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Gentrification in Latin America: addressing the politics and geographies of displacement

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ABSTRACT

In this article, we develop a contextual framing for the analysis of the social, economic and political transformations that have altered Latin American cities since the turn of the century, especially by displacing deprived households from the central city. We de-centre research on gentrification through the territorial and linguistic lens of Latin America, epitomising four simultaneously paradigmatic, but diverging and diverse gentrification scenarios. In such a comparativist account, emphasis is placed on: (i) the decisive role that public institutions play for gentrification in Latin America, especially with regard to the ferocity of new real estate markets; (ii) the symbolic violence that is required to re-appropriate architectural and cultural heritage; (iii) the vehemence of formalising urbanity in economies that are dominated by informal ways of producing, living and appropriating the city. Such debates conceptualise displacement and eviction from a perspective that is theoretically informed by the realities of Latin American cities.

Comparativist perspectives on gentrifications in Latin America – an introduction

Recent urban policies in Latin America have triggered mechanisms that target the displacement of deprived households from city centres, as well as from semi-peripheral areas in transformation. This socio-spatial reconfiguration has affected most cities, regardless of whether they were governed by progressive administrations or more market-oriented regimes. However, the articulation of politics and geographies of displacement varies considerably from country to country, from city to city and within a city across time and places. But it has in common some basic aspects, such as real estate investment and exclusionary urban transformation, that lead to the reconquest of reinvented cityscapes by wealthier tenants. Such processes have for decades been addressed as gentrification – at least in the North Atlantic hemisphere (Lees, Slater, & Wyly, 2008). Nevertheless, the term has been much less prominent in debates over Latin American cities. This raises the question of whether it makes sense to adopt it for cities with significantly different social, urban, political and administrative structures

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and histories, or if its application in this and other world regions implies a neo-colonial reorientation of scientific and political debates.

Such considerations are currently at the forefront of critical approaches to the emerging "geographies of gentrification" outside the Anglophone core (Lees, 2012), gentrifications that at the same time have been referred to primarily by authors located in the "Global North" (e.g. Atkinson & Gary, 2005; Lees et al., 2008; Porter & Shaw, 2008; Smith, 2002). Different opinions exist in this regard. Maloutas (2012) claims that introducing the term to different social and urban contexts outside the Anglophone world implies an excessive conceptual stretching that uncritically assumes that, elsewhere in the world, similar outcomes are a result of the same processes. His perspective challenges some of the assertions made by Lees (2012). She argues that gentrification outside the North Atlantic context can be revealed through a postcolonial approach that takes into consideration the widespread critiques of developmentalism and universalism. This might be the case for Latin America, especially when we reconsider some of the evidence about the multi-scalar, poly-centric and non-hierarchical – but also power-laden and uneven – character of contemporary policy mobility and knowledge exchange (González, 2011; Healey, 2013; McCann, 2011; Vainer, 2014), as well as the pragmatic use of the term gentrification by many social movements (Casgrain & Janoschka, 2013).

Our contribution consists of comparisons of urban realities and processes from Latin America that focus upon "nuanced, complex and contextual accounts" (Robinson, 2011, p. 18) to adopt the concept of "gentrification". More than comparing urban realities in terms of similarity and difference, such a comparativist approach attempts to elaborate meaningful analytical categories that better help to understand paradigmatic, yet complementary, processes. It draws from the work of Janoschka, Sequera, and Salinas (2014) who have argued that while gentrification takes place differently in Latin America, the term should be applied to urban realities in the region by critically re-articulating three key dimensions, namely; (i) the creation, assemblage and transformation of real estate markets; (ii) the focus on the symbolic dimensions of gentrification and (iii) the key role that displacement plays for the politics and geographies of gentrification in Latin American cities. This article further develops these elements by bringing together four iconic, contemporary, but simultaneously divergent, examples. In each of them, neoliberal policy application and rampant capitalism have paved the way for a successive re-appropriation of strategic portions of urban space by more affluent social actors. Analysing this production of gentrified landscapes by specific, locally assembled modes of urban reproduction, we characterise displacement as follows:

   (i) *Displacement by heritage accumulation*, as it has been orchestrated in the course of the "rescue" of the historic centre of Mexico City.
   (ii) *Displacement by cultural dispossession*, as enacted through the heritage of Tango culture in deprived inner-city neighbourhoods in Buenos Aires.
   (iii) *Displacement by militarization and "states of exception"*, as part of the expansion of (real estate) markets in Rio de Janeiro prior to the 2016 Olympic Games.

(iv) *Displacement by ground rent dispossession*,[1] as articulated by the return of capital to previously downgraded inner-city neighbourhoods in Santiago de Chile.

This perspective might provide a starting point from which to consider the world of comparative urbanisms and imaginations about gentrifications outside the Anglophone core. It responds to demands for "situated thinking across diverse urban experiences [. . .] in order to press toward generative theoretical insights on contemporary urbanism" (McFarlane & Robinson, 2012, p. 768). Hence, we will first analyse the social geographies of gentrification in Latin America. This discussion will suggest that gentrification is part of the multifaceted violence that contemporary capitalism exercises, through different *dispositifs* (in the Foucaultian sense) that cause displacement. Second, we will reflect on how displacement can be addressed from a perspective that includes, and refers to, Latin American urban realities. Four different but mutually intertwined mechanisms of displacement will be described, showing that gentrification comprises not only changes in the social composition of an area's inhabitants, but also the transformation of manifold aspects of daily life that expel and dispossess the underprivileged from spaces reclaimed by capital. Finally, this comparativist approach will relate the gentrification debates in Latin America to strands of research in the Anglophone world that struggle against the "eviction of critical perspectives" (Slater, 2006) and seek a return to critical analysis of eviction and displacement as key mechanisms of gentrification (Desmond, 2012; Lees, 2014; Lees, Shin, & López-Morales, 2015; Newman & Wyly, 2006; Slater, 2013).

