

# TEMPORALITIES AND TRADITIONS

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**2014 - 2015**

**Volume 266**

**Series Editor: Nezar AlSayyad**





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- Singapore's Geylang Serai and the Ramadan Bazaar:  
Resilient Culture in a Seasonal Space** 1  
*Rabil Ismail and Brian J. Shaw*
- Spontaneous as Contemporary Vernacular? An Analysis of  
Spatial Norms in Istanbul's Gecekondu Settlements** 19  
*Min Tang*
- Subversive Spatial Practices in the Urban Fringe of São  
Paulo** 54  
*Giuseppina Forte*
- Futuristic Traditions: Rethinking "Hybrid" Identities on  
the Northern Side of the Mexican Border** 67  
*Diana Maldonado*

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**Titles 2014 - 2015**

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# **Traditional Dwellings and Settlements**

Working Paper Series

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## **SINGAPORE'S GEYLANG SERAI AND THE RAMADAN BAZAAR RESILIENT CULTURE IN A SEASONAL SPACE**

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*Rabil Ismail*

**Volume 266**

Pages 1–18

2014

## SINGAPORE'S GEYLANG SERAI AND THE RAMADAN BAZAAR RESILIENT CULTURE IN A SEASONAL SPACE



*The paper contends that as a study in resilience, Singapore's Malay-Muslim district of Geylang Serai is symbiotically linked to the annual Ramadan bazaar and in consequence acts as a nonpareil affirming identifier for this minority community. The event has demonstrated community resilience in the face of government 'nation building' imperatives but current development projects combined with seismic demographic changes have renewed concerns over the face and fate of the event. The continual contestations and accommodations of a minority group within competing and disparate forces that characterise an increasingly multiracial Singapore are played out in the local bazaar but may be seen to have wider relevance for Singapore's social wellbeing.*

### GEYLANG SI PAKU GEYLANG<sup>1</sup>

*Geylang Serai is a fascinating place. It has endured as an important node for Singapore's Malay community despite numerous drastic physical overhauls and demolition phases.*

Imran bin Tajudeen<sup>2</sup>

As a proud self-proclaimed successful multiracial society, Singapore's dominantly Chinese population has sizable minority communities of Malays (approximately 13.3% in 2013), Indians (9.1%) and, more amorously, 'Others' (3.3%)<sup>3</sup>. The Malays, a dominantly Muslim community, with their historical place in the larger Malay Archipelago, are in the unique position within Singapore of being a local minority with visible links to a wider majority immediately beyond the national boundary. In this context the demand for national allegiance combined with the preservation of authentic cultural identity has defined the character of government dispositions since Singapore's abrupt separation from Malaysia in 1965. In Singapore's Malay-Muslim community such resilience has been borne not just by a "compliant community"<sup>4</sup> but a community with well-honed natural survival instincts.<sup>5</sup>

The need to affirm identity through faith, culture and language has achieved tangibility in the spatial development of a distinct cultural area. Throughout the decades of urbanization, renewal and development starting in the 1960s, the Geylang Serai district has successfully retained its distinction as the premier area for the affirmation and enhancement of Malay-Muslim identity.<sup>6</sup> Notwithstanding the fact that Geylang Serai is still a product of state-directed actions, socioeconomic circumstances, unequal power dynamics and what might be termed 'hegemonic multiculturalism'<sup>7</sup>, it still forms the heart of the community as "The Malay Emporium of Singapore"<sup>8</sup>.

Its reputation lies with being the oldest of Malay settlements situated along the Geylang River, and the result of a subsequent removal policy by British colonial authorities that saw the gravitation of the Malay community into its present location. By the mid-1960s, Geylang Serai had established itself through the prominent physical presence of a \$3.7 million project of three blocks of flats at Jalan Pasar Baru, a new market (*pasar baru*) and other associated amenities. Completed in 1965, the initial building was complemented in the 1960s and 1970s by a massive and highly successful resettlement project in which Geylang Serai was marked for both low cost housing and light industries, part of a plan to “make the kampong area of Geylang Serai part of modern Singapore”. The initial three blocks of flats and surrounding buildings, such as a popular cinema and related businesses became recognised as the spatial heart of the community.<sup>9</sup> Since then, this area has acted as a viable and thriving economic and communal anchor for both the originally dispersed Malay *kampungs* (villages) and the subsequent Housing Development Board (HDB) multiracial estates which today comprise 81.6% of Singapore’s dwellings.<sup>10</sup>

