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Shifting corporate geographies in global cities of the South: Mexico City and Johannesburg as case studies

Christof Parnreiter [1], *Christoph Haferburg*[2], *Jürgen Oßenbrügge*[1]

[1] Institut für Geographie der Universität Hamburg, Bundesstr. 55, 20146 Hamburg, parnreiter@geowiss.uni-hamburg.de, ossenbruegge@geowiss.uni-hamburg.de;

[2] Institut für Geographie der Universität Erlangen-Nürnberg, Kochstr. 4/4, 91054 Erlangen, Germany, chaferburg@geographie.uni-erlangen.de

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Abstract

Global city research links the expansion of advanced producer services in major cities to the internationalisation of real estate markets as well as to the spread of (mainly) high-rise office complexes. This research, however, has based its findings mainly on cases of the Global North. This paper examines, based on Grant and Nijman's (2002) suggestion that the "internal spatial organisation of gateway cities in the less-developed world" reflects "the city's role in the global political economy", which patterns occur in two metropoles of the Global South. In addition to this, the analysis focuses especially on the driving forces behind the changes in corporate geographies. The analysis is placed in Mexico City and Johannesburg and based on real estate market data (offices) as well as background documents on urban development. The outcome shows that in these cities, local transformation processes of the real estate market and office space location are indeed considerably shaped by global market dynamics. However, the findings also indicate that there is no clear scale dependence of the territorial form. In order to comprehensively understand the changes in the corporate geographies therefore, it is necessary to direct more attention to local and national dynamics. The restructuring of the built environment in both cities can only be grasped fully by considering the particular role of local and national governments. This additional entry point to an understanding of shifting corporate geographies helps to put recent dynamics of global capitalism and politics of urban neoliberalism in perspective.

Zusammenfassung

Die Global-City-Forschung verweist auf Beziehungen zwischen Standorten produzentenbezogener Dienstleistungen, der Internationalisierung der Büroimmobilienmärkte sowie der Expansion entsprechender Bürobauten. Empirisch basiert dieses Konzept jedoch vorwiegend auf Fallstudien im Globalen Norden. Daher untersucht dieser Beitrag, ausgehend von *Grant und Nijmans* (2002) These, dass bestimmte Städte des Globalen Südens (*„Gateway Cities"*) gleichermaßen von weltweiten Wirtschaftsverflechtungen überprägt werden, welche Formen der Stadtentwicklung sich in zwei dortigen Metropolen abzeichnen. Darüber hinaus versucht die Untersuchung, zwischen verschiedenen Ursachen der zu verzeichnenden Veränderungen dieser „Corporate Geography" zu differenzieren. Die Analyse von Mexico City und Johannesburg basiert auf Statistiken über die Büroimmobilienmärkte und auf stadtpolitischen und -planerischen Dokumenten. Im Ergebnis zeigt sich, dass sowohl Veränderungen der jeweiligen Immobilienteilmärkte als auch Bürostandorte stark von Dynamiken des Weltmarkts abhängen. Allerdings finden sich auch zahlreiche Hinweise darauf, dass diese Dependenz in Bezug auf die gebaute Umwelt vielfach gebrochen wird. Um die (manifesten) baulichen Restrukturierungen umfassend zu verstehen erscheint es notwendig, insbesondere die Rolle lokaler und nationaler Regierungen bzw. Steuerungsinstrumente stärker zu berücksichtigen. Erst dieser erweiterte Zugang zu den „Corporate Geographies" macht das Zusammenspiel von globalem Kapitalismus und neoliberaler Stadtentwicklung nachvollziehbar.

Keywords Corporate geography, office location, capital city, Mexico City, Johannesburg

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1. Introduction

Large-scale changes in the physical environment of cities are frequently pointed out as important and highly visible imprints of globalisation on urban development. While some studies have focused on the spread of malls and gated communities into cities all over the world (see, for example, *Tomlinson* and *Larsen* 2003; *Glasze* et al. 2006; *Hahn* 2008), global city researchers have emphasised the relationship between the expansion of advanced producer services into a key economic activity of major cities, the internationalisation of real estate markets in these cities, and major changes in the built environment induced by the spread of (mainly) high-rise office complexes (see, for example, *Fainstein* 2001, 2008; *Sassen* 2001). Systematic analysis of the relationship between global city formation and the transformation of urban landscapes has, however, barely moved beyond the 'The Big Three': New York, London and Tokyo. Although there is a growing number of studies on spatial transformations in cities in South and Southeast Asia (*Haila* 2000; *Olds* 2002; *Yusuf* and *Wu* 2002; *Han* 2005; *Ren* 2008), allusions to global city research in this literature are by and large limited to the absorption of a specific terminology. The same holds true for Latin American and African cities. While changing patterns of segregation and their (possible) relationship to processes of globalisation have been subject to analysis (*Bond* 2000; *Ciccolella* and *Mignaqui* 2002; *Haferburg* and *Oßenbrügge* 2003; *Harrison* 2003; *Parnreiter* 2003; *Crankshaw* and *Parnell* 2004; *de Mattos* et al. 2004; *Beavon* 2005), little research has been devoted to systematically linking changes in the urban fabric and the production of new urban spaces to the changing ways in which major cities in poorer countries are inserted into the global economy.

There are, nevertheless, notable exceptions to this shortcoming. Arguments advanced in the late 1970s and early 1980s by world system analysts suggested that the analysis of processes of dependent urbanisation should start by examining the ways in which specific spatial patterns in 'third world cities' articulate with broader dynamics of the world economy (for an overview of this literature see *Smith* 2000). However, studies undertaken at that time did not provide sufficient empirical evidence to trace the spatial structure of specific cities to their particular incorporation into the world economy. More recently, *Chakraworty* (2000) explicitly linked spatial transformation in Calcutta to different periods in the city's history, suggesting that in each stage considered (colonial economy, post-colonial command economy during the nationalist period of India, post-command economy since the early 1990s) a distinct spatial structure was produced. Similarly, *Grant* and *Nijman* (2002) contend that the "internal spatial organisation of gateway cities in the less-developed world is in part a reflection of the city's role in the global political economy" (*Grant* and *Nijman* 2002: 323). The authors provide convincing evidence for the proposition of a corresponding periodisation and regionalisation of corporate presence in Accra and in Mumbai. Through a detailed historical analysis of locational patterns of international and domestic companies in the two cities, *Grant* and *Nijman* detect changes in the corporate geography over time. In particular, they identify concrete areas within Accra and Mumbai from where today's external relations of the two cities and countries are organised, and where they are therefore spatially materialised in physical infrastructure. The authors conclude, therefore, that the globalisation of the Indian and the Ghanese economy leaves clear imprints on the urban landscape. The countries' current connectivity to the global economy is, thus, "reflected in a spatially *delineated foreign corporate presence*" (*Grant* and *Nijman* 2002: 323; emphasis added) in the two cities. Part of this physical transformation is the result of a de- and reregulation of urban planning which is made more flexible and site-specific in order to accommodate foreign investors' needs (*Parnreiter* 2011).

In order to thicken evidence of the specific periodisation and regionalisation of corporate presence in major cities in poorer countries, we will provide more qualified substantiation for the notion that the changing insertion of a specific city into the global division of labour (e.g. from import substitution to globalisation) has an impact on the city's internal spatial organisation. Taking Mexico City and Johannesburg as case studies, we will give a detailed account of the changes in the corporate geographies in these cities since the mid-1990s.

