

# **The struggle to belong**

***Dealing with diversity in 21st century urban settings.***

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***The Consolidation of the Latin American City and the Undermining of Social Cohesion***

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## *Abstract*

The paper examines possible sources of urban disorder and their impact on social cohesion in two times periods in Latin America. The first period is that of the region's rapid urbanization (c. 1950-1980) and the second is the current period of low rates of urbanization and slow urban growth, particularly true of the largest cities. I concentrate on the intervening factors that mediate the link between urban disorder and social cohesion. As well as crime and protest movements, I focus on some key demographic and ecological sources of urban disorder. These include the pattern of settlement of the city through different types of migration (rural-urban, urban-urban and intra-metropolitan) and the spatial evolution of the city in terms of the location of economic enterprises and residential segregation. Social cohesion is defined in terms of the nature of social relationships and in terms of feelings of trust and identity with others at both neighborhood and city level. The spatial and demographic sources of disorder are hypothesized to have a positive impact on social cohesion in the first period relative to the second period when the impact is more negative. Crime weakens social cohesion in both periods, but its impact is increased in the second period by changes in patterns of migration and in the spatial evolution of the city, as well as by changes in the pattern of crime, particularly drug-related crime.

## *Introduction*

The paper examines perceptions of urban disorder, their empirical referents and the impact on social cohesion in two time periods in Latin America. One is the period between 1950 and 1980s of rapid urban growth based on high levels of rural-urban migration when cities were made as much by the efforts of their inhabitants to create shelter and employment as by government or private sector development strategies. The second is the period after the 1980s when rural-urban migration ceases to be a significant factor in urban growth, in which earlier irregular settlements are consolidated through the granting of titles and the installation of basic infrastructure and in which central cities lose population to their peripheries where poverty increasingly concentrates. Both periods are seen by commentators and citizens alike as characterized by urban disorder.

The concepts used to identify the sources of disorder in the two time periods have changed. In the first period, the disorder was identified with explosive growth based on rural migrations resulting in marginal masses unable to adapt to urban culture or politics. In the second period, crime and violence are seen as the major forms of disorder.

Disorder often includes and leads to new forms of cohesion and these must also be part of our analysis. The tension between disorder and cohesion is the basic theme in the earliest analyses of the characteristics of the modern city, which sought to identify the intrinsic challenges to social cohesion associated with the size, density, population mobility and fleeting interactions of the modern city. The context was the cutting-edge cities of the most developed nations of the time: Germany and the USA. Simmel's (1971 [1903]) essay 'Metropolis and Mental Life' posited the rise of a particular type of personality in face of the competitive individualism and superficial relationships fostered by the metropolis. To Simmel, social cohesion in the Metropolis depended on reconciling the individuality it fostered with the objective rational order it imposed. Social Cohesion could no longer be based as in the past on the moral supervision of others and the suppression of individuality and privacy.

Likewise, Louis Wirth's essay 'Urbanism as a way of Life' emphasized the impersonal order of the city, symbolized by the traffic light and the tensions arising from a city's economic and ethnic heterogeneity. Wirth (1938: 23) also argued that "social control should typically proceed through formally organized groups. It follows, too, that the masses of men in the city are subject to manipulation by symbols and stereotypes managed by individuals working from afar or operating invisibly beyond the screen through their control of the instruments of communication".

But if impersonal forms of order and formal organizations are often seen as characterizing the overall cohesion of the modern city, residues of older forms of cohesion remained to enable urban populations to cope with the impersonality and the economic and social segmentation of the large metropolis. In the USA, this form of order often emerged on the basis of ethnicity, as when inhabitants of even poor urban

neighborhoods developed their own identity through their language culture and norms of behavior (Hannerz 1969). Gerald Suttles' (1974) *Social Order of the Slum* describes the way in which youth groups develop a strong identity based on ethnicity and territory, often in opposition to other ethnic groups. The issue that these local cultures pose for the overall cohesion of the city is whether or not the order that emerges from these re-ordering processes connects to city-wide formal institutions. They did in the unionized industrial communities of Britain in the later nineteenth century and early twentieth centuries because of the strong links to national politics and the Labour Party.