Methodological considerations

This article reflects upon the globalisation of gentrification and develops our own view and positionality towards the phenomenon, as researchers who reside in Spain but have lived, studied and worked for long periods in Latin America. It is based upon research carried out in four Latin American cities that participate in the scientific network CONTESTED_CITIES.[2] The project addresses the comparativist study of variegated geographies and politics of gentrification in the course of ongoing restructurings of urban life in Latin America, and it provides us with an interdisciplinary and culturally sensitive background for the continuous revision of scientific concepts within critical urban studies. Our empirical fieldwork about gentrification and displacement consists of interviews with experts, planners and inhabitants in the neighbourhoods of *San Telmo, La Boca* and *Puerto Madero* in Buenos Aires, as well as in different favelas in Rio de Janeiro – especially *Vila Autódromo*, a community next to the future Olympic village that has been resisting eviction for many years. In Santiago de Chile, interviews were conducted with experts and social movements resisting gentrification and displacement, such as the *Movimiento de Pobladores en Lucha*. Finally, in Mexico City we carried out expert interviews and developed participant observation in the historic city centre. The resulting vision allows us to develop a "thick description" (Geertz, 1973) that is simultaneously based upon microscopic in-depth analysis and theoretical reflections to better understand contemporary Latin American urbanism, of which the four cities are paradigmatic, iconic and at the same time diverging examples.

Social geographies of gentrification in Latin America

Debates about gentrification have only become popular in Latin America rather recently. There are three principle reasons: *first*, there are distinctive temporalities to Latin American gentrifications. About 15 years ago, many authors still disagreed that gentrification was taking place, and the first empirical study about the colonial city centre of Puebla (Mexico) was only published in the late 1990s (Jones & Varley, 1999). *Second*, many Latin American researchers have resisted this "Anglo-Saxon concept" (Jaramillo, 2006, p. 20), proposing terms such as "ennoblement" or "elitization" (González-Hernández, 2009). But as Latin American gentrifications are rarely a process in which "elites" play a role as newcomers in a neighbourhood, both terms are not accurate and did not move forward. *Finally*, the ways gentrification is politically assembled and socially perceived are dissimilar to those of the North Atlantic context. Hence, as its symbolic and material expressions cannot be directly translated, the term itself must be adapted. This is especially the case as Latin American gentrification research starts from a relatively broad consensus that centres on the harmful conse-quences of the process. By referring to gentrification, researchers can better develop the critical approaches to urban politics that remain somewhat absent from mainstream discourses about urban governance and renovation (Janoschka & Hidalgo, 2014), thereby helping to re-politicise urban studies. Yet, what additional connotations does the term need for it to apply to Latin American urban realities in constant transformation?

Any response to this should take into account the political, economic and social structures of Latin America, especially with regard to the role that the State plays for enhancing gentrification processes. After decades of rampant neoliberalisation and deregulation, and contrary to the "austerity urbanism" in the United States and especially the European Union (Peck, 2012), during the 2000s public administrations in Latin America increased their capacity to shape urban development by active policies and state-led initiatives. However, welfare policies have generally aimed at normalising common capitalist practices, for instance by promoting a specific kind of social housing that displaces lower-income residents from central city areas. In this regard, two further particularities should be underlined: First, the inherited socio-spatial structuration, especially the ubiquitous urban poverty in central city areas, and the informality of urban economies, including the informal production of housing (Gilbert, 1998). As a result, and acknowledging the differences between countries such as Chile and Mexico, Argentina and Peru, or Brazil and Venezuela, certain practices such as the (illegal or informal) occupation of land and vacant housing have until recently been central to the material production of urban space. Similar to other world regions, such informality has produced radically different terrains of habitation, livelihood, self-organisation and politics (Roy, 2011). As a consequence, people internalised an array of conscious and unconscious practices, which in the long run protected society from full penetration by capitalist micro-politics, creating alternative and counter-hegemonic ways of producing, living and appropriating the city (Zibechi, 2012). Such collective organisation of solidarity networks seriously challenges the rapid, even and easy implementation of gentrification policies.

To further understand the social power relations underlying these practices, a second particularity should be considered: The working class, as collective subject of the European or North American scholarship, never had too much in common with what has been addressed in Latin American sociology as popular classes (*clases populares*, Merklen, 2005; García Canclini, 1982). Even during the heyday of the import substitution strategy, perhaps with the exception of Argentina during the Perón era, industrial and unionised workers were only a very marginal element of the Latin American class structure. Additionally, the habitus dispositions of European or North American middle classes would be considered as upper middle class in Latin American societies, shared only by the upper 10–15% of the population. The income gaps between rich and poor, or dominant and subordinated citizens have been significantly higher than in European, and even North American, cities. Yet the most important collective subject should be the popular classes, which can be differentiated from middle and upper classes not only along economic, social and cultural lines but also along ethnic and racial lines. The popular classes consist of between half and two-thirds of the population, but for decades they have been mired in structural poverty. They often live in socially stigmatised habitats (slums, precarious housing, occupied houses, recently also in social housing complexes) and perform rather informal economic activities. Although major formalisation of such economies has recently occurred, the majority of the population still works in the informal sector (Betancur, 2014), and an estimated 20–25% lives in informal settlements (Fernandes, 2011).

