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Peripheralization through mass housing urbanization in Hong Kong, Mexico City, and Paris

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ABSTRACT

This article compares how state-initiated mass housing urbanization has contributed to processes of peripheralization in three very different historical and geopolitical settings: in Paris from the 1950s to the 1990s in Hong Kong from the 1950s to 2010s and in Mexico City from the 1990s to the 2010s. We understand mass housing urbanization as large-scale industrial housing production based on the intervention of state actors into the urbanization process which leads to the strategic re-organization of urban territories. In this comparison across space and time we focus particularly on how, when and to what degree this urbanization process leads to the peripheralization of settlements and entire neighbourhoods over the course of several decades. This long-term perspective allows us to evaluate not only the decisive turns and ruptures within governmental rationales but also the continuities and contradictions of their territorial effects. Finally, we develop a taxonomy of different modalities of peripheralization that might serve as a conceptual tool for further urban research.

Introduction

In this article, we compare mass housing urbanization in Hong Kong, Mexico City, Paris. This urbanization process is implemented by state actors, often as a response to fast urban growth, and implies a combined intervention into the housing market, the housing industry, and the territorial development of the entire urban region. In Hong Kong and Paris, this process unfolded in the context of the post-war economic boom; initially, it was provoked by a severe and politically threatening housing crisis, which made the economic, technical, and organizational efforts for fast housing construction politically necessary and economically welcome. A different version of mass housing urbanization evolved around the turn of the century in Mexico City under the premises of a financialized housing market, where it served to relocate lower-income populations from urban regeneration and renewal sites in central areas. During this research we found out that in all three case studies strong processes of peripheralization occurred. In the following, we present a comparison of the patterns and pathways of a Fordist, a colonial, and a financialized variation of mass housing urbanization and the related processes of peripheralization over the course of several decades.

Mass housing urbanization

In contrast to other types of social housing production, which include a wide variety of material forms, scales, and organizational arrangements, mass housing *urbanization* is a large-scale process and therefore involves the urban transformation of the entire urban territory – not only the urban periphery but also the urban centres. A key aspect of this process is the direct intervention of state actors into housing production, as well as urbanization and territorial development. Mass housing urbanization is thus different from other large-scale urbanization processes, such as the privately organized and market-oriented production of single-family homes and condominiums or the various forms of self-construction and popular urbanization in southern metropolises.[1]

Comparative historical analyses of mass housing urbanization across the world are relatively rare. Studies on mass housing usually focus not on urbanization. They analyse the relation between state regulation and housing production and highlight the variety of pathways, actors, housing markets, and urban forms.[2] However, they neither conceptualize mass housing production as an urbanization process nor analyse its territorial dimension, in particular the changing relationships between centres and peripheries and the related resettlement and relocation of people. Similarly, recent analyses of financialized housing production reveal processes of privatization and enclosure but neglect the territorial restructuring and its consequences for the entire urban region.[3]

We define mass housing urbanization as a specific process of urbanization that is determined by four main characteristics. The first of these is the *large-scale construction of housing units* based on standardized industrial production. Because of its organizational complexity, this process is often implemented at the scale of the nation-state. Both the strong standardization of the production process and the resulting product (the urban typologies and floor plans) contribute to imposing normative lifestyles and consumption patterns.

Second, mass housing urbanization usually addresses *lower-income groups* (working and middle classes) and therefore receives *financial support from public authorities*. This includes direct and indirect subsidies such as regulative interventions into the housing market, social benefits for tenants, and mortgage benefits. Furthermore, they can be granted for social rental housing as well as for home ownership. In both cases, the state influences social reproduction through mass housing urbanization.

The third characteristic of mass housing urbanization is the *powerful intervention of state actors into the urbanization process*. Only state actors have the legal power and the organizational capacity to control the large-scale production of housing and the related relocation of people. Most important, states hold the power of disposition over public land, as well as expropriation rights and other tools of planning and finance.

The fourth defining characteristic of mass housing urbanization is *the strategic reorganization of entire urban territories*. This involves a rearrangement of the social composition of urban areas, and it often also includes the resettlement of mostly lower-income groups from central (inner-city) locations to peripheries, thus transforming both the periphery *and* the urban centre.

The large-scale production of housing requires the availability of large tracts of land, which can be provided either by the large-scale demolition of inner-city neighbourhoods through urban renewal strategies or by the urbanization of sparsely settled areas at the outskirts. Territorial

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[1]Streule et al., "Popular Urbanization. Conceptualizing Urbanization Processes Beyond Informality".
[2]See, e.g., Power, *Hovels to High Rise*; Dufaux and Fourcaut, *Le monde des grands ensembles*; Urban, *Tower and Slab*; Glendinning, *Mass Housing*.
[3]Aalbers, The Financialisation of Housing. A Political Economy Approach; Jacobs, *Neoliberal Housing Policy*; and Rolnik, *Urban Warfare*.

restructuring is thus a defining feature of mass housing urbanization, and it *might* result in specific forms of peripheralization. Peripheralization as such, however, is *not* a defining characteristic of mass housing urbanization. Even though the newly built settlements are generally located at the geographical periphery of densely settled areas, they do not necessarily experience spatial isolation and lack of centrality. The strategic planning of public transport infrastructure and new centralities could provide at least certain urban qualities and fast access to the main centres. Various examples of mass housing urbanization and New Town development in both capitalist and socialist countries during the post-war period have also resulted in inclusive urban neighbourhoods without strong socio-economic segregation that often subsisted over the course of several decades.[4] However, the three case studies presented here show strong processes of peripheralization, despite their different geographic and historical settings. Identifying and comparing the characteristics of pathways that turned mass housing urbanization into peripheralization is one of the main goals of this paper. It thus also contributes to a relatively recent project of comparative global housing studies.[5]

Peripheralization

With the term *peripheralization* we describe a territorial process that generates and reinforces relations of dominance and dependency. It is a relational concept for identifying the polarization of power, wealth, and access to economic and social resources between central and peripheral areas. This definition shifts the focus from a static conceptualization of periphery as a geographical location to the analysis of a dynamic and contradictory economic, political, and social process.[6] Increasing socio-spatial inequalities have led to a revival of the term peripheralization in urban and regional research in recent years, particularly for the analysis of declining industrial regions in Europe and North America and of sparsely populated areas in Eastern and Southern Europe.[7] Peripheralization is also closely related to processes of stigmatization, marginalization, and exclusion and often associated with processes of shrinkage.[8]

In the early 1970s, Henri Lefebvre gave the centre-periphery-relationship a pivotal role in his theory of the production of space. He understood centrality as a dialectical concept: the centre does not exist without the periphery (or multiple peripheries). He applied this conceptualization in his analysis of the restructuring of the Paris region in the 1950s and 1960s, describing the relocation of the working class from central neighbourhoods to the new housing estates in the urban periphery, which led to the massive reduction of everyday amenities, opportunities, and possibilities. Lefebvre's encompassing understanding of centre-periphery relations also allowed him to link processes of peripheralization in metropolitan and in remote and sparsely settled territories. He defines centrality as a spatial form. Its logic stands for the simultaneity of people, things, and events that can be brought together around a point. It creates a situation in which they no longer exist separately, but interact and become productive. The centre is a crucial resource: it is a privileged place of encounter, assembly, and communication, a place for the exchange of goods, information, and affects, a place in which constraints and normalities dissolve. In this sense, centrality represents the wealth of a society. The question of access to or exclusion from centrality is the core of

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[4]Beyer, *Die Produktion sozialistischer Urbanität*; and Clapson, *A Social History of Milton Keynes*.
[5]Aalbers, "Towards a Relational and Comparative Rather than a Contrastive Global Housing Studies".
[6]See Kühn, "Peripheralization: Theoretical Concepts"; Kühn and Bernt, "Peripheralization and Power".
[7]Fischer-Tahir and Naumann, *Peripheralization*; Kühn, *Peripherisierung und Stadt*.
[8]Kühn and Bernt, "Peripheralization and Power", 312; Kühn, *Peripherisierung und Stadt*, 76; Kühn, "Peripheralization: Theoretical Concepts".

Lefebvre's understanding of the 'right to the city', which he basically defines as a 'right to centrality'; that is, the right not to be excluded from centrality and its movement and the right not to be forced out of society and culture into a space produced for the purpose of discrimination.[9]

Saskia Sassen was among the first to conceptualize processes of peripheralization in global cities in the 1990s.[10] She argues that the increasing concentration of corporate power and highly qualified economic sectors depends on large numbers of people, often migrants, who work in precarious low-income sectors such as cleaning, care, logistics, and transport services. Such processes of peripheralization in urban centres question the classic idea of a centre-periphery dichotomy, as the areas undergoing peripheralization are in growing urban regions, sometimes even adjacent to urban centralities, but are nevertheless cut off from urban life. Loïc Wacquant calls this polarity between affluent and impoverished neighbourhoods 'advanced marginality'.[11] Lindsay Howe looked at the intersection of peripherality and poverty in her analysis of the spatiality of poverty in the extended region of Johannesburg and revealed how state subsidized affordable housing often reinforce existing socio-spatial inequalities, while emerging popular centralities produced by the agency of people may help to reduce the peripherality of their settlements.[12]

Comparative analysis

This article highlights how state-led mass housing urbanization initiated and aggravated processes of peripheralization in Hong Kong, Mexico City, and Paris. It thus draws on distinct cases situated across different geopolitical and historical settings, while the core of the analysis consists in comparing their centre-periphery relations and related territorial effects. This analytic angle shifts to the background the difference—so central to Friedrich Engels's analysis of the housing question in late-nineteenth-century Europe—between owners and tenants.[13] Even if the concrete form of tenure is still critical to each specific variation of mass housing urbanization, differences between tenure are not the focus of this paper. The goal of this comparison is also not to simply find similarities and differences between the discussed cases. Rather, we seek to bring the Fordist, colonial, and financialized variants of mass housing urbanization into conversation with one another to conceptualize an empirically grounded definition of this specific urbanization process.[14] Adopting a transductive approach, we regard the relationship between theory and empirical research as dialectically intertwined, 'an incessant feed-back between the conceptual framework used and empirical observations'.[15]

Our comparative method is based on recent debates in urban studies, particularly on scholarship of planetary urbanization and postcolonial urbanism that strives to conceptualize the urban across the various divides of the contemporary world.[16] The goal of this wider comparative agenda is both to acknowledge the diversity of urbanization processes and to theorize their intrinsic global

[9]Lefebvre, *The Urban Revolution*, 109–10, 150; Schmid, *Henri Lefebvre and the Theory of the Production of Space*, chapter 4.
[10]Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy*, 319–24.
[11]Wacquant, *Urban Outcasts*.
[12]Howe, *Spatiality of Poverty*.
[13]Engels, "Zur Wohnungsfrage".
[14]For the conducted empirical research, we used qualitative methods including qualitative interviews, mobile and multi-sited ethnography, and a specific form of mapping allowing us to integrate knowledge of various urban actors (for a detailed discussion, see Schmid et al., "Towards a New Vocabulary of Urbanisation Processes: A Comparative Approach".).
[15]Lefebvre, *Right to the City*, 151.
[16]Schmid et al., "Towards a New Vocabulary of Urbanisation Processes: A Comparative Approach"; Robinson, "Thinking Cities Through Elsewhere: Comparative Tactics for a More Global Urban Studies"; "Introduction: Generating Concepts of 'the urban' Through Comparative Practice "; Becker, *Global Players*; McFarlane, "The Comparative City".

interconnectedness. In this comparative endeavour, we had to both understand the specific territorial relations and the conditions for the development of each case.[17] In addition, we adopted a long-term perspective not only to explain decisive turns and ruptures within governmental rationales but also to understand the continuities and contradictions of their territorial effects. Significantly, this comparison did not start after the individual case studies were completed but was an integral part of the analysis from the outset.[18] This entailed, for instance, reading the Paris case through the lens of the colonial territorial regime in Hong Kong during the 1950s and 1960s or analysing the global city formation and financialization in Hong Kong and Mexico City after 1980 and 1990 respectively in view of the consequences of neoliberal restructuring in Paris during the 1970s.