The situation of Latin American cities contrasts with their counterparts in Europe and the USA in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries because of the unevenness of their economic development. Latin America urbanized in the twentieth century and became the most urbanized of developing regions. The urbanization process was less industrial than in the British case and urban employment in manufacturing and mining unlike in Britain never provided more than about a third of employment. Despite the dearth of large-scale employment, the rapid rates of Latin American urban growth in the mid-twentieth century exceeded those of the British cities in their nineteenth century heyday of growth. It often exceeded 5% annually in the major cities, was based on a large-scale rural-urban migration, which often by-passed intermediate size towns and cities to concentrate in the major cities – the phenomenon of primacy. The cities grew partly because of population pressure on inequitably divided landholdings, but also because income opportunities concentrated in the few urban centers which contained large-scale markets for industrial goods. The cities were cities of migrants; in that respect, they were similar to the major US cities of the early twentieth century, which Wirth (1938: 19) saw as highly heterogeneous because they were mainly composed of immigrants and their children. We will explore the extent to which local and informal forms of cohesion arose in the Latin American cities in the first period of urbanization and the extent to which they are replaced by more formal, city-based bases of cohesion in the second period.

To analyze these changes in perceptions of urban disorder, their empirical referents and their consequences for social cohesion, I consider their links to three structural processes that are inherent in urban growth. The first is population movement and concentration, and the extent it poses a challenge to a city's established order. The second is the spatial reordering of the city as it grows and consolidates, particularly the nature of residential segregation. The third is economic change, particularly the changing balance between formal and informal economies and the internal logic of each. I begin with an outline of the imaginaries of disorder in the modern city and their relation to the nature of their industrial development.

### ***Disorder and Cohesion: Historical Imaginaries***

Throughout history, cities have been seen by observers and their inhabitants as sources of disorder, containing dangerous places and dangerous people whose perils are

heightened by their being unfamiliar. In the nineteenth century, the Industrial and Agricultural revolutions ushered in urbanization as a linear process with country after country experiencing the permanent shift of population from rural areas to urban ones (Lampard 1965). The fast-growing cities of industrial Europe were often associated in the public imaginary with urban disorder. Manchester, the industrial pace setter of its day, was the 'shock' city of its age. In her novel, *North and South*, Elizabeth Gaskell (1855) gives us a fictional, but eyewitness, account of the tensions between employers and workers under the appalling living and working conditions of textile workers in the Manchester area. Central to her story is the contrast between the dirty, disordered North subject to riots and violence and the ordered South where rural and middle class calm prevails. In Gaskell's account it's the North that wins out because it represents dynamic forces of progressive change in contrast to the complacency of the Southern rentier economy. Engels (1999 [1887]) in *The Condition of the Working Class in England in 1844* gives a similar account of the poor urban working and living conditions in the North of England, which was also based on observation. Engels like Gaskell also emphasized the progressive nature of the forces at work in the North, seeing seeds of change in the evolution of industrial capitalism and the solidarity arising from urban working-class communities.

The fast growing cities of nineteenth century USA elicited similar reactions. Carl Smith (2005) argues in his analysis of the Chicago fire, the Haymarket Bombing and the Pullman Strike that disorder was inherently associated with the new type of city that Chicago represented. To commentators of the time, as Smith puts it, 'social order was volatile and liable to burst into flames.' There was a fear of chaos brought on by the influx of an ethnically diverse population and by dense populations living under poor material conditions. In contrast to the disorder of central Chicago, the Pullman community was idealized as enabling people to live in harmony under the semi-rural conditions established by a paternal management. The Pullman strike destroyed that imagery and gave rise to further contrasting imaginaries of the city ---- a hotbed of subversion according to management and a place of relentless exploitation according to the workers.

In the above accounts, disorder also produces order. Confronted by disorder, urban populations of all classes seek to impose their own order. In Britain as in the Pullman case, paternalistic employers constructed model communities, such as the Styall textile mill in Manchester set in a rural situation and surrounded by cottages for the workers and cottage gardens so that they could feed themselves. More prosaic employers whose factories were located in the densely inhabited industrial suburbs of Manchester took advantage of improvements in road and rail transport to move their residences, which were alongside or inside the mill, to distant suburbs in the more salubrious parts of the city. The working classes also developed their own sense of order in relatively homogeneous manufacturing and mining communities with their choirs, bands and clubs and a strong union organization.

