights that we argue enable a stronger articulation of the way individuals and groups might think and act in the urban.

So what do Scott and Storper (2015) suggest is particularly distinctive about the urban that is foundational and that warrants an articulation *of* the urban rather than simply *within* it? They suggest that there are two important interconnected characteristics or processes that are generators of much of what is distinctively urban. The first is the set of complex spatial dynamics of economic activity that are commonly defined as agglomeration. Following Duranton and Puga (2004), they suggest that agglomeration can be generally understood as an economic mechanism of sharing, matching, and learning. Sharing refers to dense local interlinkages or networks within production systems as well as to indivisibilities that make it necessary to supply some kinds of urban services such as integrated transport services. Matching refers to the process of connecting people with jobs, a process that is made easier where large local pools of businesses and workers co-exist. Learning refers to information flows between businesses that tend to stimulate innovation and that are supported by a critical mass of economic specialisation. Taken together, these properties of agglomeration give rise to powerful and measurable economic synergies.

The second is an urban land nexus which is the corollary of agglomeration. By this, Scott and Storper (2015) mean how businesses and households come to be concentrated within urban contexts; as they explain, the urban nexus contains 'the production space of the city where work and employment are concentrated, and the social space of the urban as manifest in residential neighbourhoods, typically differentiated by variables such as income, race, and class' (Scott and Storper p. 8). In addition, there is a third space that can be defined as the circulation space of the urban, which is represented by the infrastructures and connections that facilitate intra-urban flows of people, goods, and information.

Although these elements of agglomeration, land nexus, and third space provide a general understanding of what is distinctly urban, Scott and Storper (2015) also recognise a variety of contextual variables that intersect with common urban mechanisms to generate place-specific urban dynamics and outcomes. For example, they suggest that the urban land nexus is very much more than a simple aggregation of independent private locations. Individual, communal, and political actions invariably impinge upon the way units of urban land become what they are. In particular, the way in which particular urban neighbourhoods or districts develop or change over time reflects not only emerging elements of agglomeration and the associated economic components of the urban land nexus but also the way local decisions and actions about infrastructure and other forms of investments and knowledge generate particular forms of land use in the urban. In summary, the essence of the urbanisation process resides in the twofold status of urban centres as 'clusters of productive activity and human life that then unfold into dense, internally variegated webs of interacting land uses, locations and allied institutional/political arrangements' (Scott and Storper 2015, p. 10).

In addition, other current and historical institutional, demographic, and political arrangements of particular urban settings are not *of* the urban per se (viz. they are not generated specifically by the urban processes of agglomeration and associated land nexus) but clearly impact on the nature of urban agglomeration and land nexus. For example, prevailing structures of social stratification, including racial and ethnic variations within the urban, will have a powerful impact on neighbourhood formation in those contexts. Also, the scope of local government and urban planning activities will influence elements of agglomeration and the detailed spatial functioning of the urban land nexus. In a sense, the history, structure, demographics, and governance *within* urban places work in conjunction with agglomeration and the land nexus *of* those urban places, to orientate those places in particular ways.

These economic, political, demographic, and structural elements of urban contexts do not, however, fully explain the enduring and/or changing nature of what various people in urban contexts think and do. The cultural articulations of agglomeration, land nexus, and how they work out in particular urban contexts also need to be explored if we are to understand people's personality/identity and agency. To do so requires some additional thinking tools. Such tools are perhaps best articulated and synthesised through the Bourdieu inspired ideas of urban doxa and habitus. Taken together these ideas are suggestive of cultural dynamics that affect and are affected by a multitude of practices and ways of life in the urban landscape, including the formation, evolution, and persistence of neighbourhoods and the operation of local labour markets. In the sense we are using the terms here, urban doxa is specifically about the structure of urban meaning that at the micro urban level is articulated in local rules and resources and realised just as much in the daily talk of residents, as in the wider architecture, technologies, urban planning, and associations of urban life. The urban habitus—a set of revealed in-practice structured and structuring ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving with urban contexts—micro-operationalises the doxa through implanting the qualities of a city into the 'flesh' of everyday activities that makes up our lives.