Thinking the urban, with its 'multiple elsewhere,' to use Jennifer Robinson's phrase, allows us to revisit and provincialize inherited terms and ways of understanding mass housing urbanization. This is exemplified by concepts that are key to understand mass housing urbanization in the Paris case, such as 'neoliberal restructuring' and 'welfare state', that help to understand urbanization processes in the West, but not to grasp the specificity of the two other cases. The comparative analysis of different territorial settings across global divides was therefore crucial for developing a novel and globally relevant understanding of mass housing urbanization. Decentring Western Europe and its canonical narratives of housing histories pushed us to thoroughly reposition and calibrate the role of the nation-state within the process of mass housing urbanization. This procedure allowed us to understand the inherent logic of this urbanization process precisely *because of* – not despite – the diversity of the analysed case studies. The stark contrast of Fordist, colonial, and financialized settings helped us first to identify the fundamental features of mass housing urbanization and its ensuing peripheralization and then to work towards a definition which might speak to other contexts.

A taxonomy of peripheralization

In its most general sense, *peripheralization* denotes a territorial process that generates and reinforces relations of dominance and dependency. It leads to the loss or lack of access to all sorts of functions, jobs, infrastructures, uses, facilities, venues, meeting places, and public spaces. As a result of our comparison, we identified three modalities of peripheralization operating through mass housing urbanization: logistic, everyday, and socio-economic peripheralization.

Logistic peripheralization focuses on processes that are restricting access to these functions and infrastructures. It entails the physical and social disconnection of a territory from urban centralities and networks – that is, its isolation from the surrounding urban fabric including through the lack of affordable public transport infrastructure. It thus imposes often unaffordable and time-consuming long-distance commutes to workplaces and main regional centralities. *Peripheralization of the everyday* is the counterpart to logistic peripheralization as it entails the absence or poor quality of local and regional centralities and corresponding amenities. It includes the lack of opportunities for education, cultural and political participation, social encounter, leisure, and enjoyment. Additionally, peripheralization of the everyday has a more encompassing dimension: it restricts inhabitants' capacities to create their own modalities of everyday life. This often goes hand in hand with economic prosperity, particularly when homogenization and commodification reduce

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[17]Robinson, "Introduction: Generating concepts of 'the urban' through comparative practice", 1528.
[18]Schmid et al, "Towards a new Vocabulary of Urbanisation Processes: A Comparative Approach"; Streule et al., "Popular Urbanization. Conceptualizing Urbanization Processes Beyond Informality".

the possibilities for appropriation and self-management of economic, socio-political, and cultural spaces. The third process we observed in our case studies is *socio-economic peripheralization*, occurring in our cases only after the 1970s. It is characterized by processes of impoverishment, social exclusion, and stigmatization and describes a situation in which people cannot afford access to basic goods and services even when they are available. Socio-economic peripheralization almost inevitably comprises features of a peripheralization of the everyday – such as exclusion from social networks and decision-making processes – whereas peripheralization of the everyday may occur without strong socio-economic peripheralization.

In the following three chapters, one for each case study, we first investigate the agencies and administrative tools of the main actors who initiated the process of mass housing urbanization. Second, we analyse the governmental rationales and territorial strategies, land regimes, housing markets, and subjectivities in the different political and socio-economic contexts of these urban regions. Based on these insights, we then analyse the specific territorial characteristics and the varying processes of peripheralization. The order of the case studies in the text follows the pathway history of peripheralization through mass housing urbanization: Paris (1950s to 1990s), Hong Kong (1950s to 2010s) and Mexico City (1990s to 2010s). The concluding section directly compares the three cases, unfolds our taxonomy of peripheralization through mass housing urbanization, and discusses the role of the state and its colonizing strategies in the production of urban territories.
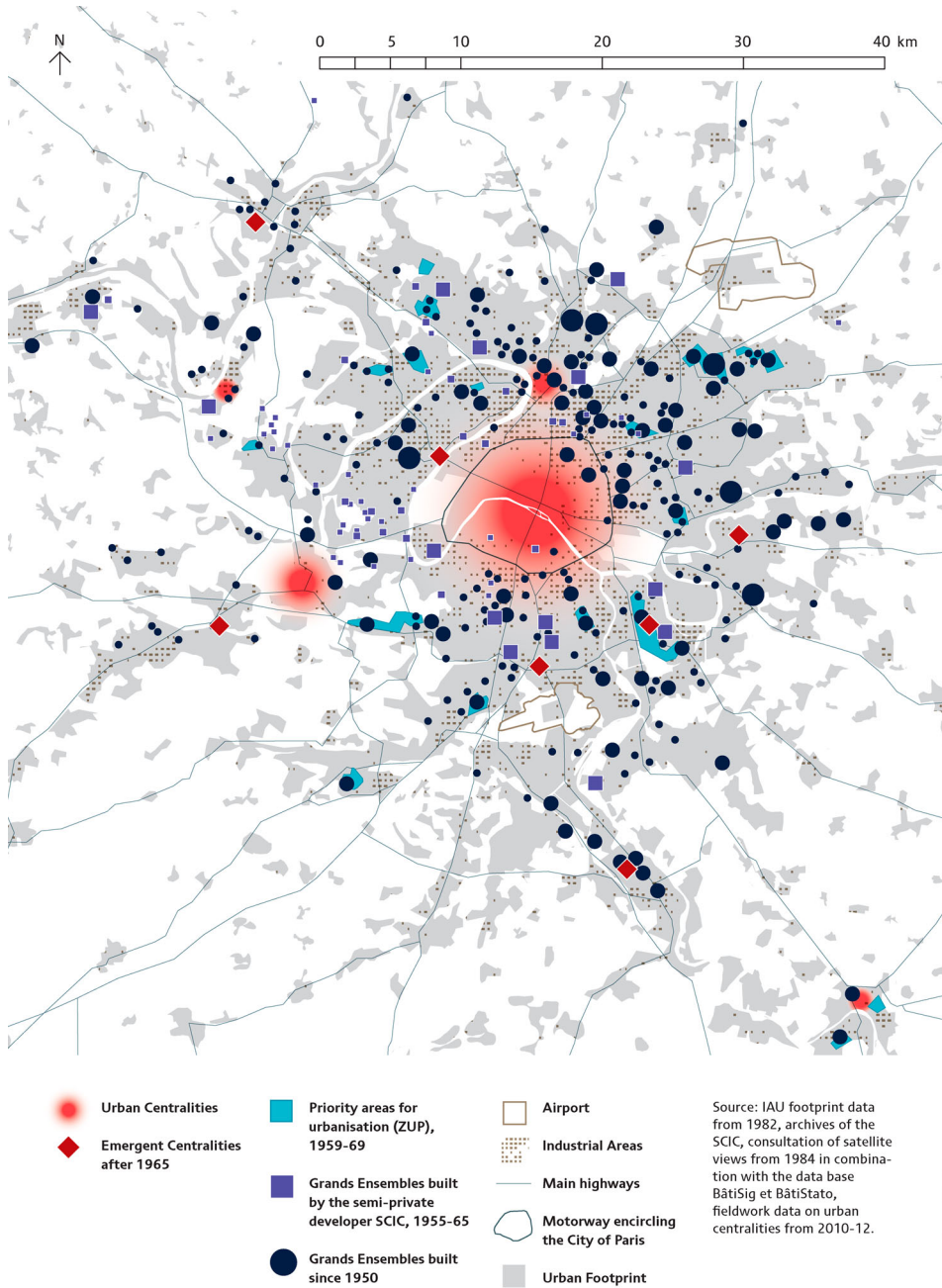
Paris, 1950s–1990s

The extended Paris region (Île-de-France) faced unprecedented urban growth during the post-war boom period, expanding from 4.5 million inhabitants in 1954–7.6 million in 1975. Much of this urban growth was absorbed by modernist high-rise estates colloquially called *grands ensembles*. In 1962, 110 *grands ensembles* in the urban periphery of Paris housed around 2 million people, almost as many as the City of Paris. They catapulted the life routines of the upper working and lower middle classes from the nineteenth into the twentieth century and provided the grounds for the formation of a consumer and leisure society. However, by the mid-1980s, the *grands ensembles* had turned into zones of socio-economic decline, deprivation, and stigmatization. This inversion of socio-economic reality and symbolic meaning was a result of the liberalization of urban politics within the French system of centralized interventionism from the mid-1960s onwards, the economic crisis of the mid-1970s, and the neoliberal restructuring after 1978. All these processes resulted in strong socio-spatial segregation and a fragmented and heterogenous territorial pattern (Map 1).

The urban model of the *grands ensembles* and the transformation of Paris

The term first *grand ensemble* appears in public discourse at the end of the 1950s. It designates a large-scale modernist housing complex composed of high-rise towers and slabs (*tours et bars*), usually comprising more than 500 apartments, structured by large-scale open spaces and equipped with certain urban amenities.[19] A precondition of this urbanization model was the prefabrication building industry created for the reconstruction of war-damaged cities after World War Two. Starting in the mid-1950s, mass housing urbanization was implemented at the scale of urban regions. At the time, the Paris region faced a severe housing crisis that posed a threat to governmental stability;

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[19]The term *grands ensemble* is a discursive term but is not juridically defined (as is the ZUP). For an attempt at a definition of the time, see Lacoste, "Un problème complexe et débattu".

Map showing legend:

- Urban Centralities
- Emergent Centralities after 1965
- Grands Ensembles built by the semi-private developer SCIC, 1955-65
- Grands Ensembles built since 1950
- Priority areas for urbanisation (ZUP), 1959-69
- Industrial Areas
- Main highways
- Motorway encircling the City of Paris
- Urban Footprint
- Airport

Source: IAU footprint data from 1982, archives of the SCIC, consultation of satellite views from 1984 in combination with the data base BâtiSig et BâtiStato, fieldwork data on urban centralities from 2010-12.

Map 1. Mass Housing Urbanization in Paris, 1985. Author: Anne Kockelkorn; Graphic Design: Dorothée Billard, Monobloque Berlin.

it was caused by the comparatively low construction activity and the dilapidation of the existing housing stock at a moment when the region experienced strong economic and demographic growth. In the Département de la Seine surrounding the City of Paris, 240,000 families were

Figure 1. Grands Ensemble of Sarcelles built from 1955. Foto: Anne Kockelkorn, 2015.

classified as 'poorly housed' (*mal logés*) in 1954, and thousands were living in squatter settlements. In the City of Paris, only one of every two apartments was equipped with a toilet, only one of four had central heating, and only one of five a bathtub or a shower.[20] To accelerate housing production, the French state adopted several financial and political incentives for the construction industry. In 1953, it facilitated access to credit financing and granted public authorities expropriation rights for housing production.[21] It also created an employers' tax system which strongly pushed the growth of semi-public social housing providers for employees.[22] In 1954, the public investment bank CDC (Caisse des dépôt et consignations) founded the subsidiary construction firm SCIC (Société centrale immobilière de la Caisse des dépôts) as an intermediate agency between the state and the municipalities. The SCIC soon became the main housing investor in Île-de-France, where it financed and built 60,000 housing units until 1964, including the New Town of Sarcelles.[23] (Figure 1)

The expropriation laws and the creation of the SCIC constituted a decisive shift from locally rooted housing provision towards a strategic intervention of the national state into urbanization processes. The creation of the SCIC linked civil engineering, market interventions, and military strategies; this strategic combination of legal tools and disciplinary knowledge was initially developed and applied in the French colonies.[24] The strategy of combined urban intervention was

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[20]Bertrand, "Le confort des logements".
[21]Effosse, *L'invention du logement aidé*, 275−98.
[22]Driant, *Les politiques du logement*, 77−80, 99. In 1976, semi-public housing providers owned 40 per cent of social housing units at national scale; see Glendinning, *Mass Housing*, 171–2.
[23]Landauer, *L'invention du grand ensemble*, 246–52.
[24]Kipfer, "Démolition, mixité et contre-révolution", 210–11; Fredenucci, "L'entregent colonial des ingénieurs", 79–91; Henni, *Architecture of Counterrevolution*.

further strengthened with the advent of the Fifth Republic, established by General Charles de Gaulle in 1958 a few months after a military coup in Algeria had dismantled the Fourth Republic (1945–58). De Gaulle installed a political system that granted the president and the prime minister special executive rights, and in the following years French urban planning introduced comprehensive territorial projects through authoritative top-down procedures.[25] In 1958, the Gaullist government created 'priority areas for urbanization' (ZUP),[26] an administrative tool allowing land acquisition for the construction of 500-unit settlements equipped with public facilities. The twenty-two ZUPs launched in the Paris region from 1959 to 1969 comprised 140,000 housing units and covered a territory of nearly 6,000 hectares – half the size of the City of Paris.[27] However, mass housing urbanization in the Paris region during the post-war boom was a much more diverse and finely grained process. Fewer than half of the approximately 150 *grands ensembles* built until 1976 were built as ZUPs or developed by the SCIC. The others were realized by a variety of small-scale public or semi-public housing providers acting at a local scale, as exemplified by the high-quality social housing projects in the communist municipalities of Ivry-sur-Seine and St Denis.[28] Local empowerment could also be achieved when a ZUP was based on the initiative and leadership of a mayor, such as the ZUP of Créteil which included a new university. This coexistence of authoritarian strategies *and* local empowerment characterized the production of the *grands ensembles* until the mid-1960s.

