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Governing Complex City-Regions in the Twenty-First Century

Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa

Philip Harrison

Rich, detailed and solid, this excellent book reveals that these city-regions are governmentally constructed through planning and administrative practices beyond the material linkages and diverse discursive presentations. It will be a key reading for anyone interested in understanding how metropolitan spaces are constructed and governed.

— Fulong Wu, Bartlett Professor of Planning, University College London

Phil Harrison offers a much-needed decentring and enlivening analysis of city-regions. Detailed accounts and comparative insights from across the urban-region governance arrangements in BRICS countries propose new theoretical insights and governance in a globalised world. The book highlights the sharp institutional and territorial conflicts and top-down directives as well as the emergent discourses, collaborations, and often informal ingenuity of actors, which are shaping the future of urban regions.

— Jennifer Robinson, Professor of Geography, University of California, Los Angeles

Government of big cities is a contested, constrained, and continually changing exercise, and this book explores an unusual and highly varied selection of cases. The result is a readable and provocative account that offers no simple solutions but will inform debate and further research.

— Alan Mabin, Emeritus Professor of Urbanism, School of Architecture and Planning, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

This book explores the challenges of complex, institutionally fragmented and dynamic city-regions across the BRICS countries and the emergence of formal and informal governance arrangements.

The scale, complexity and pace of urban change in the recent past has been disorienting. As individual cities evolve into complex urban agglomerations, sometimes called city-regions, urban scholars battle to find adequate vocabularies for contemporary urban processes while practitioners continually search for meaningful governance responses. *Governing Complex City-Regions in the Twenty-First Century* explores the ongoing evolution of regional and metropolitan governance as diverse urban agents grapple with the dilemmas of collective action across multi-layered and fragmented institutions, in contexts where there are manifold centres of influence and decision-making.

The author draws on the experiences of the BRICS countries (Brazil, Russia, India, China and South Africa), situating his analysis against the particular historical and political cycles of each. This expands the geography of knowledge in the study of city-region governance, revealing meanings, processes and outcomes of city-region governance that are not apparent in the more settled urban contexts of Western Europe and North America on which much of the existing literature is founded.

Intended for students, academics, and professionals, the book provides a critique of the ‘best practice’ approach, showing that governance approaches are rarely designed but emerge, rather, from the disparate intentions, actions and practices of multiple collaborating and competing actors working within diverse contexts of political settlement and political culture. While it does not offer packaged solutions or easy answers to the challenges of urban governance, it does show the value of comparative study in inspiring new thought and perspectives, which could lead to improved governance practice within South African contexts.

About the Author

Philip Harrison is the South African Research Chair in Development Planning and Modelling at the University of the Witwatersrand in Johannesburg and a member of the National Planning Commission and other advisory structures to government. He jointly edited book *Changing Space, Changing City: Johannesburg after Apartheid*.

Keywords: city-region; metropolitan governance; agglomeration; built environment; Brazil; India; Russia; China; South Africa; BRICS; spatial city planning; urban sustainability; environmental governance; comparative method; Human Settlements; hyper-cities; hyper-complexity; vertical cities; urban systems; urban policy; Metropolis; Megalopolis; City cluster; Urban agglomeration; Urban governance; Collective action; Comparative urbanism; Urban emergence

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