

**EXPLORATIONS ON SOCIO-SPATIAL INTEGRATIVE STRATEGIES
BASED ON THE TRANSFORMATIVE POTENTIALITIES OF
IMPLEMENTING A POLYCENTRIC METROPOLITAN MODEL
– A SOCIO-SPATIAL AND CULTURAL APPROACH FOR IMPROVING THE
BASES FOR PARTICIPATORY PLANNING INTO POVERTY
ALLEVIATION STRATEGIES IN METROPOLISES IN
TRANSFORMATION IN LATIN AMERICA**

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ABSTRACT: Recognizing that globalization processes has accelerated changes in production and development processes in urban agglomerations, cities and regions around the globe; resulting in a new urban and regional system of correlation and validation on a worldwide scale. The metropolization process in Latin America follows this development path and is also organized in a polycentric model articulated by main centralities (at local, city-metropolitan and even global level). The model needs some particular consideration in Latin American cities, in order to fulfil its main goal of enhancing competitiveness and coping with social needs. The dual scope of the development goal is in direct relation to the strategic approach of enhancing *inter*-relationship between the different centralities (mainly towards the global level) and *intra*-relationship (towards local level) needs a proper equilibrium; requiring a concrete, active role in the planning framework of each agglomeration as pre-condition for its success. This paper explores the potentialities of socio-spatial integration (at the local level as a concrete tool to validate the neighbours' voice) towards a more integral multi-actor approach and as a process base in a relational network perspective, structured to achieve territorial multi-sectoral ambitions under the current urban transformation process. It is proposed that socio-cultural criteria can reveal the spatial needs and correlation potential of local inhabitants (in particular in informal settlements) via a process of recognition of their appropriation of the space, where a constituting sub-centrality via the recognition of its relational links, can impulse a concrete and activated network perspective (spatially and functionally) and could contribute by validating people's voice to involved actors dialogue in order to archive territorial multi-sectoral correlations as indicated by the goals for the proposed polycentric model.

KEYWORDS: Globalization, metropolization, polycentric development model, centralities, socio spatial fragmentation, competitiveness, social equity, local identity, bottom up strategies, relational network, multi-sectoral ambitions, metropolitan strategic planning.

INTRODUCTION:

Under the current context of globalization, it is possible to understand the global and local urban conditions in terms of their reciprocal relationship. According to Ulrich Beck (2004), the effects of globalization are as much a homogenization process as one that reinforces the identities and characteristics of places. A city can therefore in the current globalized context for development, find a chance to cultivate its singularities and through them; a new way to position itself towards the world. The local sphere can then build the engine of a new form based on international and internal integration, related to aspects of local identity.

This logic of locally identified spaces, embedded in specific communal social networks is seen as that which allows positive transformative criteria for the poorer and most disconnected areas of the city (Carrion, F. 2008).

Nowadays, this logic is operated by the development of new centralities corresponding to the development of the current metropolitan polycentric model. It is under this polycentricity where the strange or the different could be socially and physically integrated via the development of an *inter*-relation instead of an *intra*-relation. This means that the development of a social construction which does not separate but rather integrates (Carrion, F. 2008). This paper explores the capacities of these newly developed centralities on its potential to articulate the dual recognized goals of competitiveness and social equity (as is stated by the European Spatial planning Strategy, where the original model is defined). This will be introduced from the recognition of the role of local public space as the spatial base that allows for socio-cultural interactions. Process caused by individual recognition (internal appropriation of the place) as well as an external orientation connected to the cultural, spatial and functional integration. The proposed approaches will be introduced as main consideration for the design of possible integration strategies (from the local scale to the metropolitan scale) to counteract the increasing marginalization of poor areas within the metropolises.

1 FROM MONOCEPHALIC URBAN PRIMACY TO A METROPOLITANIZATION IN EXPANSION, The polycentric model in the Latin American cities and the potential for sustainable developing roles of the newly developed urban centralities.

The actual size, population and organizational complexity level reached by the development of the large metropolises in Latin America determines firstly a restructuring of its urban economies and a new and more integral planning approach, to be able to cope with the various actors involved in its management and new developments.

The actual stage attained by the current intensity of globalization of trade, production and finances trigger an accelerated urban transition, with the understanding that the urban, as the new base for capital accumulation and development (Friedmann, 1987; Sassen, 1991), determines a new governmental focus on metropolitan development as a new paradigm for urban-based competitiveness.

The current expansion of globalization of the economy and the latest advances on ICT development characterizes the restructuring of Latin American urban economies, specifically on their persistence to develop their main agglomerations into metropolitan areas. Their responses are strategies to improve the competitiveness of their respective national economies¹ as mentioned previously and where large parts of the anticipated economic growth will develop in cities (especially considering a highly potential in the already large metropolitan areas) organized and articulated by each of its constitutive centralities. As such it is expected that despite the problems that these agglomerations face, Latin American governments shall focus on the opportunities that this represents for economic growth and improve the quality of life of its population.

Intercity competition appears as a universal paradigm triggering urban development around the world². Determining a new geography of winners and loser as described by Wallerstein (1976) as a world system, and later updated by Sassen (1991) where the search for a Global City status (understood as the agglomeration capacity to attract investment, business, public resources and tourism) has intensified on its developments and effects following the current economic and energy crisis.