Another conflicting coexistence characterized the social composition of the *grands ensembles*. On the one hand, social housing remained socially segregated until the mid-1960s, since access to social rental contracts required a defined minimal income and thus excluded the poorest strata of the population, as well as refugees and people without French citizenship. On the other hand, the *grands ensembles* also housed people displaced by the urban renewal of working-class neighbourhoods in the City of Paris. Throughout the 1950s and 1960s, large parts of the City of Paris were transformed into a centre for global finance and a headquarter and knowledge economy, which was accompanied by a fundamental change in the social composition of its population. From 1954 to 1975, the share of workers living in the City of Paris dropped from 30 to 22 %, whereas the share of inhabitants older than 65 increased from 11 to 18 %.[29] From 1962 to 1975, 1.7 million out of 2.8 million people left the City of Paris, while only 800,000 new inhabitants arrived there; in the same time span, its population shrank by 500,000, while the urban region grew by 1.9 million.[30]

The Paris government further propelled this urban transformation process through a series of urban renewal projects, which encompassed 3.8 square kilometres, or 3.6 % of the area of the city in 1970.[31] The social housing companies owned or co-owned by the City of Paris[32] also facilitated the relocation of working-class inhabitants to the inner *banlieue* by building large-scale housing estates for the inhabitants of urban renewal sites, such as the Cité des 4000 in La Courneuve (1959) or Les Courtillières in Pantin (1955–61).[33] However, most of the expelled indigent residents

[25]Vadelorge, *Retour sur les villes nouvelles*; Effosse, "Paul Delouvrier et les villes nouvelles", 75–86.
[26]Décret n° 58–1464 relatif aux zones à urbaniser en priorité.
[27]Jamois, *Les zones à urbaniser par priorité*, 235–36. At the national scale, 197 ZUPs contained 2.3 million housing units.
[28]In 1976 and at national scale, France had 1,200 active social housing (HLM) companies divided 60–40 per cent between public (OPHLM) and semi-public (SAHLM) housing providers. See Glendinning, *Mass Housing*, 172; Fourcaut, "Qu'elle était belle la banlieue …"
[29]Nivet, "La formation du bastion gaulliste", 251.
[30]Annuaire statistique de la France.
[31]Godard et al., *La rénovation urbaine à Paris*, 12–14; Coing, *Rénovation urbaine*.
[32]Régie immobilière de la Ville de Paris (RIVP), Société anonyme de gestion immobilière (SAGI), office public HLM de Paris (OPHLM de Paris).
[33]Pouvreau, "Quand Paris logeait ses pauvres"; Landauer and Pouvreau, "Les Courtillières", 75.

of the City of Paris were relocated to new substandard housing estates which were often situated in ZUPs. The relocation efforts initiated a process of socio-economic peripheralization.[34] Astonishingly, the communist press did not take much notice of the 'renovation and deportation' (*rénovation-déportation*), as critics called it at the time.[35] This silence can be interpreted as a tacit territorial compromise between the conservative government of the City of Paris and the communist municipalities of the Département de la Seine.[36] The former sought to enhance and upgrade the City of Paris, while the latter hoped for a strengthening of their electorate through the arrival of additional working-class people.

Logistic peripheralization and peripheralization of the everyday

In this first phase of mass housing urbanization, the *grands ensembles* functioned as enclaves of accelerated modernization for the white and French part of the population, offering a modern but peripheralized mass consumer environment. In the outer *banlieue* they initiated the urbanization of agricultural land that interwar urban planning had protected from construction. In the inner *banlieue*, by contrast, they were built on the interstices between the dense nineteenth-century urban blocks, patches of single-family homes, and industrial sites. In both cases, many *grands ensembles* were realized on territorial enclaves, cut off from local centralities and adjacent neighbourhoods by motorways, rail lines, or industrial sites. This logistic peripheralization of the *grands ensembles* was due not least to sharply rising land prices in the Paris region (24 % per year from 1958 to 1964), since private and state-owned developers prioritized affordability.[37] While public bus connections were mostly available, travel time to the centre of Paris could easily exceed ninety minutes. Additionally, buses often did not run in the evenings, and bus stops could be reached only after long walks.[38] Territorial isolation and lack of public transport resulted in the creation of a double periphery: many *grands ensembles* were peripheral to the centre of Paris *and* cut off from easy access to local centralities and the crucial amenities of daily life.

   Despite the various forms of logistic peripheralization, living in a *grand ensemble* in the early 1960s was considered a privilege by many working-class households: the apartments provided comfort, light, and space; private bathrooms and central heating came along with a new consumer lifestyle and new domestic appliances; and, despite standardized production methods, buildings and apartments often had a high architectural quality. However, this modernization went hand in hand with a peripheralization of the everyday. Social spaces for meeting and interaction, such as restaurants, bars, and venues, were largely absent, while televisions, refrigerators, and washing machines shifted collective routines from the neighbourhood to the domestic interior. The economic viability of small retail stores was diminished by the state-driven implantation of large-scale shopping malls in the *banlieue*.[39] At the same time, higher rents for the modernist apartments and the cost of new consumer goods imposed economic discipline on households. The interplay of these processes with the functionalist apartment plan and the urban setting reinforced the Fordist production of new subjectivities through individualization and hierarchical gender roles, promoting a modern middle-class identity of white French culture.[40] This homogenization of urban space became

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[34]Tricart, "Genèse d'un dispositif d'assistance", 608.
[35]Groupe de sociologie urbaine de Nanterre, "Paris 1970".
[36]Between the Parisian Commune from 1871 and 1977, Paris did not have a maire but was directly administrated by the state via the "Préfet de la Seine", who was directly nominated.
[37]See Vadelorge, *Retour sur les villes nouvelles*, 106, 116.
[38]Clerc, *Grands ensembles*, 61–3; Huguet, *Les femmes dans les grands ensembles*, 79, 81.
[39]Cupers, *The Social Project*, 243–52.
[40]As illustrated by Christiane Rochefort's novel *Children of Heaven* (1962) and investigated by Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*.

particularly apparent when compared to the tight mesh of small retail stores, launderettes, bars, cinemas, and venues that constituted everyday routine patterns in the working-class neighbourhoods of the City of Paris.[41] The morphological rupture between the hermetic, monotonous universe of the *grands ensembles* and the surrounding urban fabric aggravated the experience of alienation. Sociological surveys revealed a widely shared unease in everyday life in the *grands ensembles*, and in 1965 82 % of French citizens preferred a detached house to an apartment in a *grand ensemble*.[42]

Racialized socio-economic peripheralization

During the 1970s, the *grands ensembles* became the arena of a political paradigm shift in migration politics and the politics of housing finance that consolidated a process of socio-economic peripheralization and initiated a new process of racialized peripheralization. Thus, social problems were turned into the urban problem of a territorially, socially, and ethnically segregated society. Starting in 1965, public authorities began to withdraw funding for social rental housing, while offering higher-income groups strong financial incentives to leave the social rental housing sector.[43] Access to home ownership was facilitated through the launch of public mortgage schemes and direct housing subsidies, while the rent levels in social housing depended on the level of income.[44] This process was institutionalized and accelerated with the neoliberal reform programme of 1977, named after Prime Minister Raymond Barre. This reform programme worsened the loan conditions for social housing companies, encouraged lower-income groups to become homeowners by launching a mortgage scheme for households with no equity, and extended the existing system of housing benefits.[45] These changes introduced a new governmental rationality: the shift from a right to housing to the duty to participate in the housing market.[46]

In parallel to these changes in politics of housing finance, the poorest French citizens and the immigrant population gradually gained access to the regular social rental housing from which they had previously been excluded.[47] In 1968, the regional administration began to impose annual admission rates in the regular social housing (*habitation à loyer modéré*, HLM) sector for households from squatter settlements and urban renewal areas. Squatter settlements had been growing since the end of the colonial war in Algeria in 1962, and, in 1966, 119 settlements in the Paris region gave shelter to about 47,000 people from North Africa and Southern Europe, as well as poor white French inhabitants.[48] The majority of the immigrant population, however, lived in private rental housing in dilapidated working-class neighbourhoods in the City of Paris – neighbourhoods which were often targeted by urban renewal.[49] In both cases, the relocation of Algerian residents operated initially through specialized housing companies, special funds, and legal instruments: their hostels and provisional settlements materialized a state of exception and stigmatized their inhabitants as incapable of fulfilling the normalized actions of modern everyday life.[50] The situation

[41]Coing, *Rénovation urbaine*, 91.
[42]Raymond et al., *L'habitat pavillonnaire*, 29.
[43]Kleinman, "France", 79–85.
[44]Lefebvre, Mouillart, and Occhipinti, *Politique du logement*, 33–44.
[45]Bourdieu and Christin, "La construction du marché", 67; Kleinman, "France", 60–68; Lefebvre, Mouillart, and Occhipinti, *Politique du logement*, 52–4.
[46]Kockelkorn, "Palace on Mortgage. The Collapse of a Social Housing Monument in France."
[47]Tricart, "Genèse d'un dispositif d'assistance", 615; Gastaut, "Les Bidonvilles", 4.
[48]Gastaut, "Les Bidonvilles", 2.
[49]Tricart, "Genèse d'un dispositif d'assistance", 606; Viet, "La politique du logement des immigrés", 93, 95–6.
[50]Gastaut, "Les Bidonvilles", 5; Tricart, "Genèse d'un dispositif d'assistance", 605, 619–21.

changed in 1970, when a newly adopted law for rehabilitation gave immigrants and the poorest French citizens access to the HLM sector.[51] This was a clear political victory for racialized and immigrant people. However, their numbers rose only through struggle and contestation, since housing companies and municipalities, no matter their political colour, strongly rejected and circumvented their integration –despite annual admission rates for households from squatters and redevelopment areas, imposed by authorities in 1968, and fixed at 15 % in 1970.[52]

By 1979, the share of immigrants in the HLM sector had risen to 26 %. In general, however, they were often located in sites that suffered more from peripheralization, as disadvantaged sites had more frequent vacancies. At the same time, the arrival of poorer income groups and racialized people contributed to a symbolic devaluation of the *grands ensembles* in public discourse that would later lead to racist discrimination against its residents, especially when specific sites were affected by strong processes of peripheralization.