This picture necessarily overgeneralises and erases the different weight of informality in the social and economic structures in each country. Furthermore it does not consider the internal differentiation of the popular classes; for instance with regard to gendered dimensions that lead to unequal relationships between men and women within the social reproduction. But our key purpose is to emphasise that different class structures imply a different structuring of urban space, and therefore different ways in which the neoliberal politics of gentrification tackle the spatial reorganisation of the city.

Displacement in Latin American cities – conceptual reflections

Although displacement is intrinsic to the production of capitalist cities, it is at the same time one of the "most understudied processes affecting the lives of the urban poor" (Desmond, 2012, p. 90). In theory, it can be defined as an operation that restricts the options of – usually underprivileged – sectors of society to find adequate places to live in a specific neighbourhood, especially when other social groups with higher economic, social and cultural capital arrive in that area (Slater, 2009). Displacement from a neighbourhood or housing estate "describes what happens when forces outside the household make living there impossible, hazardous, or unaffordable" (Hartmann, Keating, & Le Gates, 1982, p. 3). But what are these forces, and how can we research them to better illustrate the nexus between displacement and gentrification in Latin America?

One key approach to studying the relationship between gentrification and displacement stems from Peter Marcuse (1985). Based on a statistical analysis of the housing market in the city of New York in the 1970s and early 1980s he developed four well-known analytical categories to better address the nature of displacement mechanisms:

last-resident displacement, chain displacement, exclusionary displacement and displacement pressure. Although this typology distinguishes between direct and indirect displacement, it can only be considered a starting point for analysing the displacement of lower-income tenants in Latin American cities. The different social structures and ways of producing urbanity described in previous sections call for different ways of thinking about displacement. In particular we consider it necessary to unravel the hidden, often symbolic forces behind displacement. Furthermore, we will reflect upon the genealogy of gentrification. Many decisions inducing displacement (i.e., planning legislation) were taken years or even decades ago. Sometimes they are not related to a specific urban space or to urban politics at all, but are located in broader societal changes. One example of this is the persistent reduction of poverty in Latin America, which has transformed the popular classes into heterogeneous groups with different claims (Salcedo & Rasse, 2012). This has consequences for the politics and geographies of gentrification and displacement.

Displacement is a social injustice that encumbers certain groups from the right to the city. Consequently, it should also be addressed by considering existing power relations that define and structure discourses about it, something that necessarily includes the role of public administrations (Lees, 2014). In line with this, Garcia Herrera, Smith, and Mejías Vera (2007: 280) remind us that "as the state at various scales adopts gentrification as a housing policy […] it has little self-interest in collecting the kind of data that documents the level of displacement"; especially as such data would prove the failure of common policy discourses. This means that it is important to take into consideration the methodological limitations that often encumber debates about displacement (Slater, 2009). For instance, much data about displacement is rudimentary and does not allow place-specific analysis or comparisons across time. We can consider this lack of information as a specific and strategically important kind of state power or "technique of governmentality" that is exercised through omission (Sequera & Janoschka, 2015).

To compensate for this lack of information, gentrification researchers could gather such data on their own. However, the size and complexity of Latin American cities mean that, in practical terms, data recompilation is impossible. Additionally, critical urban research can better apply itself building bridges with the neighbourhoods under consideration, that is, by applying participatory or interventionist research methodologies rooted in the intention to transcend the invisible frontiers between social sciences and society. Yet this is difficult when applying conventional quantitative methods. Hence, in an era of rampant capitalist accumulation by manifold processes of dispossession it is more important to focus on the common and often naturalised discourses that justify displacement, thereby transforming the lens through which scientific debates arise.

Gentrification, dispossession and displacement – an analytic perspective

In the subsequent analysis we develop a perspective that considers displacement and gentrification through the dialectics of accumulation and dispossession. When David Harvey (2003) developed this notion to update the Marxist concept of primitive accumulation, he emphasised that it is an active and permanent extractive process. If primitive accumulation meant the capitalist re-organisation of society through private property rights and through the commercialisation of common goods, natural resources

