RE-SHARED URBAN SPACE: NEW ACTORS AND PROCESSES IN SOUTH AMERICAN CITIES

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Abstract: Following stormy debate regarding the role of globalisation and global space in development, geographical analyses are now tending to return to matters of place, and its role in people's lives. Given that Latin America's cities were founded by Europeans, one might expect them to be characterised by processes and phenomena similar to European experiences and general processes of globalisation today. In fact, however, specific socio-cultural features arising from both the colonial and pre-colonial past of this region, political factors (especially that reflecting the presence of powerful elites descended from the Spanish) and economic features (interest in the region's resources being displayed by foreign investors) have all conspired to ensure that Latin America is characterised by a development trajectory distinct from those in other regions, as well as by contemporary structures in urbanised areas being shaped by diverse political and economic forces, mechanisms ever-present in the region's culture and politics deriving from social stratification, strong regionalisms, and diversified economic potential and global relationships.

Key words: cities, spatial division, Latin America, globalisation

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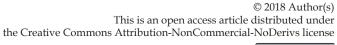
Introduction

The period from the mid-1970s to the end of the 20th century brought many scientific studies devoted to spatial structure in Latin American cities (Wilhelmy, Borsdorf 1984, 1985). However, the peak period for research and analysis relating to cities there came in the first part of that period and was associated with the huge popularity then enjoyed by urban- and regional-planning concepts, that gained the support of CEPAL (the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean) and what was then its key institution in that field, responsible for urban-planning analyses, i.e. the *Instituto Latinoamericano de Planificación Económica y Social* (ILPES, Santiago). Many leading Latin American authors cooperated

with it at the time (Dembicz 2008), and many development plans for cities were drawn up. Sadly, the majority of these were never put into effect (Czerny 2014).

Discussion about spatial diversification

The fact that the 1970s represented a peak period of interest in urban areas was mainly down to the sprawl in the continent's metropolises, with huge influxes of rural populace into the cities, and hence abrupt suburban growth. In seeking to encapsulate the phenomenon, scientists adopted many different approaches, among which the most noteworthy were examples of the modelling of city space. German geographers

were the undoubted pioneers of such work with the subject literature, *inter alia*, being enriched by such models applying to Latin America, as those proposed by Bähr, Mertins, Borsdorf and Gormsen (Wilhelmy, Borsdorf 1984) in the case of Brazilian cities (Kraas et al. 2014). These were joined by Griffin and Ford (Czerny 2014), as well as by Latin American authors in the 1990s, including Lopes de Souza (2000). Naturally, all of these models feature certain structural elements that most of Latin American cities have in common, *inter alia*, because of their long shared colonial histories, as well as similar modernisation and migration processes. More specifically, Mertins considered that conceptualisations had as their common elements the social structure characterising city inhabitants, as well as the times of settlement of different parts of a city (Mertins 2003:2, Czerny 2014). This kind of structure was first proposed in 1976 by Bähr in his "scheme for the ideal large Latin American city" (Wilhelmy, Borsdorf 1984), which in turn draws on Herbert Hoyt's classical concentric zone model, dating back to 1939 (Czerny 2014).

The inspiration behind the adoption of this particular research topic (the shaping and re-shaping of today's functional and social space and fragmentation in Latin American cities) has come with the "rediscovery" – by circles (especially Anglosphere circles) encompassing both urban and regional planners and geographers – of the work of the outstanding Brazilian geographer Milton Santos (1926–2001) (Santos 1979, Melgaço, Prouse 2017). More widely, Western geography has in general experienced a growth of interest in the work of authors coming from the "Global South", in this way coming to appreciate how necessary it is for the latter's ideas to be incorporated into a worldwide discussion on disproportions in development that is founded in post-colonial and global theory. Specifically, Western science's models and concepts – including those revolving around spatial analysis – are seen to need revision and critical analysis, at the same time with a hope or expectation that there will be new paradigms of processes whose development can be regarded as symptomatic of the contemporary process by which cities are being transformed.