These new population politics, together with the introduction of the financial incentives described above, fundamentally altered the social composition of the social housing sector. In 1973, a large portion of the inhabitants of the *grands ensembles* belonged to the middle and even to the upper classes, while only 12 % of social housing residents in France belonged to the lowest income quartile of the households entitled to social housing.[53] By 1984, the share of the lowest income quartile had risen to 26 % and by 2006 to 40 %.[54] This change in the social composition led to uneven urban development. Poorer households with a migrant background were most likely to be placed in already disadvantaged *grands ensembles* in the outer periphery, where vacancies were higher. The continual rise of unemployment from the mid-1970s and the second wave of deindustrialization reinforced the process of socio-economic and racialized peripheralization. It became most severe in *grands ensembles* located close to industrial plants which either were shut down or drastically reduced their workforce – such as the ZUP La Rose-des-Vents in Aulnay-sous-Bois. Similar strong processes of peripheralization occurred in housing estates that had served as relocation sites for slum clearance and urban renewal, such as the Cité des 4000 in La Courneuve and La Grande Borne in Grigny (Figure 2). The lived experience of residents confronted with constant racial discrimination laid the ground for the projection of an imaginary of state violence on an architecture that was originally the outcome of a Fordist compromise based on the idea of a society of entitled citizens. Many *grands ensembles* of the post-war boom years thus transformed into territorial enclaves for a stigmatized population whose entitlement to claim political participation, economic redistribution, and territorial justice was pulverized. Throughout the 1990s, urban uprisings erupted in the Parisian banlieue almost yearly, tying the urban model of the *grands ensembles* to the imaginary of racialized socio-economic precarity and violence.

The beginnings of racialized socio-economic peripheralization of the *grands ensembles* occurred simultaneously to the implementation of five *villes nouvelles* (New Towns) in the outskirts of Paris. The planning of this large-scale territorial project in the 1960s exemplified the authoritarian, top-down mode of Gaullist governing. The plan's realization, however, was strongly impeded first by

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[51]Tanter and Toubon, "Le mouvement HLM", 51–2.
[52]Tellier, *Politiques de la ville*, 287; David, "La resorption des bidonvilles de Saint Denis"; Blanc-Chaléard, "De la résorption des bidonvilles", 15;
[53]Lévy-Vroelant, Schaefer, and Tutin, "Social Housing in France", 136. In 2020, the income ceiling for social housing in the Paris region for a young couple was at €57,000, which corresponds to the 10 per cent of highest incomes of the entire French population.
[54]Housing inquiries by INSEE and Mission économique de l'Union Nationale des Fédérations d'Organisme d'HLM.

Figure 2. Housing Slab 'Debussy' of the Cité des 4.000, La Courneuve (before its demolition in 2011), Foto: Christian Schmid, 2011.

changed public strategies that shifted development initiative to private investors in 1969 and then by the economic crisis of the 1970s. As a result, the five New Towns attracted only a fraction of the inhabitants they had been planned for, and in the early 1980s they were additionally struck by a subprime mortgage crisis triggered by the neoliberal reforms of 1978. In the 1990s, most New Town centres experienced similar processes of racialized socio-economic peripheralization as the *grands ensembles* – even though regional metro lines (RER) and shopping malls had attenuated the effects of logistic peripheralization.[55]

By the 1980s, the concentration of poverty in territorial enclaves and strong territorial fragmentation were key features of the Paris region. Throughout the 1970s, they developed within an overarching socio-economic pattern contrasting a poor north-eastern and a wealthy south-western part of the banlieue that characterized the region since the mid-nineteenth century. This large-scale socio-economic polarization was reinforced in 1968 by the dissolution of the Département de la Seine which had surrounded the City of Paris. Its replacement with three new départements – Hauts de Seine, Val de Marne, and Seine-Saint-Denis – significantly weakened the communist dominance in regional governments and thus also their more distributive policies. The north-eastern territory, which mainly corresponds to the Département

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[55]Kockelkorn, "The Social Condenser II—Eine Archäologie zu Wohnungsbau und Zentralität in der Pariser Banlieue am Beispiel der Wohnungsbauten von Ricardo Bofill und Taller de Arquitectura", 155–220.

Seine-Saint-Denis, had a long-standing history of industrialization and working-class immigration dating to the mid-nineteenth century. To this day, it contains a high number of precarious urban zones classified as 'Sensitive Urban Zones' (ZUS), which often comprise *grands ensembles* and are characterized by high rates of unemployment, poverty, immigrants, youth, large families, and lower rates of education and health. By contrast, the entire southwestern part of the Paris region – extending over the départements of Hauts-de-Seine, Yvelines, and Essonne – largely escaped industrialization; it was much less affected by relocation processes, immigration, deindustrialization, and unemployment; and today it includes less than 10 % of the regional ZUS (Map 1).

Conclusions

From the 1950s to the 1970s, mass housing urbanization in the Paris region was characterized by a great diversity of developers, urban forms, and territorial settings, and the trajectories of individual *grands ensembles* were as unique as their locations. First, they were realized by a great variety of actors: municipal, regional, and national, public and semi-public. Second, they were implemented through contradictory modes of governing: on the one hand, an authoritarian interventionism derived from colonial rule furthered the relocation of working-class populations to the urban periphery; while, on the other hand, municipal action allowed for local empowerment. Third, they were territorialized in the finely grained mosaic of the more than 1,300 municipalities of the Paris region, each having a specific relation to the City of Paris and a specific territorial position in the complex centre-periphery system of the region.

Despite these differences, the majority of the *grands ensembles* provided a shared collective experience of modernity until the mid-1960s. Simultaneously, they were affected by logistic peripheralization and a peripheralization of the everyday. However, with the neoliberal restructuring of the 1970s, the destiny of the *grands ensembles* changed radically. They no longer served as a normalizing step in a middle-class housing career but contained an increasingly marginalized and stigmatized population. Many territorially separated and enclaved sites suffered from racialized socio-economic peripheralization which was aggravated by the rise of unemployment and the pre-existing effects of logistic peripheralization. The high architectural and landscape quality of many *grands ensembles* could not balance social stigmatization and territorial segregation. This demonstrates that urban form alone cannot counter the effects of logistic and socio-economic peripheralization.

The answer of the French government to this triple process of peripheralization was a complete change of urban strategy. In 2004, it allocated 24 billion euros (through 2030) for the demolition (in part or in whole) and reconstruction of precarious *grands ensembles* across the nation. In the Paris region, 119 sites were transformed, leveraging 100 billion euros in private-sector investment.[56] Because of its gentrifying aspects, scholars and activists alike were initially highly critical of this strategy, which is often combined with infrastructural measures and increases in home ownership. However, the strategy put a preliminary halt to the ongoing peripheralization of many urban enclaves while maintaining the total share of social housing units in the urban region over fifteen years.[57]

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[56]For key data on the Agence Nationale de Rénovation Urbaine (ANRU), see https://www.anru.fr/les-chiffres-cles-de-lanru, accessed 7.2.2021.

[57]In 2006, the share of social housing units in the region was at 23 per cent. It rose to 25 per cent in 2015 and shrank to 22 per cent in 2019. From 2006 to 2019, the region's population grew from 11.5 to 12.2 million inhabitants.

Hong Kong, 1950s—2010s

The colony of Hong Kong developed in the contradictory interplay of British colonialism and free-trade capitalism. Founded in 1841 at the end of the first Opium War between the British Empire and China, the original raison d'être of this colony was its entrepôt economy. Until the Second World War, this 'free-trade port' served as an outpost for trade between the British Empire and China. It was based on the colonial government's principle of non-intervention into economy and society, small government, no tariffs, and a low tax system. The main source of income and the main instrument of domination of the colonial government was the leasehold system of the 'Crown Land' that constituted the original territory of the colony; namely, Hong Kong Island and the Kowloon Peninsula. In 1898, the colony further expanded through the ninety-nine-year lease of the 'New Territories' north of Kowloon, which a century later would lead to the handover of the entire colony to the People's Republic of China.

After the Japanese occupation in World War Two, Hong Kong was restored as a British colony. In the radically changed geopolitical situation of the Cold War and the rise of Communist China, it became a frontier territory between the Western and the Eastern blocs.[58] The turmoil in China provoked the immigration of hundreds of thousands of refugees, who soon constituted a majority of the population of the colony. In this situation, the political and economic doctrine of non-interventionism proved to be dysfunctional. The colonial government had to take charge of the production of housing and urban infrastructure and embarked on a new pathway of urbanization in which mass housing urbanization became the main colonial technique to manage the large number of immigrants and to restore social order, which in turn also gave rise to rapid export-led industrialization. This mode of space production was again reshaped in the context of the radically changed political and economic conditions of the 1980s, when China opened itself to the world economy and Hong Kong turned into a global city (Map 2).

A colonial strategy of spatial containment

In the early 1950s, mass housing urbanization became the key element of the government's territorial strategy aimed at controlling the multiple economic, demographic, and geopolitical crises which were challenging the colony. First, in the context of waves of decolonization in Asia and Africa, British rule in Hong Kong was challenged at the international level. Second, the trades embargo imposed by the United Nations and the United States on China (1949–71) severely affected Hong Kong's entrepôt economy. Third, the civil war and the rise of the Communist regime in China provoked a continual flow of refugees to Hong Kong. From 1945 to 1959, its population quadrupled from 600,000–2.36 million, which aggravated the already severe housing crisis and triggered the sprawl of squatter communities on rooftops, along hill slopes, and at urban fringes. The colonial government initially refused to provide resettlement to illegal squatters, but squatter communities grew rapidly from 30,000 inhabitants in 1947–300,000 in 1950. More important, the growth of the squatter communities led to the eruption of social unrest that immediately assumed a geopolitical dimension. A series of squatter fires in the early 1950s sparked waves of social unrest and anti-colonial activity that formed a potential existential threat to the colony.[59] The Shek Kip Mei fire of December 1953 finally prompted the official launch of a resettlement policy.

[58]Mark, *Hong Kong and the Cold War.*
[59]Smart, *The Shek Kip Mei Myth.*
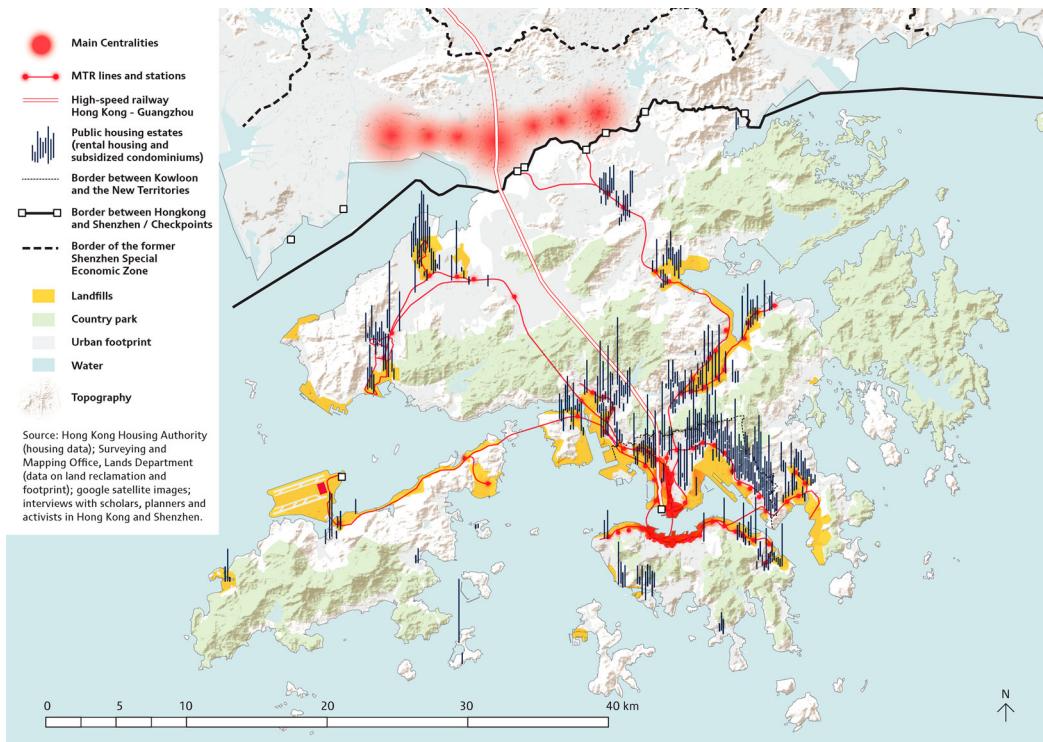
Map 2. Mass Housing Urbanization in Hong Kong, 2015. Author: Kit Ping Wong; Graphic Design: Dorothée Billard, Monobloque Berlin.