and labour force, "accumulation by dispossession" relates to the new wave of enclosure of common goods. It turns against underprivileged parts of society, applying economic processes to areas of social life that had still stayed at the margins of the market. Additionally, while they act as strategic market agents, public administrations facilitate such dynamics of urban capital accumulation and reproduction. This relationship illustrates the necessity of establishing certain discourses to prepare the population prior to the implementation of politics of displacement and gentrification. Yet it is also true that many common practices in Latin American cities do not conform to the hegemonic reproduction modes of capitalist societies. This is why the previous discussion of the social structures and the collective subject of popular classes is important in order to adapt Harvey's concepts to the displacement–gentrification nexus in Latin American cities. Popular classes have produced different subjectivities and struggles about the production and collective appropriation of space. With regard to this, Latin American cities share with other world regions of the "Global South" the importance of the social and collective production of urban habitat, a process that sheds light on alternative attitudes towards displacement. For example, Islam and Sakizhoglu (2015, p. 254) have stated that in cities such as Istanbul in which "not everybody has the right to stay put", "classic" evictions are additionally enforced by state-organised displacement strategies that establish specific regulations and restrictions. Cases of resistance lead to forced rehousing. Following the description of Seong-Kyu (2015), displacement in Seoul creates new shantytowns in the periphery, which are inhabited by those who were dispossessed. Such strategies have become rare in Latin America. Rather, displacement takes place through what has been described elsewhere as public–private pressure and persuasion (Herzer, Di Virgilio, & Rodriguez, 2015), by pricing out of the market (Cummings, 2015), or through direct or physical violence. This means, for example, that basic services such as water and electricity are cut (Alexandri, 2015, p. 27), or that those neighbours, street vendors and other individuals who are resisting displacement are beaten up (Jones, 2015, p. 272). Additionally, there are different governmental techniques to produce and accelerate the displacement of residents. As we will further learn from the four cases in the next section, the dependent variables in these cases are the popular classes and the manifold informal ways of producing and appropriating popular habitat (Herzer et al., 2015). For urban developers, the popular classes might be considered an easy target for removal from urban spaces under transformation. By conceptualising "accumulation by displacement", we highlight another mechanism of dispossession that works through the exclusion and expulsion of specific ways of life from certain urban areas.

Experiences of displacement and gentrification in four Latin American cities

Displacement by heritage dispossession – the historic centre of Mexico City

The historic centre of Mexico City can be considered a paradigmatic social, political and spatial fix that sheds light upon the neoliberalisation of urban politics, which have profoundly transformed the city since the beginning of the century (Crossa, 2012; Walker, 2013). It is the largest and symbolically most important heritage site in the

Americas which juxtaposes colonial and pre-colonial architecture. It is exemplary of policies that have been applied in Latin American cities with a rich architectural heritage, such as Quito, Lima and Cuenca, to name but a few (Bromley & Mackie, 2009). These policies commonly pursue the redevelopment of historic centres for heritage tourism (Betancur, 2014), displacing popular classes and practices. In Mexico City more than 9,000 buildings, 1,500 of which are of historic or artistic heritage, belong to the conservation area. Three strategies have been combined to achieve the euphemistic "rescue" of the historic centre: social cleansing, securitisation and exclusive renovation of parts of the housing stock. Social cleansing refers to the strategy of making invisible the traditionally important informal commercial appropriation by street vendors, whose number was estimated at more than 30,000 at the turn of the century (Crossa, 2009; Reyes, 2013). Street vendors have been repeatedly identified as standing in the way of gentrification in Latin America. In the historic centre of Mexico City, their activities were first declared illegal, and then they were evicted from public space in a military-like police action during October 2007. This relates to the second strategy, namely the way zero tolerance, video surveillance and other policing strategies were applied to "secure" the area. Since the early 2000s, the historic centre has become a laboratory for mobile security policies originating in the United States, especially as Rudolph Giuliani's consultancy firm was appointed to elaborate a strategic plan to implement new security policies (Becker & Müller, 2013; Davis, 2013). The results are easily visible, and they involve controlling public space – by surveillance, discipline and punishment. Such policies are considered to "normalise" the historic centre, relative to a supposedly exceptional appropriation. Finally, the increasing symbolic and material eviction of underprivileged people was paired with several public–private partnership interventions aimed at enhancing the attractiveness of public space and at transforming the social profile of users of the material environment. Among others, Carlos Slim, one of the richest people in the world, and the Slim-owned *Fundación Centro Histórico*, bought and renovated several dozen historical buildings in this area. These buildings were occupied chiefly by educational or cultural institutions, and turned into museums, hotels, cafés and restaurants. But many apartments are also rented to students, artists or politicians who live part-time in Mexico City (Betancur, 2014).

These transformations and the ongoing renovation of (abandoned and run-down) buildings have generated exclusion, but lower-income tenants still dominate the area's inhabitants. This results from the historic occupation and relatively low residential mobility that characterises Mexico City (Ward, 2012). It is important to recall that the historic city centre had become a key site for popular pressure for *in situ* reconstruction of several thousand low-cost housing units after severe damage caused by the 1985 earthquake (Delgadillo, 2008; Duhau, 1987). This history obstructs any rapid, bulldozer-like gentrification of the area under the contemporary neoliberal accumulation regime. In other words, more subtle, indirect and symbolic methods have to be employed to subvert popular identities. Such mechanisms of *displacement by heritage dispossession* first focussed on cleansing and securing public space, and on criminalising, repressing, relocating and expelling informal street vendors—in order to prepare for the extractive powers of spatial dispossession. This is especially the case in areas of potential interest for heritage tourism. The eviction of informal commercial activities belongs to a facet of displacement that aims to secure urban public space for tourists.