Several critical visions for the region coincide with the latest findings of the economic geography on the uneven character of the externalities of this process. According to Veltz (1997): "...can hardly be any dispute about the uneven nature of the capitalist world economy, which results in a spatial mosaic of prosperous and underdeveloped places, regions, and states, or what elsewhere has been termed an archipelago economy".

¹ As stated by Rojas, E. (IDB, 2004). "The region is recognized by the demographic and economic importance of its cities, which in 2000 concentrated 75% of the 523 million inhabitants and generated over 50% of the economic growth". In: Rojas, E (Ed.). *Gobernar las Metropolis*. Interamerican Development Bank. Washington.

² OECD Report (2006), *Territorial Reviews Competitive Cities in the Global Economy*. OECD Publishing. <http://www.oecdbookshop.org/oecd/display.asp?K=5L9N7R5RX0MQ&DS=Competitive-Cities-in-the-Global-Economy>

In the case of Latin America, the main focus to increase competitiveness and promote local growth has been through the development of its main agglomerations; areas that experience a process of expanding metropolization. Processes, which are followed without exception, by the main agglomerations in the region clearly articulated by the activation and creation of new urban centralities, determine a clear territorial organization of polycentric formations within diffuse internal boundaries (Borsdorf et al, 2002).

The polycentric model present in Latin America can be mainly understood through the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (1995) that had a distinct socio-distributive character design in search of a balance in the distribution of economic activities or rather a clear socio-integrative perspective.

2 THE INSTITUTIONAL AND ADMINISTRATIVE CHALLENGE UNDER ACTUAL URBAN DEVELOPMENT PARADIGM

With governments worldwide being required to allocate large amounts of public resources to create the best urban conditions for hosting global investment; a number of key policy issues are emerging. These include demands for more sustainable oriented development, inclusive governance and more liveable cities (Cuadrado Roura, J. 2005) given current global economic turbulence and spatial unevenness of global economic growth. The “winner-losers” dichotomy is not only found between cities and regions but increasingly within the city itself and increasingly expressed as socio-spatial fragmentation. The institutional planning framework of the Latin American agglomeration does not yet effectively incorporate the structural responsibility and task of equilibrating the different forces (and correlated externalities) influencing metropolitan developments.

To cope with the internationally oriented competitiveness strategy (following the urban scope to become a “global city”) and in a search of accelerating local economies several national governments (in the region and worldwide) are strategically improving services and infrastructure provision “by transferring responsibilities to sub-national governments units, which are more capable of meeting the needs of local economies and working with local entrepreneurs and civil society organizations” (Rojas, E., 2005).

Whereas the Inter-American Development Bank (IADB) report (2005), has emphasized the current challenge for urban governance in Latin American agglomerations; “...the main goal is to improve the competitive capacities of local productive base, while reducing social inequalities and minimizing and controlling environmental impacts”; thereby clearly insisting for sustainable oriented development.

The decentralization of government functions has been one of the most distinguishing characteristics of the recent evolution in the administration of Latin American Cities. As appreciated in several territorial governing bodies in Latin America (for example: the 1996 Santiago de Chile Director plan; the 2000/2006 Territorial ordering plan of Bogota, Colombia³), the above mention goal, could clearly be recognized in a dual challenge of: urban competitiveness and socio spatial equity.

By recognizing the effects of the fast processes of urbanization, current high levels reached by the main Latin American agglomerations in metropolis formation, uneven development and the actual correlated polycentric urban model in practice, one can determine the development of several new urban centralities in a model that searches for more territorial balance in urban development under the above described conditions need to be reviewed.

When analyzing the Latin American region, Cuadrado-Roura (2005) highlights the dual challenge and how that affects all cities with metropolitan areas in an apparent double perspective with regards to competitiveness. The dual challenge directed outwards in relation to other metropolises and must also focus inwards to solve the challenges raised by the expansion and the demands of the population. In this paper, we will focus on the potential of urban centralities and its dual challenge of economic growth and social spatial equity.

With the understanding of goals of the current organization patterns and polycentric development (as a spatial developing model) defining the search for redistribution of attributes of the main old centres in favour of the periphery or stagnated areas - given that even the peripheral or the stagnated areas can also develop

³ As set in Sepulveda, D. (2003). *Plan director urbano Santiago de Chile 1996, Plan de ordenamiento territorial Bogota 2000-6*. Analyze in: *The role of public space in urban transformation: The Case of Santiago de Chile*. Delft University of Technology, PhD Thesis. Delft University Press. Delft.

new centres that can build up positive complementariness or even compete with the old or main centralities⁴ - as well as the knowledge that nowadays, balanced configuration development of new centralities as a development strategy for stagnated areas appears as a concrete strategic possibility for achieving the goal of a polycentric urban model.

2.1 Metropolitan Polycentric organization in Latin America, considerations for the transferability of an imported development model

Like many other spatial developing models, the polycentric model was defined and developed in Europe and North America and later on, following the Washington consensus, adopted by several Latin American metropolises. There are however structural problems that require a better “translation” towards a successful implementation of the polycentric model in the context of the Latin American main metropolises. Polycentricity has been understood as a spatial structure with concrete social distributes characteristics (Reynaud, 1981; Gil Beuf, 2009) of certain spatial elements, the centralities, embedded in an upper scale spatial system⁵.