In a sense these notions of urban doxa and habitus reflect Williams's idea about the *structure of feeling* (Williams 1977) of places that, when operationalised in highly localised ways through the specific and different, and yet structured, networks of activities for people in localised places, can be potentially defining and hence suggestive of the experiences that one may partake within such urban contexts (Taylor et al. 1996). In essence, this suggests that people in urban neighbourhoods in particular cities interact with one another in particular social groups and in particular places that reflect urban theorised configurations of activity systems that orientate both their being and becoming. It is these structures of feeling, facilitated by the various spatially configured urban social networks to which people belong, that help shape how people orientate and enable their lives in relation to others. Over time, this 'relational living' shapes people's particular social stance towards life.

Taken together, such notions—of urban doxa and habitus, and structure of feeling articulated through a specific cultural psychological lens that focuses on personality/identity and agency through the structured practical/concrete activities of everyday life (Roth 2016; Dreier 2011)—provide clues to the extent to which people's actions and experiences reflect an urban neighbourhood's interrelated levels of:

 (i) Relational activity (Donati and Archer 2015)—the extent to which people interact with their neighbours, participate in neighbourhood activities, develop relational goods, such as trust, respect or love, and are more open to influences from their milieu

(ii) Spatial collective efficacy (Sampson et al. 1997)—the process of activating or converting social ties amongst neighbourhood residents in order to achieve *collective* goals, such as public order or the control of crime

The level and nature of relational activity and collective efficacy suggest that people experience, to a lesser or greater extent, being included or excluded from the changing urban dynamics associated with particular forms and articulations of urban agglomeration and land nexus. Much of this is to do with how the context variables, associated with particular urban contexts, help determine particular forms of agglomeration and land nexus that either include or exclude people. The doxa and habitus of particular places in urban settings are cultural manifestations of this. They generate a structure of feeling that is then suggestive of people feeling like either *fish in or out of water* (Bourdieu and Passeron 1977) about the social possibilities that surround them. In essence, they are part of the structured social arrangements of social practice that make up an individual's conduct of everyday life that is then suggestive of individual personality/identity (Dreier 2011).

Where contextual variables of the urban interconnect to generate a more inclusive urban setting, a commonality of culture and a shared sense of the collective are possible. Where this is allied to change and growth, then the resulting sense for people from all parts of that urban context may be one of difference, possibility, and engagement (as we refer above, what Beck 2011 would term methodological cosmopolitanism). However, where an inclusive urban setting is allied to urban stagnation, this can result in nostalgia for the past and an associated set of everyday activities that generate an inward looking social stance, static, and ultimately reproductive of debilitating urban conditions—although some comfort can be achieved through strong supportive networks that are often generated in such communities. For urban contexts whose contextual variables generate exclusive and excluding opportunities, any growth potential associated with such contexts is unlikely to include all people or neighbourhoods. Pockets of neighbourhood disadvantage may then be reproduced, with particular localised structures of feeling creating extreme forms of territoriality that can set clear parameters of possibility for where one lives and what one does in such urban contexts (Beck's methodological nationalism and multiculturalism). For instance, although individuals may live just a stone's throw away from major urban economic and social investment and development, these might as well be on a different continent with regard to the extent to which individuals actually engage with such possibilities. And where urban contexts experience economic stagnation that are then compounded by excluding contextual variables for neighbourhoods, such as poor transport infrastructure and associated lack of access to local labour markets, there is every possibility of individuals' becoming urban outcasts in their own city, often pitted against one another and located in settings of frustration, volatility, and anger.

In summary individuals within urban settings can act differently through the ways in which they determine, and are determined in and by, the relations that reflect the agglomeration and land nexus of the urban—what jobs they have and where they live. The urban agglomeration and land nexus are also the result of global economic forces that are mediated by a whole host of contextual variables and historic activity. Taken together, the macro-global forces which shape urban contexts, and the ways people live within these contexts, produce a particular structural and cultural dynamic for any particular urban context. Although general at one level, this is also spatially differentiated for people living in urban neighbourhoods, depending to a large extent on whether urban structures and cultures are either inclusive or exclusive of their neighbourhoods. Such structures and cultures are influenced, but not determined, by global forces. They are mediated, changed, and evolve through the coming together of local agendas. The operationalisation of such agendas becomes emblematic of an urban doxa and habitus of a city and its neighbourhoods that although structuring, are neither endemic nor pre-given for eternity. They yield and respond in growing measure to the way people who live in those neighbourhoods understand through their actions what is and is not possible for them.