Santos (1979) further claimed that what we are dealing with in regional and urban development is some kind of rather unique selective spatial history, with the variables comprising this needing to be treated as a *continuum* through time. Space in the then "Third World" he described as "derived space" (after M. Sorre, 1961 – *espace dérivé*). In fact, this has become still-more visible as a result of economic globalisation. Each action on the part of the dominating (external) system is seen to have its impact: when that system was Spain or Portugal the consequence was the establishment of new economic and political centres (cities), while now, when that system is global, the effect is a severe fragmentation of space in cities. Today, alongside indigenous elements there are global elements in the form of housing estates, shopping malls, entertainment centres, etc. In this way the derived space has been formed –certainly in the past, but also today. In the colonial era the effect was an organisation and re-organisation in relation to distant economic and political interests. This has left the management of cities – in the past and now – as a function of exogenous needs. What is more, the fact that the space in question has ultimately "derived" also denotes that it is by its very nature peripheral (Santos 1974). Thus, modernising elements introduced into such space do not achieve their "impact" in uniform time (Santos 1974). Rather, the said impact is stretched between various different variables, whose inter-combination owes its characteristic features to the given area (or place) (Valenzuela 2013).

The processes going on here represent a historical continuum in the shaping of urban space. Simultaneously, however, the whole time has also witnessed progressing decomposition, re-composition and spatial transfer of physiognomic features and functions first set in train five centuries ago. In the 1970s, Santos drew a distinction between four mechanisms that stimulated both the development of cities and their ongoing internal differences, i.e. a) the industrialisation of a given city, which works to diversify its economic base and "draw in" industry, at the expense of cities also competing to have businesses locate within them; b) a transport network that links only a few cities with their hinterlands, and is lacking altogether except in various urban centres; c) authoritarian authorities and a planning system ineffective citywide, regionally and even nationally; and d) social barriers and local

traditions that preclude dynamic economic development (Santos 2010: 25–29). The mere listing of these mechanisms makes it clear that, almost 40 years after this work came out, it remains an appropriate research thesis that the palette of processes diversifying urban space is far broader than we might think.

Santos founded his theories very firmly on concepts of globalisation and its influence on space. "The essential components of spatial reality are universal and form a historical continuum, varying nevertheless in their quantitative and qualitative balance, interaction and recomposition on the basis of location; thus we see the emergence of spatial differentiation." (Santos 1979: 7). Two decades ago, when I was engaged in broadbrush research into the contribution of globalisation to regional development in the Global South (Czerny 2005; Czerny et al. 2007), I was inclined to agree with Santos's views without reservation. Today, I consider that local and regional specifics of political and social relationships in fact play the most important role underpinning the divisions referred to. Today the processes taking place in urban space, as well as the phenomena with clear spatial connotations that emerge, are at the same time similar to, and fundamentally different from those written about by Santos. And indeed it is the multi-dimensional nature of these processes that encourages a search for new paradigms based on the analysis of multi-level and multi-relationship mechanisms.

Within the body of geographical literature, the work of M. Santos can be seen to represent one of the first attempts at a holistic conceptualisation of urban issues in what was formerly known as the "Third World". In fact, during the time this project proposal has been in preparation, an English-language publication engaging in wide-ranging discussion of Santos's concepts has appeared in print (Melgaço, Prouse 2017). This happenstance has only reinforced my conviction as to the need for a return to critical discussions on contemporary urban space and the reasons for the divisions therein that were last held in the late 1970s. For the list of phenomena giving rise to socio-spatial segregation is today a much-extended one, and my knowledge of this continent immediately suggests certain ideas regarding the existence of layers of spatial phenomena and far-reaching cause-effect relationships between historical conditions of development, land management, selective industrialisation processes, marginalisation in society, ineffective urban planning, poorly-developed civil societies, vanishingly limited governance, etc.