Operability towards the development of this model in the study region; under the enormously misbalanced conditions, existing in varied territorial scales for regions formed as metropolis in Latin America; demands some precise considerations at metropolitan level and its operative links. A *multi-scalar* approach, given the relational links at the level of centralities where the model is defined, is needed in the search for the articulation of a cooperative metropolitan network as main operative goal.

a. Considerations on the metropolitan level

The imposition of this spatial model in Latin American has met with several critiques on the anomalies of the commanding role of the metropolises at national level that are detrimental for other regions of each country. This was exposed very early on by Castells (1973) who defined this as one of the main spatial characteristic of the underdeveloped countries. According to Gouëset (2005), the failure in application of this model for Latin America is precisely the main difference with its original European framework predecessor; the lack of concrete policies sustaining urban balance related to the de-concentration of activities and population which was not even considered during the latest unsuccessful decentralization efforts in the region.

The decentralization process (partly understood as a tacit agreement of the Latin American governments to follow the Washington consensus) required - as observed in Europe (that has met with strong critiques on its concrete performance) - a strong and effective public policy and a concrete operative capacity on the territorial ordering (as characterize by the European Union Policy under its review of the 1999 ESDP).

Following the above mentioned characteristics of the model as described by Reynaud (1981), who explains a distributive model of certain spatial elements, where the dynamic of the different centralities (applied at diverse scales from local to interurban or even global) is required to be embedded in a upper scale spatial system to validate its dual goal (as understood from the original scope of bustling European cities economies, embedded in the overall goal of increasing the global competitiveness of the European Union as a whole).

A great amount of the actual Latin American metropolises presents a polycentric model (mainly at the local and intra urban scales) that has resulted from the decentralization of certain activities, but most cases

⁴ An emblematic best practice, can be found at the regeneration projects in Barcelona of 1980s under the perspective of Jordi Borja-New centrality, Barcelona 92-, were the strategy consists of re-qualifying the stagnated areas, promoting socio spatial integration and operationalizing developing poles with strong endogenous capacities in the periphery (Gil-Beuf).

⁵ The social distributive character of the polycentric model, was firstly define under the 1995, European spatial development perspective, under the new concept of polycentrism, and according to Baudelle (2005) was defined as a strategy overrun the possible contradiction between the global competitiveness objectives and the cohesion between the members of the European Union. According to Gil-Beuf (2009) understood in this way polycentrism, was identify by the spatial economy as an ideal model for the balance distribution of economic activities, base on its potential capacity to optimize the positive externalities under critical mass agglomeration, (articulated by the dynamic of the centralities) with certain control over the negative externalities, base on a equilibrium on size and correlation between the different centralities, skipping the overall congestion at the main one(or its dominant attractions).

appears as clear results of market related forces rather than clear governmental action on the territory (De Matos, 2001; Borsdorf et al., 2002; Rojas E, 2005; Gouëset, 2005). This has made the concrete steering capacities on the development of driving forces focus on main economic actors and thus diminishing (or even neglecting) the “voice” of most vulnerable groups evident. This condition characterizes a majority of populations in the studied agglomerations, thus there is a clear need on the planning framework of each of the metropolitan regions to consider curbing this phenomena as recommended by the ESDP, from where the model originated.

b. Consideration at the local level on the centralities.

Several scholars have criticized the potential dual capacity of the spatial structure (for example, new urban centralities) to be able to combine favourable conditions for competition and territorial equity at the same time; without the threat of falling into the trap of creating more polarization and segregation given the inevitable role of private sector investments in the wish for economic dynamism that tends to privilege the objective of competitiveness in the first place (Bailey and Turoc, 2001). The latter focusing on territorial-oriented investment strategies. Following the ESDP goals in application of this model, it is understood that it is possible to counter the inequalities by “correcting externalities” via the actual strong re-distributive policies operated via social or economic transferability as subsidies and subsidiary practices.

Application of a model in a region with the enormous differences between rich and poor inhabitants and a socially segregated territorial distribution determine very fragmented cities, as recognised by Burgess (2004). The peripheral character of the studied regions is in relation to its participation on the decision-making influences of the world economy, combined with the active and structural role of the informal economy in regional economic development determines clear and important factors to be considered in any developing strategy. In Latin American agglomerations where at its very base, development units are constitutive centralities and sub centralities where any required integrative strategy should be articulated. This fact recommends a clear focus on the polycentric network on a local scale and its forming centralities, as the base to be considered in its governance structure with a more significant role of local scale actors.

As Planel (2008) maintains, the development policies “must be as well selective as correctives, create inequalities and expose the ways to counteract their effects” (Gil-Beuf, 2009).

This is precisely the main gap in the Latin American planning context where the concrete instrumental power of the State in this relation is still very underdeveloped. This fact and the large effects of the process of socio-spatial fragmentation has determined enormous differences in economic capacities of the municipalities (presenting quite homogeneous socio-economic groups of either rich or poor) and where the subsidiary model between them are too difficult to operate, based upon the weak power (mainly inexistent) of the central government and/or a metropolitan authority (Sepulveda, D, 2003).

3 EXPLORING THE POTENTIAL ROLE OF THE POOR URBAN INHABITANTS UNDER THE POLYCENTRIC MODEL’ GOAL OF ECONOMIC COMPETITIVE DEVELOPMENT AND SOCIO SPATIAL INTEGRATION AT THE VERY LOCAL LEVEL.

