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<ATL>KNOWLEDGE OF METROPOLITAN GOVERNANCE IN THE SOUTH</ATL>

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<H1>Abstract</H1>

<ABSTRACT>The practices of metropolitan governance in the South are normalized and legitimized through the workings of a 'knowledge market' that has evolved at an extraordinary juncture between geopolitical and technological transformations. This essay describes the packaging and management of knowledge since the early 1990s, a period which has seen increasing references to concepts such as 'public-private partnerships', 'new public management' (NPM), 'metropolitan governance' and 'best practice'. It explains the shift in terms of the coinciding dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, which removed the brakes on 'neoliberal policy programmes', and the practicability of using the web for knowledge management. Accompanying the 'metropolitan renaissance' since the early 1990s, NPM theory provided support for private sector-style management of formerly public services and the claimed 'global trend' of decentralization of those services. The essay subsequently explains how, since the early 2000s, knowledge exchange relevant to metros in the South has also arisen from participation in transnational municipal networks (TMNs). Knowledge exchange has become more geographically complex, including learning across sites in the South. A policy discourse once dominated by global agencies and national governments now primarily takes the form of global agency knowledge transfer via the web and participation in TMNs.</ABSTRACT>

There has been considerable discussion in the pages of this journal regarding the ways in which knowledge about cities should be produced. Recently, much of the debate has focused on the value and limitations of comparative study extending beyond the

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traditional foci on high-income countries constituting the North (see e.g. Scott and Storper, 2015; Robinson and Roy, 2016). <FN1> While this debate continues, the actual knowledge informing the policies and practices adopted by particular cities in low- and middle-income countries of the South is drawn almost overwhelmingly from confident assertions of 'best practice' (or equivalent wording) by 'certifying agencies' such as the World Bank, UN Habitat and Cities Alliance, and transnational municipal networks (TMNs) like the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Group (C40) and United Cities and Local Governments (UCLG). However, while we draw attention to this apparent disjuncture between academic writing and actually existing knowledge exchange, we emphasize the need for scholars to propagate alternative modes of knowledge production and transfer, including forms of comparative study that engage more meaningfully with context and variation than simple assertions of best practice can ever do.

The web has become a vital means of transmitting the packaged knowledge of best practice, although its role is still surprisingly neglected in the literature on knowledge and policy transfer. For example, in *Fast Policy*, Peck and Theodore (2015) do not consider the fastest of all methods of knowledge transfer, namely the web and social media. This essay explores 'knowledge products' relevant to Southern metropolitan governance in this (mainly) web-based process of knowledge transfer, drawing implicitly on the experiences of one author as a former official within metropolitan government, and the other as a longstanding consultant to government on urban policy. The three areas of substantive focus in this essay are the role of the web in facilitating knowledge transfer; ideas of NPM which originated in the North and have had varying effects in the South; and the more recent rise of TMNs as a vehicle for knowledge certification and transfer. TMNs are increasingly structured so as to give greater voice than before to cities in the South, but they are closely tied to agencies such as the World Bank and UN Habitat, and thus contribute to the 'downward' dissemination of the accepted conceptions of best practice, albeit (arguably) in a more contextually informed way.

After illustrating the rise of a new knowledge (near) hegemony, the essay argues that the dissemination and packaging of this knowledge occurred at the confluence of geopolitical transformation which included, most importantly, the dissolution of the Soviet Union in 1991, the rise of 'neoliberal' policy prescriptions and the practicability of using the web for knowledge management (Tomlinson, 2010; 2013; 2015). Reflecting the timing of these changes, 'it was not until the early 1990s that a genuine post-Keynesian, neoliberalized global rule-regime was consolidated' (Brenner *et al.*, 2010: 338).

This was reflected in the origins, evolution and dissemination of NPM theory, first clearly articulated in the early 1990s (Hood, 1991). Since then, there have been further geopolitical transformations, including the economic rise of (parts of) the South and the emergence of social media. In this context, TMNs with fairly strong participation from some cities in the South have emerged as a platform for sharing best practices (Harrison, 2014).