As a quick fix to these interrelated crises, the colonial government started to build resettlement housing. To maximize the number of rehoused people, the government opted for a highly dense form of mass housing using minimal land areas at the lowest cost. During the 1950s, twenty-six resettlement estates were established in the New Territories north of Kowloon. Similar to 'chawls', a form of tenement housing for workers in India,[60] the six-to-seven-storey H-shaped blocks had no elevators, squeezed five people into each 120-square-foot room, and provided only shared latrines and washing facilities – a water standpipe, basins, and showers – on each floor. Because its goal was to restore colonial control and spatial order, resettlement was conceived as spatial containment, not as a welfare provision, and emphasized efficiency and quantity, not quality. The Public Works Department was responsible for the construction work, while the newly established Resettlement Department oversaw estate management, squatter control, slum clearance, and rehousing. By 1972, 234,059 resettlement units housed around 1 million people,[61] about a quarter of Hong Kong's population. Additionally, various government agencies built low-cost and middle-class rental housing, and government loans were offered to independent voluntary organizations to build affordable housing (Figure 3).

Before World War Two, the colonial government, while imposing residential segregation between the European and the Chinese population and controlling building and sanitation of

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[60]Home, *Of Planting and Planning*.
[61]Yeung, *Fifty Years of Public Housing*, 21.

Figure 3. Mei Ho House, Shek Kip Mei Estate (1953), the only remaining Mark I configuration in Hong Kong, transformed into a 'heritage hotel' by YHA in 2013. Foto: Kit Ping Wong, 2022

the settlements, allowed the Chinese immigrants to self-organize their own social infrastructure, such as educational, medical, and social services.[62] In contrast to this laissez-faire policy, the post-war resettlement estates functioned as a disciplining instrument and marked the beginning of direct rule of the Chinese subjects, whose presumed loyalty to Communist China posed a threat to the colony.[63] All blocks and rooms were numbered, tenants paid monthly rents through standardized administrative protocols, and the spatial organization of the settlements and buildings made it easy to control the inhabitants. For the government, this new type of housing was instrumental to transform the post-war immigrants into 'good citizens': 'if they were to remain and become good citizens, they had to be weaned away from their discontent and transformed by some social alchemy from the mentality of the farmer to that of the industrial worker'.[64] Mass housing urbanization, which began as an immediate response to a social crisis, thus evolved into a governmental strategy for the territorial containment and colonial control of the immigrant population.

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[62]Carroll, *A Concise History of Hong Kong*.
[63]Mizuoka, *Contrived Laissez-Faireism*.
[64]HKAR 1956, 9.

Collective consumption and export-led industrialization

Additional to the containment of the immigrant population, the resettlement strategy had a second effect, which soon became decisive for the further development of Hong Kong. The government not only constructed public housing but also multi-storey industrial buildings for cottage industries relocated from squatter areas.[65] In the mid-1950s, the government started to develop entire industrial towns on reclaimed land in Kwun Tong and Tsuen Wan to relocate families and allow Chinese industrialists to set up new factories. These industrial towns had large concentrations of factories and low-wage workers, assuring the growth of labour-intense industries – and thus functioned effectively as a solution by the production of space to the economic restructuring.

A key aspect of this territorial development model was the availability of land. As the colonial government was the owner of all 'Crown Land', it could use it for state-built public housing while also offering land in prime locations to private companies via public auction. In the following decades the sale of land became the most important source of income for the government.[66] However, land was scarce, not only because of the hilly topography but also because indigenous villagers held most of the land in the New Territories and resisted the resumption (reacquisition) of their farmland (a renewable 75-year-lease of indigenous land) by the government. Therefore, the government began a process of large-scale land reclamation to make rapid expansion of mass housing in the New Territories possible and financially viable.

Although the colonial government did not provide direct support to industries like other fast-industrializing South-East Asian countries due to the opposition of British business groups,[67] it can be argued that mass housing was a form of collective consumption organized by the colonial government that constituted a kind of wage subsidy to industries by lowering costs for the reproduction of labour power.[68] It contributed to the development of an export-oriented manufacturing sector that was closely linked to the long-established port centre and its related businesses in finance, commerce, insurance, and shipping. Industrial take-off in turn stimulated commercial and banking activities, which made Hong Kong a regional financial centre by the 1970s.[69]

In various ways, mass housing urbanization thus marked a turning point for the development of Hong Kong. The colonial government assumed a much more interventionist role in the economy and society and re-established its own domination over the production of urban space, land supply, and population management in a new territorial order.[70] At the same time, mass housing urbanization became the motor of post-war industrial development and territorial expansion. In the 1970s, Hong Kong became one of the four 'Asian Tigers' in the new international division of labour.

The production of civic pride

In the 1970s, mass housing urbanization began to fulfil an additional function: it became a tool for creating a sense of civic pride and identity. This strategic change was a reaction to two riots that constituted a real threat to the social order and the legitimacy of the colony and increased geopolitical tensions with China. In 1966, in response to an increase in fares, the 'Star Ferry protests'

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[65]Castells et al., *The Shek Kip Mei Syndrome*; Mizuoka, *Contrived Laissez-Faireism*.
[66]Ho, *Challenges for an Evolving City*; Mizuoka, *Contrived Laissez-Faireism*.
[67]Chiu, *The Politics of Laissez-faire*.
[68]Castells et al., *The Shek Kip Mei Syndrome*.
[69]Jao, "The Rise of Hong Kong as a Financial Center."
[70]Ma, *Political Development in Hong Kong*.

erupted. They were the culmination of earlier protests demanding the government address pressing social needs and indicated the rise of local political consciousness. The following year saw a political riot inspired by the Chinese Cultural Revolution, as local communists turned a workers' dispute into a series of violent actions challenging colonial rule and imperialism.[71] These riots made clear that the early form of resettlement housing had not transformed immigrants into 'good citizens' but instead had concentrated an unruly working class. In response, the colonial government launched a series of social reforms to re-establish the people's confidence in government's legitimacy.

In 1972, the new governor, Sir Murray MacLehose, started a ten-year public housing scheme and a New Town programme, with a target of producing decent housing for 1.8 million people. His main idea was to develop the already planned New Towns of Shatin and Tuen Mun into 'full' cities with their own centralities, access to local employment, better public housing, and an improved urban environment providing leisure and public facilities. The goal was not only to enhance the government's legitimation but also to create the new political subject of the 'Hong Kong people' distinguished from their Chinese identity.[72] With this goal, MacLehose also intended to strengthen the position of the colony in upcoming negotiations with China about the status of Hong Kong after 1997.[73]

Mass housing urbanization and New Town development thus became a strategic political instrument to develop a sense of civic pride. This strategy aimed to solve the contradictions of colonialism through urbanization: instead of giving people democratic rights, it offered them a sense of belonging. Thus, in public discourse the 1970s symbolized a period of successful governorship, modernization, prosperity, and social stability. And yet, the ideological framing of this kind of production of space used the spatial fetishism of 'home' and 'prosperity' to conceal the contradictions of colonial domination.

Colonial politics of peripheralization

During the three decades of post-war boom, mass housing urbanization in Hong Kong initially evolved from a short-term response to social unrest into a spatial strategy to contain immigration and illegal squatting. It then became a motor of industrialization and finally a form of socio-spatial engineering of civic identity under colonial rule. This development also included processes of peripheralization of the working class.

First, mass housing urbanization intervened in the regional territorial development, orchestrated flows of investments, and established a new territorial order for the colony. That is, while Hong Kong's centre was reserved for commercial and financial activities and British capitalists, the incoming Chinese industrialists and the working class were relegated to the peripheries. This territorial organization involved a strong logistic peripheralization. This would have severe consequences in the following decades.

Second, the government relocated an increasing number of people and activities from squatter areas, tenement buildings, and streets or roadsides into new, high-density, peripheral areas and thus brought them into a new technocratic spatial order. This new territory was defined by power and led to a peripheralization of everyday life of the working-class families, unlike the

[71]Lam, *Understanding the Political Culture of Hong Kong*; Liu and Smart, "Learning from Civil Unrest".
[72]Faure, "Reflections on Being Chinese in Hong Kong".
[73]Yep and Lui, "Revisiting the Golden Era".

mixed inner-city neighbourhoods in Kowloon and Hong Kong Island. The government managed these high-density communities through town planning and land-use zoning: public facilities were allocated according to population thresholds and economic efficiency. Thus, these spaces were also increasingly controlled and homogenized, and everyday life was increasingly regulated. Low-income families were moved into rental flats, cottage factories into multi-storey industrial buildings, street hawkers into food markets with roof and stalls, schools and social activities from roof-tops into proper buildings and community centres. Squatters became tenants and were institutionalized and managed by the Housing Authority, which not only became the largest housing provider in Hong Kong[74], but also developed into a huge technocratic and managerial colonial institution. Mass housing urbanization thus became a device of control and discipline. It changed everyday routines, shaped social activities and interactions, affected social networks and social organization, reduced the capacities of self-organization, and contributed to the taming and integration of social movements. This led to a paradox: the production of space offered the people a better quality of life and a sense of belonging and pride; at the same time it served as an instrument for securing the submission of people under British colonial rule.

Government-led financialization of real estate development

In the 1980s, mass housing urbanization in Hong Kong entered a new phase. Hong Kong became an international financial centre and the privileged site of multi-national corporations and gradually developed into a global city. At the same time, with the opening of China to global markets, manufacturing industries were relocated across the border, predominantly to Shenzhen, Dongguan, and Guangzhou. Additionally, Sino-British negotiations gradually defined key projects and regulations for the future of Hong Kong.

With Hong Kong's rise to a global city, strategic territorial planning became a decisive instrument for the promotion of economic growth and advanced a fundamental urban restructuring.[75] This included, for example, the extension of the metro system, the expansion of the central business district through harbour reclamation, the redevelopment of large dockyards at the harbour front, various urban renewal projects in inner-city neighbourhoods, the construction of an international container port in Kwai Chung, and the relocation of the airport from a central area to Lantau Island. These developments also contributed to a boom in financial markets and the real estate sector. In this context, mass housing urbanization was reshaped by new territorial logics and integrated into an encompassing strategy of metropolization. Instead of focusing on developing civic pride, the political discourse now regarded housing as a 'resource' and emphasized its efficient allocation through market forces. In its long-term housing policy programme launched in 1987, the colonial government shifted its attention from public rental housing to the subsidized sale of housing and introduced new incentives to boost homeownership.[76]

In this new round of territorial development, mass housing urbanization was coupled with the expansion and financialization of the private housing sector. This process had begun during the real estate boom of the late 1970s, when developers raised capital by listing their companies on the Hong Kong stock exchange.[77] At the time, the real estate and construction sector accounted for

[74]Smart, ‚Shek Kip Mei Myth', 6.
[75]Ho, *Making Hong Kong*.
[76]La Grange, "Housing (1997–2007)".
[77]Tang, "Hong Kong under Chinese Sovereignty".

40–50 % of the capitalization of the Hong Kong stock market.[78] With the massive influx of local and global capital, private developers bought cheap farmland from villagers to keep it in their land banks for speculative use, and they started to build large-scale condominium towers and malls for the growing middle classes, first, in the 1980s, in the New Towns of Shatin and Tsuen Wan, and, a decade later, in Tin Shui Wai and Tsueng Kwan O.

This coupling of mass housing urbanization with highly speculative real estate development was gradually institutionalized through the direct collaboration of government actors and private developers in the New Town development. While the government still played a central role in controlling and orchestrating urban development through the planning system and as the only landowner, a finance-led and property-based growth regime emerged that linked the government, private developers, financial institutions, and households.[79] The process of financialization also characterized the strategy of the government-owned Hong Kong metro company MTR, which was established in 1975 and gradually developed an innovative financial arrangement, raising funds from international financial markets, receiving injections of equity from the government, and eventually starting to develop the space above the metro stations with shopping malls and condominium towers through joint ventures with private developers.[80] In 2000, the government partially privatized the MTR and listed it in the Hong Kong Stock Exchange.

Socio-economic peripheralization of the metropolitan working class

During the 1980s, mass housing urbanization in Hong Kong changed considerably. With ongoing deindustrialization and metropolization, the real estate sector and the MTR became the motors of economic and territorial development, while the coupling of public housing and industrial production lost its importance. Tin Shui Wai and Tseung Kwan O developed into dormitory towns, and Ma On Shan (an extension of Shatin) and Tung Chung (an airport-related New Town) followed these examples. These mass housing peripheries thus came to be fully integrated into the growing metropolitan territory by the railway and highway systems, which also facilitated the large-scale production of condominium towers for the middle classes in the New Towns.