As concluded from the factors described above, the initial goal of increasing urban competitiveness and socio-spatial equity via the implementation of an operative polycentric urban model requires a new approach in the planning framework of Latin American agglomerations. The question is then: *How to sustain the model’s goals of “distributive potentialities of the poly-centralities” - to be places of socio-spatial integration and not places of social injustice and exclusion?*

3.1 Considerations for the design of an integrative strategy at the local level

Before entering into the proposed approach - made operative in a concrete strategy to cope with the dual challenge of the centralities in Latin America - it is imperative to comment on the characteristics of the design of a development strategy in the current metropolitan context of the region.

The IADB report on urban development (2005) expresses the peculiarities that must to be considered for any metropolitan developing strategy in Latin America, namely the position of the metropolises in relation to global economy (economic performance and its level of decision-making) as well as the need to reflect on the role and performance of the metropolis (and its constitutive centralities) within each national context.

As mentioned before, the complex performance of formal and informal sectors demands that at the local

level the same principles need to be considered i.e. the recognition of the different identities and potentialities of the centralities and sub-centralities, constituting a particular criterion into the design of any effective urban development strategy. There is a clear requirement at the local level (sub-centralities neighbourhood level) to operate this proposed strategy within a relational network (functional and as described later on, socio-cultural). In order to achieve the territorial multi-sectoral ambition (base for the success of the actual entrepreneurial strategic planning framework from where the urban development is operated) and considerations; it is proposed to start with recognition at this level (local-neighbourhood) of its individual involved actors.

According to Gil-Beuf (2009) and following the classification of Borja and Castells (1997) of the type of centralities, it is necessary to define the main development scope (concerted strategy) but at the same time consider its own development. It is defined by two main typologies; on one hand the centralities of flows (where the driven force is the economic competitiveness in search for global investors/articulators) and on the other a centrality of places (where the scope is to provide services to the direct surrounding population). This typological dichotomy reveals the tension within the dual scope of the spatial model.

The nature of the dynamic development of centralities of flows, which links and polarizes spaces at large scales (even worldwide), is appreciated between the world core cities (e.g. Paris, Frankfurt, Tokyo). Central Business Districts - linked according to Sassen (1991) - can be a clear illustration of this nature.

Meanwhile, the centralities of places (which in South America can also be understood as the sub-centralities: traditional neighbourhood centres or spontaneous ones emerged by the gathering of services at residential neighbourhoods) are characterized by a density of services that constitute an attractor for the neighbouring population, extending to a further area of influence.

The clear distinction between these two types of centralities in the urban dynamics is far from evident. In many cases, the centralities performance focuses on the global economic demands of providing services and resources to its surroundings inhabitants (both formal and informal). However, some centralities characterized as providers of services and resources at the local level, house certain activities with highly competitive factors at the global level.

The challenge for the local governments of the region is then their capacity to plan the poly-centralities (and sub-centralities) in a more articulated way where neither one type dominates another completely.

As such the challenge can be summarize in two approaches:

- i) The first approach is the consolidation of a mixed scope, where the globally oriented centralities are defined under certain spatial configuration so that broader ranges of socio-economic groups profit from its services.
- ii) The second approach is understood as not a collection but a network of centralities - from polycentricism towards polycentricity - enhancing the complementary relations between them, based on their divergent identities and multi-scalar interaction (as described by Gil-Beuf, 2009).

With this last approach, the use of the centralities and the recognition of its embeddness in the bigger territorial vision through the active interaction of sub-centralities, centralities and scales is where a concrete strategic approach is proposed; to incorporate the most disadvantaged groups and its settlements in order to be able to reach the goals of socio- spatial equity within local urban competitiveness goals.

The socio cultural perspective as Local Identification

Given the diverse character of the Southern agglomerations, it is clear that the search for an appropriated approach is critical for being able to realize the dual scope defined by the main spatial and social goals of the current development model. It is clear that the identity and collaboration between centralities and sub-centralities (at multi-scalar dynamic) as articulated by concrete functional links must be explored, measured and evaluated (at the local level) where the model is expressed via the relation of main centralities of an area and its links to the sub-centralities as a result of the inhabitants daily use and further defined by a socio-cultural perspective. (Janchez, F, 2010).

The variety and complexity of the reality of the studied metropolises makes it advisable to establish a rational process to allow stakeholders to analyze and give a concrete diagnosis on each particular situation at each particular location. Formulation of successful relational strategies should choose an operative model (with concrete managerial tools) that fulfils the need of an area in a clear open system, defined by a

multi-actor and multi-scalar dynamic approach and con-validated into a multi-actors decision making framework.

To be able to fulfil the aspirations of each of the multiple actors involved at the local level, the process must advocate and be organized in a Strategic Plan, which guarantees a comprehensive and integrated multi-sectoral approach. In order to fulfil the dual goal, strategies must articulate both the local and the global realms, identified on its concrete correlations (Friedmann, 1987; Rodriguez, 2000; Sassen, 2002).

4 PUBLIC SPACE AS TOOL FOR URBAN TRANSFORMATION

From a cultural point of view, public space is crucial to the symbolic life of a city being a central factor in building up the cultural operative. As the space where experiences and uses of inhabitants meet, it represents community life par excellence. It is at this concrete urban element where we evaluate the role of the scope of reach of socio-spatial equity within local urban competitiveness as a concrete strategy to integrate urban poor areas. In short, public space is a consolidation of the importance of the local level, needs and potentialities; embedded in the multi-scalar and multi-actors complexity of metropolitan level governance.