The conjoining processes we refer to have been far-reaching but are, of course, more complex and geographically variant than can be described in a short essay. This is the

case, for example, with the spread of neoliberalism, the emergence of NPM and the rise of the South, with even the spread of the web and social media occurring unevenly (e.g. China's bar on Google). As we show, the idea of neoliberalism (whether deployed by its supporters or critics) surged from the early 1990s. It was foreshadowed by Hobsbawm's (1994) *Short Twentieth Century* (starting in 1914 with the first world war and ending in 1991 with the dissolution of the Soviet Union) and Fukuyama's (1992) *End of History* (charting the demise of the socialist alternative and the seeming hegemony of Western liberal democracy). Since being popularized as a concept in the 1990s, neoliberalism has received massive scholarly attention. It is generally characterized in terms of a 'reduction of government role in the economy' (Krugman, 2004), the marketization of service delivery (Camilleri and Falk, 2009) and the narrowing of knowledge to support these ends (Olssen and Peters, 2005). However, recent scholarship highlights the variegated forms that neoliberalism takes in practice, the limitations of the concept in explaining micro-processes, the way in which neoliberalism interacts with other logics and practices, and the over-dependence of theories of neoliberalism on cases including the United States and United Kingdom (Brenner *et al.*, 2010; Pinson and Morel, 2017). Similarly, as we will show, the related theories of NPM have been less coherent than initially supposed.

The 'rise of the South' is similarly a complex matter, given the huge and growing differentiation across the so-called South (a category which includes, for example, both the economic powerhouse of the People's Republic of China and the extremely marginalized Central African Republic). In terms of metropolitan governance, we may, for example, refer to the rise of the South using recent data which suggests that 47 of the world's 50 fastest-growing cities are in the South, although concentrated mainly in Africa and South/East Asia (Oxford Economics, 2016). In economic terms, however, the picture is less clear, with 34 of the anticipated 50 fastest-growing cities located in the South, of which 29 are in China and neighbouring Southeast Asia (*ibid.*).

We proceed from these qualifications, and a recognition of the need to go beyond the broad introduction above, to the specificities of different places. This essay first demonstrates the coinciding sharp increase during the early 1990s of reference to knowledge management and knowledge transfer, neoliberalism, PPPs, governance, NPM and so on, using Google Ngram Viewer. Google Ngram Viewer is 'an online graphing tool which charts annual counts of words or sentences as found in the largest available corpus of digitalized books' (Roth, 2014: 34). Google is seeking to digitize all the books ever published. The initial five collaborating libraries were the Harvard, Michigan, Stanford and Oxford university libraries, plus the New York Public Library. Google Ngram Viewer refers to books published, not searches for those books, identifying the mention of words or phrases in books 'in American English, British English, French, German, Spanish, Russian, Hebrew, and Chinese', while statistically adjusting for the fact that more books are published now than hitherto.

Next, as noted, the academic backdrop to explaining and formulating changes in urban governance from the 1990s is largely to be found in NPM theory. Key elements of

NPM include a private sector style of public management, decentralization of public services, competitive delivery of these services, a strong centre featuring separation of strategy and operations, performance management, and controls exercised through the setting of standards and measuring of outputs (Dunleavy and Hood, 1994; McLaughlin and Osborne, 2002).

The essay then turns to the period from the early 2000s, which has seen knowledge exchange between cities in the North and South within TMNs and, at the same time, TMNs increasing references to best practices on their websites. This period also reflects the emergence of 'middle powers' with, for example, O'Neill's (2001) introduction of the acronym BRICs for those countries comprising the emergent economic powers—Brazil, Russia, India and China (BRIC becoming BRICS when South Africa joined in 2010). It is BRICS cities, along with those in Mexico and Turkey especially, that have led the way in participating within TMNs. Some of the TMNs are sector-specific: for example, C40 is a network of large and engaged cities from around the world that address climate change; others pursue a number of initiatives, such as the World Association of the Major Metropolises (Metropolis); while others have a very specific agenda to increase the 'role and influence of local government', notably UCLG. Knowledge sharing within TMNs seldom constitutes an alternative to the World Bank or UN Habitat representations of best practice. Indeed, some TMNs are closely aligned with the World Bank and UN institutions. At the same time, there are indications that, in articulating the voice of city governments, TMNs are introducing a change of orientation in policy discourse, possibly diminishing the role of national governments.