The rationale behind the selection of Mexico City and Johannesburg is that we place our analysis explicitly in the context of the above-mentioned debate on the relationship between global city formation and the transformation of the physical environment of cities. Against this background, we are particularly interested in the articulation of this relationship in non-core global cities. Mexico City and Johannesburg represent valid cases, because both cities have developed since the 1990s into major gateway cities for the globalisation of economic activities in 'their' countries. For that reason they are categorised by the 'Globalization and World Cities Research Network' (GaWC), which regularly assesses the shape of and changes in the world city network, as alpha world cities – "very important world cities that link major economic regions and states into the world economy". This classification is based on GaWC's measures of how deep a city is embedded into the world city network. This network connectivity is derived from the size of a city's globalised producer service sector: The more offices of global producer service firms a city has, and the bigger theses offices are, the more linkages connect this city to other world cities. Mexico City's global network connectivity amounts to 0.55, which means that this city is connected to other world cities about half as strongly as London or New York are. As 24th best connected city, Mexico City's position in the world city network is comparable to the of São Paulo, Zürich or Amsterdam. Johannesburg's network connectivity amounts to 0.43, which compares to Washington, Melbourne or Barcelona (*Taylor* 2011; for case studies on Johannesburg and Mexico City see *Haferburg* and *Oßenbrügge* 2009, *Parnreiter* 2010 respectively).

Our concern with global city formation and its (possible) effects on corporate geographies accounts for our focus on the 1990s and 2000s which cover the transition of inward-oriented development strategies pursued in both countries during the second half of the 20th century to a pronounced globalisation course. A further rationale for the choice of a relatively 'short-durée' time frame is that our argument is supported not only by an analysis of locational patterns of major companies; rather, departing from the assumption that global city formation, the internationalisation of real estate markets and the (partial) restructuring of urban spaces are intertwined processes (*Sassen* 2001), we set out to explore the material essence of the restructuring of corporate geographies, namely the rapid building of one high-rise office complex after another (*Sassen* 2001). In order to identify the changes in corporate geographies, we particularly focus on the shifting geographies of office markets in Mexico City and in Johannesburg, because it is the "city builders" (*Fainstein* 2001) who represent the conceptual link between globalisation processes and spatial transformation in cities. This analysis is limited to the last 15 years or so, because in both cities the development of a first-class office market is a relatively recent phenomenon.

In addition to providing more substantial evidence, the second objective of this article is to advance a more nuanced analysis of the driving forces behind the observable changes in corporate geographies. *Grant* and *Nijman* (2002) underscore above all the important role of external linkages and market forces (that is, of private sector companies) in this reshaping of the urban fabric. Although the authors refer to local processes, they do not explicitly address the question of what specific bearing these local processes could have on the making and remaking of urban economic geographies. In a similar vein, their allusion to national governments is confined to governments' role in implementing 'global' liberalisation policies. Thus, the ways in which 'the national' and 'the local' might also impact on the formation of corporate geographies in the *global* era remains an under-explored issue. In order to overcome this limitation, we emphasise the role played by national and local governments in determining the specific ways and locations in which and where new corporate geographies are being produced.

The rest of the article is organised as follows. In the next section we will provide detailed information on the development of the office markets in Mexico City and Johannesburg. Drawing on written information supplied by global real estate firms, we document quantitative variation since the 1990s, putting particular emphasis on the geographical shifts of the supply of office space. Based on this description, in the following section we outline the changing corporate geographies in the two cities by relating the information on the geography of office supply with data on locational patterns of major companies in Mexico and South Africa. In Section 4 we analyse the findings, paying particular attention to the complex – and place-specific – mix of exogenous and endogenous factors that cause the described changes in corporate geographies. In the final section the results of the study are summarised and an agenda for possible ways for further deepening the research on the relationship between global city formation and changing urban geographies is proposed.

2. The production of new corporate geographies: the development of office markets in Mexico City and Johannesburg

Since 1994, when NAFTA was enacted, which institutionalised Mexico's globalisation course, the corporate geography of Mexico City has undergone significant changes. Between 1997 and 2007, the year before the global financial crisis broke out, total inventory of office space grew by 2.2 million to 5.6 million m^2, a 65 per cent increase compared to the 1997 stock[1]. There are many indications that this increase has been demand-driven: the number of real estate market transactions has been rising, annually leased or sold office space grew by 50 per cent between 1995/97 and 2005/7, and the availability of office space declined sharply. While in 1998, supply for 'Class A' office space was twice as high as demand and the vacancy rate amounted to 23 per cent, by 2007 the vacancy rate had fallen to a historical low of 5 per cent. The crisis of 2008/9 hit the city's office market, though without long-term consequences. Shrinking demand made the vacancy rate double, to 12 per cent in 2011. Most real estate firms agree, however, that since then the vacancy rate has declined again, amounting to 10 per cent or less in the first quarter of 2012. Both sales and leasing activities picked up in 2011, nearly doubling with regard to the leased office space (2009-2011) and more than tripling regarding the sold office space. Finally, construction activities re-accelerated, to add a further 1.5 million m^2 to the total inventory, which by the end of 2011 amounted to 7.1 million m^2.

In addition to the strong expansion in supply, the inventory changed in three noteworthy ways. Firstly, there is a marked tendency towards an upgrading of the supply. Since the late 1990s, about four-fifths of the construction activity contributed to the first-class office market. As a consequence, the A and the A+ classes increased their share in the total inventory to about 60 per cent of all office space in Mexico City. An analysis of transactions also shows a sharp increase in the importance of the highest market segment.

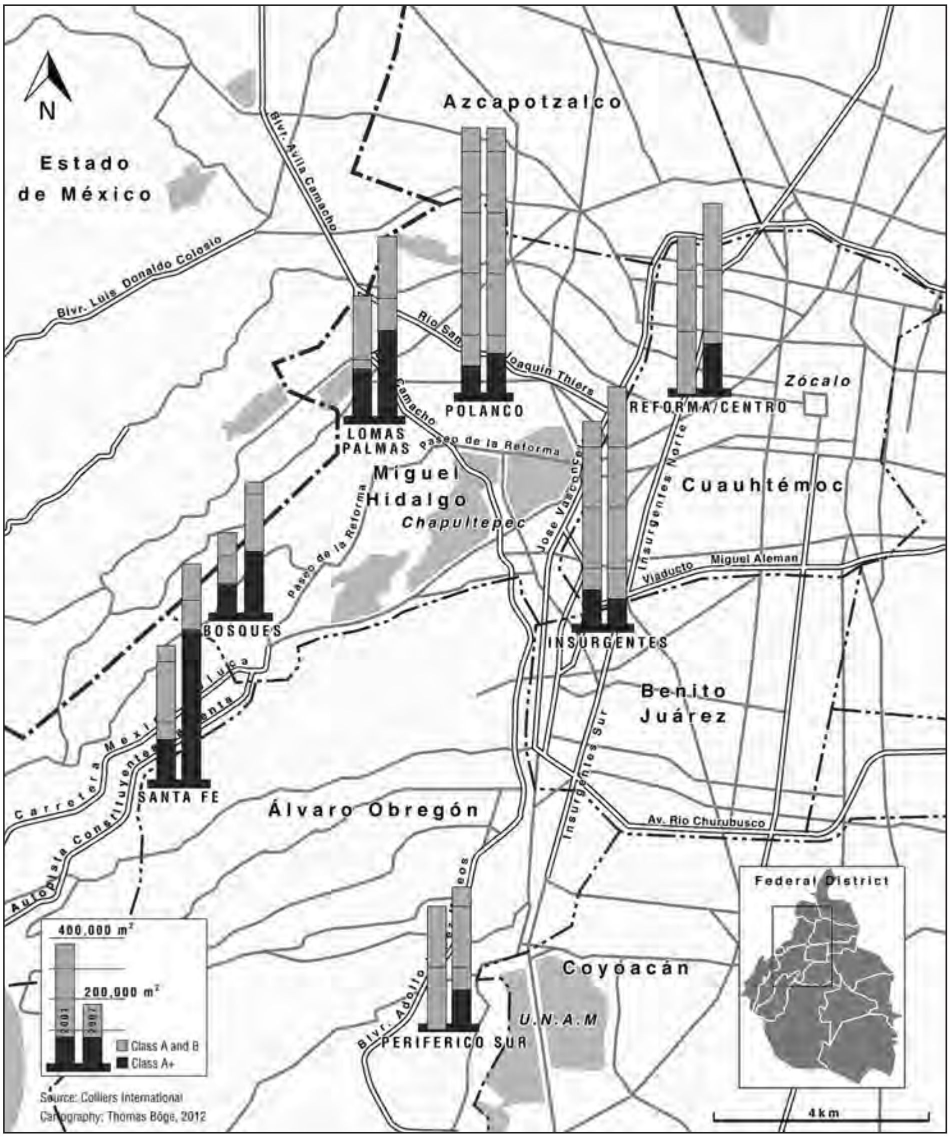

Fig. 1 Office space in Mexico City's real estate sub-markets, total floor space in 2001 and 2007