4.1 Public Space and its potential role for socio-spatial integration. Considerations on the socio-spatial construction of the public space in the actual Latin American context

Public space can be conceived, not as the physical space owned by the State according to property regulations, but as a space owned by all and from a socio-cultural point of view constitute the community expression of the contact and communion among individuals. As a spatial embodiment of the community, the “public” can then emerge spontaneously from the natural dynamics of the city and the behaviour of people, conferring such character on spaces that judicial could not have or if it was planned as such (Borja, J. and Muxi, Z., 2003).

Based on the premises of physical rationality and equality, as well as on hygienist values of the role of nature (Borja, J. and Muxi, Z. 2003), modern cities changed human and political notion of public space aiming instead to define it by physical conformation, abstract values and a general conception (almost physiological) of the individuals needs. Urbanism has always sustained on functionalism based on efficiency as a central value and with results that were, almost invariably, the application of sectoral policies instead of actions articulating the diversity and complexity of urban demands.

By confusing urbanism with mere housing and public works developments, the public policies of the Modern Movement have forgotten the potential of public space as an integral and cohesive product of the city (Hall P., 1988). This limitation in viewing public space has led; for instance to conceiving the street as a simple transit area or a park as an urban oxygenation centre; neglecting the crucial roles of both elements as social interaction junctions.

In the present globalized context, this facet of the modern movement tends to be reproduced. All current urban transformation projects agree on the need to work in de-contextualized voids, seeing them as spaces where it is possible to materialize ideal images of the “best place for life, work, and education” (Hall, P., 1988). Vacant areas of the city, usually produced by obsolete or disused infrastructures, turn into the perfect ground for experimentation since the new urban space becomes independent from historical and cultural references, precisely on account of their emptiness of content (or obsolescence of it) and their isolation from the interweaving of traditional functions and events. The urban operations in these vacant areas are materializing into projects that generate a sort of “appearance” of urbanity: spaces with explicit references to urban elements are created, trying to re-create the feeling of urbanity and social openness characteristic of the traditional city. This situation hides a very different reality in which the urban space has been homogenized and privatized (Sorkin, M., 1992) without the required systemic openness, which characterizes real urban life. In these pseudo-urban areas, the city is no longer an instrument of interaction and social integration. These areas have a social composition much more homogeneous than the traditional city; integration among different social economical groups is not necessary in them, since everybody belongs to the same. The spread of these forms of space appropriation generates a fragmented city made up of islands inhabited by these “communities of equals”.

This type of fragmented city also means the disappearance of public space as a space of integration and interaction among the different social groups. Streets, somehow as in the modern movement paradigm,

become simple transit areas among the different urban islands. Through the physical and symbolic barriers that it creates among the different areas of the city; this absence of integration potentiates existing social polarization. In turn, the disappearance of an integrative public space within each of these areas of “equals” generates a sense of dis-belonging in their inhabitants, since these new urban spaces are “Forbidden places that, with their physical isolation, foment the disintegration of the local forms of solidarity and community life” (Bauman, Z. 1999).

This disappearance involves also a loss of identity for the city and its neighbourhoods (which under these circumstances should already be called fragments) in relation to other cities. It is a process of real homogenization in urban lifestyles that makes cities increasingly similar one another.

Under these parameters, the applied urban intervention strategies neglect the development of the city as a system of social links and go on to see it as a commodity product, focusing the effort on projects capable of adding value according to the demands of national and international market forces. In this new urban scheme, the inhabitants of sectors economically integrated, evaluate the city according to two priorities: personal security, and accessibility of the areas where their everyday life takes place. This is to say, following individual scopes of competitiveness, which in the case of Latin America, is enhanced by the differences in education level and capacity to reach developing opportunities, between the very few privileged groups and the high majority of the population lacking of it. These requirements become the new standard of value for the urban space, being disregarded traditional strategic aspects such as heterogeneity and social diversity. In this process of dissolution, fragmentation, and privatization, the city suffers from the weakening of public space as a civic space, which causes the un-governability of a territory now filled up with products, inequalities and marginalization (Janiches, F, 2010).

A guiding principle postulated by these new forms of planning is the re-signification of urban peripheries and old stagnated areas, as ways of inhabitation that contrast with the collapsed and “shantytownized” traditional urban centres. However, there is a paradox in it as Haijer and Reijndorp (2001) pointed out: “while urban designers try to correct the shapelessness of urban periphery by urbanizing it, in their attempts to regenerate the inner-city they adopt the organizational principles of the periphery [...] its designs and principles of control are simply replicated in the city. Parts of the city are adapted to make them fit for the requirements of healthy house hunters and consumers who want a safe, controlled and segregate environment”. This indicates the closing of opportunities towards more correlated operations and paving the way to more socio-spatial fragmentation.

4.2 Local and global scopes and potentialities as criteria for Integral socio- spatial development strategies

Nevertheless, alternative understandings on this socio-territorial homogenization recognize the global and the local in terms of their reciprocal relationship. As mentioned in the introduction, according to Ulrich Beck (2004), the globalization condition can trigger as much a homogenization process as one that reinforces the identities and characteristics of places. As it is not possible for the local identity to emerge from the global, there is in the globalization process an implicit recognition of the importance of the local level. A city can therefore find in the globalized context a chance to cultivate its singularities and through them, position itself in a new way towards the world abroad.