<H1> Knowledge of metropolitan governance in the South since the 1990s </H1>

As noted, the context for framing alternative policies was shaped by the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the loss of credibility for a socialist alternative and a neoliberal future already charted during the Thatcher and Reagan era, together with the rise of 'state dirigisme' in countries like China and Russia. While there is a great deal of empirical complexity, the rise of a new discourse on governance and development is clear. The displacement of 'socialism' by 'neoliberalism' in the literature is evident in Figure 1, with reference to socialism declining sharply during the 1980s and 1990s, and reference to neoliberalism increasing exponentially early in the 1990s.

<INSERT FIGURE 1 HERE>

At the same time that reference to neoliberalism increased rapidly, so did reference to 'the web', 'searching the web', 'knowledge management', 'knowledge products' and 'best practice'. Reference to 'social media' and 'googling' increased a decade later, and 'social media' was soon incorporated into knowledge management (Tomlinson, 2015). It

was at this time that the web (Figure 2) made it possible to imagine managing knowledge globally (Figure 3).

<INSERT FIGURES 2 & 3 HERE>

Although the rise of the web came with the promise of more open and democratic access to (diverse sources of) knowledge, a number of studies suggest that there is a coverage bias in web searches (Introna and Nisselbaum, 2000; Pan *et al.*, 2007; Vaughan and Zhang, 2007). While users typically trust the rank position of sites in search outcomes, institutions with technical and financial resources are able to position their sites favourably in search rankings. In fact, relative to the size of the web a very small proportion of sites dominate the top rankings (Vaughan and Thelwall, 2004; Tomlinson *et al.*, 2010). For Introna and Nisselbaum (2000: 692) the 'politics of the search engine matters', while Van Dijck (2010) argues that knowledge is co-produced by the profiling and ranking systems of search engines in ways that are concealed to the user.

As the web has become increasingly central to knowledge management in urban governance, so the hidden bias of search engines has come into play. Arguably, the World Bank is especially to be credited with the evolution of the role of the web and social media in knowledge transfer for cities in the South. In 1996 the president of the World Bank, James D. Wolfensohn, recast the institution as a 'knowledge bank' that would use the ever-expanding reach of information and communication technology to provide city managers, policy professionals and others 'with the right kinds of knowledge' (cited in Riggiorozzi 2007: 210). Wolfensohn (1999) wrote that the World Bank should support '[p]roactive knowledge management', with the apprehension that poor access to the web will lead to 'knowledge gaps'. The World Bank Institute (2010: 4) subsequently claimed that: 'We develop knowledge exchange services to over 3,000 cities to help city managers deliver public services through innovative financing mechanisms and public private partnership (PPP) structures, while also sharing best practices'.

Through search engine optimization, Google made it possible for an institution or a handful of like-minded institutions to dominate the first few results pages (Tomlinson, 2015). Thus it has been previously demonstrated that, in the case of urban issues in the South, it is the World Bank, UN-Habitat and the Cities Alliance that dominate the first results page of a Google search (Tomlinson *et al.*, 2010). Further to the point, searching the web together with hyperlinks enables the institution to lead the searcher along a knowledge pathway; for example, from 'slum upgrading' to 'urban land markets', to 'PPPs' and on to the multi-donor Public-Private Infrastructure Advisory Facility. This body 'was created in 1999 to act as a catalyst to increase private sector participation in emerging markets [in] the provision of basic infrastructure services'. <FN2> (It is worth noting that large cities provide an attractive market for privatization or PPPs, due to the scale of

projects involved in the delivery of water and sanitation, transport, energy and certain other services.)

