



Advancing urban rights

Equality and diversity in the city

Eva Garcia-Chueca and Lorenzo Vidal (Eds.)

CIDOB GLOBAL CITIES

BARCELONA
CENTRE FOR
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Barcelona

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CIDOB edicions
Elisabets, 12
08001 Barcelona
Tel.: 933 026 495
www.cidob.org
cidob@cidob.org

Printing: Book-Print S.A.
ISBN: 978-84-92511-75-4
Legal deposit: B 25546-2019

Barcelona, November 2019

Cover Image: Matteo Paganelli

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I. Introduction

This article seeks to show that to realise the right to the city the new urbanisation patterns taking shape in a range of situations require new institutional frameworks and unprecedented government policies. To do this, a time period will be considered that runs from the 1980s to the present when three configurations of events are changing the dynamics of the Latin American city:

A process of urbanisation: the end of the countryside to city migration cycle and the beginning of international migration means cities grow less, but with greater complexity. *Inequality replaces urban expansion as the main problem*, leading to demands for the *right to the city* (Harvey, 2012; Carrión, 2019) and *spatial justice* (Secchi, 2015; Soy, 2014). On the other hand, cities cease to operate according to a size-rank mentality with urban hierarchies and begin to act *through transurban and interurban dynamics* that pose an unprecedented problem: the poor fit between the new forms of urban territory organisation and the institutional structures of government.

Democracy returns (after dictatorships) and is *extended* to local governments as part of decentralisation processes. In 1980 only seven countries in the region elected their local authorities (1980); today all are chosen by the people (Carrión, 2015). Urban society is thus democratised and relations with the states (unitary, federal), intermediate governments (states, provinces, departments) and local governments (municipalities) are redefined.

The neoliberal rationale taking hold in the production of cities leads to the focus shifting from the social (welfare state and redistribution) to the economic. Profit drives urban planning (efficiency) via: the privatisation of services and infrastructure (Pérez, 1999), tax policies (tax reductions), increased capital gains on land (Abramo, 2011) and public investment in urban planning projects.

These three factors form the core of the urban conflict, leading to the emergence of cities as a political phenomenon with complex institutional frameworks and where the right to the city is claimed. We will therefore

Inequality replaces urban expansion as the main problem, leading to demands for the right to the city and spatial justice.

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The urban explosion phase produced the historical dissociation between urbanisation and the city, because migration from the countryside did not produce cities.

work on three coordinated themes: the characteristics of the urbanisation process; the lack of congruence between institutional frameworks and new urbanisation patterns; and the right to the city, understood as a political utopia that seeks the balanced distribution of power and citizens' access to the goods the city produces.

II. The urbanisation process

Latin America has seen two phases of urbanisation in the past century:

Urban explosion

The urbanisation that began in the early twentieth century lasted until the 1980s and is characterised as an *urban explosion* due to the accelerated rural-urban migration that saw the concentration of the Latin American population in cities rise from 41% in 1950 to 71% by 1980, making it the continent with the highest level of urbanisation in the world.

In the urbanisation of cities, three phenomena should be highlighted: the increased number of cities, which multiplied by six; the growth in the size of the population concentrated in the largest cities; and the predominance of coastal or nearby areas (within 100 linear kilometres) (Rodríguez, 2002).

This migration produced a new urban reality. The people who arrived in the city did not meet the basic needs of city life. But by reproducing peasant cultures and economies in the cities as a survival strategy, they nevertheless transformed those cities by producing peripheral areas that operated as *cities of peasants* (Roberts, 1980).

The urban explosion phase produced *the historical dissociation between urbanisation and the city, because migration from the countryside did not produce cities*. The places it produced were categorised as illegal settlements because many emerged from the invasion of public and/or private property,¹ from a lack of respect for construction and urbanisation regulations, and a lack of services, infrastructure and public spaces, which made the public and private administrations deny their existence and therefore their recognition. Bourdieu (1999) says that to speak of problematic suburbs or of ghettos is to almost automatically evoke non-realities.

This urbanisation based on unrecognised human settlements twice caused boundaries to be broken down:

The urban area overflowing beyond the city core due to the sudden appearance of human settlements on their outskirts gave rise to *slums* with the names (depending on the city) of *favelas*, *pueblos jóvenes*, *villas miseria*, *barrios de rancho* and *colonias populares*. These settlements were built outside the city and on the edge of the urban area, forming a dual urban structure with one legal-formal city and another illegal-informal one (Hardoy and Saterwaite, 1996).