These developments generated a parallel process of socio-economic peripheralization, as many low-income families from the metropolitan centre had to relocate to the new areas. The drastic loss of industrial jobs forced the working class into low-end service sectors, while the real estate boom led to a massive surge in property prices and rents. The living conditions of working-class families became harsh in the 1990s. While on the years-long waiting lists for public housing, they had to live in expensive but intolerable subdivided or cubicle rooms in inner-city areas. The only way to get affordable housing at the time was places like Tin Shui Wai, a New Town without local jobs and thus long commutes to work. This had particularly severe impacts on young, nuclear families as parents struggled to get or keep a job and had to cope with gender and family issues if, for example, only the wife could get a (low-paying) job. In 1995, Tin Shui Wai appeared in a newspaper story headlined 'Nightmare in a Dormitory Town',[81] and in the early 2000s it was dubbed the 'City of Sorrow'.[82] Tin Shui Wai was not the only example for this strong form of socio-economic

[78]Tse and Ganesan, "Hong Kong".
[79]Smart and Lee, "Financialization and the Role of Real Estate".
[80]Yeung, *Moving Millions*.
[81]"Nightmare in a Dormitory Town".
[82]Lee, "City of Sorrow".

Figure 4. Tin Shui Wai New Town, built in the 1980s, Foto: Christian Schmid, 2015.

peripheralization, but by its sheer scale it symbolized the socio-spatial trapping of a considerable portion of the metropolitan working class in the periphery (Figure 4).

The paradox of physical upgrading and social discipline

One striking paradox of this kind of mass housing urbanization is that the quality of the urban environment improved while it reproduced disciplinary power. Architectural and landscape design turned the extremely high housing densities into a rational but also punitive form of community space. This space was highly controlled by the Housing Authority, which introduced standardized security measures to all buildings and hired low-wage sub-contracted security guards to patrol the buildings. In 2003, to 'ensure public hygiene and effective management', it imposed a 'marking scheme' with a code of conduct for public housing tenants, who could be cited for any of twenty-eight 'misdeeds' (e.g. littering, smoking, drying clothes in corridors, water dripping from air-conditioner) and assigned 'penalty points'.[83]

In 2005, after the Housing Authority won a legal challenge at the Hong Kong Court of Final Appeal, it launched the large-scale privatization of commercial properties in all public housing estates.[84] The privatization of about 180 shopping centres and food markets drastically increased

[83]Housing Authority, *Marking Scheme for Estate Management Enforcement*.
[84]Chen and Pun, "Neoliberalization and Privatization".

the value and the rents of the retail spaces in the housing estates, which in turn increased general household expenditures, as small retail stores and family enterprises selling at lower prices had to relocate or give up their businesses. Since many shops and restaurants were dominated by the big retail chains owned by a handful of real estate tycoons, this further manipulated the everyday consumption of ordinary families. The spatial paradox made this socio-economic segregation invisible and turned each domestic unit into a clean, well-planned, and effectively-managed space, which drove people into passivity. It also reduced the possibilities for grassroots initiatives and social movements, which had played an active role in public housing estates since the 1970s.

Conclusions

Mass housing urbanization in Hong Kong began as a colonial strategy of spatial containment and control of a growing immigrant population. It then turned into an instrument to produce and reproduce an industrial working class. It became a force of production that transformed Hong Kong's entrepôt economy into an export-oriented manufacturing economy closely linked to the long-established harbour economy. However, this development also led to logistic peripheralization and particularly to the large-scale peripheralization of the working class. Mass housing urbanization produced a new territorial order in which Hong Kong Island and the central parts of Kowloon developed into an international commercial and financial centre under the lead of British capitalists, while Chinese industrialists and the working class were relegated to peripheral areas.

In the 1970s, mass housing urbanization became a strategic political instrument to develop civic pride and a new Hong Kong identity as a way to maintain colonial rule without granting the people more political rights. This strategy aimed to resolve the contradictions of colonialism through urbanization and particularly through the construction of New Towns with their own centres, access to local employment, better public housing, and an improved urban environment. At the same time, mass housing urbanization became an instrument of control and discipline that led to a peripheralization of everyday life.

In the 1980s, the process of globalization and metropolization led to a new model of territorial development. Mass housing urbanization was coupled to financialization and private real estate development, which rearticulated a collaborative relation between the government and private developers in the construction of New Towns. As a consequence, everyday life was subject to a contradictory form of the production of space: a highly efficient and profitable territorial organization that at the same time resulted in the socio-economic peripheralization of the metropolitan working class.

Mexico city, 1990s—2010s

In the first two decades of the twenty-first century, the urban peripheries of Mexico City have seen a striking socio-spatial transformation. From 1999 to 2015, peripheral municipalities have approved more than 400 *mega conjuntos habitacionales* (mega housing complexes) as part of a fundamentally reformed public housing policy.[85] Subsequently, private developers constructed more than 724,000 housing units, mostly in poorly accessible outskirts often lacking even basic urban infrastructure. In contrast to the French *grands ensembles* and the Hong Kong New Towns, these mega settlements consist not of dense housing high-rises but of mass-produced small single-family houses forming

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[85]Villavicencio and Durán, "Treinta años de vivienda social"; Maya and Cervantes, *La producción de vivienda*.

Figure 5. Example of a Mega Cojunto Habitacional, Foto: Monika Streule, 2013.

vast carpets of housing.[86] (Figure 5) In 2013, less than fifteen years after the first *mega conjunto* was built, the entire Mexican housing programme was thrown into a deep crisis. Major private developers declared bankruptcy, and 5 million houses throughout Mexico were abandoned, a clear indicator that this corporate 'public housing' model had failed.[87] (Map 3)

## The territorial dimension of mass housing peripheralization

What seems to be a quick 'rise and fall' of mass housing urbanization at the urban fringes of the metropolitan region is strongly related to the re-densification policy of certain popular inner-city districts of Mexico City. This upgrading policy, which was implemented in the early 2000s by the government of the Distrito Federal (today Ciudad de México, CDMX), contributed to leap-frogging mass housing urbanization beyond its borders to the surrounding Estado de México (the provincial state that houses the majority of the over 21 million inhabitants of Mexico City).

This process of mass housing urbanization is rooted in the history of public housing policies in Mexico. In the late 1940s, public housing was reserved for state employees, while most low-income people invested in self-built houses in areas of popular urbanization.[88] A profound housing reform

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[86]Salinas, "Política de vivienda social".
[87]Streule, *Ethnografie urbaner Territorien. Metropolitane Urbanisierungsprozesse von Mexiko-Stadt.*
[88]Streule, "Tracing the developmentalist regime of productivity: nation, urban space, and workers' habitat in Mexico City, 1940s–1970s"; Streule et al., "Popular Urbanization. Conceptualizing urbanization processes beyond informality".
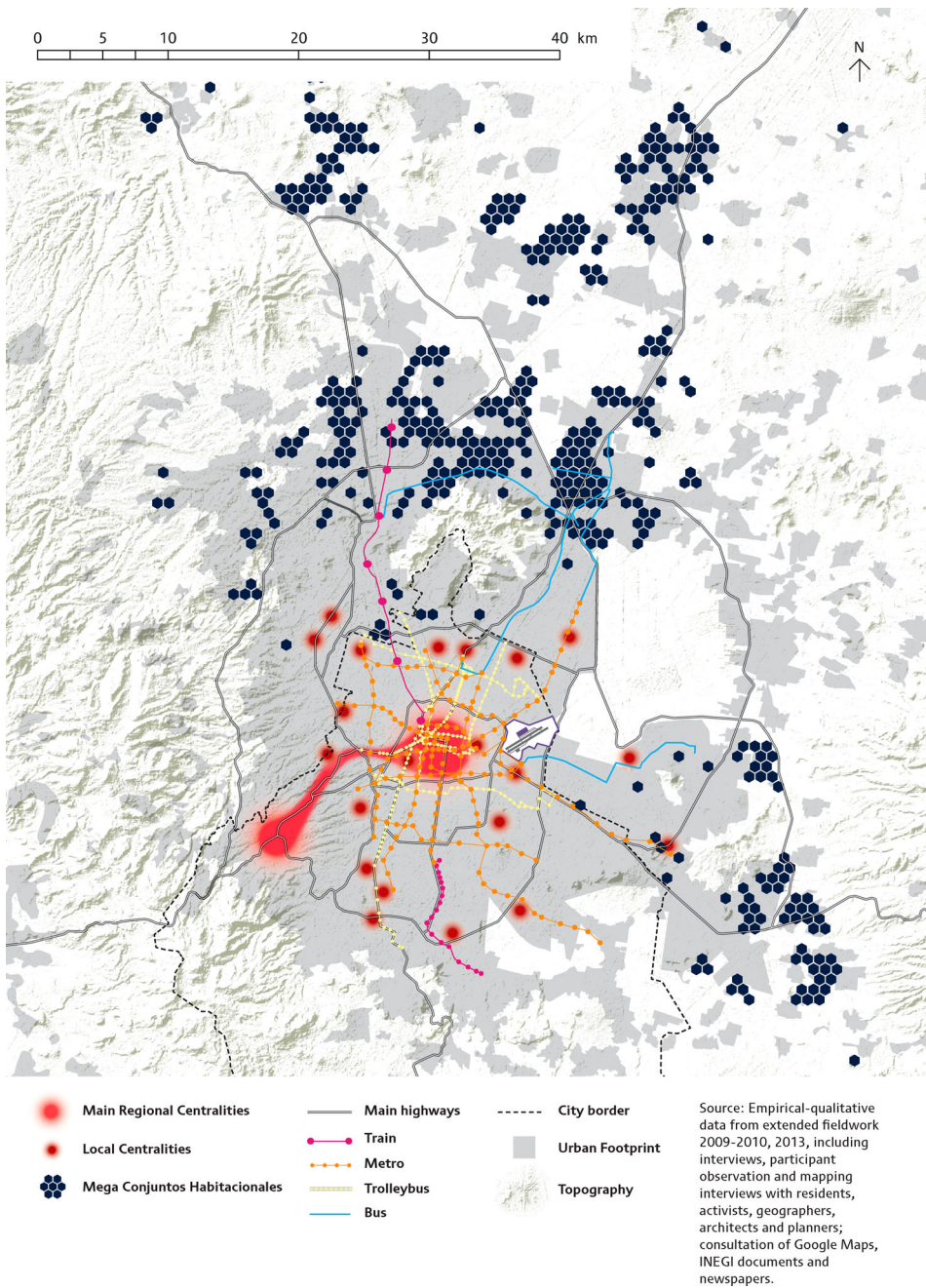
Map 3. Mass Housing Urbanization in Mexico City, 2013. Author: Monika Streule; Graphic Design: Dorothée Billard, Monobloque Berlin.

in the early 1970s gave rise to a new form of housing estate, the *unidades habitacionales* (housing units), multi-storey housing blocks for state and private-sector employees mainly built close to industrial areas. After a catastrophic earthquake devastated large parts of the central areas of

Mexico City in 1985, many new *unidades habitacionales* were built in the urban peripheries to relocate people from affected areas.

The most recent round of mass housing urbanization has been of a vastly different scale and scope, since it addresses not only public and private workers but also aims to bring broad sections of Mexican society into the housing market through specific mortgage programmes.[89] It is based on a policy of decentralization pursued by the national government since 1994 and on a series of far-reaching constitutional reforms in the 1990s, particularly decisive was a land reform, a financial market reform and a pension reform as we expand on in the following.[90] Political decentralization has given municipalities much more decision-making capacity, including more influence on urban development. Many municipalities have promoted state-planned market-based mass housing urbanization on communal agricultural land, particularly on ejido land, which is regulated on the basis of collective use rights.[91] Key to this transition was the land reform of 1992 that allowed local governments to sell ejido land, which previously was not legally saleable. As a result, the ejidos of Mexico City were turned into major urban land reserves, giving rise to marketized, profit-oriented urban development.[92] In a broader context, the Mexican government promoted the commodification of the ejidos and the change of the Mexican Constitution in 1992 to prepare for the 1994 NAFTA trade agreement.