Like their European and US counterparts in the previous century, Latin Americans and many outside commentators, viewed the rapidly growing Latin American cities of the mid-twentieth century as sources of potential disorder since they attracted ill-educated rural people unused to urban culture and forced to survive through marginal activities. The observers had less confidence, however, in the future of the city than had their nineteenth century counterparts in Europe and the US. In a Conference organized in Oxford in 1974 by the British Sunday Newspaper, *The Sunday Times*, academics, planners and journalists from around the world commented on the challenges of cities that were growing without adequate planning, filled with slums and generally unhealthy places to be. The Conference was called *Exploding Cities* (Wilsher and Righter 1975). For several of the commentators, the solution to the urban growth of developing countries was to promote rural development and curb city growth. Most were pessimistic about the urban future in developing countries. In contrast, conferences today in Latin America concentrate on crime and violence and much less on migration or a return to the countryside. Along with the uniformly rising levels of crime and violence in urban Latin America, other traits that give rise to fears of urban disorder are poverty and income inequality (Portes and Roberts 2005). Neither of these two themes received much attention in the 1960s and 1970s (Roberts 2010).

We can now review the three structural processes that underly these changes in perceptions of the Latin American City.

### ***Population Movements***

The general change in population movements as they affect LA cities in the two periods is from an urban growth that draws heavily on rural-urban migration to an urban growth that is predominantly based on urban natural increase, with urban to urban and intra-metropolitan migration replacing rural-urban migration as the major sources of net population increase or decrease within the city. Jaime Sobrino's (2010) analysis of urban growth in Mexico from 1900 to 2000 shows clearly that cities grow mainly by in-migration in their early periods of growth. Mexican cities have grown at different periods so their phases of being mainly cities of migrants differ, and some cities, such as Tijuana, have been cities of migrants throughout the twentieth century (Sobrino op cit. Cuadro 8). The Metropolitan Area of the City of Mexico grew mainly by immigration up to 1960s. Thereafter the migration component declined until there was net outmigration by 2000, with immigration being mainly from other urban areas (op cit.)

Let's consider some basic implications of this change in growth pattern. If a city grows mainly through migration, then it grows through the addition of an economically active population. Children may accompany their parents, but the migrating household will need shelter and employment. If a city grows mainly by natural increase, then it grows through the addition of babies, who can be incorporated into existing households and whose demands of housing and employment comes not only later, but also when the

children become adults and will have the time and urban experience to search out, individually, new accommodation or jobs.

The first type of growth is likely to be the more challenging one for both the perceptions and the empirical referents of urban disorder. Migrants are easily identified and stereotyped, particularly when they come from rural areas and are illiterate or have low levels of education. Incoming migrants who are economically active individuals have an urgent need to find secure accommodation where they and their families can live. Until they get stable jobs they are in constant fear of not being able to pay the rent. In my interviews with informants from a squatter settlement in Guatemala City in 1966 and 1968, constant themes were the difficulties they had in finding rental accommodation and the need to invade land to construct their own housing to solve their difficulties (Roberts 1973). Large numbers of migrants seeking cheap and secure accommodation were to power the growth of irregular settlements in the cities of Latin America. Settlements that were irregular either because they were invaded or because the land was sold semi-legally without infrastructure make up between a quarter and a half of housing in Latin American cities.

The migrations that powered the growth of cities in the early phases of urbanization were centripetal. They mainly consisted in migrants coming to the city, perhaps finding initial accommodation in the central city, but relatively soon obtaining housing in irregular settlements. Once they arrived in these settlements, they stayed there. It is only with the next generation that further residential movements will occur in substantial numbers. The various surveys done as part of the third generation housing project in the Latin American Housing Network (LAHN) show that in the most of the low-income irregular housing constructed in the 1960s and 1970s, the original families are still occupying the lot thirty or forty years later. Most of the children may have moved on, but lots have been sub-divided to accommodate some of them and others will live in the same neighborhood.

Migration is a source of perceived and real urban disorder as land is invaded, as settlements arise wherever cheap land could be found and as residents collectively lobby governments for urban infrastructure. But it is also a source of order. Many migrants came as extended families and originated from the same village or region of the country. As Lomnitz (1978) describes in Mexico City, this gave them a basis for trust and solidarity in the city and for coordinating their actions. In Lima, regional associations based on villages of origin proliferated in the city enabling migrants to find work and shelter (Doughty 1995). Even where there were relatively few pre-existing ties of solidarity, the coordinated efforts required to make irregular settlements inhabitable created trust among neighbors and effective community organizations, as I showed in my Guatemala City study (Roberts 1973).