Reference to metropolitan governance, PPPs and NPM similarly increased exponentially in the early 1990s, with reference to 'civil society' also increasing sharply (Figure 4). PPPs are the predominant form of private sector engagement in services previously delivered by government, with the World Bank publishing a *Public-Private Partnerships Newsletter*.

<INSERT FIGURE 4 HERE>

The decentralization of public services, coupled with revised roles for the public and private sectors and civil society, explain the 'renaissance' of, and 'experiments' with, metropolitan government and governance (Lefevre, 1998: 16). However, Lefevre had cities of the North in mind. Countries in which there have been experiments, or with experiments underway, include Austria, Belgium, Canada, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Finland, France, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, the UK and the USA (see Salet *et al.*, 2003; Kubler and Heinelt, 2005).

In order to obtain a more wide-ranging impression of metro reforms during the 1990s, the World Bank's (1999) *Entering the 21st Century World Development Report 1999/2000* is helpful. Referring to decentralization, localization and governance rather than metropolitan governance *per se*, it is noted that 'Sustained development requires institutions of good governance that embody transparent and participatory processes and that encompass partnerships and other arrangements among the government, the private sector, nongovernmental organizations, and other elements of civil society' (*ibid.*: 14) and that there is 'around the world' a "'quiet revolution" in local governance' (*ibid.*: 145). Governance reforms generally, and governance reforms in cities specifically, are perceived as integral to entering the twenty-first century.

<H1>NPM and knowing what is best</H1>

NPM 'is used mainly as a handy shorthand, a summary description of a way of reorganizing public sector bodies to bring their management, reporting, and accounting approaches closer to (a particular perception of) business methods' (Dunleavy and Hood, 1994: 9). The origins of NPM have been traced primarily to ideological transformations in the United Kingdom, although the North American influence is acknowledged, and links have been established with governance reforms in Australia and New Zealand (Barzelay, 2002; McLaughlin and Osborne, 2002).

In the UK, the Thatcherite ideologies of the 1980s supported the rise of business-oriented forms of public management and, by the early 1990s, a cluster of new organizational best practices had been identified and labelled as NPM (Hood, 1991; 1994).

Subsequently, the modernizing agenda of Blairite 'New Labour' brought greater coherence to the emergent doctrine of NPM, but also some significant shifts. For example,

while early versions of NPM were associated with the marketization of public services, the Labour government (elected in 1997) emphasized the public management of complex networks of service delivery which included public and private agents (McLaughlin and Osborne, 2002). NPM as a best practice helped depoliticize public policy—Labour's 1997 manifesto said 'what matters is what works'—and, not coincidentally, use of the expression 'policy wonk' was increasing exponentially at this time.

NPM spread rather quickly across the globe, achieving virtual dominance in public management thought by the early 2000s. A strong channel of influence was the 'Third Way' political leadership of the period, including, for example, Tony Blair in the UK, Bill Clinton in the USA, Gerard Schröder in Germany, Romano Prodi in Italy, Thabo Mbeki in South Africa and Lula da Silva in Brazil (Harrison, 2006).

There were also strong global organizational advocates for NPM, including the World Bank, IMF and OECD (McLaughlin and Osborne, 2002). The significance of these organizations is apparent from googling 'world bank' 'new public management' 'best practice', which produced 55,100 results (27 November 2017). NPM had a major impact in the South, with NPM-related reforms identified across all scales of government in countries including Brazil (Andrews and Kouzmin, 1999), Chile (Casetti, 2014), Colombia (Caballero-Lozada and Nieto-Gómez, 2015), India (Prasad *et al.*, 2008), Pakistan (Zia and Khan, 2013), Thailand (Mongkol, 2012), Malaysia (Khalid and Nabiha, 2008), Singapore and Hong Kong (Lee and Haque, 2006), Nigeria (Philip and Daganda, 2013), South Africa (Chipkin and Lipietz, 2012) and Egypt (Hassan and Sarker, 2012).