But it also represents the transformational and somewhat violent power of tourism, a key mechanism for producing gentrified landscapes (and vice versa). It confronts antagonistic forms of appropriating space that produce contestation over hegemonic practices, applying different kinds of violence: for instance, the *violence of hyper-security* that is required to lock public space, as well as different kinds of *ethnic and racial violence* necessary to project the exclusionary future of contested spaces. Yet this is only a preparatory move for the application of what we define as *touristic violence* – an intangible force that dispossesses both symbolically and materially, eradicating the presence of undesired identities. Although a superficial social cleansing has proven successful, at the same time a wide range of ongoing struggles over space have been observed. This shows that displacement in Mexico City is a process that requires much more time, effort and investment than in the Global North: during many years and sometimes even decades it produces uneven and constantly contested territories.

Displacement by cultural dispossession – Tango gentrification in Buenos Aires

Similarly to Mexico City, heritage also plays a pivotal role in the materialisation of gentrification of Buenos Aires' inner city, especially if we concentrate on the area surrounding the former central market (*Abasto*) and two neighbourhoods in the Southern inner periphery of the city (*San Telmo* and *La Boca*). However, the techniques and mechanisms that are applied vary substantially. They relate primarily to immaterial heritage represented by the Tango culture, listed as UNESCO World Heritage since 2009. Tango is now an example of touristic extraction of culture, and the gentrification processes imply displacement pressures that are intrinsically related to its valorisation circuits and modes of subliminal conflict regulation (Centner, 2012a; Herzer & Gil y de Anso, 2012).

The *Abasto* area was a traditional inner-city working-class neighbourhood, surrounding the homonymous central fruit and vegetable market that operated until 1984. After the market's relocation, the quarter went through an intensive phase of abandonment and stigmatisation, chiefly related to the occupation of vacant plots and abandoned buildings by immigrants, drug trafficking, prostitution and other underground activity. During the late 1990s, it re-emerged as the property developer *Inversiones y Representaciones Sociedad Anónima* (IRSA; related to a George Soros investment fund) renovated and transformed the market building into the largest shopping centre of the city. Additionally, a hotel, a huge supermarket and several high-rise condominiums with approximately 1,100 apartments were built, and many of the tenants of neighbouring properties were bought out and displaced towards peripheral locations (Carman, 2011; Centner, 2012b). However, the key aspect is not the purification and economic redefinition of the territory, but the branding and merchandising that has been taking place since then, in honour of the famous Tango star Carlos Gardel. This strategy introduced different tourism-related uses like museums, thematic restaurants, pedestrian street walks and souvenir shops, and especially a whole series of new aesthetics.

The situation is somehow different in *San Telmo* and *La Boca*, respectively, the Tango gentrification frontiers of the 2000s and 2010s. *San Telmo* can be considered as paradigmatic of long-term abandonment processes in Buenos Aires' southern inner city. It was originally home to the city's elite, but was then stigmatised for more than a

century after an outbreak of yellow fever during the 1880s. Poor immigrants then moved into this and adjacent areas such as *La Boca* and gave birth to, and popularised, Tango. After 1990, *San Telmo* was targeted both by municipal renovation schemes and by the *mise-en-scène* of Tango culture. This set the foundations for displacement by touristic activities. For instance, a commercial reorientation has taken place, and cultural institutions, theatres, libraries, restaurants and concert-cafés that offer Tango shows for international tourists have mushroomed (García & Sequera, 2013). But this process also transforms the residential real estate market: *San Telmo* has become a prime location for short-term rentals, and also for "residential" tourists such as university professors on sabbatical leave or professionals on long-term holidays who get involved with Tango culture.

However, similar processes have now also expanded to parts of neighbouring *La Boca*. The key attraction – and one of the "musts" of every visitor – has for a long time been *Caminito*, a street with colourful houses that hosts galleries, street markets and restaurants associated with the merchandising of Tango culture. However, *La Boca* is home to a significantly underprivileged population, and the neighbourhood suffered massive downgrading due to deindustrialisation and changes in transport logistics since the 1970s. Hence, it has become a key target for the amplification of Buenos Aires' tourist corridor, as the spectacle of cultural heritage in *La Boca* symbolises the variegated forms of material and symbolic re-articulation of the neighbourhood. It is stimulated through active public policies that aim at attracting designers, artists and other pioneers of gentrification. This strategy delimits a sphere of otherness that produces a form of violence by merchandising the residents' cultural assets while simultaneously provoking displacement (Herzer et al., 2015).

Behind the beautification of *fin-de-siècle* architecture in *San Telmo*, the colourful houses of *Caminito* in *La Boca* and the *mise-en-scène* of Carlos Gardel in the *Abasto* neighbourhood, this Tango-related gentrification hides different strategies of cultural dispossession. Running across the mystification of Tango backed both by UNESCO offices and local policy-makers, different fiscal exemptions promote real estate projects targeting artistic ateliers and loft living. This organises the separation of the city from local inhabitants by a kind of dispossession that chiefly addresses a "trap of culture" (Carman, 2006). By devaluing popular culture, such displacement generates what we define as *cultural violence*. But our own research also shows that it involves a *physical (material) violence*: forced evictions, the burning of buildings (for "officially" unknown and non-investigated reasons) and other material relocations that simultaneously exercise different forms of symbolic and economic power occur habitually, especially in the gentrification frontier of *La Boca*. Such strategies have been addressed repeatedly by inhabitants, social movements and media reports. They literally remove population, often to poorer and worse connected suburban locations.