The overburdening of public institutions due to the poor capacity to respond to migratory pressure led social demands to be directed towards local administrations that lacked resources and competencies, showing

1. At present, urban illegalities extend beyond the outskirts and into work, trade and urban centres; but also towards more complex illegalities: drugs trafficking (consumption, money laundering), people trafficking and arms sales.

the limitations of the centralist state. This went so far that the *crisis of the centralist state took hold, forged out of this urban crisis.*

Urban transition

The 1980–2020 period, understood as the *urban transition*, resulted from the change in the direction of migration. The rural-urban movement cycle came to an end and that of international urban-urban migration began. It had two expressions: the rate of urbanisation fell, and *an interurban and transurban system was formed, with urbanisation that was multi-sited and unfolded across continuous or discontinuous territories.*²

It was *multi-sited* in the sense of a structure that assembles several spaces inhabited or appropriated by various types of capital (Bourdieu, 1999) into the form of a *city of cities*. In other words, a process of fragmentation of the territory – which promotes inequalities – based on an urban structure formed of a *constellation of discontinuous spaces* (Castells, 2001), *island cities* (Duhau and Giglia, 2008) or *archipelago-type cities* (Rubalcaba and Schteingart, 2012).

This structure was formed in various spheres, such as that of a new economy – urban and global – that links spaces and sectors in a pattern of dispersing economic activities and centralising their management in the territory (Sassen, 1999). They demand infrastructure that integrates ports, airports, highways and, above all, new communication technologies. In territorial terms a new type of urban centrality emerges that operates as an inter- and transurban articulation node, with central functions that stretch beyond the city in which they are registered to link with similar centres in other cities through the higher tertiary sector (Pradilla and Márquez, 2008).

This new way of organising the territory generates a mismatch with existing institutional frameworks, causing a lack of correspondence between the *multiple territorial levels* and the *multilevel institutional complex*. A juxtaposition results between bodies at the horizontal (municipal) and vertical levels, whether intermediate (province, department, state) or national (intra-state or interstate).

Hence, the pattern of *urbanisation rooted in a core metropolitan city is left behind*, in favour of a territory in which different activities can be integrated into a *post-metropolitan* interurban and transurban dynamic (Soja, 2008). The new urbanisation patterns produce a new urban geography from which multiple centralities emerge and so, as a result, do multiple peripheries.

III. Current urbanisation patterns

In the urbanisation process, there are two key elements to the integration of territories: the *supra-national* (Castells, 2001; Sassen, 1999), fed by the technological scientific revolution, which reduces distances, stimulates the flow and movement of capital and refunctionalises urban regions, borders and clusters.

Then there is the *subnational* (Borja and Castells, 1998). The strengthening of local governments through increased resources and competencies

The rural-urban movement cycle came to an end and that of international urban-urban migration began.

This new way of organising the territory generates a mismatch with existing institutional frameworks.

2. *Place* may be defined as the point in physical space where an agent or thing is located, “takes place”, exists (Bourdieu, 1999).

and, above all, the election of their authorities by popular vote, introduces something previously unseen: the territorialisation of politics. From this point on, the relationship between the state and local societies is modified, as a territory is formed that can be opposed, coordinated or isolated in a subnational or supranational way (global or border cities).

The new urbanisation patterns produce a new urban geography from which multiple centralities emerge and so, as a result, do multiple peripheries.




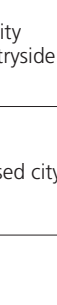



Glocalisation prompts a new model of accumulation to emerge, where the local is internationalised and the global is localised.

Glocalisation prompts a new model of accumulation to emerge, where the local is internationalised and the global is localised – the global being a constituent part of the local, rather than something external. From this perspective, cities and regions become a core part of the anchoring and development of globalisation: they are strategic locations for its articulation in continuous, discontinuous, diffuse and distant forms. Global city systems, urban networks and global cities are formed that reference the global coordination of cities.

Cities do not exist in isolation because they are not autarkic: they emerged connected to the countryside, and later linked to other cities to form inter-urban and transurban relationships. The first cities grew up along the seas, rivers and roads nature provided. Today they are produced socially, with new communication technologies playing a decisive role (Castells, 2001).

Urban territories are formed from these elements and the following three ideal types shown in Table 1 stand out:

Table 1. Urbanisation patterns and institutional governance frameworks in Latin America

	City type	spatial model	relations	government
Urbanisation of cities:	Nuclear city		City countryside	Municipal isolated
	Metropolitan city		Polarised city	Metropolitan
Interurban urbanisation	Urban systems		Articulated cities	Horizontal municipal
Transurban urbanisation	Clusters		Factory City	Multilevel public/private
	Borders		Pair cities	Multistate
	Imagined cities		Multi-sited city	Pluristate
	Regional urbanisation		City of cities	Multilevel

Source: compiled by the author.