Consider, in contrast, the impact of the new types of migration. These are essentially centrifugal. The central cities of many Latin American large cities are losing population

as densely populated lower-income inner city areas are re-developed for commerce and higher-end housing. This, when added to the new generations of family members who cannot be accommodated in the original house, means a substantial movement out of the city. In one case in the inner city squatter settlement in Guatemala, the original couple that I interviewed in 1966 now has 61 descendants organized in three generations and ten households. In this case, most of the households have remained in the squatter settlement in separate housing, although one has moved to the southern part of the metropolitan area. In other cases, the movement out from the settlement of the new generations has been complete apart from one married son or daughter remaining in the family house or to care for the ageing parent.

The net loss of population from the inner city that these out-movements imply is only part of the inner city's population movement since there is also an inflow of migrants from other urban areas or rural areas. These will often have different characteristics from those that move out --- having, for example, higher socio-economic status, as Duhau (2003) shows for Mexico City Metropolitan area. Movement out from the inner city is mostly to the surrounding metropolitan area – in Guatemala City in 2002, 164,790 people or some 20% of the city's 1994 population had left the municipality for the municipalities of the surrounding metropolitan area. In Guatemala, these outward migrations disperse among various municipalities. The surveys that are part of the restudy of the two neighborhoods of the original study show no concentration of those moving out from either neighborhood in a particular neighborhood of the metropolitan area.

The new types of urban migration are thus likely to increase heterogeneity and weaken older bases of solidarity at the neighborhood level.

## *Spatial Change*

In the early period of urbanization providing housing was done in an unplanned way through the initiatives of land speculators, through the renting of rooms, apartments and small houses by entrepreneurs who bought, remodeled or constructed housing on a small-scale and through land invasion and self-construction. Only recently has the state in Latin America intervened in a significant way to provide housing for the low-income population. Thus urban growth followed the logic that Kovarick (1977) described as the 'Logic of Disorder' where cities developed spatially by the rationale of an imperfect market. Inadequate transport and the relative absence, compared to the US, of a large middle class meant that there was no market in Latin America for the kind of middle-class suburbanization that developed in the US.

Instead, developers sold unserviced lots very cheaply to the low-income population who had to construct their own housing and obtain their own services. When city governments provided services and roads to these settlements, developers could then develop tracts of middle-class housing along the transport and service axes. The



consequence was a high degree of social heterogeneity in the centers of the Latin American cities, where levels of residential segregation were lower than in the US. Even the wealthy lived in relatively proximity to the poor (Roberts and Wilson, 2009). On the periphery, there was, in contrast, a growing concentration of low-income settlement, which created a socially homogeneous pattern of residential segregation

This pattern of settlement gave rise to the characteristic forms of urban protest of the early period of urbanization – the urban social movements that emerged in many Latin American cities in the 1960s to the 1980s. Although these movements were often supported by public and private sector labor unions, their dynamic came from the common problems of lack of basic urban infrastructure and insecure title to housing that affected most urban inhabitants. In many cities, such as Lima, they became formidable agents of change, gaining basic utilities and in many cases gaining titles for their members. They were a evident symbol of urban disorder, as seen in the constant marches to public offices and protests in the main squares of Lima that lasted well into the 1990s (Dosh 2010). Unlike the protests in late nineteenth century Britain, however, they did little to challenge the basic economic and power structure of the city. They could be bought off by piecemeal concessions. The clientelistic nature of urban politics in the early period of urbanization did, however, create opportunities not just for individuals but also for groups of residents seeking to obtain needed urban services or legal recognition (Cornelius 1975).