NPM was a doctrine and set of best practices that emerged within specific centres of political, organizational and intellectual influence in the global North, in response to perceived inefficiencies of traditional public management; in the process of popularization and diffusion, however, NPM lost some of the coherence that it may have had (Gruening, 2001; Hood and Peters, 2004). Some writers point, for example, to significant differences in the application of NPM between the West and Asia (Lee and Haque, 2006), and between different countries in Asia (Samaratunge *et al.*, 2008), or to very selective application of NPM in some countries (Monkol, 2012).

NPM has clearly left a major legacy in terms of thought and practice, but the concept is waning, with various competing and hybridized approaches entering its space. This includes the arguably more inclusive notion of new public governance (NPG), which emphasizes networks, partnerships and voluntary mechanisms of cooperation, rather than the managerial and hierarchical approaches of NPM (Osborne, 2006; Hyndman and Liguori, 2016) (using Google Ngram Viewer, reference to new public governance increased exponentially, beginning in 2000–01). In a similar vein, the World Bank (2012) published on the web *The World Bank Approach to Public Sector Management 2011-2020*, mentioning NPM only in passing.

<H1>The TMN route to what city managers and urban policy professionals know</H1>

There is a long history of municipal associations in North America and Europe, but from the 1980s a new generation of associations emerged, characterized by their transnationalism and the extent to which they linked city government across the scales of governance to global forums (Toly, 2008; Kern and Bulkeley, 2009). Davidson and Gleeson (2015: 16) argue, for example, that the earlier 'municipal voluntarism' has evolved into a 'strategic urbanism' that mainly takes the form of networks of globally powerful cities. While municipal voluntarism was associated almost exclusively with urban networks in North America and Europe, the goals and practices of strategic urbanism are at least partly dispatched by TMNs in which cities of the global South play an increasingly significant role. While Boutlieger (2013) correctly points to the continued inequalities between North and South within TMNs, there are a handful of cities in the South which have an influential presence in new-generation TMNs such as Metropolis, UCLG, ICLEI — Local Governments for Sustainability and C40 Cities. The North–South balance is, however, not a simple matter; while key cities in the South have increased their representation in TMNs as members and as political office holders, the secretariats remain dominated by cities in the North. The internal workings of TMNs and the actual balances of interests and power require detailed study.

Metropolis, an alliance of the world's major metropolitan cities, was founded in 1985 at the initiative of the president of the Regional Council of Île-de-France. Among the 14 founding cities were, in fact, a number from the South—Addis Ababa, Abidjan, Buenos Aires, Colombo, Cairo and Mexico City. Metropolis was nevertheless dominated by the North, with the major supporting cities being Île-de-France, Montreal and Barcelona (where the organizational headquarters were established). The rising involvement of cities in the middle-ranking countries of the South was indicated, for example, at the Metropolis summits in Porto Alegre (2011), Guangzhou (2012), Johannesburg (2013) and Hyderabad (2014). In an attempt to create a degree of geopolitical balance, Metropolis elected three co-presidents each from North and South (namely the mayors of Barcelona, Berlin, Montreal, Johannesburg, Guangzhou and São Paulo). The secretariat, however, remains dominated by the founding cities in the North (Metropolis, 2016).

The UCLG convenes the World Assembly of Local and Regional Governments and is the closest to a formal city government representative body among world forums. The process of establishment began in the 1990s with the UN-supported World Associations of Cities and Local Government Coordination, which lobbied hard for a UN-recognized world assembly of local government. UCLG was eventually founded in Paris in 2004, with the ambitious intention of gaining direct representation for cities in the UN General Assembly. UCLG is headquartered in Barcelona but, in common with other TMNs, the influence of the South has increased over the past decade. Kadir Topbaş, mayor of Istanbul, was elected president of UCLG in 2007, and the former mayor of Johannesburg, Parks Tau, was elected to this position in October 2016, with co-presidents from Guangzhou and Quito (this last city hosting the Habitat III conference at that time). The secretary-general, however, is from Barcelona (Salomon and Sanchez, 2008; UCLG, 2016).