Transactions of A+ office space were twice as high in 2007 as in 1997, making up 45 per cent of all traded space (2006). With the crisis, the dominance of the prime segment of the market became even more salient: In the second trimester of 2011, the A+ segment accounted for 61 per cent of the sold or leased office space, while the A Class added a further 14 per cent. A second, though less pronounced, trend is the polarisation of the office market. The reported increase in the highest-level first-class office space was mainly at the expense of Class A, whose share decreased from 38.5 to 29.0 per cent (2000-2008), while Class B and C, amounting to 26 and 13 per cent in 2007, lost less participation in the market share.

Thirdly, the geography of office space has changed considerably in the last years. The areas that during the import-substituting era constituted the CBD comprised three of today's nine office submarkets[2]: Centro Histórico (historical centre) and its long-established extension to the west, Paseo de la Reforma; the Polanco area north of Chapultepec; and Insurgentes Sur and its neighbouring districts to the south of the historical centre. In 2001, this traditional CBD comprised 57 per cent of all office space, with Polanco being the most important single market (24 per cent of the inventory), followed by Insurgentes (19 per cent) and the corridor Centro Histórico – Paseo de la Reforma (14 per cent). In 2007, the pre-crisis year, the new business areas in the west and south of the city already comprised slightly more than half of all office space. Although Polanco's share decreased to 19 per cent, it remained the most important single market, followed by Insurgentes (17 per cent) and Santa Fe in the west (16 per cent) (see *Fig. 1*). It is striking that since then the traditional CBD has recovered, with a notable increase of the inventory along Insurgentes (22 per cent of all office space in 2011) and a massive construction boom along Paseo de la Reforma (e.g. Torre BBVA Bancomer, Torre Reforma, Torre New York Life). These changes substantially increase the share of the Centro Histórico – Paseo de la Reforma submarket from currently 11 per cent. On the other hand, the massive expansion in Santa Fe has come to an end – the share of this submarket fell slightly to 15 per cent.

Changes in the corporate geography become even more visible if the focus is on prime office space, the fastest growing segment of the market. As early as in 2001, the traditional CBD held only a minor fraction of Class A+ office space (37 per cent), while two of the newer submarkets accounted for nearly half of the inventory (Lomas Palmas with 25 and Santa Fe with 22 per cent). By 2007, the share of the traditional CBD had fallen to a quarter of the Class A+ office space, while Santa Fe has emerged as *the* dominant area of prime office space (31 per cent) (see *Fig. 1*). In Santa Fe, more than 70 per cent of all office space belongs to the Class A+ segment, while the share is considerably lower in the Centro-Reforma corridor (27 per cent) and in Polanco (17 per cent). Regarding the post-crisis development, real estate firms like CBRE or JLL do not distinguish anymore between A+ and A spaces. Available data suggest, however, that the current dominance of Santa Fe, Lomas Palmas and Bosques de las Lomas is challenged by a trend towards a 're-appropriation' of the traditional CBD by the prime sector of the market. JLL reports, for example, that of the 830,000 m^2 of A and A+ office space, which are under construction in spring 2012, some 22 per cent are allotted to Paseo de la Reforma and another 26 to the Polanco area. Santa Fe and Lomas, on the other hand, account for only 11 and 9 per cent, respectively. Even more visible is the trend towards inner-city locations for prime office space as regards planned (but not yet started) projects: 60 per cent of the projected 548,000 m^2 will be found in new office buildings along Paseo de la Reforma, while no planned projects are reported from Santa Fe and Lomas.

In Johannesburg, total stock of office space grew by 2.9 million to 7.5 million m^2 between 1993, the last year of formal apartheid, and 2005, a rise which represents an increase of 159 per cent. During this period, the annual growth rate of 12 per cent in the total inventory of office space was nearly twice as high as in Durban and in Pretoria, and four times higher than in Cape Town (*Rode* 2005). In Johannesburg, vacancy rates have only been low in the high-end segment of the market (*Rode* 2005, JLL 2011: 4). The Grade A segment, however, accounts for 52 percent of the total office stock (SACPN 2012). As in Mexico City, there was a clear impact of the crisis in all Johannesburg submarkets (as well as in other South African cities): In Sandton, representing the biggest of the decentralised nodes, the vacancy rate had dropped from 15 per cent (2003) to an amazing 3 per cent (2007), but it escalated again to 9 per cent (2010) due to the global market turmoil. Johannesburg's CBD was hit even harder: Here vacancies had decreased from around 20 per cent (2003) to below 10 per cent (2008), only to jump back to 17 per cent in 2011 (*Lottering* and *Meijers* 2012, JLL 2011: 4). Recently though, vacancy rates in Johannesburg's prime submarkets are decreasing again (JLL 2012), and compared to other South African cities, the above

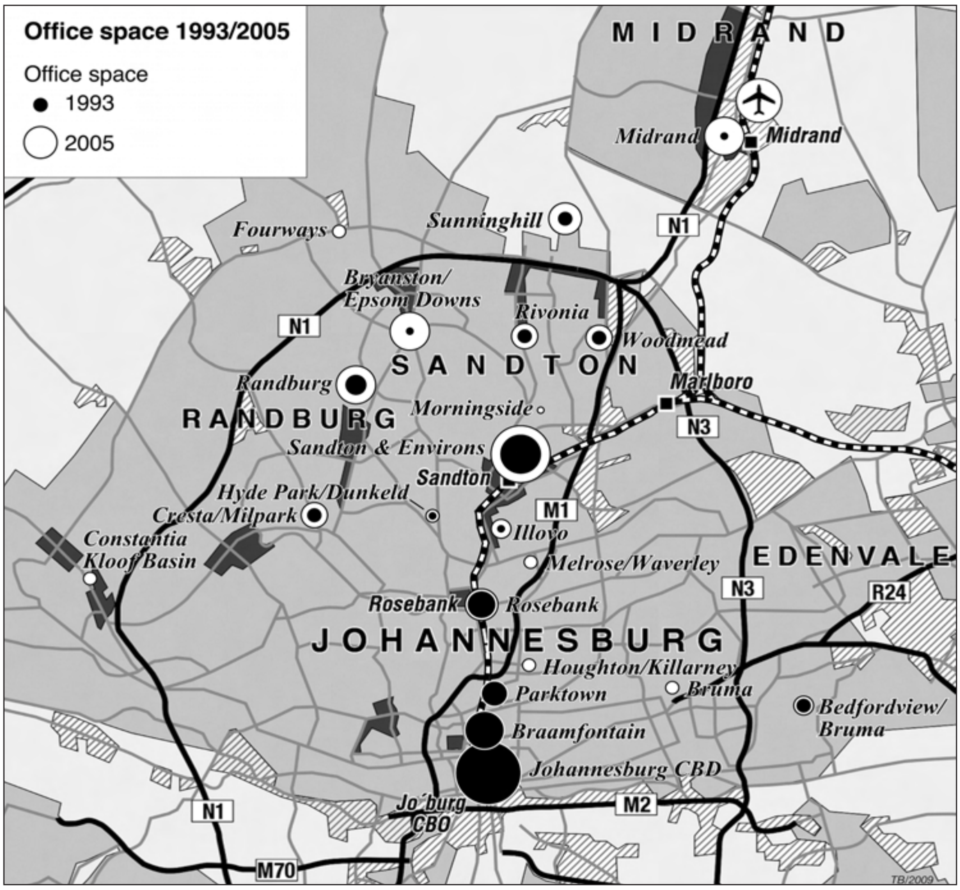

Fig. 2 Dynamics of office space development in Johannesburg's key sub-markets, 1993 and 2005

average growth of the inventory in Johannesburg indicates a concentration of demand for office space in this city, which operates as the main gateway through which the re-insertion of South Africa into the world economy is managed (cf. SAPN 2012).