11.5   Exploring Urban Education with Regard to Urban Theory: Examples of the Rhondda Valley and Newport

In this section of the chapter, we focus on two urban contexts—the Rhondda Valley and Newport—that provide specific opportunities for exemplifying our thinking on urban education. As we stated at the outset, we have engaged with these contexts because they specifically do not focus on major cities that have become synonymous with ideas of the urban. Instead, they are regional urban contexts that have had important economic histories but that are not now at the forefront of major current urban post-industrial activity (Bright 2011). Secondly, they are also the locations of some important research conducted by Evans (2016) who explored young people's educational aspiration/engagement and transition choices in sites of broad urban similarity that yet demonstrated specific contextual differences. Although Evans herself does not engage in a full discussion of urban theory, her paper in many ways suggests to us how and why such thinking can be of importance in explaining both the similarities and the differences of urban education in such contexts. Our aim in this section of the chapter, therefore, is not to use Evans's work as empirical evidence for our theory but rather to explore some of our thinking on the urban and urban education through illustrative elements of Evans's research. Hence, our engagement with Newport and Rhondda in this chapter is more theoretically illuminative than deeply, empirically, and analytically.

Evans's paper, like our own, suggests that much urban education research offers insufficient insight into the ways in which apparently similar 'working-class' localities might nonetheless yield variations in the distinct nature of young people's edu-

cational engagement, aspirations, and transitions. She illustrates how the nuances and specificities of distinctive 'working-class' localities in Wales, at a time of global contraction of employment opportunities for the young, frame young people's decisions relating to their educational aspirations and post-school transitions. The localities are Newport and the Rhondda Valley. These urban contexts have both important common characteristics and important differences. As Evans notes, they are represented in the popular imagination as 'typically' working-class localities and are less than 30 miles apart. Although Evans does not frame her analysis in this way, we suggest important historic moments of urban agglomeration and associated land nexus for both places. For example, both places generated important dense local interlinkages or networks that supported coal mining and steel production. These systems connected local people with jobs and over time, generated large local pools of opportunities for plants and mines and workers to co-exist. There were also opportunities to continually stimulate innovation in both industries because they supported a critical mass of economic specialisation. The land nexus in both places tightly linked the production space of areas associated with work and employment to the social space of workers' neighbourhoods. These were working class communities whose urban doxa revealed in-practice through structured and structuring ways of thinking, feeling, and behaving—its habitus—were suggestive of a social stance to life that was reflected in the economic and social reproduction of working cultures and ways of living. Although clearly stratified and differentiated by class, according to Evans, these communities generally felt proud and included—sites that we would suggest are enabling of relational activity and spatial collective efficacy.

However, over time, the strengthening free international trade associated with globalisation, and various international and national neoliberal political actions, resulted in the de-industrialisation of these once powerful agglomerations. As Evans notes, both places have experienced chronic and long-term unemployment levels which today continue to exceed the national average as a result of de-industrialisation. And yet, these localities have followed different trajectories in reaching their present-day social and economic landscapes.

Evans suggests that the comparison of local economic and political practices reveals different approaches to coping with de-industrialisation and post-industrial decay. Newport's apparent success in meeting the challenge is strongly associated with a particular form of urban governance associated with a 'culture of change', what we would term a new urban doxa. Evans notes that this culture of change has been orchestrated by local economic, business, and political actors who have helped to re-organise the jobs market through an expansion of the service sector. She also suggests that the continual investment in the extensive transport networks to other cities has provided Newport with relatively greater scope for opportunities of growth and possibilities. We would suggest that these opportunities of growth and possibilities are revealed in an associated urban habitus that imbues notions of expansive aspirations and opportunities relating to a diverse economic base and its new prospects. Building on Evans's evidence, we argue that there is a palpable sense in which there is a re-awakening of much relational activity between people and a related emergent social collective efficacy for the place. In contrast, Rhondda's

slumped economic landscape is more entrenched. Evans attributes much of this to the demise of the coal mines and its physical geography, which has mediated against extensive economic investment. Today, it presents little in the way of employment opportunities, especially for school leavers. We would argue that culturally Rhondda's urban doxa and habitus—its structures of feeling—in many ways hark back to a lingering nostalgia for past industrial glory and its historical canon of routinised and habitualised practices associated with coalmining.