In the contemporary period, urban space is being reorganized by market forces to a greater extent than in the past. The major Latin American cities have become targets for substantial foreign direct investments aimed at commercial and service developments and high-end residential complexes. Coupled with improvements in road and transport infrastructure, this has made possible two new forms of spatial development. The first is a transport/road centered development of shopping malls, such as those on the Periferico of Mexico City and Santiago's new circular road system. The second is the well-known phenomenon of gated communities. Some of these emerged in the center city in the shape of enclosed condominium blocks, but most located on the outer fringes of the city and in the metropolitan area, which previously had been occupied by low-income settlements. The gated communities, which at times were enclosed townships, protected themselves from the poverty around them by their walls and gates, but made use of the services of the low-income populations and had easy access via the new transport routes to the mall complexes. This is the pattern of small-scale segregation described by Sabatini et al (2001), which marginally dilutes the large-scale segregation of the peripheral settlements of poverty. These settlements have grown rapidly, thereby extending the area of the metropolitan area, and increasing the journey to work. During the day, the neighborhood is left to the elderly and the many unemployed youth.

The change in spatial segregation presents a new form of urban disorder. Gated communities and malls are islands of privilege in the urban landscape, which are unlikely to contribute to or be interested in the overall security of the city. Private security

abounds and private rather than public spaces are defended and enhanced. Increasingly spatially marginal low-income settlements are populated piece-meal by those looking for cheap accommodation. They have less of a spatial basis for solidarity and for ordering their environment than did the irregular settlements of the first phase of urbanization. Administrative decentralization has placed more decision-making power at the local level but without providing the resources needed to meet the local demands encouraged by the emphasis on local participation. In this context, politics are heavily local and city-wide urban movements now reflect citizen concern with rights, whether over the environment, gender equality or security (Roberts and Portes 2006).

### *Economic Change*

The spatial disorganization of the city in the early period was heightened by the proliferation of informal economic activities in small workshops, domestic production and street trade. There was a synergy between informal housing arrangements and informal economic activity – self-constructed housing would be adapted to a workshop, petty commerce and other domestic economic activities. Zoning was not usually applied so neighborhoods were disordered by industrial noise and by the flow of industrial and commercial activities.

In the early period of urbanization, half or more of the economically active population worked informally, whether measured by the low productivity of their activities in self-employment or small-scale enterprise or by the absence of state regulation (Tokman 1991, Portes, Castells and Benton 1989). In the period of early urbanization, the informal sector was a dynamic sector occupying the niches left by the regulated formal sector. Small shops and street peddlers sold to formal sector workers. Tailors, shoemakers, mechanics and other repair specialists offered customized products and services for a low-income market; whereas large-scale enterprises produced more standardized products on an assembly line. Some large-scale enterprises put out work to small workshops. Supermarkets had home workers assemble garments from packets delivered by truck and picked up by truck. Building laborers might have formal jobs, such as with the municipality, but also offered their services to help people self-construct their houses. The early period of urbanization was, thus, one in which there was considerable synergy between the formal and informal sectors of the economy.

Earnings were less in the informal sector, but the informal sector facilitated family enterprise and family labor. It was common for households to contain workers in both formal and informal sectors, and for all to benefit from the social security coverage that came from formal employment. Perceptions of the informal economy were, on the whole, positive. Economists and international organizations stressed the need to improve the productivity of small-scale enterprise and expressed concern about child labor, but the informal economy was not seen as a ‘black’ economy. To most city dwellers, the informal economy was perceived as a normal part of the urban economy despite its

disorder. There were exceptions. Buenos Aires had a relatively small informal economy in the 1960s and 1970s and its economy was dominated by government and formal unionized enterprises. This affected perceptions of employment. For workers in Buenos Aires, the type of work associated elsewhere with the informal economy, such as street peddling or fetching and carrying services, was not regarded as employment, but as a 'changa' (occasional or short-lived job). Recorded unemployment could thus be high. In interviews that I conducted in Buenos Aires at the end of the 1990s, people declared themselves unemployed, and only with probing said that they maintained themselves and their families through 'changas'. In Mexico, recorded unemployment rates were always very low in the 1970s and 1980s because for Mexicans any casual job, even that of selling soft drinks in front of one's house, was regarded as employment.

In the second period of urbanization, there are important changes in economic activity that affect both formal and informal economies. First there are the changes in the sectoral and occupational composition of the work force that consist in a shift from manufacturing and commerce to transport, communications and services, particularly producer services, such as finance, insurance, real estate and professional services. Within sectors, there is a decline in manual work and an increase in non-manual and technical and professional occupations. These changes began during the ISI period of industrialization in Latin America, and intensified as Latin American economies adopted free trade, privatized state controlled industries and de-regulated capital and labor markets.