The *urbanisation of cities* derives from the first phase of urbanisation and has two expressions: *nuclear cities* (large, medium and small) with strong anchoring in the countryside, and *metropolitan cities* with an important regional base, whether flat or polarised.

Interurban urbanisation coordinates cities within an *urban system* or *city network*, a concept that goes beyond that of *urban hierarchy*, and is based on demographic size-rank and not relations. Borja and Castells (1998) argued the contrary, saying that the global urban system is a network, not a pyramid.

Transurban urbanisation comes from cities' territorial sprawl, going beyond them and operating within them in multi-sited forms that go beyond relations between cities and have four expressions:³

Clusters and *factory cities* operate as a group of private units that act strategically in certain sectors of the economy and territory. They are interconnected concentrations of companies that can carry out intensive private-corporate production. States create the general conditions for production (taxes, infrastructure) without building public institutions, but municipalities are integrated. Clear examples are the areas producing salmon in the X region of Chile (Montero, 2004), cars in El Bajío in México (Montero, 2015) and tourism in the Machupicchu region, in Peru's Sacred Valley and Cusco (Navarrete and Caballero, 2015), all regions of *mono-production* with horizontal value chains.

Imagined cities – perceived as urban – unfold across the territories of distant and distinct countries and continents and operate as *symbolic communities in transnational social spaces* (Beck, 1998). Transurban cities form around the economy/culture/society and technology through two mechanisms. First, *high-level markets* in the new urban centres enable the Norths of the cities in the South to be integrated into Northern cities (Sassen, 1999). Second, through *interurban migration*,⁴ origin and destination can be integrated to found a transurban city thanks to the development of communications technology (smartphones with multiple applications),⁵ international banking (remittances) and the global integration of the economy (legal and illegal). Hence, a fifth of Mexicans and a quarter of Cubans live in the United States, Buenos Aires is the fourth-largest Bolivian city, Los Angeles the fourth-largest Mexican city, Miami the second-largest Cuban city, and New York the city with the second-most Salvadoreans.

Border cities – multi-site cities,⁶ mistakenly called twins, mirrors or pairs, are an expression of the transurban city, as a border between two or more neighbouring countries is a condition of their existence. One could not exist without the other, to the extent that they may be considered one city with two different parts; they are shaped by urban segregation and fragmentation. The idea that they are two different cities has its roots in *methodological nationalism*, while that of integration comes from *complementary asymmetries* (Carrión and Pinto, 2019).

Regional urbanisation – cities of cities – result from *urban integration that goes beyond* the metropolisation developed around a central city that incorporates a neighbouring territory to form a space with multiple scales that produce governments with multiple levels.

The global urban system is a network, not a pyramid.

Imagined cities unfold across the territories of distant and distinct countries and continents.

3. The concepts "interurban" and "transurban" are expanded on in the forthcoming book *Devolver la polis a la ciudad* (Carrión, 2019).
4. Several studies note the clear differences between the migratory stampede of the late nineties and the start of the new century and previous migrations. Among the differences are: new destinations, higher levels of education, the feminisation of migration, increased sending of remittances and use of new information and communication technologies to facilitate the weaving of migratory networks and enhance the formation of transnational virtual communities in the context of globalisation and computer capitalism (Ramírez, 2014).
5. Previously there was no relationship between the two sides of the equation, to the extent that the origin (countryside) was reproduced in the destination (city) through the peasant economy and culture. This is what Roberts described in 1978 as *Cities of Peasants*.
6. The urbanisation of border areas is higher than the national average in most Latin American countries (Carrión and Pinto, 2019).

IV. The institutional framework of territorial government

The institutional frameworks of city governments are structured on the basis of two stated purposes: reforming the state and the new patterns of urbanisation.

Neoliberalism modified urban societies when urban objects became commercially tradable goods and the objects of speculation.

The absence of correspondence between urbanisation and government bodies produces complex inter-institutional structures.

The *first* introduces the neoliberal rationale to the public administration of cities. Municipalities give up certain functions or privatise them, form municipal companies, foundations or corporations and carry out limited sectoral actions that create new links between the municipality and the economy and the city, and fit with the dynamics of the minimal state. Regarding public policy: *planning* is replaced by urban planning projects (Puerto Madero in Buenos Aires, Guayaquil 2,000 in Guayaquil and the second level of the Periférico ring road in Mexico City); and the *tax authorities* value fees over taxes, meaning municipalities specialise in producing services and infrastructure. Neoliberalism modified urban societies when urban objects became commercially tradable goods and the objects of speculation; citizenship acquired the dynamics of consumer sovereignty (demand, taxpayer). The right to the city is thereby questioned and new urban inequalities take hold that demand access to the city and the production of a new one.