While Metropolis and UCLG have a broad mandate to strengthen the role of cities within global structures, there are also TMNs of a global reach that are thematic. Most important are those which have a focus on urban sustainability and especially on climate change. The early 1990s was the moment when an ideology of decentralization to local government coincided with rising global concern about climate change, as symbolized, for example, in the adoption of *Local Agenda 21* at the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (the 'Rio Earth Summit'). In 1990, ICLEI — Global Cities for Sustainability was founded at an inaugural conference in the UN's New York headquarters, with its international secretariat located in Bonn, Germany, headed by a Brussels-educated secretary general. It has a strong concentration of European and North American members, but its president is from Seoul and the majority of portfolio holders on the board are from the South.

C40 is one of the later arrivals, having been established in 2005, but it makes confident claims to global leadership in the fields of climate adaptation and mitigation (Davidson and Gleeson, 2015). The leadership model uses the offices of global influential and economically powerful mayors. The organization was initially launched at a meeting of cities convened by the mayor of London, Ken Livingstone, with the mayor of New York, Michael Bloomberg, serving as president of the board of directors. However, C40 did expand to include the influential cities of the middle-ranking powers in the South. In 2013, Rio de Janeiro's mayor, Eduardo Paes, was elected president of C40. Of the 11 members of the C40 steering committee, four are from the South—Johannesburg, Buenos Aires, Rio de Janeiro and Jakarta—although the board of directors and the senior members of the secretariat still represent the founding London–Paris–New York axis (Cameron, 2014; C40, 2017).

There is a critical alliance between UCLG, Metropolis and UN agencies. The UCLG has not succeeded to date in gaining formal status for city government in the UN General Assembly, but it has ensured a strong articulation with UN agencies, including (but not only) UN Habitat. Salomon and Sanchez (2008) observe that local authorities would not have the position they currently enjoy within UN structures had TMNs not emerged and subsequently converged through strong inter-association collaborations. The UN Conferences on Housing and Sustainable Urban Development (known as Habitat) provide key moments in which this articulation is expressed, with TMNs such as UCLG and Metropolis working as key partners with the UN in the formulation of the New Urban Agenda launched at Habitat III in 2016.

Intersection, however, goes beyond the UN connection. The TMN websites indicate partner organizations and these are commonly the World Bank and its affiliate Cities Alliance, the OECD, the World Economic Forum, the European Commission and the Clinton Foundation. The one non-governmental organization to feature prominently is Shack/Slum Dwellers International. This is clearly a powerful network for the transmission of discourse on urban development and best practices (ICLEI, 2016; Metropolis, 2016; UCLG, 2016; UN Habitat, 2016; C40, 2017).

There are multiple mechanisms through which TMNs, operating within the broader organizational network, function as transmitter of discourse and 'best practice'. Clarke (2012) draws insight from Pierre-Yves Saunier's work on the transnational municipal movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, showing how important these networks were for the transfer of urban policy, but also how complex these transfers were, as people, ideas, texts and information circulated through the actor networks within which the inter-municipal relationships were embedded. In comparison to twenty-first-century policy transfer, however, these processes appear quite organized, with Clarke (*ibid.*: 25) concluding that 'urban policy circulation in the 21st century is (dis)organized, geographically extensive, fast, and anti-political'. Clarke acknowledges the role of information and communication technologies in accelerating and complicating transfer, but the ways in which the web operates to selectively identify and transfer knowledge, reinforcing the dominance of a tight cluster of international agencies and global networks, remains largely unexplored.

The interface between the web and this organizational matrix may be illustrated through Google searches of UCLG, C40 and ICLEI (Table 1), which found frequent reference to 'best practice'. In addition, the coinciding voices of the World Bank and the same TMNs in respect of best practice is evident from a search of page links from the World Bank to the TMNs. <FN3>

<INSERT TABLE 1 HERE>

Best practices are disseminated through the web and channels such as conferences, case write-ups, study tours, benchmarking, training programmes and peer-review initiatives. These exercises standardize the wording, the keywords used for web searches, and are central to enabling domination of the first Google search results pages.