The arrival of the 21st century has indeed been showing that earlier concepts and paradigms for the spatial development of Latin American cities may not fully account for the functioning and dynamics of all the relevant phenomena and processes that are reformulating those cities' structures, and leaving them so highly fragmented. A first attempt at a holistic conceptualisation of all this urban diversity and disparity came with the 2002 work of Borsdorf, Bähr and Janoschka (2002), who proposed that a new look at the cities in question be taken, with an admission that the models they themselves had put forward previously no longer corresponded with the Latin American reality. For new phenomena and processes have made their appearance, and these resist generalisation, as well as assignment to ordered sectors of urban space, as seemed to be the case previously. At the very start of the 21st century, the above authors noted the presence of new causal agents underpinning spatial fragmentation and segregation, i.e. guarded housing estates for the upper classes and a trend towards the construction of ever-larger estates of this kind that are fenced off and hence inevitably capable of obstructing spatial continuity (also with population sizes that now begin to rival those of small towns, as can be noted in Chile); the spread across entire cities of an ever-greater number of shopping malls and urban entertainment centres; and the ever-growing significance of transport infrastructure to residential decision-making; the suburbanisation of housing and industry; and the growing marginalisation of poor quarters thanks to the growing presence of fences and walls that operate to keep them hidden from the sight of others.

Today we may be justified in saying that the second decade of the 21st century has brought further modifications of the picture. What needs stressing first and foremost here is the enormous dynamics of spatial change – at a scale that has not been met with hitherto (Kraas et al. 2014; Taubenböck et al. 2015). This is true of such features as further spillovers or sprawl of cities into peripheral areas, and an urban-rural continuum

in which the main recipients of urban processes are what have hitherto been rural areas. On the one hand, the latter ones are penetrated by urban forms of built-up areas into which they actively seek to integrate. On the other, gated estates are inserted whole and, as it were, fully-formed into these areas, proving alien in terms of both the form of construction and the lifestyle of the inhabitants. Actors in this process prove to be both the upper strata of society and ordinary people, and the cultural aspect is seen to play a key role (thanks to the housing preferences of a city's inhabitants), alongside a geographical and political aspect, involving the role assigned to urban and regional policies in the sphere of spatial planning, as well as the system of governance.

Factors of the spatial expansion of cities in Latin America

Cultural aspects of the development of cities

In the 16th and 17th centuries, the Spanish came to America, not as farmer-colonists seeking to bring areas of a new land under cultivation, but as conquerors in search of precious metals, above all gold and silver; and sometimes also as merchants (though it was the Portuguese who set themselves up as the key developers of trade and founders of factories in coastal areas). Furthermore, as a consequence of the discovery of Mexico and a further penetration down into the realm of the Incas, the development of Spanish settlement concentrated on the western edge of Central and South America, primarily in the Pacific Lowland, though also in the Cordillera and Andean mountain chains.

The Spanish and Portuguese had different expectations and various motives as they developed settlement in the New World. Administrative centres selected by the Spanish were located in places where indigenous peoples were already settled densely. This meant that, with the exceptions of Veracruz or Lima, most of the remaining urban centres important to the development of the colonies arose in the Andean basins, or on the *Altiplano*. In contrast, the Portuguese colonising Brazilian territory found no cities that the incomers from Europe could simply take over to develop their settlement network. The first

Portuguese cities were therefore coastal, located in places where ports were established – something of a feat in itself, given a rather undifferentiated coastline not especially favourable to that kind of activity. In essence, the Portuguese came to Brazil as sailors and entrepreneurs rather than *Conquistadores* (Wilhelmy and Borsdorf 1984). Furthermore, the first ports they founded served as stop-off points on the route to India, and it was only in the 19th century that any process of colonisation of the Brazilian interior (from the coast via rivers) started. At that point, new Portuguese towns came into existence, as mining settlements, or places associated with farming and livestock-rearing.

The cities of South America played a very important role as bastions – and also conveyers – of European culture. They were also the political, cultural and economic centres of the entire colonies, and this kind of role was maintained in the post-colonial era, and indeed right through to the present day.

As far as the external form was concerned, the colonial cities were modelled on various late-Mediaeval patterns, structurally, but also in terms of administration and operation. While these might have been abandoned in Spain itself as early as at the beginning of the 16th century, they developed well in the colonies, and persisted for more than 300 years (Wilhelmy and Borsdorf 1984). All of this ensures that the cities the Spanish founded continue to have their specific charm and atmosphere – *ambiente* – of a kind noticeably absent in the cities of North America. Indeed, the cities particularly interesting in the USA – as in the case of San Francisco and New Orleans – are those of Spanish or French origin (respectively), rather than Anglo-Saxon. The *Plaza* main square with its diverse social, cultural and political functions is indeed the true heart of the Ibero-American city. Equally, cities have developed between the 17th century and now in such a way that the styles of various epochs can be encountered, with influences of European and American architecture of the late 19th and early 20th centuries (and beyond).