Through this, the local sphere can build the engine of a new form of international integration, related to aspects of local identity. By “strengthening its differential, identities and personalities [a city] potentiates a kind of internal cultural re-signification and the proper way to reposition its place in the global context [...] so, the concept of ‘globalization’ could be described as a process that creates transnational links and social spaces, revaluating local cultures and helping to foreground third cultures” (Beck, U., 2004). Such recognition of place as a point of valuation of the city based on a local-global relationship repositions the cultural difference in all its cohesive power.

Many examples illustrate this kind of intervention based upon repositioning values that emerge from restricted particular events that potentiate the global consumption of historical and social local events considered as individual marks⁶. Cities promote themselves locally by re-signifying the marks consolidated

⁶ Events such as carnivals or football matches clearly illustrate the consumption of local particularities. Both events, associated to local values, are presented as an *international show*: a “safe” distance is generated so as to appreciate or consume the emblematic socio-cultural behavior.

in the global context and by globalizing the singularities of their particular identities, linking the global orientation of the development with the local character, potentialities and needs within.

4.3 The socio-spatial construction of space under the actual hegemony of the global oriented development

This socio-cultural approach of the city and public space is also applicable to the peripheral space (as well as stagnated ones) because from a cultural point of view, the peripheral/stagnated condition involves places dis-characterized by a community on account of their lack of interaction and socio-cultural links.

Furthermore, considered from this angle, the peripheral or stagnated condition has an essential relational dimension, since it is in the dichotomizing interdependence and the confronted vision of both concepts – central space / peripheral space, connected space/ stagnated - where individual, shared values and deficiencies are potentiated. The value of an urban area is not an intrinsic feature of its own: it only acquires significance in reference to areas lacking it.

These processes of differentiation quite often impair public life in a city, as they easily turn from definitions of the otherness into real acts of marginalization of what is different. Thus, many places in the city cease from being those defined as “others” in a certain urban dialogue to enter a process of radical segregation that may even culminate in the racial stigmatization of societies and places (as the “No-go areas” or “forbidden places”) Auyero, J (2000).

As García Canclini, N. (2004) points out in his intercultural maps, these differences should be seen as cultural activities constructed in terms of a distance from “the other” and it is through the multicultural interdependence that we recognize our own prestige and stigmas.

This urban character requires a special type of urban project not simply focused on a physical and infrastructural approach to the problem of marginality, but a project centred on creating places that can be symbolically appropriated by their dwellers. The strategic planning approach in development programs should not only include measures aimed at fighting the increasing housing shortage but also at validating the “voice”, legality and civic belonging of marginalized neighbourhoods.

It is by strengthening at the local level; the existing ways of socio-cultural interaction as well as the identification / differentiation relations - both internal and within the neighbouring context - that a more generalized process of urban integration will be viable. It is only by projecting the public space as a place of community dominion, where cities would be able to re-conquer and re-qualify their historically disarticulated areas (peripheries and stagnated settlements), linking them to the city as a whole.

The transformation process initiated during the decade of 1980 in Barcelona clearly shows the use of public space as part of an urban view focused on integration and non-exclusion. Its strategy of “making city in the city” was based on the construction of public spaces in all scales and on their positive impact on the degraded environment. The plan of new centralities designed by Spanish architect Oriol Bohigas (which included multiple dispersed interventions with alternative scales, programs and contents) made possible both to promote the development of the outskirts and to reposition the qualities of public space design as an essential tool in the strategic urban planning. Its methodology of city construction was based on the “reevaluation of the place, of public space, of urban habitat, of life quality, of the dialectic between the city and its districts and its imprint into a succeeding operative on the city polycentrism”.

Previously Aldo Van Eyck, in his project for playgrounds, (1947 - 1978) used the power of public space for the recovery of degraded spaces. Bearing in mind the capacity of public playgrounds to connect people with the place, Van Eyck set an urban transformation process for post-war Amsterdam through activities accessible to people of all ages and from different cultural backgrounds. With an intervention of a polycentric, interstitial and participative character Van Eyck created a network of approximately 700 playground areas that made possible to strengthen the sense of community in a devastated socio-territorial context (Lefavre, L.2007). His idea, based on the distinction between “space” and “place” was a reaction against (the CIAM-approach for urban planning) a priori concepts and abstract principles (of space) into an “approaches embedded in real circumstances, lived in conditions, experienced cases, immediate contexts, or situations (of place)”⁷.

⁷ See Lefavre Liane, “Space, place and play or the interstitial/cybernetic/polycentric urban model underlying Aldo van Eyck’s quasi-unknown but, nevertheless, myriad postwar Amsterdam playgrounds.” Lefavre Liane, de Roode Ingeborg ed. *Aldo Van Eyck – the playgrounds and the city*. Stedelijk Museum

This kind of intervention clearly defends a concept of “urban” that considers the urban as daily experience (what García Canclini calls “micropolis”). In the symbolic dynamics of social life, each society reacts in a particular way to a space—even to spaces materially identical— according to the specific urban imaginary in the group (Lindon, A. 2007). This clearly proves a potential value in public space as a key-differentiating element whose culturally determined appropriation enables the consolidation of urban identity.

By counting on public spaces that, beyond their physical form, differ on account of their cultural signification for certain social groups, cities cease from being similar one to another.⁸

From this view of urban space, is it possible to conceive an alternative way for urban development. The projectable device will be aimed at generating intensity points, as “events”, capable of creating symbolic identification and social integration. These events would be intermediate spaces, spatially communicative, not intended as permanent and unchanging facts but rather as evolutive and adaptable events, places of seduction⁹ produced in the “common” place of a society. The key of their meaning and success will no longer be the clairvoyance of a planner who tries to impose solutions, but the use and the appropriation that the community itself will make of them.