Similar to the *grands ensembles* in Paris, the *mega conjuntos* were predominantly built in remote areas where land was available and cheap. In contrast to Paris, however, they were situated in more remote places, farther from urban infrastructures, detached from the existing urban fabric, and particularly lacking access to public transport. Thus, daily commuting from these settlements to more central areas is not only time-consuming but also expensive, especially for public transport in the Estado de México. The subsidized metro network is mainly located in the CDMX, and only a few lines of rapid bus transport connect central areas with municipalities in the Estado de México (Map 3).

The financialization of housing

An important precondition for the *mega conjuntos* was a renewed politics of financialization introduced by the Mexican government and promoted by major international development organizations such as the World Bank and the Inter-American Development Bank.[93] The pension reform of 1995 changed the pension scheme from a general fund to a personally managed account and made parts of the pension fund available for mortgage lending. Only two state-led housing funds manage the entire mortgage market for low-income housing in Mexico: INFONAVIT, the institution granting housing loans to private-sector employees, and FOVISSSTE, the corresponding institution for state employees.[94] Employees and workers who have saved the required amount can, depending on their income level, request a loan for a particular housing type. This housing policy, which promotes the individualization of lending, is also reflected in the changing discourse of the national government, which since 2000s has highlighted the 'right to access to credit' and downplays the constitutional right to decent housing.[95] As a result, the processes and formalities of the credit business have been rigorously simplified since 2000 and further established with the two consecutive conservative federal

[89]Soederberg, "Subprime Housing Goes South".
[90]Álvarez, "Nuevo modo de regulación".
[91]Isunza and Méndez, "Desarrollo inmobiliario"; Varley and Salazar, "The Impact of Mexico's Land Reform".
[92]Fausto, "De las reservas territoriales".
[93]Boils, "El Banco Mundial".
[94]UN-Habitat, *Housing Finance Mechanisms*.
[95]Sánchez Casanova, "¿Derecho a la vivienda, o derecho al crédito para la vivienda?"

governments of the Christian-democratic PAN supporting deregulation and privatization. Mortgage loans were made more accessible, and the target groups were expanded to include wider social strata. At the same time, like a variable mortgage, the mortgages are adjusted daily for inflation, which constitutes a massive financial risk for new house owners.[96] People living in the *mega conjuntos* thus not only struggle with the peripheral location of their houses but also with the burden of increasing mortgage payments, which over time can exceed the budget of many residents.

The increasing level of debt as a result of this mortgage scheme and the massively reduced access to the job market caused by logistic peripheralization have strongly aggravated socio-economic peripheralization. As jobs and services are rare in these neighbourhoods, most of the population works or studies outside the municipality, mainly in the CDMX, which generates massive additional commuting and thus also additional costs. Some inhabitants began to open businesses in their own homes, starting restaurants, hair salons, and workshops in their living rooms.[97] Furthermore, the *mega conjuntos* provide only minimal access to education, which is mostly limited to childcare facilities and primary schools.

The failure of the corporate model for public housing

Since the late-1990s, the Mexican public housing market has been dominated by a handful of private developers[98] who acquired large land reserves on former ejido or communal land to achieve economies of scale.[99] These developers are responsible for the design of the housing types, the planning, the construction, and the management of the *mega conjuntos*. Upon completion of the construction phase, they hand over the administration of the settlements to the local government, which is not obliged to take any planning or construction measures until this transfer – and can even deny municipalization if developers do not fully comply. Furthermore, the developers' responsibilities are often unspecified. Although contractually committed to constructing the necessary residential infrastructure, they provide only basic services and infrastructures, and those are often late, insufficient, and particularly short in water supply.[100]

The financial risks in this corporate model of public housing are borne by the state via the Sociedad Hipotecaria Federal (Federal Mortgage Company), which provides the loan guarantee, as well as INFONAVIT and FOVISSSTE, which manage the credit funds and collect interest. Falling demand for new houses in the *mega conjuntos*, an exodus of residents and subsequent halting of their interest payments, and, above all, the developers' aggressive financial policies plunged the developers into a crisis in 2013. Having speculated on anticipated profits which were not realized, by this time they owed the banks over 2 billion US dollars. Two of the largest developers declared insolvency in mid-2013 and suspended their debt payments. Su Casita, Mexico's second-largest private lending institution went bankrupt in the same year. Despite state rescue strategies, the model of the *mega conjuntos* seems to have come to an inglorious end.

Conclusions

The state played a fundamental role in the financialization of mass housing urbanization in Mexico City by directing public resources to the private building sector and promoting public-private

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[96]Valenzuela and Tsenkova, "Build It and They Will Come"; see also Rolnik, "Neoliberalismo reciente".
[97]Hastings, "El problema cualitativo".
[98]Puebla, *Del intervencionismo estatal.*
[99]Valenzuela and Tsenkova, "Build It and They Will Come", 499; see also Isunza and Méndez, "Desarrollo inmobiliario".
[100]Maya and Cervantes, "La importancia del espacio exterior".

partnerships for public housing. Yet, the crisis of the corporate model for public housing in 2013 has already led to an ostensible shift in Mexico's housing policy towards more integrated urban development, where developers are incentivized to build higher-density housing near densely built areas close to industrial and business zones.[101] Furthermore, the current government elected in 2018 has prioritized credit schemes for purchasing land, for auto-construction, and the repair of existing housing stock rather than for new homes. Despite this policy shift, developers still construct about half a million houses in new *mega conjuntos* annually on large peripheral tracts of land based on deals secured in the last two decades.

Today, the failure to provide adequate and affordable housing in Mexico City has resulted in increased vandalism, abandonment, and vacancies in many settlements. The 2013 developer crisis had a profound territorial impact, as it created zones of insecurity susceptible to organized crime.[102] The exclusion from social networks and thus the peripheralization of the everyday has a particular weight in the *mega conjuntos*. Newcomers are usually delinked from their existing social networks elsewhere in the city. The lack of social cohesion is aggravated by the high insecurity of the urban areas, which are notorious for gender-based violence.

In the broader perspective, mass housing urbanization in Mexico City has played a less important role than in Paris or Hong Kong in providing affordable housing. Regardless of any claims of the universal benefits of mortgage securitization and its ability to make markets more efficient and allow lenders to increase credit to more borrowers, Mexico continues to be characterized by an extreme shortage of affordable housing for the poor.[103] For most low-income families this means no access to public housing and thus more incentive to continue the long-standing and well-established process of popular urbanization.

Comparison and discussion: colonial strategies and the devaluation of social reproduction

Analysis of the pathways of mass housing urbanization in Hong Kong, Mexico City, and Paris reveals a broad spectrum of territorial processes that are also depicted by the three maps, although the map of Mexico City is an exception insofar as it depicts only *one* phase of mass housing urbanization that included all three types of peripheralization *from the outset*. This map highlights a radical logistic peripheralization and peripheralization of the everyday in almost diagrammatic simplicity that visualizes the inherent neo-colonial features of financialized mass housing urbanization. Interpreted in combination with the socio-economic peripheralization revealed by our analysis – which this type of map cannot show – the entire territorial pattern of Mexico City can be read as a diagram of the inherent violence of this process.

The maps of Hong Kong and Paris show a simultaneous snapshot of two distinct phases of mass housing urbanization that led to different and sometimes contradicting types of peripheralization. These maps become decipherable only if territorial disposition, governmental rationales, and historic pathways are considered together. In the following, we compare how mass housing urbanization came into existence in these three urban regions, what goals motivated its origination, and how different peripheralization processes unfolded over time.

[101]Valenzuela and Tsenkova, "Build It and They Will Come", 496.
[102]Valenzuela, "Failed Markets", 48.
[103]Soederberg, "Subprime Housing Goes South", 483.

The state and the land question

The most important precondition for mass housing urbanization is land ownership or, more precisely, the capacity of state actors to control, repurpose, and reallocate large swathes of land. The instruments we identified in the three cases are government land ownership, expropriation, financial incentives, privatization, and various forms of public-private collaboration. The most striking case is Hong Kong, where the colonial ownership of land assigned as 'Crown Land' and the tactics of land reclamation and acquisition gave the colonial regime a monopolistic position in the land market. With these instruments, it became the dominant agent of urban development and compensated its failure to contain the massive illegal squatting after World War Two. This power relation remained at its core unaltered in the following decades even as the governmental rationale and planning strategy changed several times, and it persisted also after the end of British rule and the handover of the colony to the People's Republic of China. In Paris under Fordism, the interventionist welfare state increased the leverage of already existing tools and strategies to control and redistribute privately owned land, both directly through the strengthening of expropriation rights and indirectly through zoning regulations and financial incentives for housing developers. In Mexico in the 1990s, the central state imposed a new legal framework that allowed municipalities to privatize and urbanize initially communal and collectively owned land and to enter direct collaborations with private developers.

State control of available land is thus a necessary condition for mass housing urbanization, which can be achieved through the regulation of the land and housing markets in combination with planning strategies and the imposition of various forms of land tenure. Investigating how the interplay of land regimes, planning strategies and housing policies profoundly transform and reshape urban territories requires a transdisciplinary research approach that has rarely been undertaken in academic housing studies. Our analysis thus highlights how the large-scale territorial development strategy of mass housing urbanization leads to the rearrangement and relocation of people, jobs, livelihoods, social networks, urban services, and infrastructure, thereby profoundly changing the everyday life of the inhabitants.

Colonial and Fordist rationalities

The simultaneous launch of mass housing urbanization in Hong Kong and Paris after World War Two highlights strong parallels. First, it was used as a tool to stabilize both a political and social crisis. Second, it implemented a governmental logic of collective consumption through which the state assured long-term economic growth by providing the necessary infrastructures for social reproduction. In Hong Kong, mass housing urbanization assured the survival of colonialism during periods of social unrest and allowed the government to manage large numbers of refugees amid geopolitical turbulence; it also contributed to decades of high economic growth and relative stability. In Paris, it helped to appease social unrest and political conflicts during the transition from the Fourth to the Fifth Republic. It also enabled the Fordist growth model and addressed the severe housing crisis that had resulted from long-standing neglect of the housing stock and strong population growth in the post-war years.

Closer investigation, however, shows the differences between a Fordist and a colonial mode of governing. In Hong Kong, mass housing urbanization was realized directly by the colonial government through urban planning and the construction of housing and infrastructure and thereby became a key element for the development of a new industrial working-class. Relocating large

parts of the immigrant population into large-scale high-rise settlements and New Towns became a primary tool to form, regulate and control the everyday life of the labour force. The ensuing formation of an industrial workforce provided the necessary precondition for Hong Kong's industrialization and initiated its fundamental change from an entrepôt economy to one of the world's leading industrial export economies. Granting political rights was never part of this economic, administrative, and territorial restructuring programme. Instead, mass housing urbanization was used to re-establish and legitimatize the colonial government's dominant rule in the post-war society. Although the government improved and diversified architectural forms, the homogenizing governmental logic of mass housing urbanization characterizes the entire territorial process from the first settlements in Kowloon to the most recent production of urban peripheries in the New Territories.

In Paris, the conditions for mass housing urbanization were set through a Fordist, tripartite institutionalized compromise between organized labour, entrepreneurial organizations, and the state. This compromise offered the working class a range of benefits, such as rising wages, full employment, a welfare state, and social stability; it also included both the working and the middle class within the same social project of housing provision. Mass housing urbanization as such was implemented through a territorial strategy that shows certain parallels to Hong Kong. It included the centralization of decision-making and territorial control, close collaboration between the government and the construction industry, and the rapid, top-down implementation of new settlements through new planning instruments. In contrast to Hong Kong, however, this centralized and authoritarian form of territorial regulation was implemented in parallel to extant local forms of housing provision that allowed for self-empowerment through social welfare. In particular, the possibility of self-empowerment happened when projects were realized by strong local actors or in the context of a territorial compromise between the Gaullist government and communist municipalities. The coexistence of authoritarian strategies *and* local empowerment has led to the great diversity of territorial situations, architectonic forms, and urban infrastructures that characterize the *grands ensembles*. In subsequent decades, this heterogenous constellation would lead to strong territorial fragmentation and various processes of peripheralization.