The 19th and especially the 20th centuries ushered in social change as well, making it possible for members of the native Indian populations to migrate to cities. Increasingly, cities became ethnic melting-pots, as the descendants of the

Spanish were joined by native Americans, so-called *Mestizos*, and newcomers from other continents (not only Europeans but also, with time, Asians). Cities of this kind were hotbeds for both independence-minded ideas and a fostering of ethnic identity. Borsdorf and Wilhelmy (1984) put particular emphasis on this role of cities in creating new Latin American societies, even in the face of the attitudes and ideas of the old ruling strata in society, whose status as comfortably-off residents of countryside areas did little to favour liberation movements. For such people, social revolution and independence denoted a loss of slaves, growing tolerance for strata in society other than just the Creoles, the loss of long-nurtured influences on politics, and so on (Wilhelmy, Borsdorf 1984: 9).

In colonial times, Lima was a true centre for the lives of a Creole aristocracy clustered around the mansion of Peru's Viceroy and living peaceful lives in which most needs were met readily enough. Indeed, exploitation of the indigenous people and the possession of large landed estates (conferred upon them by the King of Spain) helped ensure the Creoles unfettered political and economic power. Beyond that, social divisions were very well-marked, and ran along lines of class and racial origin. The lowest rung of the social ladder was here occupied by the indigenous peoples ("Indians"), as well as slaves shipped over from Africa to work on plantations.

These divisions also had their spatial aspects. The face of each colonial-era city was dominated by its religious buildings – cathedrals and churches often so numerous that it was possible to count several dozen of them each, in Quito, Sucre, Popayan, Mexico City and others. Built-up residential areas were then sprawling, single-storey houses with several internal patios. Dwellings of this kind are built to this day in many cities of Latin America. Within a given quarter, houses of this kind might occupy a considerable part of the area, to the extent that such a quarter might only play host to 2 or 3 such buildings. These would then have main entrances on one street, with servants' entrances on smaller streets running parallel to them at the back. At the end of the 19th century, city-centre houses of colonial origin would tend to have one or two more storeys built on to them. However, the real changes in the socio-spatial structure characterising colonial cities

took place as new immigrants flowed in from Europe in the late 19th century and first quarter of the 20th.

The Creole aristocrats inhabiting their extensive homes with patios began to feel less comfortable where they were, when it became necessary to share their neighbourhoods with the numerous industrial plants, workshops, shops and so on founded by incomers (who themselves also sought to dwell in the city centre area). At this point, the old colonial houses began to change hands, with the plots they stood on then starting to be divided into smaller sub-plots. In this way a start was made to a process whereby the city centre area came to be more densely built-up than previously, with new houses going up and numbers of inhabitants increasing. Meanwhile, the representatives of the old elites had begun their move out to the edges of cities, where villa districts in the North American or European styles began to take shape. That again meant single-story homes with large gardens.

The power of the tradition involving extensive single-storey houses that the Spanish brought with them into the New World proved so great that, to this day, inhabitants throughout this region predominantly feel the desire to live in single-family, rather than multi-family housing. Even into the 1970s, dwelling in multi-family circumstances was looked upon as some kind of inferior choice, suggestive of belonging to the lower orders, the poor unable to afford a home of their own. For this reason, even those residing in the marginal districts continue to nurture an ambition that their housing needs be resolved through the purchase of a small plot of land (most commonly between 40 and 150 m^2, depending on the city), and the erection upon it of a small home (Czerny 2014).

The long-term effect of this is Latin American cities spilling and sprawling out into their suburbs to a greater and greater extent. Land for building is needed in ever-greater quantities where people's ambitions continue to be with single-storey construction. Naturally, such urban sprawl brings with it all the typical problems regarding necessary communal infrastructure, transport, education and healthcare, and so on. Successful management of an urban complex of this kind represents its own kind of challenge.