As in the case of Mexico City, the increase in office space was accompanied by a geographical change of supply. *Figure 2* shows the corporate geographies in 1993 and 2005, indicating a marked northward shift. In contrast to Mexico City, where the 'heart' of the new CBD, Santa Fe, was built in a previously 'empty' area (see below), the production of new office spaces in Johannesburg followed the pattern of residential suburbanisation as well as the construction of new shopping malls which set in during the late 1970s and 1980s. As a result, the traditional CBD located in central Johannesburg and including Braamfontain, Parktown and Millpark accounted for only 26 per cent of all office space in 2005 and the share has further decreased since then. Nevertheless, with more than 1.7 million m^2 (2005), central Johannesburg is still the biggest submarket in the metropolitan area. North of the traditional CBD, Sandton has emerged as the second biggest submarket. Sandton, which was incorporated into Johannesburg's enlarged municipal boundaries in 2000, has an inventory of about 1.4 million m^2 today, although it has experienced continuous growth in the past years (cf. *Lottering* and *Meijers* 2012). However, adding smaller neighbouring locations for 'high-end' demand, like Rivonia (290,000m^2) and Woodmead (350,000m^2), the new Sandton-centred CBD accounts for more than a quarter of all office space in Metro-Johannesburg and has, for a few years – in sum – been bigger than the traditional CBD. Further important office locations of Johannesburg are Rosebank (300,000 m^2), strategically located between the traditional CBD and Sandton and hugely benefiting from the newly-built rail link to Pretoria and the airport, respectively, as well as the north-western corridor with Randburg CBD (435,000 m^2), Bryanston (595,000 m^2) and Fourways (155,000 m^2) (*Lottering* and *Meijers* 2012). Recently, Cresta, which lies south of Randburg, is experiencing substantial growth, from a low base though (with a current office stock of 170,000 m^2).

Between the old municipalities of Johannesburg and Pretoria, Midrand has been developed as an edge city with a total of 481,818 m^2 of office space in 2008 (JLL 2008: 4), compared to 354,845 m^2 in 2002

(*Rode* 2002 after *Beavon* 2005). With this growth rate of more than 6 per cent p.a., Midrand has become the fourth biggest cluster of office space (after the traditional CBD, Sandton and the north-western cluster) in the Johannesburg Metro[3]. The attraction of Midrand is seen in the establishment of the seats of the Development Bank of Southern Africa (DBSA), the African Union's Pan-African Parliament and the Gallagher Estate, with 28,000 m^2 of gross indoor exhibition space comprising one of South Africa's largest convention centres – and as the old name Halfway House indicates, there is the additional benefit of being located equally close to Johannesburg and Tshwane (Pretoria), a factor which is boosted by the Gautrain (cf. below). The latest development between Midrand and Sandton is Waterfall City, a mix of upmarket residential units (i.e. 20,000 apartments and a retirement village), shopping malls (150,000 m^2) and office parks, lauded as the "biggest property development in South Africa's history" (2,200 ha of surface area) by the Midrand Reporter.

3. Analysis I: The geography of foreign corporate presence in Mexico City and Johannesburg

So far we have shown that in both Mexico City and Johannesburg the supply of offices has grown substantially in the last years. Increases in the inventory are, in particular, to be observed in the high-end segment of the market. A second notable feature is that there is a pronounced geographical shift in the supply of offices. In Mexico City as well as in Johannesburg a new CBD was developed in the last years, which raises the question as to whether we can confirm the findings of *Grant* and *Nijman* (2002), namely that foreign companies have specific locational patterns that differ from national firms. Is there a specific geography to foreign corporate presence in Mexico City and Johannesburg? And, in particular, are there spatially delimitable 'global city zones' in Mexico City and in Johannesburg?

In the case of Mexico City, we contend that the massive influx of foreign firms since the mid- 1990s, the globalisation of some Mexican companies and the enormous growth of the advanced producer sector has spurred *and* changed demand for prime office space. In 1993, 255 of the Top 500 companies in Mexico were headquartered in Mexico City (Expansión 1993)[4]. 42 per cent of these firms had their headquarters in the traditional CBD. Polanco was the most important submarket (16 per cent), followed by the corridor Centro Histórico – Paseo de la Reforma and by Avenida Insurgentes (13 per cent each). The rest of the 255 Top 500 companies were fairly evenly spread over the city. The industrial districts of Azcapotzalco, Iztacalco, Iztapalapa, Naucalpan and Tlalnepantla in the northern and eastern part of the city together housed nearly a quarter of all headquarters, while 19 per cent of the headquarters were located in districts mainly westwards of the historical centre which were expected to become a new Central Business District in the late 1990s (e.g. Lomas Palmas, Bosque de Lomas, Santa Fe).

By 2010 the picture had changed considerably. 322 of the Top 500 companies were headquartered in Mexico City (Expansión 2011) – an increase of 26 per cent since the enactment of NAFTA. In sum, the Mexico City headquartered companies account for 73 per cent of the sales of the 500 biggest firms in Mexico. This increase has had an important impact on the urban geography, though the traditional CBD continued to be an attractive zone for Mexico's biggest firms. 42 per cent of the Top 500 companies headquartered in Mexico City have their main offices there which is the same share as in 1993. Within the traditional CBD, Insurgentes has most headquarters (18 per cent), while the corridor Centro Histórico – Paseo de la Reforma and Polanco have 12 per cent each. Polanco, however, houses the larger firms, with 15 per cent of the sales of the Big 500 being controlled from companies located there. Two of the Top 10 firms are headquartered in Polanco: the telecommunication company América Móvil (second biggest firm in Mexico) and General Motors (7). The Insurgentes area and the Centro-Reforma corridor have each one two Top 10 headquarter: Grupo Financiero BBVA-Bancomer in the former (9) and Comisión Federal de Electricidad (4) in the latter. Companies in the Insurgentes area account for 8.2 per cent of the turnover of the Big 500, while the Centro-Reforma corridor has 6.6 per cent. In sum, the old CBD accounts for nearly 30 per cent of the sales of Mexico's biggest companies.

Despite this lasting importance of the traditional CBD, changes in the corporate geography have occurred. The industrial districts in the northern and eastern part of the city have lost many of their main offices, housing about 10 per cent of the headquarters in 2010. Secondly, the areas composing a new CBD in the west and the south of the city increased their share of major offices in Mexico City from 19 to 47 per cent. However, regarding the share in the Big 500's sales, the new CBD still lies behind (25.8 per cent). The main sub-centres are Santa Fe (12.7 per cent of the offices and 10.1 per cent of the sales) and Lomas Palmas (14.6/7.1) west of the traditional CBD. Both Santa Fe (Ford [number 10]) and Lomas Palmas (Wal-Mart, which has relocated from the Northern district Azcapotzalco recently, in Lomas Palmas) house one Top 10 corporation.