Displacement by militarization and a "state of exception" – Rio de Janeiro's Olympic dream

Rio de Janeiro is a unique case of a strategically planned and assembled long-term reconfiguration of urbanity, fostered by a key mechanism: the expansion of capitalist market rules towards areas of social, economic and territorial organisation that were previously structured by different accumulation processes. This is a large-scale venture

that is accompanied by broad changes in urban life, and is paired with an implementation of exceptional planning policy regimes. Some elements of market creation concern the selective reincorporation of the city into transnational tourism markets (symbolic gentrification), while others have more to do with general requirements of capital in rapidly expanding medium-income economies such as Brazil. This powerful logic consists of bringing together major exclusionary urban renovation projects, security governance and the preparation and celebration of international (sports) events to implement mechanisms for sustaining a continuous "state of exception" (Sánchez & Broudehoux, 2013). The city's strategic plan, dating from the early 1990s, articulates major transformations of the social, material and political structures that chiefly aim at displacing and regulating the conduct of undesirable populations (Gaffney, 2010). Such mechanisms introduce new citizenship models (Freeman, 2014), as well as an authoritarian entrepreneurial planning regime that negates political space and constitutionally granted property rights. *Vila Autódromo*, a neighbourhood under threat of eviction because of the construction of the Olympic village, is an example of social discrimination and territorial reconfiguration carried out by a coalition of public administrations and real estate companies (Silvestre & Gusmão de Oliveira, 2012).

For a better understanding of these mechanisms, the morphology and social geography of the city should be taken into account – especially the extraordinarily close proximity between wealthy and poor residents. Many favelas are situated in prime sites, that is, next to beaches, which are archetypical spaces of social diversity and democracy (Godfrey & Arguinzoni, 2012). Over 20% of inhabitants live in one of the 750 favelas, but in the central city this ratio exceeds 40%. This means that popular culture, which in Rio de Janeiro is also "black" culture, is a central element of daily urban life (Costa Vargas, 2013). However, favelas present a threat to urban planners, as they are reminders of different and non-market-conformist ways of organising territory. Since the 1990s, the State has pursued major efforts to restore governmental control over these areas. Four intertwined strategies have been followed, all exerting different forms of symbolic and physical violence over inhabitants: (1) municipal investment in the "regeneration" of favelas (programmes such as *Favela Bairro, Programa de Aceleração do Crescimento* and recently, *Morar Carioca*); (2) selective eviction of favela inhabitants (even, in the case of the *Aldeia Maracanã* and *Vila Autódromo*, of whole communities, if they stand in the way of mega-events); (3) relocation of inhabitants in social housing complexes that are located in the periphery of the municipality (through the Federal programme *Minha Casa, Minha Vida*) and (4) "pacification" of favelas by Pacification Police Units (*Unidades de Polícia Pacificadora*), a paramilitary force that since November 2008 has supposedly "liberated" several dozens of favelas from drug trafficking and violence, through a quasi-military occupation of the territory. In these areas, exceptional regimes of citizenship with major restrictions of civil rights have applied ever since, and police forces have repeatedly been accused of severe violence, shooting approximately 1,000 favela inhabitants per year (Comitê Popular da Copa e das Olimpíadas do Rio de Janeiro, 2014).

This spatial, social and economic configuration has serious consequences. The vast majority of "pacified" favelas are located in central neighbourhoods that have been undergoing transformations due to preparations for the Olympic Games. In other words, the pacification of favelas does not relate to "objective" insecurities and the desire to gain control over territory, but to other usually hidden objectives related to

strategic urban reform. In this regard, it is important to recall that the pacification of favelas increases property values inside and in adjacent areas, and it exercises displacement pressure, that is, by the formalisation of new markets. As soon as a favela is pacified, municipal and private services become regulated and have to be paid for, and this increases living costs. The most disfavoured inhabitants are thus displaced towards more peripheral favelas. On the other hand, many houses and even entire favelas have been evicted because of the construction of sports installations or other infrastructure, the inhabitants displaced to social housing complexes in the city's far periphery. Hence, disciplinary regimes foster the strategies of displacement and dispossession by (real estate) markets. While the right to housing is accomplished in Rio de Janeiro, the right to the city is now constantly denied to the urban poor, despite having participated for generations in urban life and commonly shared spaces.

Displacement by ground rent dispossession – Santiago de Chile

For at least four decades now urban and regional planning devices have been strategic elements in the neoliberalisation of Chilean society, paving the way for a new urban model. However, Santiago de Chile was also the first Latin American city in which informal settlements became a residual part of the housing stock. This resulted from (i) extensive regularisation of informally occupied land (e.g., the so-called *campamentos*) introduced in the late 1950s and further pursued under the socialist government of Allende in the early 1970s, (ii) eradication and clearance of informal housing *manu militari* between 1979 and 1985, during the Pinochet dictatorship and (iii) development of social housing programmes that provided public subsidies for the purchase of land and property (Casgrain & Janoschka, 2013; Farías, 2014; Hidalgo, 2007). These measures introduced commoditized social housing that applies economic criteria to relate income to residential location. This implies a social and spatial reorganisation of the metropolitan area, evicting poor households towards subsidised social housing complexes located in the metropolitan region's expanding peripheries. Concomitantly the central municipality of Santiago has lost more than 55% of its population since the mid-twentieth century, reaching a minimum of around 200,000 inhabitants in 2002 (Contreras, 2011). Given these factors, Santiago can be considered an exemplary case of abandonment of the inner city and suburban expansion.