Comparing the two models of mass housing urbanization, we can identify two paradigms of urbanization. Hong Kong was developing a homogenizing type of territorial regulation that was stabilizing and strengthening a colonial type of governance. The Paris case shows a different type of territorial regulation, one based on a territorial compromise that also involved local governments. It offered the possibility of self-empowerment and social welfare, operating either on tacit agreements or as an alternative to the overarching colonizing features of the process. Both paradigms operated as social projects intended to create a supposedly homogenous group of either colonial or colonizing subjects: a colonial working class with a Hong Kong identity and a modern middle-class of white French culture in Paris.[104]

Logistic and everyday peripheralization in Hong Kong and Paris

Both in Hong Kong and in Paris, the colonial and Fordist rationales of mass housing urbanization entailed various processes of peripheralization. Dominant in this first phase was logistic peripheralization, as the new settlements were located at remote locations in the urban peripheries. In the large-scale settlements of Paris's outer *banlieues* and in the interstices of the inner *banlieues*, this

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[104]Ross, *Fast Cars, Clean Bodies*.

created double peripheries: the settlements were far from the City of Paris and also cut off from local centralities. In Hong Kong, the immigrants were relocated to new settlements at the urban fringes and later in the New Territories at a considerable distance from the main urban centres on Hong Kong Island and Kowloon. With this urbanizing strategy the colonial government could re-establish social order and preserve its power to govern land and people. As the housing estates were strategically built together with new industrial zones, mass housing urbanization not only provided industrial workplaces in the vicinity but also became a driver for the fast industrialization of Hong Kong. At the same time, it led to a large-scale territorial divide: while Hong Kong's centre continued to be dominated by commercial and financial activities and British capitalists, the incoming Chinese industrialists and the working class were relegated to the periphery. Mass housing urbanization thus established a new territorial order for the entire colony.

In this first phase, both cases also showed different forms of the peripheralization of the everyday. In Paris, the loss and destruction of a tight and small-scale network of shops and social and cultural facilities in the City of Paris could not be re-established in the *grands ensembles*. In Hong Kong, the peripheralization of the everyday resulted from the production of a standardized and manageable habitat that subjected their residents to colonial authority. In Paris, similar techniques of colonial governance, discipline, and control were applied to the poorest segments of the population, in particular Algerian immigrants who were excluded from regular social housing rental contracts until the mid-1960s. This form of exclusion did not apply, however, to the white French working class and the rising middle class living in the *grands ensembles*.

Initially, this combination of logistic and everyday peripheralization was not necessarily tied to other processes of peripheralization. On the contrary, one of the initial purposes of Fordist and colonial mass housing urbanization was precisely *to counter* socio-economic peripheralization and *to resolve* governmental contradictions. Until the early 1960s in Paris and the late 1970s in Hong Kong, a social rental apartment in a modernist housing estate signified a social promotion. In Paris, the opportunity to live within socially homogenous *grands ensembles* largely composed of young, white, middle-class and upper-working-class families also facilitated access to a modern lifestyle and integration into social networks and community organizations. In Hong Kong, housing production was strategically used to create a productive labour force, and it was also coupled with the production of new amenities and sub-centres for the working class in the New Towns. The aim was to create an identity – the people of Hong Kong – and a sense of 'pride' in that identity to help enhance the government's legitimacy and strengthen its negotiations with China. These examples show that social promotion and welfare can go hand in hand with a severe lack of social and urban integration and self-determination, and thus with everyday peripheralization. Hong Kong did not grant full political and civil rights to its people, and most of the residents of the *grands ensembles* in Paris were denied the right to the city and to centrality.

Pathways to socio-economic peripheralization

During the planetary shift towards global capitalism that occurred from the mid-1960s to the mid-1990s, the situation of the inhabitants of mass housing estates in both Paris and Hong Kong changed dramatically as socio-economic peripheralization emerged. On the one hand, it became less urgent to secure political stability through housing production and the creation of collective identities. On the other hand, the new economic and political conditions led to radical changes in the role of the working class. As industrial jobs were rationalized and relocated, they were replaced by low-paid and often precarious jobs in the service sector of the metropolitan economy. Accordingly,

the housing policies changed towards marketization and financialization of social housing and the incorporation of individuals into the housing market. Taken together, these factors led to the paradox of urban fragmentation and territorial inequality caused by state-initiated housing provision.

In Paris, the transition towards socio-economic peripheralization of the post-war *grands ensembles* began with the liberalization of the housing market in the mid-1960s and the inclusion of immigrants and indigent French citizens into the social housing sector in the 1970s. While members of the middle class received strong economic incentives to leave the social housing sector, new legal tools facilitating inner-city urban renewal and squatter clearance fostered the relocation of racialized and poor people to the *grands ensembles* in the urban periphery. This change in social composition was reinforced in the mid-1970s with the economic crisis, deindustrialization, and growing unemployment. In 1978, the introduction of a new neoliberal governmental rationality and the corresponding reform programme radically altered the status of the labour force: the reforms replaced the idea of full employment and a society of entitled citizens with a 'liminal population' to be held at the minimal status of employability if the market demanded.[105] In the field of housing, neoliberal reforms aggressively promoted state-subsidized subprime mortgages and initiated a shift from a right to housing to a duty to participate in the housing market. The combination of these measures strongly reinforced processes of socio-economic and racialized peripheralization of the *grands ensembles* and aggravated already prevailing logistic and everyday peripheralization. The former 'engines of modernization' thus turned into sites of social and urban relegation, creating a strongly fragmented urban territory with contradicting urban imaginaries and spatial practices; that is, emancipatory hopes for working-class emancipation and neocolonial strategies of socio-spatial segregation could coexist on the same site.

A similar process of socio-economic peripheralization and territorial fragmentation began in the 1980s in Hong Kong. Its development towards a global city and the unprecedented industrialization of the Pearl River Delta led to a fundamental economic and territorial restructuring of the entire region. While large parts of Hong Kong's manufacturing industry moved across the Chinese border, its urban development was marked by deindustrialization and the massive growth of the financial, real estate, and service sectors. The government changed its territorial strategy towards metropolization, rail-based urban development, and the implementation of urban renewal programmes. The rapidly increasing rents and poor living conditions in subdivided housing and urban renewal projects drove low-income families from inner-city areas to the New Towns. In some peripheral areas, railway stations were transformed into new urban centralities directly coupled with condominium towers for the growing middle classes. In this new model, public housing policies were directly linked to the development and financialization of the real estate sector. Social housing, which became the only type of affordable housing, was not produced for the industrial proletariat anymore but for the new working class of the low-income service economy of a polarized global city. Similar to Paris, these processes changed the nature of the labour force and led to a dramatic socio-economic peripheralization through socio-economic relegation, isolation, and loss of social capital. Low-income families had to relocate to the new, fast-growing housing estates in New Towns that lacked local job opportunities, which made their everyday life precarious and social reproduction arduous, even though improvements in public transport later allowed inhabitants with higher incomes to commute to the centre. The everyday lives of both groups were thus affected either by long daily commutes or by controlled routines and social isolation in a monotonous and extremely dense environment kept under strong surveillance. Rather

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[105]Foucault, *Birth of Biopolitics*, 194–209.

than overcoming social contradictions, mass housing urbanization during this period produced new contradictions: social housing estates developed into containers of poverty and despair.

The process of financialized mass housing urbanization is illustrated most clearly in the case of Mexico City. Here, financialization itself was the underlying raison d'être for mass housing urbanization through the model of the *mega conjuntos* which ceded housing provision to market mechanisms. The socio-economic peripheralization of low-income populations in the *mega conjuntos* was an integral part of the government's strategy. From the beginning, the new neighbourhoods were characterized by exclusion and stigmatization, resulting in severe reductions in their inhabitants' quality of life, increasing the burden of rising mortgage payments, reducing health prospects, and increasing gender-specific violence. This socio-economic peripheralization was aggravated by strong logistic peripheralization and interconnected with the peripheralization of the everyday. Together, these processes produced a strong territorial inequality that still characterizes the entire urban region.

Reading the territorial logic of Mexico City's mass housing urbanization through the Hong Kong case, we can clearly distinguish the pivotal role of the state in dominating territorial relations. Even if the geographic and historic contexts of the two cases are profoundly different, the processes of mass housing urbanization follow similar lines of (neo-)colonial dynamics of state rule over territory. While in Mexico City this process promoted national and transnational corporate interests, in Hong Kong it strengthened the agenda of the colonial government. A centrepiece of the territorial logic in the Mexico City case is the privatization of the ejidos preceding, yet strongly connected to, the implementation of the NAFTA agreements in the mid-1990s. The neo-colonial element of this model is based exactly on re-establishing and protecting private land tenure and prioritizing shareholders' interests. The process of financialized mass housing urbanization can thus be understood as a neo-colonial restructuring of urban territories that serves to entrench colonial values of social segregation and spatial fragmentation.

Revisiting the Paris case with this insight in mind reveals that its territorial pattern in the 1980s does not show a financialized version of mass housing urbanization. Rather, it shows how the initial Fordist model of mass housing urbanization underwent a process of socio-economic peripheralization initiated by a neoliberal rationale of governing. The first phase of the Paris case also highlights the emancipatory variation of the Fordist model of mass housing urbanization; that is, the promise of political uptake and well-being of working-class residents through state-initiated housing production. This exception was reserved for a comparatively small minority of working-class citizens and occurred only during two decades.

These research results reveal the relevance of comparisons across very different socio-economic and urbanistic contexts, confronting colonial social rental housing in high-rises and two-story row houses accessed via mortgage payments. Conventional accounts of housing histories usually avoid comparing such diversity of urban forms and modes of tenure. However, this triangulation across global divides helps to reveal the inherent colonial logic of the territorial process as well as the specificities of each case.

Territorial process and urban form

What lessons does this comparison hold for architecture and urbanism? Comparison of the maps in combination with analysis of the respective urbanization processes highlights the relations between material urban form and the governmental rationales and modes of territorial regulation that produced those forms. These relations include contradictions and disconnections that give relevant clues on how to read the power relations at work in the built environment; clues that cannot be

deciphered through an analysis of built form alone. In Paris, the Fordist state that had initiated and realized the *grands ensembles* faded away during the 1970s, and the strategies of the neoliberal state that replaced it fundamentally contradicted the social and economic model for which this housing model had initially been developed. The typological variety and architectural quality of the *grands ensembles* could not resist the ensuing processes of logistic, everyday, and socio-economic peripheralization. The finding that peripheralization prevails over urban form is consistent with observations from Mexico City, where the two-storey row-house typology of the *mega conjuntos* resulted in processes of peripheralization that closely resemble those created by the high-rise estates in Paris and Hong Kong, despite their radically different urban typology and urban density. Finally, the social housing estates in Hong Kong's New Towns built in the 1990s had a much better material and aesthetic quality than the first resettlement estates of the 1950s, but the residents of the new estates experienced much stronger effects of everyday and socio-economic peripheralization. We conclude that the processes of peripheralization have such a strong impact on the trajectory of mass housing urbanization that they override planning concepts or architectural typologies that seek to counter peripheralization. However, architectural design and urban form do play an integral role in the process: in combination with the respective governance regime, material form can reinforce peripheralization; *resistance* against peripheralization through material form can occur only if local actors, both private and public, are equipped with strong political leverage. In Hong Kong, urban forms of maximum density managed by the Hong Kong Housing Authority became tools for surveillance and discipline of colonial subjects and thus reinforced processes of peripheralization. In Mexico, the poor material quality of the houses and the interdiction of altering them inhibited the appropriation of urban space and thus contributed to peripheralization. In select cases in the Parisian *banlieue rouge*, however, the urban design qualities of social rental housing helped to enhance residents' well-being and contributed to the production of local centralities. To understand how the architecture of housing mediates power relations, the territorial process and governmental rationales have to be taken into account. Only the combined analysis of territorial processes, urban forms, and governmental rationales can reveal the underlying forces that determine how a specific urban space mediates the power relations and dependencies between a globalized centrality and its urban periphery.

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