The finding that Mexico City now has two business centres is backed by an in-depth analysis in which we classified companies by size (measured in sales), by ownership and by economic sectors. Regarding sales, the traditional CBD accounts for 30 per cent of the sales of the Big 500 companies, while the new CBD makes up 26 per cent (2010) (see *Fig. 3*)[5]. There is a clear time dimension to the geographical differentiation between old and new CBD; firms that already played an important role during import-substituting industrialisation (like the former or still state-owned companies, e.g. Teléfonos de México, América Móvil; Comisión Federal de Electricidad, or global corporations operating in Mexico for a long time, e.g. General Motors or Nestlé, or financial institutions that emerged from the acquisition of Mexican banks, e.g. Grupo Financiero BBVA-Bancomer) tend to be headquartered in the traditional CBD. The new CBD, however, houses both companies which have been in operation for a long time in Mexico, but have recently changed the locations of their headquarters (e.g. Ford, General Electric or Wal-Mart), and firms which have installed themselves in Mexico since NAFTA's coming into effect,

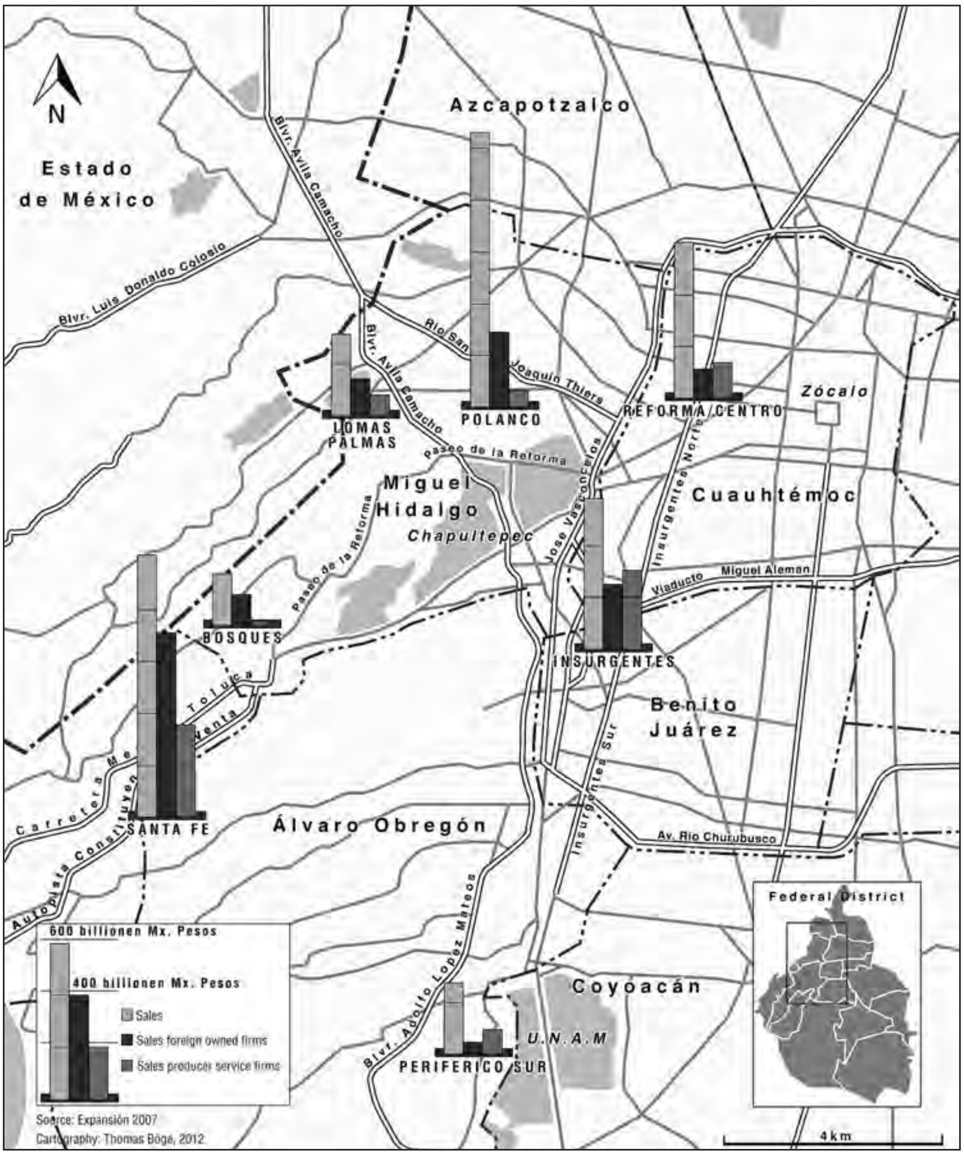

Fig. 3 Location of Mexico's biggest companies (sales): all, foreign-owned, producer service firms, 2007

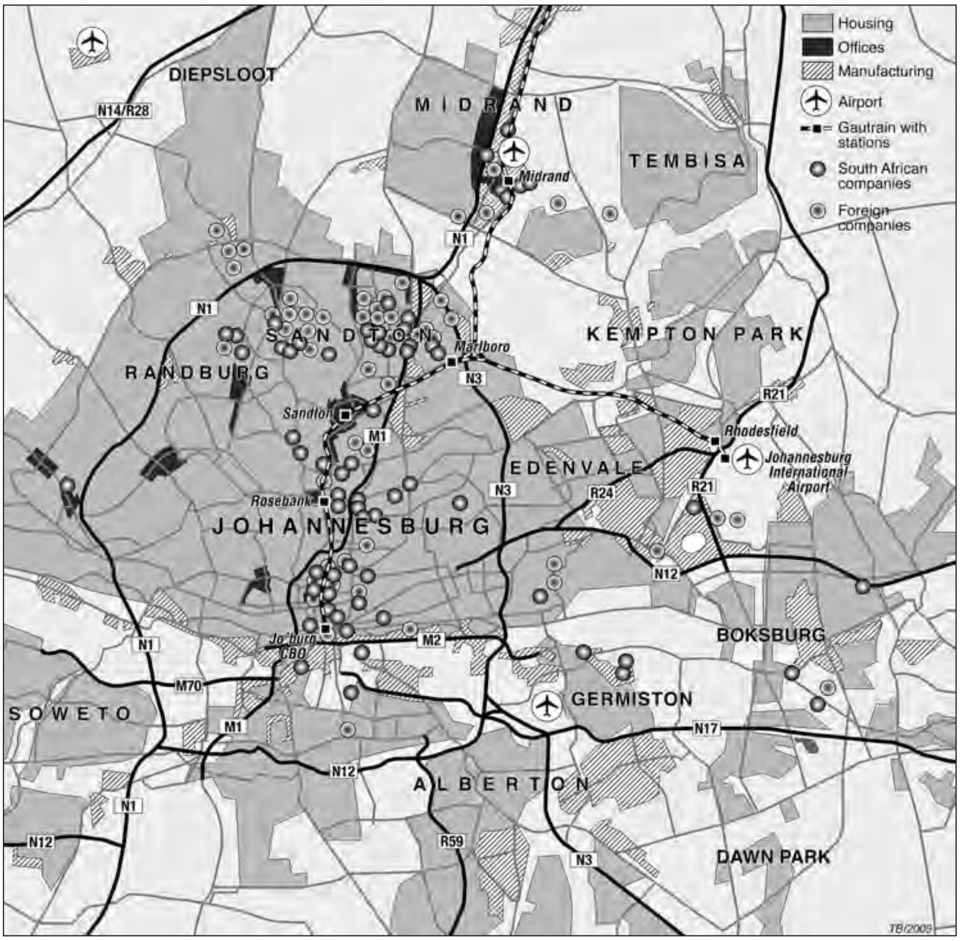

Fig. 4 Postapartheid urban development: Johannesburg's corporate geography

e.g. ING bank and many other providers of financial and other producer services from the FIRE sector.