So how does such urban thinking explain how young people in both contexts differentially engage with education in their particular locational contexts? Evans's evidence is quite clear about this. Her data reveal broad differences between the way young people in both contexts engage in education and then progress on to post-school pathways. Building on Evans's labour market analysis, we argue that the differences between the locations reflect perhaps the broader different structural urban agglomerations, land nexus, and contextual variables and associated cultural urban doxa, habitus, and levels of relational activity/collective efficacy of each location. According to Evans, young people in the Rhondda Valley, with few employment opportunities, experienced the fact that there was little economic development in the area. No major new dynamic agglomerations were in evidence and employment opportunities were scarce. There is a sense in which the local doxa and habitus were suggestive of young people feeling the futility of compulsory education and at the same time feeling in Evans's words 'pushed' into post-school education by the scarcity of local employment opportunities. In Newport, whilst labour market opportunities for the young were limited, they were not nearly as restricted as in the Rhondda Valley. Engaging with education and staying on in post-school education was not so much the only option, but the most rewarding for securing labour market advantages in the context of recently slumped, now service sector dominated, local industry. Thus, for Evans's young people in Newport, transition to post-school education was likely to be more of a positive choice; they were more likely to 'jump' into it in order to gain advantages in the local labour market. The local doxa and habitus appeared future focused and suggestive of possibility rather than those in the Rhondda that appeared backward looking and constrained.

11.6   Opportunities for a Re-energised Field of Urban Education?

What, then, does our thinking about the urban as schematically exemplified through the Rhondda Valley and Newport suggest for how the more specific field of urban education might develop in the future? Amongst other things, we would suggest that the role of urban education scholarship has to go beyond the identification of a familiar roll-call of problems in urban education—disengaged students, low attainments, poorly qualified teachers, and limited resources—and of technical solutions to those problems, school improvement, drives for teacher recruitment, targeted resourcing policies, and market-driven reforms. The problem with listing problems

and suggesting technical fixes is that such activity produces externalisations of social life that do not capture the complex relationships between the dynamics of urban places and the ways in which the people who live in those places conduct their everyday lives (Dreier 2008).

At the same time, however, we do not suggest that these dynamics determinisi-In the case of the Rhondda Valley and Newport, we argue how macro-social and global forces—industrialisation in the first place, followed by de-industrialisation (and attempts at re-industrialisation)—create a familiar pattern of concentrations of working class families whose economic status becomes increasingly precarious. Yet what we also suggest is that how such people engage with the world can arise out of the specificities of particular processes of economic agglomeration and the land nexus. In particular, we argue how young people's engagement with, and aspirations for, their educational lives is shaped by the history of the places where they live. Such an approach offers a set of thinking tools to help explore some of the structural place and interrelated cultural people dynamics of the urban that are suggestive of parameters within which young people practice and do their education. More specifically such thinking can provide quite detailed, micro-localised understandings of neighbourhoods within urban contexts that might help explain in broad terms the differential motivation, engagement, and attainments of individuals.

At the same time, however, we do not suggest that these dynamics deterministically set the future lives of young people who live in urban neighbourhoods. Just as many of Newport's networked urban actors appeared to have engaged in strategic actions and investment that together seem to provide an inclusive sense of the possibility of change specific to Newport's urban dynamics, so too urban actors in other places might network and assemble possibilities for inclusive change and growth— possibilities that arise out of their own strategic engagements that relate to their own local urban setting. A key element in such thinking is attempting to understand how neighbourhoods and their associated educational providers, families, and young people are enabled and empowered to be central to such discourses—a sociological and cultural psychological task that focuses on the possibilities of educational change rather than on structured and reproduced educational stasis. Given what we regard as our innovative synthesis of foundational urban theory with urban sociological and cultural psychological ideas as they apply to urban education, what emerging ideas associated with such thinking might guide the future work of researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners engaged in urban education scholarship and practice?

In the first instance, and as we detail at some length, we suggest that the educational practice of young people needs to be understood in relation to the entirety of their life worlds that is strongly associated with place-based local urban contexts. We are not suggesting that schools have no influence in this area, only that they are likely to have differential impacts depending on the level to which young people themselves feel malleable to the possibilities of the mainstream educational project. And as our urban education theory suggests, educational malleability is made more possible in neighbourhoods where young people lives are structurally and culturally included in the urban agenda for economic growth. Where there is economic stagnation and social exclusion, then protective and inward-looking doxa and habitus can

become the norm for communities and young people. The educational project in such circumstances can, as much evidence suggests, become an irrelevance.