Margaret Crawford (1999) defined by the intersection between the individual or group and the rest of the city—a space where the city accumulates the multiple social and economic transactions—is the most powerful place of everyday urbanism (understood it, in the centrality or sub-centrality formation and dynamic).

This multiple dimension of urban space can therefore be appreciated not only in the quality of its physical form but also, as Jordi Borja (2003) points out “in the intensity and quality of the social relation it facilitates, in its potential to make groups and strengths interactions and in its capacity to encourage symbolic identification, expression and cultural integration”.

Based on these concepts, an alternative strategy to produce transformation in marginal (as peripheral ones or stagnated peri-urban or more central areas as well) areas of the cities enables the development of neighbourhoods with identity and socio-cultural significances. This is to say that it enables the developing potentials of centralities and sub-centralities to be identified based on their socio-cultural character and operation.

4.4 Exploring the required dimension in a concrete local socio-spatial oriented developing strategy.

The aim of these new strategies for urban design in segregated urban areas is then to propose alternative forms of public space in order to influence some of the social, urban and environmental problems faced. This strategy is based on the identification of existing habits and routines, both ordinary and extraordinary, enabled to determine the general system of relations, associations, tensions, contradictions and balances in the settlement to be surveyed as a result of a possible process of evolution and transformation suggested.

This is because although their problems are rooted in deficiencies emerging from social and economic structural conditions, there are nonetheless in these settlements creative strategies for everyday life that constitute even if in a precarious way, structures of positive social relationships. It is therefore important to see these strategies as strengths of the villa population (poor informal settlements) and use them as key elements in urban design, which must seek for the reinforcement of slum organization and its civic awareness.

Amsterdam Nai Publishers Rotterdam.

⁸ Daniel Hiernaux understands this everyday dimension, made up of little things, as a particular way to appropriate, organize, and ensure urban life in public space. See Hiernaux, Daniel, “Los imaginarios urbanos: de la teoría y los aterrizajes en los estudios urbanos”, *EURE*, v. 33, N° 99, Santiago de Chile, August 2007.

⁹ As refers on Jean Baudrillard’s terminology, He calls these events “places of seduction”, “because in their dual character the object is confronted with the real order, the visible order that surrounds it. In the absence of such confrontation - which has nothing to do with interactivity or context - it does not take place. An accomplished space i.e. that exists beyond its own reality is a space that gives rise to a dual relationship, a relation capable of withstanding deviations, contradictions, even destabilization, but bringing face to face the pretended reality of a world and its radical illusion”. Baudrillard, Jean, Nouvel Jean. *Los objetos singulares, arquitectura y filosofía. Fondo de cultura económica. Buenos Aires 2001. p. 18*

These values could be established through multiple meetings, exercises and interviews with different social groups in the neighbourhood aimed at defining the personal desires and aspirations as well as the need of general programs and specific spaces that would mark the future network of public spaces. The models used in these information-exchange processes enable the construction of an urban cartography in which specific aspects of the work place (recognized or not, valued or not, existing or potential) are reflected.

The information search process includes the construction of the following cognitive maps:

- i) A new *cognitive map*: in the most rigorous context of daily life in the material conditions of the city enables the individual to represent his/her situation in relation with wide and genuinely non-representable totality constituted by the city as a whole. For this reason, “The cognitive map demands the combination of pure personal experience data (the empirical position of the subject) with abstract and artificial conceptions of the geographic totality” (Jameson, F., 1991) as defined by the search for relational links.
- ii) A *social map*: to define a general scheme of relations and interactions among the different social organizations trying to find the spatial dimension of these relations.
- iii) A *spatial map*: to construct an inventory of spatial conditions, patterns, regularities and irregularities in the urban tissue, as well as a valuation of the natural and scenic systems in the settlement.

These maps are based on three approaches that consider three different dimensions of the city¹⁰:

- i) *Territorial city*: the inhabitable spaces system and their topographical, historical and social delimitation; examples of this are the urban topographies, the infrastructure and physical form, the eco-system, the urban nature and emergent new ecologies and the expansion borders and periphery.
- ii) *Dynamic city*: the neighbourhood is constantly growing, with continuous expansions redefining forms and typologies in the urban settlement. Space can be approached through change and multiple categories capable of bringing together in the same place, different experiences that are neither exclusive nor hierarchical. For example; circulation systems, public space systems, quotidian and immigration / emigration.
- iii) *Event city*: a formal reconstruction of the individual or collective life space from particular events or situations. These events have a thickness, a passion; they mix and clash, generating an urban scheme that can be used as a reference for the formalization of their supporting spaces. For example; sports and their urban effects, festivities and celebration spaces, all kinds of celebrations (their origins and urban effects), music as a product and markets and fairs (the trade phenomenon capable of generating city).

It is believed that a possible fourth dimension could already integrate this recognition process and complete the approach, validating the developing potential of the varied base and upscale it in search for synergies from the other levels within each correlated potential and actors.

- iv) The *relational functional city*: a concrete documentation on the spatiality of functional and specialized links (existing) between the different areas on its own organizational patterns determining the permanent up-scaling character of the active collaborations between the analyzed scale (local-local/local municipal/municipal regional).