However, since the turn of the century it has become also paradigmatic for a diametrically different model of urban development that has strategically orchestrated the social and architectural restructuring of the central city. Between 2002 and 2012, the municipality of Santiago attracted 18% of all new dwellings of the whole metropolitan area, while its population share is roughly 2.6%. This equates to more than 72,000 housing units, and means that the total housing stock almost doubled during this decade, from 76,800 to 148,850 (Figueroa, 2013). If we add adjacent areas (11 consolidated inner city municipalities), this dramatic shift gets even clearer: the market share rose after 2002 from 7.5% to 44% and since 2006, they have even concentrated 58% of new building permissions (López-Morales, 2013; López-Morales, Gasic Klett, & Corvalán Meza, 2012). This is linked to the return of capital, not people, to the city: part of this capital is a consequence of investment strategies developed by private universities, which are increasingly important actors for urban redevelopment and also

residential investment (Borsdorf & Hidalgo, 2013). In other words, gentrification was primarily led by real estate agents (including those working on behalf of private higher education and national pension investment funds) realising the potential of existing rent gaps yet simultaneously promoting displacement (Casgrain & Janoschka, 2013).

The re-emergence of Santiago's inner city is an example of how entrepreneurial urban planning privileges private investment in a liberal economy. For instance, the State pays a subsidy of up to 10% of the purchase value of dwellings for households with relatively high purchasing power (such as emerging middle classes, young professionals etc., López-Morales, 2013). Additionally, the liberalisation of planning permissions, especially those regulating maximum height, has permitted residential densification with high rise condominiums of between 20 and 35 storeys. But the State is absent when it comes to the urbanity of such residential estates. As a consequence, redevelopment has become extremely fragmentary: on many blocks, two or three residential towers are built, while the rest of the area remains unchanged, sometimes even abandoned. López-Morales (2011) argues that under such a model, increasing ground rents accrue to a small group of large investors at the expense of small- and medium-scale development that would respect existing social and architectural diversity. This policy creates niches for consumers that had otherwise been excluded from the private residential market, such as university students, young middle-class professionals and workers attracted by the centrality, or who work in the service economy that is located nearby. However, new dwellers are of a higher social status than those who originally lived there, and real estate prices have grown exponentially for the last decade. As a consequence, many households cannot afford to stay and are displaced to more peripheral locations. In addition, the potential ground rent is capitalised in a monopolistic way by large-scale investors, dispossessing the small land owners from increases in capitalised ground rent that have been accruing during this decade of intensive reconfiguration (Borsdorf & Hidalgo, 2013; López-Morales, 2013).

In other words, gentrification in Santiago means a process that is supply-driven, driven in part by the previous deterioration and abandonment of existing housing stock. This specific way of producing gentrification in the inner city results from the manifold displacement pressures that can be described as "creative destruction". Capitalist reproduction generates new commodities that effectively enable accumulation processes. With effective support by a State that paradoxically regulates the absence of regulation, the city's densification results in an irregular and jagged territorial occupation that produces *architectural violence*. It is only the real estate market that defines how urbanity is achieved (or not). In this ultra-neoliberal city, the performance of the investment strategy of highest turnover for minimum investment produces significant *violence of urbanism*, instead of the desired new urbanity of a renovated inner city.

Gentrification, dispossession and displacement in Latin America – critical reflections

We have described the dramatic neighbourhood changes affecting key structures and processes within Latin American cities. The four cases have provided us with a better understanding of the mechanisms behind gentrification and displacement, and we have analysed the multi-layered character of gentrification. It involves diverse accumulation

mechanisms that aim at extracting what had formerly been at the margins of capitalist markets. If we understand urban capital accumulation as a spatial expansion of capitalism that is searching for new spaces that have not yet been commodified, the gentrification of popular habitats and its particular urban morphology can be considered as one of the key mechanisms of accumulation. The introduction of new market relations produces displacement, but it does not necessarily mean eviction from specific places. The commodification of non-capitalist ways of (re-)production – especially those related to culture, history, urban morphology and non-hegemonic forms of daily life – introduces new modes of dispossession, exploitation and appropriation. Hence, when we refer to "accumulation by displacement" as an analytic lens to understand the restructuration principles in Latin American cities, we refer to the political, social and geographical assemblage of dispossession. Displacement is one central mechanism of socio-spatial dispossession, and at the same time a dynamic force of capital accumulation and reproduction. The examples of Latin American gentrification presented in our study have demonstrated how gentrification is intrinsically related to the extractive character of contemporary capitalism. In this regard, we refer to the exploitation of market niches that were not part of the hegemonic capitalist market construction, such as the informal production of housing, more generally the production of popular habitat, or the complex forms of informal economies as part of the survival strategies of the popular classes that had produced subaltern urbanisms.