In such situations, local policy-makers and educational providers may need to think strategically about opening up channels of engagement to local families and young people, with, for example, education curriculum and pedagogy projects that focus on issues that are pertinent to their lived lives (Archer et al. 2018; Cremin et al. 2015; Gonzalez et al. 2005) and that build on the assets of local people and neighbourhoods. It may also be about creating authentic work experiences and progression pathways for young people that relate explicitly to labour market opportunities in the area and beyond (Hodgson and Spours 2013), that build on information and guidance systems that speak to a local vernacular, and that are deeply informed by local debates about employability (Williams et al. 2015). But it is also about a fairer redistribution of resources that recognises how the challenging physical environments associated with general urban poverty and deprivation impact on young people and their families' opportunities to be and do (Pinoncely 2014). Together, these types of approaches amount to much more than the type of the de-contextualised professionally orientated multi-agency working that formed a core part of many *within* but not *of* urban area based approaches in the UK and beyond—approaches that at best were only partially ameliorative with regard to narrowing the educational attainment gap (Raffo et al. 2014). However, in documenting such educational strategies, we are not claiming originality. Such approaches are already deeply embedded in field specific literatures that have explored the possibilities of different types of community focused and labour market-related pedagogies and curricula in particular types of school contexts. Our contribution instead is to suggest that a more developed notion of urban education as we have argued in this chapter has the potential to shape and advance the field by turning it from a potentially portmanteau term for a loosely related collection of themes—but without any real conceptual meaning—to something which has a unifying conceptual core through which to understand the diverse issues concentrated within particular urban contexts. It is these understandings that then have implications for how educational policy and practice might balance both universal and locally tailored approaches. In other words understanding, for example, the dynamics of economic stagnation and social exclusion for a particular urban context through the utilisation of our thinking tools therefore suggests particular forms of urban education such as those documented above to be effectively articulated and appropriately implemented. It goes without saying, therefore, that a differently configured set of urban dynamics as outlined by our theory may then be suggestive of a different cocktail of educational interventions that are theoretically and empirically more in-keeping with such contextual requirements.

And so, finally to how such thinking might be of use in exploring the challenges and possibilities of urban education within the context of this edited collection on education in Central Asia. The limitations of space means that this section will necessarily be brief and schematic but should provide enough broad detail about how our general theory can be put to use and therefore guide more systematic and extended research in such contexts in the future. Our choice of a Central Asian

urban context for an exploratory utilisation of our urban education theory is Bishkek, the capital of Kyrgyzstan. A brief historical survey of the city suggests that in the early 1940s, Bishkek's agglomerated economic activity focussed on food processing and other light industries using local raw materials. The land nexus was based on planned urban housing development closely tied to those industries. After heavy industries were evacuated from western Russia during World War II, Bishkek specialised in machine-building and metalworking industries, attracting a planned and limited migrated labour. What is very important to note here is that during this Soviet era, Bishkek's (then known as Frunze) governance ensured that it was a predominantly 'Russian' city, meaning that at the time of the last Soviet census in 1989, almost two thirds of the population were 'Europeans', i.e. of Russian, Ukrainian, German, etc., ethnicity.

However, post the breakdown of the Soviet Union in 1991, Bishkek in line with many other cities across Post-Soviet Central Asia experienced radical de-industrialisation with most of its factories being shut down or operating today on a much-reduced scale. With the privatisation of the economy, Bishkek became the country's financial centre, also home to its largest employer, Dordoy Bazaar, one of Central Asia's main retail and wholesale markets, and a major route for imported Chinese goods. However, such economic activity does not necessarily represent the city as a whole with clear signs that its formal economy is struggling to develop, hampered by low levels of agglomeration and with a burgeoning growth of small scale businesses within the informal sector.