Simultaneously, the so-called *leftward shift* occurred. The *return to the public* and *post-neoliberal politics* were expressed in higher public spending and investment in infrastructure (ports, airports) and in strategic sectors of the economy (oil, energy) – forming part of a “national project” according to the tenets of so-called “21st Century Socialism”. In this context, cities are democratised by holding mayoral elections and *municipalities* emerge as a local *representative power reshaping the local/national relationship through political diversity and territorialisation*. Neither neoliberalism nor the thesis of the return of the public recognised this historical fact. They were conceived as national projects that did not respect territorial differences, *because their hierarchical vision does not build unity in diversity*.

The *second* proposal relates to the government of interurban and transurban systems. In this case the *absence* of correspondence between urbanisation and government bodies produces *complex inter-institutional structures*. The growth of one or several contiguous urban areas beyond their administrative limits led to conflicts between public administrations at the same levels (horizontal, e.g. municipalities) or at different levels (vertical, e.g. intermediate or national), each of which has its own representation, functionality and policies, as the following cases illustrate:

Mexico City, with under 9 million inhabitants (a figure that has not changed since the beginning of the century) and which chooses its own head of government, in 2017 approved its own constitution, including 16 regional government delegations. Over 23 million people live in the metropolitan area, in 60 municipalities and two states. The Mexico megalopolis has over 28 million people living in 535 municipalities and five states (Iracheta, 2017). In short, it is an institutional government complex composed of: 16 delegations, a government headquarters, five states and 535 municipalities.

Ciudad Juárez has a million and a half inhabitants and, together with Chihuahua, which has 900,000 inhabitants, forms the eighth-largest metropolitan area in Mexico. When combined with El Paso – a US city of 800,000 inhabitants – it forms the second-largest transnational metropolitan area in Mexico and the United States. In this case, a number of municipalities, two metropolitan areas and two different national states constitute a “transurban city” that must seek a new government in between nation-states.

These forms of urbanisation have administrative units with governments that are juxtaposed at municipal, metropolitan, intermediate, national and inter-state level, showing the *exhaustion of the nation-centric urban regime composed of a nuclear city set within one territory, one government and one state*.⁷ In other words, multiple autonomies grow out of distinct governance units with urban policies that have little consensus in the territories, which end up complicating and *fracturing the demands for the right to the city*. This means recognising the territories where the types of cities and governments that form an institutional framework with differing autonomies unfold, in the manner of a multilevel institutional framework (horizontal and vertical). In this context of multiple institutions arising from different urbanisation patterns, how should we understand the right to the city?

V. The right to the city in a multilevel reality

The right to the city is much more than the individual freedom to access the collective consumer goods produced in the city – its services and infrastructure – because that would mean leaving its structure intact, which excludes and generates inequality.

Two key elements emerge: first, the point is not to pursue an *inclusive city*, as international cooperation advocates, but to build a different, democratic city, which goes further than granting the excluded access to the city but *maintaining its structure*.⁸ And second, it must be recognised that the right to the city is not homogeneous, because the city is the space of difference and because its government emerged from a complex inter-institutional assembly, which makes the demands for the right to the city an additional challenge.

The *right to the city is the right to change and reinvent the city* in a context of respect for the rights of nature.⁹ The current city must be changed because it is a machine for producing inequality and exclusion (Secchi, 2015). That being so, the starting point should be the questions: The right to which city, the current one or the desired one? Which city lies behind the right to the city? To be sure, it means producing a city that grows out of the foundations of the existing one, but one which is different. The right to the city concept is the bearer of a utopia that must deny the current and seek the new, in the sense Galeano expressed (2003): “utopia is on the horizon. I walk two steps towards it and it moves two steps further away, and the horizon runs ten steps further off. So what is utopia good for? For that, for walking”.¹⁰

It must be understood that a co-production of the city takes place that originates in the institutional assembly of several states, intermedi-

These forms of urbanisation have administrative units with governments that are juxtaposed at municipal, metropolitan, intermediate, national and inter-state level.

In this context of multiple institutions arising from different urbanisation patterns, how should we understand the right to the city?

7. Cities are by definition the concentration of heterogeneities, one of which is plurinationality: this is evident in cities in Bolivia, Guatemala, Ecuador, Mexico and Brazil.