Economic growth and poverty reduction during the last decade in many Latin American countries have contributed to a progressive stigmatisation of different popular appropriations of space in both material and symbolic terms. Many have been portrayed as something "vulgar" or "uncivilised", and some have been declared as illegal and persecuted. Although such displacement of popular subjectivities may vary from city to city and from neighbourhood to neighbourhood, two common features stand out: On the one hand, rapid economic growth flanked by important anti-poverty measures (such as the basic income schemes in Brazil and Argentina) has largely eradicated extreme poverty, and with this a series of popular practices to overcome it. As poverty is no longer directly related to the social majority, it has become increasingly stigmatised as an individual failure. On the other hand, policy-makers have been trying to eradicate all traces of informality, associating it in public discourse with negative aspects of poverty. This is especially the case in central city areas, and it creates material spaces that supposedly respond to the reduction in poverty. However, the definition of socially accepted forms of appropriating and using urban space has increasingly shifted towards the dispositions of middle-class habitus. This means that displacements are taking place as contingent processes that evict specific identity configurations that do not conform to the new norms of the central city.

Such symbolic exclusion and the displacement of the perspectives of the popular classes is a basic precondition for their material eviction from urban space. It is inherently related to existing social hierarchies, as well as to ethnic and racial stereotypes or stigmas. In the end, displacement re-establishes and exacerbates these hierarchies, counteracting social policies that have been applied supposedly to reduce the invisible boundaries of class structuration and racism. Such operations may occur unconsciously or consciously and they apply different types of violence. But they always produce symbolic profits that originate from the accumulation of different sorts of capital (symbolic, cultural, economic) by those subjects

who are able to define, rule and dominate spaces and places. This argument relates directly to the social reproduction and self-reinforcing power of the upper classes, and their specific discourses about gentrification and displacement that structure possible practice, habitus dispositions and positions in the social field (Dangschat, 2009). Invisible power relations define the ways symbolic displacement is assembled, for example by obscuring certain social and cultural practices while criminalising others. This is why social cleansing and the selective modernisation of territory – the eviction of popular classes and of street vendors from public space – emerge as constitutive elements of gentrification and urban capital accumulation. Latin American gentrification transforms the modes of socio-spatial reproduction, especially if the dichotomy formal–informal is considered. Such strategies make use of both symbolic and physical violence to evict and displace non-desired tenants and users of specific urban spaces considered central for contemporary urban capitalism.

The wide variety of concrete politics of gentrification and displacement in Latin American cities that we have addressed so far can be clustered into two principal arguments, which are both related to identity and otherness: First, architectural and cultural heritage in their variegated forms are used strategically for transforming popular neighbourhoods into gentrified (tourist) landscapes (see Table 1, cases A.1 and A.2). Second, policies of gentrification are used to displace informal or other non-intensive economies to prepare the construction of formal and intensive capitalist reproduction processes, especially in the real-estate sector (see Table 1, cases B.1 and B.2). Both strategies go hand in hand with security discourses that justify the policing and eviction of reproduction strategies once considered the mainstream of Latin American societies. While the strategies of "accumulation by displacement" in the four cities are mutually interwoven, each

Table 1. Accumulation by displacement in Latin American cities – a typology.

	Type	Example	Method & mechanism	Extraction	Violence
A.1	Symbolic gentrification: architectural heritage	Mexico City	- Museification of the historic centre - Cleansing of public space	- Architecture, colonial heritage - Informal economies - Public space	- Violence of hyper-security - Ethnic and racial violence - Touristic violence
A.2	Symbolic gentrification: cultural heritage	Buenos Aires	- Mystical valorisation of tango and popular culture - Fiscal exemptions and subsidies for renovation	- Tango - Popular culture - Popular housing	- Cultural violence - Physical violence (evictions, burnings) - Touristic violence
B.1	Formalisation of subaltern urbanisms	Rio de Janeiro	- Expansion of capitalist market rules - Pacification and securitisation - Militarisation of space - Production of social housing - Mega-events	- Popular habitat (favela) - Popular urban morphology - Informal housing market	- State of exception - Quasi-military occupation of territory - Physical violence (state & police terrorism) - Market forces
B.2	Creation of new real estate markets	Santiago de Chile	- De-regulation of planning legislation - Residential densification, capital investment in the city centre - Production of social housing - Public subsidies for relocation	- Centrality - Ground rent	- Architectonic violence, violence of urbanism - Subsidies (eviction & socio-spatial stratification) - Regulation of non-regulation - Market forces

paradigm has produced distinctive forms of violence. Further research should address these mechanisms and their mutual interrelations in more detail.

In this article, we have analysed how symbolic gentrification in Latin American cities is about the dispossession and extraction of popular cultural values, and their transformation into new commodified fetishes that principally address tourism. But dispossession is also orchestrated by the formalisation of subaltern urbanism that necessarily alters the regulated forms of the capitalist city, and by the creation of new architectural landscapes as material expressions of the violence of an urbanism in search of profit maximisation. Both mechanisms condemn the population to live under the discipline of the "good citizen", producing ruptures of popular habits and habitats as alternative ways of life. However, such neoliberal discipline expands only if public administrations support private capital investment, for instance through military occupation of space. Additionally, this research has also provided an understanding of how incomplete gentrification remains in Latin America, and how many barriers it must overcome before it can extend to whole neighbourhoods. All this distinguishes the politics of gentrification in Latin America from those of the North Atlantic, and raises some hope for effective resistance, as a consequence of, and in reaction to, the violence applied to displace popular practices and habitat in Latin American cities.

Notes

1. This term is based upon the conceptualisation developed by López-Morales (2011, 2013).
2. For further information about the CONTESTED_CITIES network, see: http://www.con tested-cities.net.

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