It is precisely the focus on foreign companies and on producer service firms, which have significantly increased their weight in the urban economy since 1993 (*Parnreiter* 2010), that allows us to corroborate the notion that global city formation is a main driving force in the production of a new CBD. The crucial point here is that there is a specific geography to the locations of the headquarters of foreign-owned and producer service firms (*Fig. 3*), which corresponds to the spatial distribution of prime office space shown in *Figure 1*.

The new CBD accounts for 48 per cent of the sales of the foreign-owned firms figuring in the list of the Top 500 companies, as compared to 27 per cent of the traditional CBD. Santa Fe alone makes up 19 per cent of the sales of foreign firms, followed by Lomas Palmas (17 per cent) and Polanco (15 per cent). The first two submarkets are clearly characterised by foreign companies, which account for 63 per cent of sales of the Big 500 firms in Santa Fe and for 78 per cent in Lomas Palmas. Polanco, on the other hand, is also home to national companies which comprise two thirds of this submarket's share in the sales of the Big 500. With 15 per cent of the sales of the nationally owned Big 500 firms, Polanco is the clear centre of the Mexican business community, followed by the Centro Histórico-Paseo de la Reforma corridor (9 per cent) and the Insurgentes area (8 per cent). As regards producer service firms, of which the vast majority is classified among the financial and insurance subsectors, the traditional and the new CBD are very close to each other. 43.3 per cent of the sales of those producer service firms which figure in the list of the Big 500 are controlled in the old CBD, with the Insurgentes area being by far the most important submarket (28.9 per cent). The new CBD has 41.8 per cent, of which 17.9 per cent come from firms headquartered in Santa Fe and another 10.6 per cent from companies in the Periférico Sur area.

Now, how can the questions raised at the beginning of this chapter be answered in the light of the evidence presented? Firstly, it is quite obvious that there is a specific geography to foreign corporate presence in

Tab. 1 National headquarters of national and international companies in Metropolitan Johannesburg. Source: own calculation based on Financial Mail's Top Companies 2005.

Location	Companies total (n)	National (in %)	International (in %)
Traditional CBD / Rosebank	44	66	34
Greater Sandton	80	65	35
Northern / Midrand	34	47	53
Eastern / Airport	23	57	43
Metro Johannesburg	**181**	**61**	**39**

Mexico City which concentrates strongly in the new CBD and namely in Santa Fe and Lomas Palmas. Secondly, with regard to the producer service firms, the result is less clear, because these are located in both the old and the new CBD. However, a closer look at the ownership relations of financial institutions in the two CBDs supports the thesis of a spatially delimitable 'global city zone'. In the old CBD, 44.6 per cent of the sales are realised by nationally owned firms, while in the new CBD Mexican capital accounts for only 29.7 per cent. The difference becomes even clearer if we compare the two largest submarkets – the Insurgentes area and Santa Fe. While in the former 48.5 per cent of the producer service firms's sales are generated by national firms, in the latter it is only 13 per cent. Moreover, some of the biggest financial institutions in the Insurgentes area are not only nationally owned, but also oriented towards the domestic market. The second and fifth biggest producer service providers in this submarket are *Infonavit* and *FOVISSSTE*, foundations established in 1972 in order to facilitate the access of workers to housing credits. *Nafin*, the Mexican development bank, is the fourth biggest company in this district. Thus, althourgh the rise of the producer service sector includes the old as well as the new CBD, the more externally oriented segment is biased towards Santa Fe and Lomas Palmas. There is, in sum, a spatially delimitable 'global city zone' in Mexico City, which corresponds to the real estate submarkets where prime floor space has been concentrated in recent years.

Yet, the above analysis of the real estate market has shown that Polanco and Paseo de la Reforma are currently the most dynamic zones for the construction of prime office space. Could this mean a geographical expansion of the new, *global,* CBD into the districts of the old, more national, one? Are, in other words, the observed shifts in the corporate geography a transitionary phenomenon? Is the 'global city zone' re-appropriating the more central urban spaces? Before discussing these questions, we will turn to the development of the corporate geography in Johannesburg.

In a similar vein, in Johannesburg the locational patterns of national and foreign companies indicate that the traditional CBD is more confined to the 'old' economic sectors, namely the established banks as well as the resource-based economy with headquarters of smaller South African mining companies and global resource players like Anglo American or BHP Billiton (*Fig. 4*). The pattern is, however, less clear than in Mexico City. On the one hand there are other South African 'giants' which have headquarters located in Rosebank (Sasol) or in Sandton (SAB Miller, FirstRand), which indicates a shift to the north that already set in before the end of apartheid. The departure of the Johannesburg stock exchange away from the old CBD to Sandton in 2000 is referred to as the final event of the exodus of businesses away from the inner city. On the other hand, it is rather obvious that Sandton and the other new areas in the north are more frequently used by incoming foreign companies.

In order to offer a more systematic overview and to possibly identify a spatially delimitable 'global city zone', we have located the national headquarters of the biggest national and international companies within the research area (see *Fig. 4* and *Tab. 1*). This analysis reveals a complex picture. National companies dominate the traditional CBD, Rosebank and even Sandton. Only new northern office spaces in the Bryanston area and along the N1 motorway are characterised by a predominance of foreign-owned firms, which account for about 50-60 per cent of the companies there. The same holds true for Midrand, where important global companies have their national headquarters. The northern areas, which come near to being globalised zones, are characterised by headquarters of the electronic and data processing sectors (Dell, Samsung, Dimension Data in Bryanston; Nokia, Siemens, Sony in Midrand) as well as other global and national companies. It is not surprising that these office areas expand geographically with the highest rates (see *Fig. 2*), especially since the recovery of the South African economy in the late 1990s, which were marked by the removal of exchange controls, privatisation and other strategies such as the Growth, Employment and Redistribution Programme serving to attract foreign direct investment (cf. *Newell* et al. 2002). Returning to Sandton again, we find that it is also characterised by national companies, as stated above, but similarly by specific sectors; it is the prime location for the FIRE-sector firms, and many international companies are among them. It hosts nearly 60 percent of the regional headquarters of foreign financial companies. This is why the CBD of Sandton is perceived as an outstanding symbol for global city development in Africa (*Beavon* 2005). Thus, there is a spatially delimitable 'global city zone', with Sandton and smaller office areas in the vicinity operating as the globalised CBD of Johannesburg, whereas the old CBD is more related to South African companies. Nevertheless, the spatial distribution of office space does not reflect a dualistic structure. As indicated above, South African companies and international ones are both strongly represented in the northern suburbs. Also, the old CBD has not yet been written off, as recent investments such as the headquarter of Zurich (the Swiss insurance company) in the inner-city area of Newtown indicate. Due to high demand for office space – and also because of the political will of the government – an upgrade of the historical heart of the city is under way within the framework of a further "City Improvement District" (cf. *Didier* et al. 2012). In consequence, before the financial crisis in 2008, gross rents for A-grade buildings have increased and vacancies have dropped. Compared to other areas however, the rents are still low, and interestingly, Johannesburg's CBD has been hit hardest by the crisis, especially compared to the decentralised prime nodes (JLL 2011: 4). A certain revival of the old CBD is observable, but due to its decline in the 1980s and 1990s and due to ongoing traffic congestion (the Gautrain has only recently been extended to Johannesburg's central railway station) this location remains less attractive than the new business nodes in the north.

It is obvious that in Johannesburg the contrast between the locational preferences of national and of foreign companies is not as sharp as in the Mexican case. This is a result of at least two structuring forces: Firstly, the more mixed situation is caused by intertwined locational dynamics which started in late apartheid times and shortly afterwards, when national companies left the traditional CBD in order to relocate in Sandton and surrounding areas where incoming global companies also set up their (South) African headquarters. Secondly, the lack of available office space is another reason for the locational pattern. The vacancy rates, especially of triple A-Grade office space, are very low throughout South Africa, and this is especially true for Johannesburg. Most triple A-Grade rentals are located in the greater Sandton area, but without any notable vacancy rates. Already business voices start to warn that this shortage may become another limiting factor for business and job growth in Johannesburg. This market situation prompts locational decisions driven by the supply side which means that additional spatial preferences do not come into effect.