8. This was the thesis of marginalisation that developed around the theory of modernity, which gave us the concept of the dual city: legal/illegal, which was resolved by subsuming *one into the other under the rules of the existing city* (Germani, 1980).

9. Art. 71 of the Constitution of Ecuador: “Nature, or Pacha Mama, where life is reproduced and occurs, has the right to integral respect for its existence and for the maintenance and regeneration of its life cycles, structure, functions and evolutionary processes”, English translation from: <http://pdba.georgetown.edu/Constitutions/Ecuador/english08.html>. Accessed 14.10.2019.

10. Author's translation.

A fundamental starting point for boosting the right to the city is to build a coordinated institutional structure, within which the utopia can be claimed and built.

While national governments violate international standards, cities are more permissive and show more solidarity towards migrants.

ate governments and municipalities that results from the relationship between public/private/social, local/national and local/local. That is to say, in the production and consumption of the city there is a *disjointed pluri-institutional urban complex that fragments the political framework of the right to the city*, preventing the city from being conceived as a political unit or an urban whole. In other words, the fragmentation of political-institutional boundaries calls into question the right to the city rationale because it causes the atomisation of their social and political references, preventing the democratic control of production and its surplus. Hence, a fundamental starting point for boosting the right to the city is to build a coordinated institutional structure, within which the utopia can be claimed and built.

Within the dispersal of rights within the current institutional framework, some cases emerge that show the predominance of one level over another – the presence of a hierarchy of rights. In this regard, three symptomatic cases may be given:

Gustavo Petro, elected mayor of Bogotá, was ousted from his duties because he proposed the municipalisation of the rubbish collection service which, according to the Colombian attorney general, was a policy that runs contrary to freedom of enterprise as an absolute and full fundamental right that is above municipal autonomy (the right OF the City); meaning the rights to private and corporate property are above other rights, such as that of the city.

Venezuelan migration illustrates the competences dispute at three levels: UNASUR, a South American integration agency, established the free movement of people in the region, removing the need for passports and visas to enter another country (ID cards were enough). This mandate was unilaterally disobeyed by migrant recipient countries, which demanded not only visas and passports but also criminal, fingerprint and eye records. While national governments violate international standards, cities are more permissive and show more solidarity towards migrants.

Historically, Mexico City has shown significant respect for the civil rights of the population, setting itself apart from other municipalities, states and the federal government in this. The legal recognition of equal marriage and abortion is one example, as they are not recognised at other levels.

In other words, not only are rights fragmented by each city's institutional framework, a hierarchy of rights also exists that depends on the level of government. This is a key element in the co-production of the city and, therefore, in the co-production of the right to the city.

That is why the right to the city must have one indispensable quality: a structured institutional framework in which the population is represented, participates and is close to the exercise of government. For this, the management model (public/private) must be changed and the multi-institutional complex must be constructed. This is the only way the sense of citizenship will change beyond market supply and demand and a new city can be born. This would mean understanding the city as a political community composed of citizens who seek, as Aristotle said, a happy and virtuous city.

The constitution of a *coordinated institutional framework* would involve the partial transfer of the autonomies of each body, because they would share them between the different vertical and horizontal levels of government. The chance of citizens exercising the right to the city will depend on how the public administration is reconstituted from a citizens' perspective with multiple agreements: for a collective right to be formed, a structured collective power is required. As Barcelona's mayor Ada Colau has said, this means that for citizens to have more power, municipalities need more power.

For this to happen, a shift must be made from the urban planning of projects that produce objects to citizen-based urban planning that solves social problems and strengthens citizens and their rights. Significant experience of this exists in the region, from the social production of habitat in Mexico¹¹ to participatory budgeting in Porto Alegre,¹² the glass of milk programme in Lima and decentralisation in Montevideo,¹³ among many others.

It follows that two general strategic scenarios must be constructed. *More city must be produced for more citizens* – a democratic city that creates the cultural conditions for the less integrated and diverse population to truly live in the city – and *more citizens must be produced for more city*. This is the right to the city, allowing the development of identities, meeting and participation within a framework of respect for social diversity.

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The constitution of a *coordinated institutional framework* would involve the partial transfer of the autonomies of each body, because they would share them between the different vertical and horizontal levels of government.

11. The Mexico City Charter for the Right to the City emerged from this experience, which was later internationalised.

12. Budget design means deciding priorities and if these emerge out of participation, they tend to strengthen citizenship. This initiative has been so important that it was later internationalised through international cooperation.

13. This national proposal allowed eight local governments to be created and encouraged participation and representation of the differences.

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