The overall impact of these changes on the urban economy is to subject both formal and informal sectors to competition from cheap imports from abroad, particularly Asia. The small-enterprises of the informal sector often could not compete with the prices of imported shoes and clothing. Foreign Direct Investment in Malls and Supermarkets began to displace street peddling. City policies in Lima and Bogota restricted street selling by removing it from historic centers and these policies together with supermarket competition began to reduce the numbers of street sellers. In Lima, they decreased between 2004 to 2006 from 336,000 to 212,710, a decrease from 10% to almost 3% of the working population; the decrease was particularly sharp in Bogota from approximately 80,000 in 2004 to 50,000 in 2007 (Aliaga 2011, Roever and Aliaga 2008). Consequently, many of the key sectors of employment in the informal sector begin to disappear. At the same time, labor market deregulation erodes the security and benefits of formal sector workers, enabling enterprises to hire flexibly and at low cost, diminishing the need to sub-contract to the informal sector.

The formal sector also changes with increases in both intra- and inter-sectoral pay inequality as in all sectors, and particularly producer services, high value added enterprises emerged paying significantly higher wages than in low value added enterprises and sectors. One result is an increase in income inequality in the 1990s in the major cities of Latin America, such as Santiago, Sao Paulo, Mexico City and Buenos Aires (Spagnolo 2011). This is to diminish in the early years of the new century, but still left a polarized income distribution in which only the top jobs in the formal sector

rewarded educational achievement and then only for college education and above. One further sectoral and occupational change in many countries was the relative decline in state employment. In the resurvey of the two low-income neighborhoods in Guatemala City, this was particularly noticeable. Whereas in 1968, 19% of heads of household were employed by the state, usually as construction workers with the municipality, but also as teachers and policemen, in 2009, 7% were so employed.

For our purposes, the overall impact of these changes results in two linked phenomena. One is the weakening of the neighborhood economy as a means of providing a basic subsistence to low-income families. Local activities, including street selling and home industries are less viable than they were. Unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, becomes a visible phenomenon in many low-income settlements, particularly the spatially more marginal ones. Youth unemployment has been linked in many studies to gang formation and gang violence. Gangs are highly visible signs of urban disorder, with their use of graffiti and tattoos to mark identity and location. Not all gangs are violent and gangs are more prevalent in some cities than in others (Jones and Rodgers 2009, Moser and McIlwaine 2004). However, gangs attract the attention of media, the public and officials.

The second is the criminalization of the informal economy. In the earlier period people perceived informal and formal sectors as distinct but legitimate ways of earning income. In the contemporary period, people are less likely to distinguish jobs by their level of protection since the regulatory distinction between formal and informal has been eroded (Pérez Sáinz 2005). Instead the perception of the informal economy is now more likely to be in terms of its illegality.

The rise of drug consumption within Latin American cities has been considerable since the 1980s fueled by rising incomes and as a side product of the changes in drug trafficking. New routes have been opened up to Europe and the United States that include countries, such as Brazil, that previously were not central to the drug distribution networks. Central America and Mexico also became more central to drug distribution as the Colombian cartels sold drugs directly to the Mexican cartels instead of subcontracting for their transport. The selling of drugs in Latin American cities is a labor intensive industry, involving large numbers of casual workers on street corners or transporting drugs from one part of a city to another. Neighborhoods will have a small nucleus of permanent employees in the drug industry, but the overall drug-related employment in a low-income neighborhood can be as high as 10% of the economically active population.<sup>1</sup>

In the context of high levels of youth unemployment, drugs become one of the main economic activities of youth gangs. To pay for their own consumption of drugs, unemployed youth also engage in other types of illegal activity, such as robbery often with violence. Drug money is also likely to finance legitimate economic enterprises, but

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<sup>1</sup> Based on interview with official of Guatemalan Interior Ministry.

in terms of public perceptions, drugs are becoming the visible symbols of the informal economy.