Political and administrative aspects of a city's development, as exemplified by Bogota

Access to urban land is always a matter of some delicacy or controversy when it comes to the expansion of the built-up urban area to adjacent land hitherto not urbanised. Political and administrative decisions concerning land use prove to be closely connected to informal relationships between big domestic or international capital and the political elites. Indeed, this is one of the most corruption-prone sectors in the Latin American economies. Thus, on the one hand the urban-planning institutions seek to develop – and bring into effect – physical development plans, while on the other certain illegal and informal land transactions then take place, leading in practice to spatial chaos and the maintenance of socio-spatial divisions in a city.

Urban planning in the Latin American countries has a tradition stretching back to the 1970s. Before that time, projects were implemented point by point in different parts of a city, therefore not representing any kind of more comprehensive urban planning and functional solutions, though nevertheless constituting elements in the introduction of regional planning. Most of these projects were concerned with whole cities, as well as with the planning of industrial zones.

An example of the intensive introduction of plans and programmes of regional and urban development in the 1970s is provided by Mexico. In those days, regional planners in Latin America (including Mexico itself) were exceptionally fond of the "poles of growth" theory after the French economist François Perroux (Czerny 1994). Drawing on Perroux's theories, Mexican planners and geographers promoted implementation of the said concept in Mexico, with this designed as an element by which to even out the disparities between regions in the country as a whole (Sordo 1976, Carrillo Arronte 1973). In 1970, Sordo, having analysed the potential of Mexico's large cities, proposed that a network of poles of growth be established. At the outset, he nominated 16 cities for this, with 6 of these (other than Mexico City) then being regarded as elements of a category of regional metropolises deemed to serve as a basis for future metropolises in equilibrium, i.e. Guadalajara, Monterrey, Puebla, Ciudad Juárez, Mexicali and Mérida (*ibid.*).

From the point of view of today's development of Mexico's cities, that proposal looks important, given that it designated the main industrial cities, within whose limits (or at least within limits also including certain neigbouring areas) industrial zones came into being. Their appearance ensured that major investments (above all in the machine and motor-vehicle industries, but also in food-processing and textiles) started to transform earlier urban-planning configurations in Mexico, with extensive industrial districts then being introduced. The 1970s brought the creation of projects by which the development of complexes, parks and industrial cities (*con juntos, parques y ciudades industriales*) began to take shape. This was the start of an intensive expansion of industry on the peripheries of cities. Before that, industrial plants had been concentrated in the city centre, with only the designation of industrial zones and attraction of international capital (with considerable fiscal privileges conferred upon it) ensuring the gradual emergence of large industrial areas. An example might be the Nissan factory in Aguscalientes covering 1,827 m^2, and situated 8 km from the city. This comprises two plants, of which one makes engines and parts and was opened in 1982, while the other in operation from 1992 deals with the assembly of cars. Aguscalientes, an old colonial centre with checkerboard construction in the centre, was to become one of the most important industrial cities in Mexico, to the extent that spatial development there is now regarded as associated with the new function.

Political aspects of the development of cities include programmes and plans to upgrade the urban fabric in districts afflicted by poverty. The most interesting examples of urban policy being implemented specially to deal with poor areas relate to Colombian cities, and first and foremost to the country's capital, Bogota. The latter can be said to have had good luck with its Mayors. While not every term in office brought major new developments and innovative programmes, the administration of what is officially the Capital City District has been characterised for many years by a steady search for solutions that would help ease the social exclusion and segregation typical of certain of its areas (Escallon, Artega and Caicedo 2016).

The actual development of Bogota has archetypally been one entailing formal aspects on

the one hand, and informal aspects on the other. What was initially informal, indeed illegal urban development (*informalidad* and *ilegalidad urbana*) gained resolution and recognition subsequently, thanks to actions to legalise the residential areas in question, and then to bring them under regulation. The result was incorporation into the city of entire districts, or at least housing estates (Escallon et al. 2016: 12). Later, in response to changes in the approach to the city's management, programmes were devised to bring inhabitants into the decisionmaking process when it came to changes taking place in their surroundings – through projects such as *Obras con Saldo Pedagógico*. This in turn paved the way for urban-planning initiatives that took the form of cohesive, holistic, functional and spatial projects (going by the description *mejoramiento integral*, for the Barrios) (Escallón 2008).