At the same time, Bishkek has experienced significant inflows of internal ethnic migrants seeking to escape the challenging post-Socialist conditions in their neglected rural areas to find a better life in the urban domain. This oversupply of potential labour in the city over time has resulted in heavy burdens on the city's infrastructure, generating tensions and exclusions in the city around housing and health provision in particular. As Schröder's ethnographic study of Bishkek demonstrates, there are still 'stigmas of violation and violence' (Schröder 2016, p. 150) demonstrable through a demarcated urban space, with city elites, including both a minority of long-standing ethnic Kyrgyz families and a majority of established 'European' immigrants, located in the centre of the city and experiencing many of its urbane accruements living in close proximity to marginalised poor rural migrants located on the outskirts of the city. This stratification is further compounded by a labour market that is demarcated by a relatively small number of relatively well paid and secure professional service sector jobs and a contrasting large pool of low skilled, insecure and poorly paid support service activity often located within the informal economy of the city.

So how do the current urban constitution of Bishkek and its past legacy impact on the workings of its education system? Certainly the general importance given to education that in many respects derives from the Soviet era and its relatively high levels of investment in education, is beyond the urban, and is evident amongst the general populace of Kyrgyzstan (Schröder this volume), particularly at elementary/secondary stages of education. However, the currently constituted post-secondary education and training pathways appear to be less credible for many within Bishkek.

So although there are strong vocational strands embedded in the education/training offers that relate to industry specific skills, these do not necessarily provide the essential requirements to access the equivalent jobs in the labour market. Higher education within the city also presents similar challenges. There is evidence to suggest, instead, that access to the more prestigious jobs, although related to the holding of particular educational qualifications, is perhaps as strongly contingent on the manifestation of a particular element of an urban doxa and habitus that privileges both the cultural capital—reflected strongly in the fact that the role of the Russian language is still very significant—and social capital held by particular individuals connected to processes of elitist nepotism within the city (Bauman et al. 2013; Roberts et al. 2009).

This has embedded repercussions for classed and ethnic intergenerational reproduction and social stratification in the city, perhaps most clearly exemplified by the way that many marginalised and migrant ethnic Kyrgyz young people with low levels of 'connected' social and cultural capital often work in fields unrelated to their qualification and/or at a much lower level of skill/job activity than their credentials would suggest. Over time, such challenges have given rise to a general dissatisfaction with such education/training programmes evidenced by their relatively high dropout rates. And so Bishkek's urban economic and social arrangements that in essence reflect a particular economic history and related forms of cultural doxa and habitus, are indicative of how social practices, in this case education, are understood and experienced by many of its young people. For those most marginalised by the urban processes and realities of Bishkek, the unintended consequence is that the educational and training project appears to become somewhat redundant in their lives as the more challenging realities of making the transition from education to work become ever more apparent.

11.7   Conclusion

In conclusion, this chapter has argued for the importance of foundational urban theorising, appropriately contextualised, as a way of understanding the social, economic, and cultural foundations upon which young people and urban schooling operate. More specifically our arguments represent what Roth (2016) suggests is a systemic shift or development in thinking in the field (rather than one of incremental change), in that what we present is a new discursive synthesis of foundational urban theory, urban-infused notions of doxa/habitus/structures of feeling and a focus on the micro conduct of everyday life that is facilitated by a core focus on relational activity. We have demonstrated how such ideas together build and extend the work of social and cultural geography and the spatial turn in ways that articulate more strongly the urban and therefore provide a more complete and nuanced set of thinking tools for exploring urban education. Such theorising provides opportunities for appreciating historic and emerging articulations of the way people, businesses, and structural institutions are located and positioned relative to one another.

Complementary understanding of the structures of feeling of urban neighbourhoods then locates a sense of young people's educational experiences and conduct of everyday life more generally in relation to these local structures and cultures. Importantly for local educational policy and practice, such thinking provides an overarching framework for exploring how local agents and services can be developed to respond to these detailed contextual urban realities in distinctive and particular ways. The thinking tools developed in this chapter are therefore significant in their potential to 're-energise' the international field of urban education; and whilst we have purposely used two internationally relatively unknown urban contexts in Wales as illustrative examples in this chapter, such examples point to the theoretically generalisable nature of our ideas that are evident in our brief schematic focus on the very different city of Bishkek and the workings of its education system. Without the kinds of theorisations presented here, urban education will continue to fail to provide the tools of analysis for an educational policy and practice that can have true leverage in bringing about more equitable educational outcomes for all young people.

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