TMNs function to share information, building capacity of members, set collective agendas and, through all of this, influence policy. For example, UCLG (2017) 'supports international cooperation between cities and their associations, and facilitates programmes, networks and partnerships to build the capacities of local governments ... and is a gateway to relevant information on local government across the world'; ICLEI (2017) 'unites local and subnational governments in creating positive change through collective learning, exchange and capacity building'; C40 (2017) provides an 'effective forum where [cities] can collaborate, share knowledge and drive meaningful, measurable and sustainable action on climate change'; and Metropolis (2017) enables 'global peer-to-peer learning and networking portal for urban practitioners, experts and researchers [that] documents innovative projects and policies that cities can take as inspiration and guidance'.

While TMNs have no formal coercive or hierarchical authority over the practices of member cities, they do exert significant soft power, exercising a form of governance by diffusion. In making their decisions, individual cities within these networks are at least cognisant of decisions by other cities they have knowledge of (Kern and Bulkeley, 2009;

Hakelberg, 2014). For example, Hakelberg (2014) has shown that, the longer an individual city has been a member of a sustainability-themed TMN, the greater the likelihood of that city adopting a climate change strategy. <FN4>

There is growing evidence that TMNs are providing an increasingly important conduit for transmission of best practice, and that they may also be platforms for innovation. It is likely that they are simultaneously reinforcing and reframing global norms and discourse, but the balance in this process remains uncertain. Toly (2008) suggested that TMNs may be introducing new norms in a discourse hitherto dominated by debate between global forums and nation states. C40, for example, played a critical role in linking cities to the global climate change negotiations at the 2015 Paris Climate Conference (also known as COP21) and facilitating the Mayors Covenant on Climate Change as part of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change process. Davidson and Gleeson (2015) argue, however, that C40 remains within the globally dominant template, offering no alternative or challenge to neoliberal urbanism or marketized approaches to governance. They point out, for example, that a key document of the C40, *Wealthier, Healthier Cities*, does not mention concerns of equality and social justice.

The extent to which TMNs are reinforcing or subverting global power hierarchies and established discourse does indeed necessitate ongoing inquiry. Cities in the North may still have a dominant position within the network, but there are at least indications that configurations of power have shifted of late and that a grouping of cities in the South have growing influence. TMNs may be operating not only as the traditional mechanism of North–South learning, but also as mechanisms of South–South learning and, potentially, of South–North knowledge exchange too. One of the potential pitfalls, however, is that involvement from the South is limited to a cluster of connected cities—including São Paulo, Rio de Janeiro, Johannesburg and Guangzhou—and so TMNs may currently represent the incorporation of this grouping into still North-dominated networks. More worryingly, perhaps, there is no clear evidence that the growing—albeit still limited—voices from the South are translating into perspectives or positions that are demonstrably different from those which were historically propagated by North-dominated institutions. The ‘South-friendly TMNs’ may be shifting the orientation of discourse, but are hardly disrupting established positions.

<H1>Conclusion</H1>

The requirements of critical urban scholarship require us to give ongoing attention to the question of how knowledge is produced, validated, packaged and distributed. To the extent that we can, we need to prise open the black box. What we take for granted as ‘best practice’ in urban or metropolitan governance is at least partly the product of a loaded process in which the measures of credibility are biased towards certain privileged knowledge agents, or closely interlinked networks of knowledge agents.

Historical investigation shows, of course, that this is hardly a new phenomenon, with the transnational municipal movement of the late nineteenth century, for example,

acting as a conduit for knowledge validation and dissemination (Clarke, 2012). However, what is remarkable about the current period and the past three decades or so is the confluence between a process of ideological construction that has actually narrowed what is accepted as validated knowledge and the rise of a technological regime of knowledge distribution that may promise openness and equality in access to knowledge, but which in effect often systematically privileges certain forms of knowledge over others. There are intentional mechanisms of bias which include, for example, deliberate processes of propagation that may deploy hyperlinks directing from one knowledge source to another, but also unintentional process such as the ranking algorithms of search engines.