4. Analysis II: driving forces in the production of a new corporate geography

Our results so far confirm *Grant* and *Nijman's* findings, namely that changes in the spatialities of urban economies are closely tied to the new roles cities assume in the global political economy, as *Grant* and *Nijman* (2002) suggest. There is, however, more to the production of new corporate geographies than private sector firms choosing sites for their headquarters. In fact, companies cannot – and will not – set out to produce a new CBD in just any place. Adequate space for large-scale urban projects must be available, or, more precisely, made available: if no 'empty' space is on hand in appropriate locations, space must be cleared. In addition, 'clean space' must be developed, that is, provided with the basic infrastructure such as roads, sewers, electricity, running water etc. Since such infrastructure in general requires large investments, it is commonly not private investors who cover the costs, but public authorities (*Harvey* 1985).

Santa Fe provides an excellent example for such a state driven reconfiguration of corporate geography. The development of Santa Fe began in the early 1980s, when the then 'regente' of the Federal District[6], *Carlos Hank González* from the PRI, the party that governed Mexico from the end of the Mexican Revolution until 2000, wished to develop the sector west of the city centre. By then, these areas had served for sand mining for many construction works in Mexico City and later as a garbage dump. Based on a decree from 1984, the municipality began to expropriate holders in the Santa Fe area and to acquire land at very low prices. However, it was not until 1988 that the project gathered momentum, when the PRIista *Carlos Salinas de Gortari*, whose career was nurtured by *Carlos Hank González*, became Mexican president and his fellow party member *Manuel Camacho Solís* 'regente' in the Federal District. In that time, when both the Mexican and the urban economies recovered from the collapse of import substitution in 1982 and when NAFTA was negotiated, inflow of foreign investment increased, which drove the demand for prime office space in the capital. Santa Fe was expected not only to meet *this* demand. Rather, the remaking of Santa Fe "from dump to super city", as a Mexican newspaper put it (El Norte, 1992-03 03, own translation), was envisioned as the emblem of Mexico's (hoped-for) successful transformation to a 'First World', service-oriented economy.

The way to promote Santa Fe was SERVIMET (Servicios Metropolitanos S.A. de C.V.), a firm founded 1977 by the city government. SERVIMET, which is still owned by the city, was originally in charge of constructing and administering parking lots. In the 1980s, SERVIMET became responsible for a controlled and planned urban development, mainly through the promotion of private investment in urban (mega)-projects. Therefore, the "Specific Zones for Controlled Development" (Zonas Especiales de Desarrollo Controlado, ZEDEC) were introduced in 1987 as an urban planning tool. According to the Santa Fe ZEDEC and the corresponding "Master Program for the Improvement" of that area, land use was to change. Through expropriations and purchases of land the municipality came to control an area of 840 hectares which allowed the city's officials to think about an alternative CBD, prime commercial centres and a high-income residential area.

The goal behind the implementation of the Santa Fe ZEDEC was, according to *Jorge Gamboa de Buen*, during *Camacho Solís's* rule as director of the "Department of Urban Reordering and Housing" in the Federal District and today director of "Grupo Danhos", a major private sector developer in Mexico City, "to adjust the land prices to their potential for development" (*Gamboa de Buen* 1994: 130; own translation). In order to achieve the transformation of the perfectly located dump (adjunct to an exit to the west and relatively close to Paseo de la Reforma) into "a centre of real estate investment" (*Gamboa de Buen* 1994: 239, own translation), the ZEDEC and the Master Plan were well suited because they allowed for flexibility and ad-hoc planning (*Gamboa de Buen* 2006). Thus, SERVIMET could carry on without lengthy and costly bureaucratic procedures. It continued to accumulate land holdings, either by buying them at still extremely low prices or by further expropriations. In total, some 400-500 families who lived in or very close to the dump were relocated.In a next step, SERVIMET began to negotiate with potential private investors. Since the firm could play two cards at the same time – that of the public limited company and that of a de-facto part of the city's administration – it was rather successful. Between 1993, when the Mall "Centro Comercial Santa Fe", also developed by SERVIMET, opened and when the first firms arrived, and 2006, some 3,000 million US$ were invested in Santa Fe. 43 per cent of this investment went into elite residential areas (1.4 million m^2), 30 per cent into office space (1.1 million m^2), and 14 per cent into shopping malls, hotels and restaurants (460,000 m^2) (*Gamboa de Buen* 2006). SERVIMET's revenues, which were high due to the fact that the land had been acquired extremely cheaply and sold to private investors for 2,000 US$ per m^2, were in part used to finance urban projects elsewhere, in part re-invested to provide infrastructure in Santa Fe (*Jones* and *Moreno-Carranco* 2007: 151)[7].

In sum, the development of Santa Fe shows that the production of new corporate geographies is not achieved solely by private sector companies. Nor is the role of national or local governments confined to the implementation of liberalisation policies. Rather, the concrete shaping of the spatial reordering in Mexico City, which happened as a consequence of the city's new external connections to the world market, depended critically on public intervention through new laws (allowing for expropriation), new planning instruments (allowing for more flexibility) and new actors (allowing for the blurring of the public-private divide, *Parnreiter* 2011).

As for the development of a new CBD in Johannesburg, we also identify a mix of different driving forces, two of which are more related to internal affairs and two others more to external dynamics. In addition, there has been strong political support for the goal of enforcing a global city development. A first 'inner' feature is related to apartheid and its transformation. During apartheid (1948-1994), Johannesburg was the centre of the resource-based South African economy and the majority of the huge mining firms had their headquarters within Johannesburg's CBD (e.g. De Beers, Anglo American). One reason why this old CBD lost its importance is the demise of apartheid, which equally meant the end of a legally guaranteed predominance of the 'white' population group in the inner city (and similarly in white-collar occupations). With the increasing insecurity related to the political unrest in the 1980s the CBD came to be seen as a dangerous place, with an increasing incidence of violent crime. This development may be seen as a push factor causing the so-called 'northern flight' of businesses.

A second internal impulse for the production of a new corporate geography is the pull factor of improved accessibility. The predominance of private transportation favours locations near to highways, gated residential areas and airports. Within this perspective the greater Sandton area and Midrand are locations with important interchange functions between the older areas of Johannesburg and Pretoria. Their geographical positions next to the point where the circular highway between West and East Rand meets the main axis to the north provide connections to all relevant locations within Gauteng province, including Pretoria and other urbanised areas around Johannesburg, as well as the international airport. The new rapid transportation system, Gautrain, will strengthen the position of Sandton in particular as the central node. Thus, the new corporate geography of Johannesburg is not only driven by the private sector but by the state as well. Private business has created office spaces at different locations to the north of the old CBD, whereas the state has improved their locational advantages by providing the necessary infrastructural components, such as the backbones of transport.

While these first two driving forces are strongly related to features of post-apartheid development, two others reflect globalisation processes. A third impulse for the development of a new CBD results from the success of those South African companies which intensified their international business from 1994 onwards. Despite the above-mentioned 'northern flight', the Johannesburg CBD is still the home base of strong resource-based multinationals such as Anglo American and BHP Billeton. Mining companies are among the drivers of foreign economic activities, as indicated by foreign direct investment, which grew by about 255 per cent between 1993 and 2004. This increase reveals the strong position of these particular South African companies as 'global players' and suggests an increasing demand for additional office space, including the service suppliers engaged in supporting the process of 'going global'.

