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Cities, Nationalism and Democratization (Questioning Cities)

Scott A. Bollens

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Cities, Nationalism, and Democratization provides a theoretically informed, practice-oriented account of intercultural conflict and co-existence in cities. Bollens uses a wide-ranging set of over 100 interviews with local political and community leaders to investigate how popular urban policies can trigger 'pushes from below' that help nation-states address social and political challenges. The book brings the city and the urban scale into contemporary debates about democratic transformations in ethnically diverse countries. It connects the city, on conceptual and pragmatic levels, to two leading issues of today – the existence of competing and potentially destructive nationalistic allegiances and the limitations of democracy in multinational societies.

Bollens finds that cities and urbanists are not necessarily hemmed in by ethnic conflict and political gridlock, but can be proactive agents that stimulate the progress of societal normalization. The fuller potential of cities is in their ability to catalyze multinational democratization. Alternately, if cities are left unprotected and unmanaged, ethnic antagonists can fragment the city’s collective interests in ways that slow down and confine the advancement of sustainable democracy. This book will be helpful to scholars, international organizations, and grassroots organizations in understanding why and how the peace-constitutive city emerges in some cases while it is misplaced and neglected in others.

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