Regarding NPM, it provided the grounding for the knowledge of metropolitan governance for 20 years or so. The influence of NPM now seems to be fading, with the concept of new public governance in the ascendant.

The rise of TMNs, with a partial base in the global South, may seem a positive evolution in the process of knowledge management. It does at least broaden the geographic parameters of knowledge construction, bringing a diversity of influences into the structures playing a growing role in the shaping and validating of knowledge for urban governance. A handful of large cities in the global South have gained influence in some TMNs, increasing horizontal knowledge-sharing across the South and possibly also promoting more co-production of knowledge with the North. However, the dominant mode of best practice transfer arguably remains largely intact, with existing international institutions remaining as influential sources of validated knowledge for these networks and the forms of knowledge from actors in the global South emerging, at best, as a variant in orientation rather than as a recognizable alternative to North-derived conceptions of best practice, for example. The North–South distinction in knowledge management is blurred by the role that institutions such as the World Bank and UN agencies play within networks like TMNs that include players from the South. We clearly cannot rely only on a shift in the geographical influence on knowledge management, with alternative modes of transnational knowledge production for governance, including in-depth comparative study, requiring continued attention and propagation.

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<NUMBERED FOOTNOTES>

<FN1> We use 'North' and 'South' hesitantly; these terms are inadequate shorthand for complex geographical realities and there are also parts of the world (e.g. the former Soviet Union) which fall uncertainly between these categories. While we use the terms, we also try to go beyond them by referring to the actual places that are linked through knowledge networks such as the TMNs.

<FN2> See <http://www.icafrica.org/en/fund-finder/facility/public-private-infrastructure-advisory-facility-90/> (accessed 14 June 2014).

<FN3> The search was conducted on 24 November June 2017.

<FN4> These processes are not uniform, however, with a significant difference between the pioneer cities in the networks and the large number of laggards, using membership for public visibility, who are slow to change behaviour (Hakelberg, 2014)

<TABLE 1 CAPTION>

TABLE 1 The organizational matrix of international agencies and global networks

<FIGURE 1 CAPTION>

FIGURE 1 Neoliberalism displaces socialism

<FIGURE 2 CAPTION>

FIGURE 2 The web and globalization

<FIGURE 3 CAPTION>

FIGURE 3 Knowledge that is best

<FIGURE 4 CAPTION>

FIGURE 4 Metropolitan governance

<GRAPHICS TEAM: PLEASE ENSURE TEXT IN ALL FIGURES IS FULLY LEGIBLE (CHANGE FONT TO AVENIR IF THIS IMPROVES THE READABILITY). REMOVE ALL EXTRANEIOUS WHITE SPACE SURROUNDING THE FIGURES>

FIGURE 1 Neoliberalism displaces socialism

THE NEOLIBERALISM TREND LINE (FIG 1) MUST BE CLEARLY VISIBLE ON THE BASELINE (PRE-1980)

FIGURE 2 The web and globalization

<Graphics team: please amend error in legend: social media (insert 'i' in media). I'm not sure what figures were originally submitted (presumably they were created in Excel) or whether some work has already been done on them. It is clear in Fig 2 that 'social media' and 'googling' lagged a decade behind 'searching the web' and 'globalization' so I don't think there is any great need to colour the data series in this case>

FIGURE 3 Knowledge that is best

<Graphics team: If Excel charts are available it would be good to colour the data series here to distinguish the term that was already in parlance in 1950.>

FIGURE 4 Metropolitan governance

<Graphics team: If Excel charts are available it would be good to colour the data series here to distinguish their usage more clearly>

TABLE 1 The organizational matrix of international agencies and global networks

	Search Results/Links
'UCLG' 'best practice'	'About 24,800 results'
'C4o' 'best practice'	'About 182,000 results'
'ICLEI' 'best practice'	'About 85,600 results'
http://www.worldbank.org site: UCLG.org 'best practice'	21
http://www.worldbank.org site: C4o.org 'best practice'	17
http://www.worldbank.org site: ICLEI.org 'best practice'	75

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