Fourthly, many foreign companies (re-)entered South Africa in 1994 and afterwards in order to compete on the domestic and Sub-Saharan markets. Foreign investment grew from R 36,334 million (1994) to R 355,088 million (2005), which means an increase of nearly 1,000 per cent. Companies, especially from the UK, have invested in the South African economy, but firms from other leading economies, like the US and Germany, have also increased their activities since the year 2000. Mining, automotive industries and the financial industries are the main economic sectors to which FDI is going, with each receiving roughly one third of the inward flows. Although FDI inflows to South Africa have been significantly smaller compared to other emerging market economies, they have spurred the demand for representative office space, especially in Johannesburg, the city which serves as the global hub for Sub-Saharan Africa. This kind of foreign investment has accelerated the growth of new office areas in and around Sandton and in Bryanston.

Fifthly, and finally, neoliberal forms of urban policies are responsible for spatial changes in Johannesburg. After apartheid, and especially after the fiscal breakdown of 1997, various programmes and agencies favouring commercial and real estate investments have been introduced in order to reshape the urban economy and architecture (*Parnell* and *Robinson* 2006; *Lipietz* 2008). Based on principles of privatisation and strong declarations which announced an improved efficiency and competitiveness, the years between 1997 and 2004 saw a variety of strategic papers and new bodies focussing on economic growth and the stimulation of the real estate sector. A document called "Joburg 2030", elaborated in 2002/03, put forward the vision for Johannesburg as "Africa's world class city", based on cluster policies, infrastructural investments for the national and global hub areas of the city. In so doing, the politics of urban fragmentation set in, favouring the FIRE sector and its spatial form. "One prime example in Johannesburg is the concentration of financial and business services in the northern suburbs of the city: an area now hugely congested and needing urgent infrastructural renewal. It is also one of the wealthiest, former white areas of the city. Controversially, a pro-growth budget, then, could prioritise infrastructural investment to support this cluster in the wealthiest areas of the town to the north above the dense, overcrowded and poorly serviced areas of the south of the city, including Soweto" (*Parnell* and *Robinson* 2006: 350).

While the extreme neoliberal option has been transformed according to the "Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative of South Africa" (ASGISA) and although later urban planning papers like the urban "Growth and Development Strategy" (GDS) of 2006 emphasise social integration, participation and an equivalent weight of top-down and bottom-up strategies, the support for the old and new commercial districts remains undisputed (cf. *Oranje* 2012). The Johannesburg Development Agency, which was created in 2001 together with district management bodies, is active in improving the general conditions for investments in selected areas. Surprisingly, the GDS is very aware of the inherent contradictions of this kind of development when it says that "the more successful Johannesburg is today the greater will be its development challenge tomorrow" (GDS 2006: 54). As the xenophobic riots in 2008 as well as so-called service delivery protests in the following years revealed, this ambiguity is unresolved. Growing disparities and social unrest will challenge the further expansion of the corporate geography of Johannesburg as described above.

The specific geography of foreign corporate presence in Johannesburg is blurred to a higher extent than in Mexico City by national and local determinants – Sandton, Bryanston and the edge city Midrand are Johannesburg's most 'globalised' zones, but, even here, the new corporate geography is not as clearly spatially delimitable as in Mexico.

5. Conclusion

The analysis presented here shows that in Mexico City as well as in Johannesburg the corporate geographies have been transformed significantly due to the impact of globalisation processes. Combining an analysis of the development of the market for first-class office space with an analysis of locational patterns of major companies, we could confirm two notions advanced by *Grant* and *Nijman* (2002) for the cases of Accra and Mumbai: Both in Mexico City and in Johannesburg the corporate geography becomes restructured with changes in the specific way in which the cities are incorporated into the global economy, and in both cities we can also identify spatially delineated 'global city zones'. This material transformation has led to architectural layouts which aim at symbolising the success of these cities within a competitive economic environment and serves as legitimation for neoliberal urban policies. As far as we can already balance further external opportunities, pressures and challenges which derive from the financial crisis for both cities and additionally from the Soccer World Cup in Johannesburg, there are no deviations from the general picture outlined above. In Mexico the vacancy rate doubled, but there was a quick recovery, in Johannesburg the old CBD suffered most whereas the globalised city zones experienced the crush as temporarily slack similar to Mexico City. In the meantime the old CBD of Johannesburg has caught up again.

Obviously, both cases illustrate clearly forms, intensities and dependencies of the global integration ongoing dynamics which shape the urban fabric. There are clear proofs which support the notion of distinct global city zones, especially in Mexico City, but in Johannesburg, too, and it is possible to identify those global players who are responsible for it. But beside this first glance we have to go beyond the focus on the external links and to extend the position suggested by *Grant* and *Nijman*. In the case of Johannesburg the 'exogenous' influences of globalisation have been blended with national economic trends as well as with the macro- and micropolitics of the post-apartheid state and its neoliberal agenda from the beginning. Even in Mexico City, where new global city zones had been set aside the old urban morphology before the financial crisis, this clear picture has been blurred in the last years. There are at least indications for a recentralisation of foreign corporate presence in the traditional CBD in both cities today. While we alluded to this phenomenon for the case of Johannesburg already in pre-crisis times, supported by new arrivals of global companies in the last years, it is important to hint at very recent developments at Paseo de la Reforma in Mexico City, which currently is one of the "hot-spots" for the construction of first-class office space and luxury housing.

Due to these findings there is no clear scale dependence of the territorial form. In order to comprehensively understand the changes in the corporate geographies in the two cities it is necessary to direct more attention to local and national dynamics. As argued in the second part of our study, the restructuring of the built environment in both cities can only be grasped fully by considering the particular role of local and national governments in this reshaping of the urban environment. Thus, rather than just implementing global dynamics, local and national governments proved to be crucial actors in driving the restructuring of the corporate presence in Mexico City and in Johannesburg. They try to establish showcases of a successful transformation of the economy and the city or – more general – an imagined globalised urban economy using the materiality of the real estate sector. In this way local actors enable a transformation of the urban landscape according to the assumed imperatives of urban competiveness. They help to create globalised city zones as, at least partly, voluntary local subjection under global capitalism.

Finally, our research question and the case studies show that an approach, which has been labeled here as corporate geography, borrowed by *Grant* and *Nijman*, is an appropriate starting point to describe in a systematic way how local transformation processes of the real estate market and office space location operate in globalising cities of the South. It helps us to relate spatial form to economic and political processes as well as to reveal the materiality of the imagined urban economy. In this way the shifting corporate geographies are additional building blocks in order to understand recent dynamics of global capitalism in the context of global city formation and politics of urban neoliberalism.

Notes

[1] Data in the following section draw on real estate reports of (alphabetical order): CB Richard Ellis, Colliers International, Cushman & Wakefield and Jones Lang LaSalle. For years prior to 1997 no systematic information is available.

[2] Real estate agents identify nine office submarkets: Reforma/Centro, Polanco, Lomas Palmas, Bosques de las Lomas, Santa Fe, Periférico Sur, Insurgentes, Interlomas, Lomas Altas (see *Fig. 1*). In very recent years, a tenth submarket (Norte) was added, due to the opening of Mexico City's technopark in the northern district of Azcapotzalco.

[3] Midrand was incorporated into Johannesburg when the latter was consolidated into a single metropolitan authority ("UniCity") in 2000.

[4] Data refer to the Metropolitan area. PEMEX, the state-owned oil company, accounting for 14 per cent of the BIG 500 sales, is located outside both the traditional and the new CBD.

[5] The fact that the old and the new CBD represent together only 56 per cent of the sales of the Big 500 (and thus three fourth of the sales of the largest companies, which are headquartered in Mexico City) is due to the fact that PEMEX, the state-owned oil company, accounting for 14 per cent of the BIG 500 sales, is located outside both the traditional and the new CBD.

[6] The Federal District is the inner part of Mexico City, which until 1997 was mandated by the Federal Government and hence governed not by an elected mayor, but by a 'regente' appointed by the Mexican president.

[7] Nevertheless, poor infrastructure and road connections to other parts of the city remain a constant problem.

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