In the early period of urbanization, informal activities gained an economic advantage by not paying social security or other taxes. This practice was seen as legitimate and in most cases was not illegal since the self-employed and family enterprises were usually exempt from paying social security. Informal enterprises today are more likely to become illegal enterprises in order to survive. Contraband is an example. Contraband existed in the earlier period as a means to avoid tariffs, but contraband in an era of Free Trade is likely to be a highly organized enterprise siphoning off parts of legal shipments or engaging in pirate copies of DVDs and designer brands. One neighborhood entrepreneur in Guatemala is reported to work with highly placed military and police officials to handle large quantities of goods that disappear from legal shipments into the country. He distributes them through a network of street stalls and peddlers, effectively selling stolen goods on which no taxes have been paid. Although strictly illegal activities are a minority of activities within the contemporary informal sector, they are the activities that get the attention of the media and other observers. In the contemporary Latin American city, the informal economy is more likely to be viewed as the black economy.

### ***Social Cohesion***

Following Chan et al. (2006), I define social cohesion as a state not a process and one based on both subjective and objective components. My interest is in seeing how the disorder and reordering accompanying the three structural processes described above impact both peoples' perceptions of whether others can be trusted, share similar interests and have similar identities. Equally important are the practical steps that they take on the basis of these perceptions, such as joining associations. Horizontally, its subjective components include trust in neighbors, willingness to co-operate with them and other city dwellers in like situation and a sense of shared identity. Vertically, the subjective components are trust in public figures and confidence in political and other major social institutions. The objective components are participation in community activities and social networks, organizing with others throughout the city, and political participation in elections or national organizations. Chan et al's analytic framework is intended as a means to measure cohesion at the national level, but I will use it at the neighborhood and city level.

At first sight it would seem as if disorder is inherently antithetical to social cohesion since it threatens stable relations and creates an uncertainty that can weaken participation and limit trust in others. But disorder, as we have seen, can be a source of order, as when neighbors band together to obtain needed services or when youth gangs help protect and keep order in a neighborhood. Thus, it is perhaps more useful to see how the axes of cohesion ---- its spatial extent and its vertical/horizontal dimension – perform in our two periods of urbanization. My spatial dimension is family, neighborhood, and city. The

horizontal dimension is identification with people in a broadly similar social and economic position, and the vertical dimensions are the relations with institutions external to the neighborhood.

A centripetal migration pattern, the pressure on people to create their own shelter and the close relations between workers in the formal and informal sector meant that trust in proximate others and identification with others in a like situation was relatively high in the first period of urbanization. Over time, a certain pride developed in being 'pobladores' or 'favelados'. Their discrimination by the formal city was keenly felt by my informants when they recounted their experiences of rejection when applying for a job or a school for their children after they had revealed where they lived. However, it also reinforced their pride in their achievements in improving their neighborhood. Participation in neighborhood committees was high and these were committees created by the residents, not by outside agencies. The number of gains that residents obtained by their concerted action was considerable --- building churches and chapels, building community centers, installing a sewage system, installing running water and electricity, garbage collection, title to land, and so on (Dosh, 2010).

The first period saw little progress on the vertical dimension of cohesion. In many cities of Latin America, the state was relatively absent from low-income settlements, without a police or administrative presence. Social agencies in most cities did not reach down to low-income settlements. Indeed, Ministries of Social Development are recent creations in Latin America, dating from the late 1980s in Mexico where the predecessor Ministry was that of Infrastructure and Roads. The nearest that most low-income settlements came to relations with the state was through political parties and then mainly at election time. In Mexico, it was not the Mexican government but the PRI, that dealt clientelistically with low-income neighborhoods providing infrastructure or handouts in return for political support at rallies and in elections. The same was true of the Peronist party in Argentina, where such practices continue to this day (Auyero 2001). In this context, it is to be expected that low-income urban populations had little confidence in government or saw politics as relevant to people like themselves. In my 1968, survey of the two low-income neighborhoods, the majority of respondents said that they had no confidence in politics as a means of improving the situation in Guatemala and also said that the state was not relevant to them.

In the second period, horizontal cohesion is likely to have diminished. There is no longer an ongoing need for neighbors to work together to improve their living situation. Housing searches are more individualistic as family members seek out accommodation to meet their needs and budgets. It is also clear that the climate of insecurity is undermining trust in others and the willingness to work with others. Insecurity was the overwhelming response of respondents to the 2009 survey asking them to identify the major problems of the neighborhood – in the past it would have been improving infrastructure, upgrading housing and so on. In interviews, residents talked about their unwillingness to venture out at night to attend meetings or even for recreation. Janice Perlman reports similar changes

in her restudy of four irregular settlements in Rio de Janeiro (2006, 2010). There are countervailing trends. Neighborhood watch committees are being formed in low-income communities in Guatemala City. In our interviews, residents said that although they feel insecure, at least in the neighborhood people know them and they are as safe there as anywhere in the city.

