Preface

Twelve of the chapters in this volume (Chapters 2 to 13) are revised versions of a selection of papers presented at the panel ‘The Spatial Consequences of Urban Ethnic Diversity’ that convened at an Inter-Congress of the International Union of Anthropological and Ethnological Sciences (IUAES), held at Beijing on 24–28 August 2000.

Taken together, the chapters search the various dimensions of urban interethnic relations as reflected in the spatial organization of cities around the globe. Unlike most ethnographies, in which authors write about the ‘other’ in faraway places, the majority of the authors in this volume have studied their own society. This ‘anthropology at home’ gives the analyses a refreshingly intimate and direct touch. However, the term ‘anthropology’ can be misleading, since the authors actually come from diverse backgrounds, such as the fields of geography, landscape architecture, social demography, medicine, sociology and, indeed, social or cultural anthropology. This multidisciplinary background enables the adoption of a rich variety of methodological approaches, thus pointing out the many directions for possible research in the future. Despite their national and disciplinary variety, the authors of this book have adopted an ‘actor-oriented’ approach and share the assumption that ‘urban space’ is not a given, but a social construct.

It was not possible to arrange the chapters geographically due to the restrictions of the methodology of social sciences concerning the analysis of any given data. Hence the ‘Introduction’ has been based on a classification clustered according to the level—that is, the macro-, the meso- and the micro-levels—being analysed by the author of each chapter. This proved to be a difficult task because of the blurred demarcations between the different levels of analyses and the multiple, if not innovative, approaches of the authors.

We would like to thank the Chinese Association of Urban Anthropology for organizing the Inter-Congress of the IUAES and for their gracious hospitality, enabling the authors of this volume to meet and discuss their papers in detail. We also wish to extend our appreciation to the authors who have patiently put up with our requests during the process of editing and preparing the chapters for this book.

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