Such programmes implemented in the 1970s were the *Programa Integral de Desarrollo de la Zona Oriental de Bogotá* (PIDUZOB) – for the development of the capital city's eastern part. This was followed in the 1980s by the "*Ciudad Bolívar*" programme for the poor SW zone of the city, and then in the 1990s by the *Programa de Desmarginalización*, which was addressed to the lower social strata, as well as spatially to marginal districts again located in the south and southwest. The city authorities thus strived to engage with the city's "informal" aspects, be these the informal trade in land or construction, or indeed the informal labour market. They were only partially successful, though there were some positive developments, with new public spaces created, local communities integrated around common tasks in their own interests, infrastructure improved, and so on. In each case the path for new, 21st-century programmes was supposed to be put in place. Indeed, the year 2000 brought the enactment of the *Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial* (POT) – a document intended to dictate the further development of the city, while assisting with sectoral projects to improve urban infrastructure.

Also made ready – in 2001 – was the *Programa de Mejoramiento Integral de Barrios*, which set out the principles and means by which services were to be supplied, thus also identifying zonal planning units within the cityspace (i.e. *unidades de planeacion zonal*). Notably, these units were smaller than the localities surrounding Bogota, but larger than its districts. Each such planning unit has become associated with Spatial Development Plans slated for implementation. There is thus an urban-planning instrument for a group of districts of similar features and physiognomy. As projects at this scale are being prepared for and then implemented, a considerable role is played by public consultations. The UPZs also coordinate joint activity one with another, local and district authorities also joining together with communities of inhabitants and private-sector players. In this way, opportunities are opened up for a cohesive road to be followed, with joint accountability, the dynamics of the city's development retained, and a specific focus on people's rights.

Further plans were to resolve infrastructural problems on the peripheries of Bogota, in the adjacent administrative units now playing host to over 2.5 million people, in which the Sabana de Bogota (once-extensive Bogota Savanna) area is now urbanised to the tune of no less than 28% (*ibid.*).

Final remarks

The shaping of the city's 21st-century face – in terms of structure and physiognomy – may not solely be looked at in relation to straightforward centre-periphery relationships, as many 20th-century studies of Latin American cities were already making clear. There are many reasons for this, and understanding on the basis of classical definitions of towns and cities and their key players is not always possible.

Urbanised areas including a city within their administrative limits, plus adjacent areas, are now ensuring that what actually takes shape is a zone of continuous construction of mixed character, in which it is no longer easy at all to determine where the centre ends and the periphery begins. Once determining the physiognomy of the city, the relationships between these two traditional areas have been more or less erased. Of greater importance now are sub-centres, and their relationships with residential land close by. What is more, consideration of peripheries in urban-planning terms reveals that the theoretical image of such land and its extent have actually changed radically. This is made clear by the intense academic debate taking place since the

beginning of the 21st century on what the concept of the periphery might be, where it is located, and what are its formal features and present-day significance, as set against the values ascribed to the periphery more traditionally (Arteaga 2016).

The authors here seek to understand what role urban peripheries do indeed play in new territorial structures. To do this, they analyse the evolution of the historical concept of the periphery, as well as the process by which that has become transformed. In the case of the Latin American cities, peripheries are seen as those areas inhabited by the poor, regarded as marginal, and possessing only poorly-developed infrastructure, whose appearance was linked with a period of accelerated economic growth across the entire region in the 1950s. There, once supplied and gathering pace, the onset of any dynamic establishment of a peripheral zone maintains its momentum and continues, even if the rate of economic development is seen to falter (as happened in the 1980s) (Arteaga 2016).

A city's territorial extent, and the division of that area into districts of differing physiognomy and function, is a manifestation of social structure and planning processes. Given the interrelationships between different players, all activity engaged in across a city's space affects the entirety of the structure and boils down to what are in fact a series of political acts. As such, they are not merely processes occurring in a given area, but are rather capable of impacting on the nature of a given city's residential zones in their entirety. For planning and development activity in a city in the context of the implementation of particular political strategies gives rise to social change, and in this way has consequences for all the social, functional and spatial attributes (Pradilla Cobos 1984).

Recalling the views of Borja, we may thus draw these considerations to a close by stating that the space of a city "is a field of confrontation for values and interests, joint projects and hegemonic approaches, and claims and obligations as regards the state" (Borja 2003, p. 5).

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