On the vertical dimension of cohesion, there have been substantial changes. Opinion polls show that people continue to have low faith in government, political parties and most institutions except churches and universities. There is little respect for the police or the judiciary. But low-income residents are now in more frequent contact with external institutions than they were in the past. Non-governmental development and social service organizations proliferate in most Latin American low income settlements. The squatter settlement in Guatemala City has several religious and secular organizations actively working in the neighborhood, providing computer classes, pre-school and elementary education, sporting activities and so on. Also, government ministries now have social programs that bring them into direct contact with low-income populations. *Oportunidades* in Mexico and *Bolsa Familia* in Brazil are examples of programs that directly transfer money to individual poor families on the condition that they keep their children in school and pay regular visits to health clinics. Most countries now have similar conditional cash transfer programs. These are not clientelistic, but are based on formal procedures to ascertain eligibility and automatic and impersonal means of payment – in Mexico by sending bank drafts directly to the families.

The urban poor are enmeshed in a variety of external relations in the modern Latin American city. These relations, however, are individual, not collective. Urban administration has de-centralized, often promoting local participation in schools and health clinics, and in some cases, in determining budgetary priorities. However, these initiatives came mainly from above, rather than responding to the organized demand-making of low-income populations. In Guatemala City, the municipal administration uses a website to enable city residents to pay taxes, find out about possible services and to publish municipal accounts and decision-making. The administration has also formally organized the city into zonal administrations, each with a number of neighborhood committees. It has also promoted neighborhood watch committees (Roberts, 2010). The two neighborhoods that we are re-studying are part of this reorganization, with part-time municipal officials who live in the neighborhood. However, the elections for the neighborhood committees are now organized by the municipality, which even prints out the ballots. The neighborhood like other low-income neighborhoods in the city is no longer a member of any city-wide association of low-income neighborhoods, as they were in 1968.

I would argue that in the contemporary period, low-income city populations have very little felt cohesion with external institutions – little confidence in government or politics and little faith in judicial institutions. However, there is considerable, but individual, participation in these institutions. Low-income people are aware of

government and its programs to an extent that they were not previously. There is perhaps more of a sense of individual citizenship and rights than in the past, but perhaps less community solidarity and capacity to act collectively.

## ***Conclusion***

What then is the relation between imaginaries of urban disorder and its empirical referents in the Latin American case? In both periods, the relation is an inexact one. Some of the earlier images were very partial visions of reality -- of city culture being swamped by backward rural people or of the political dangers of frustrated migrants, of cultures of poverty that fatalistically reproduced material poverty, inhibiting enterprise and collective organization, or of a marginality that meant that the poor were isolated from the mainstream urban economy and society. They also served, to some extent, to blame the victim, overlooking the energy and achieved social mobility of most migrants and the overall improvement in a nation's economy brought by urbanization.

The imaginaries of the second period are no less exact. Crime and Violence is one of these. It has become an obsession with the media, both national and foreign, and among urban residents. Teresa Caldeira (1999), for example, reports how in Sao Paulo how fear of insecurity leads to demands for more surveillance and to stereotyping of certain types of people and areas as dangerous. Cities are, of course, more dangerous than they were in the past. But not all cities and not all neighborhoods are unsafe. Mexico is a case in point. It contains very dangerous places, particularly along the northern border. But the incidence of crime and violence varies considerably between states in Mexico and between cities. Many Mexican cities are safer than some US cities, such as Detroit or Washington D.C.

Obsession with gang violence and the Maras of Central America has lumped all gang members together as inherently criminal. Under the *Mano Duro* policy in Honduras, anyone with a tattoo was subject to arrest. One consequence is to create a self-fulfilling prophecy. Gang members are imprisoned together in jails where they recruit new members and reinforce the loyalties of old members (Wilston, 2009). Crime and violence imaginaries are not devoid of reality, but they emphasize its dramatic aspects with a focus on drug cartels, the international connections of gangs such as the Mara Salvatrucha, and on individual victims and criminals. It means that less attention is paid by observers to the more complex structural processes that are producing violence --- youth unemployment and the spatial marginality of many urban neighborhoods.



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