5 EXPLORING POTENTIALITIES OF A LOCAL INTEGRATIVE STRATEGY WITHIN THE CHALLENGES OF THE POLYCENTRIC MODEL ANALYSED IN THEIR SOCIO-CULTURAL, SPATIAL AND FUNCTIONAL DIMENSION

To counteract the permanent character of the marginalized groups requires a special type of urban project; not simply focused on physical and infrastructural aspects of the problem of marginality but a project centred on the recognition of places that can be symbolically appropriated by their dwellers.

It is proposed that by strengthening the current and concrete ways of socio-cultural interactions as well

¹⁰ These dimensions were defined by crossing the strictly architectural approach with those of other disciplines in a workshop on urban mapping held in the Faculty of Architecture, Design, and Urbanism at the University of Buenos Aires (2004). Professors in charge: Max Rohm, Flavio Janches. Assistant professors: Suzanne Pietsch, Florencia Rodríguez.

as identifying / differentiating its relations (both internal and within the neighbouring context) up-scaling them to nearby centralities (considering its links as more external oriented functions) could potentially be incorporated into the metropolitan level decision making operability. This could generalize the process of urban integration and will determine its systematic viability on the planning framework.

The integrative urban project aims to be a sort of “urbanization germ” from which other inner evolutionary forces and inertias within a settlement will reinforce and develop, with both predicted and non-predicted results, its social and symbolic structure (process with clear involvement opportunities opening up the possibilities for more long term ones towards a concrete solution via active involvement).

Rather than establish a definite design, the integrative project must aim to generate a process for a viable future evolution. For that to happen, it must be flexible and adaptable to the modifications and limitations that could come up through out its development, as well as to adapt to the uses given by the inhabitants to the proposed urban devices which needs to be re-evaluated later on in its potential to constitute physical and or functional links with the upscale considering the metropolitan system. This can also be understood as a potential negotiation arena where the more powerful stakeholders can meets and negotiate with the local stakeholders.

6 POSSIBLE CONCLUSION

To summarize, the model for planning and organization of the metropolitan space must consider the actual development of centralities and sub-centralities that are defined and qualified by the inhabitants' appropriation of the space. This constitutes the real base for constructing an integral socio-spatial strategy to counteract the process of socio-spatial fragmentation.

It has being stated that the articulators of the new urban transformations, responds better to the dual role assigned to them (centralities and sub-centralities); as they are planned, design and developed in a systematic logic that recognized people-driven constructed spaces. Urban transformation is then understood as a permanent evolutive concept that requires regular evaluation from its multi-scalar interrelation on the building up of centralities/sub-centralities as people spaces.

From this understanding, an operative functional network is established; where each correlated scale can interact recognizing the spatial demands and potentialities of each place (determined by the people who use it, as socio cultural expression). Functional links are potentiated from this; defined in the public space, giving new characterization to the area (an identity) from where the urban dynamic is generated from centralities and sub-centralities better define correlated synergies and conditions; to reach a competitiveness perspective (global-metropolitan) as well as certain distributive justice for local oriented services, supporting their development in a correlative way.

This approach can constitute a successful entrance to reach the concerted dual goal assigned by the polycentric model (considering the concrete socio-spatial conditions in Latin American metropolises) capable of reaching high competitive standards as well reaching socio-spatial equilibrated distribution. Then the actual transitional transformation process in the study area would enable more sustainable oriented cities and regions. By a possible implementation of dialoguing/negotiating integral instances, this approach can open up the base for a strategic, inclusive planning framework for future metropolitan regions.

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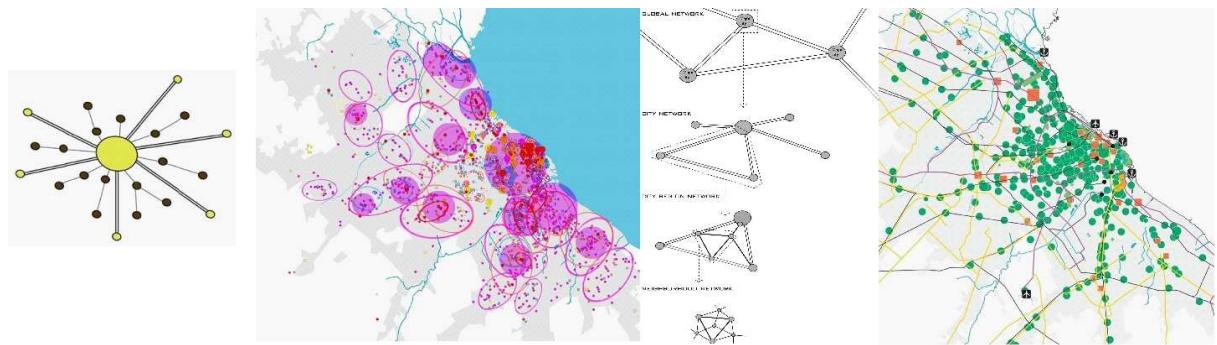


Figure 1 Buenos Aires from monocephalic to polycentric model

Source: Delft University of Technology, Master 2 urbanism 2009, Course results, *designing the dual city*.



Figure 2 From the metropolitan centralities to local linked events at Boca sub-centrality.

Source: Delft University of Technology, Master 2 urbanism 2009, Course results, *designing the dual city*.