Undoubtedly, within Geylang Serai, a significant symbiotic relationship between people, buildings and businesses has evolved creating a canvas not only for the collective memory of Malay-Muslims but for the nation too, as part of the national multiracial narrative. It is this collective memory that has now become the most challenging aspect of the top-down, bureaucratic re-imagining of what the Malay-Muslim community ‘should’ or ‘ought to be’ within a multiracial society bound by a single-mindedness of national policy constructed on a base of economic pragmatism.

This state-directed challenge to authentic collective memory is demonstrated most clearly in the case of the traditional annual month-long Ramadan (fasting month) bazaar. The bazaar has evolved into a high profile and an intensely life-affirming event crucial to the spatial and psychological identity of Singapore Malay-Muslims. As a study in resilience, this seasonal bazaar has assumed a nonpareil spatial identifier anchor for Geylang Serai, and increasingly over the years the survival of the bazaar itself has become co-dependently linked to the continued existence of Geylang Serai as an area of, and for, the Malay-Muslim community. Crucially, being an interdependent relationship the bazaar relies on the permanence of space within Geylang Serai as justification for its annual appearance, while Geylang Serai considers the bazaar as one of the key validators of its ‘premier Malay-Muslim district’ claim. Not exactly a ‘Catch-22’ situation but one that relies on mutual interdependence for survival in an increasingly globalised and homogenized world.

Described recently as a “hub” of the Malay-Muslim community<sup>11</sup>, the tangible and intangible become inextricably linked to both permanent and seasonal spaces of identity that need room to continue tradition without compromising deeply held values. For others, the persistence and permanence of such tradition can

be construed as an evolving space of ‘resistance’ to the Singapore government’s penchant for the “disciplining”<sup>12</sup> and management of ethnic differences in state development defined by hegemonic authority.

### **RAMADAN BAZAAR: MINORITY COMMUNITY RESILIENCE IN ACTION?**

As the 9<sup>th</sup> month of the Muslim calendar, the holy month of Ramadan involves, among many other obligations, abstaining from food, drink and other physical needs from sunrise to sundown. As one of the five pillars of Islam, Muslims consider this as a blessed month to engage in self-sacrifice and increased religious and social activities. While Ramadan is much more than abstaining from food, an almost universal feature of this month across Muslim societies is the Ramadan food bazaar. A service to assist marking the success of a day’s fast with the family presents an economic opportunity for traders and food sellers and other associated businesses. As noted by A. K. Noor Ibtisam et.al., “Ramadan not only portrays as a windfall to food traders and sellers intensify their income but (sic) promoting food tourism among the international tourists”<sup>13</sup>.

A Ramadan food bazaar is not particularly unusual or rare as it has a rich history in the periodic market concept of economic exchange. Though seasonal, the economic activity it represents is a feature of a pre-urban economy and harks back to pre-colonial and colonial periods in which itinerant hawkers peddled food<sup>14</sup> that has contemporary counterpart in the ubiquitous *pasar malam* (night markets) in today’s HDB estates. Ramadan with its both ascetic and celebratory values of faith, family and community encouraged the congregation and gradual institutionalization of street hawking into this seasonal economic activity of buying and selling food to break and celebrate the communal fast. Singapore’s highly successful and widely lauded government policy to rehouse itinerant hawkers in the 1960s formalized these informal activities and also facilitated the growth of the Ramadan bazaar as its seasonal appearance assumed a quasi-permanent feature on the annual calendar. As an economic activity, its gravitational and institutionalization in Geylang Serai was immediately evident and could be considered as a spontaneous and populist invention of tradition: a bottom-up approach rather than a top-down directed decree.

The initial informal Ramadan food bazaar in Geylang Serai grew to concentrate at the foot of the three blocks of flats at Jalan Pasar Baru, and became evident within the Tanjong Katong and Joo Chiat Complexes, both completed in the mid-1980s. By this decade, it had also spatially extended to include adjoining car parks, plazas and pedestrian pavements. The first formalization of the event itself came in mid-1990s with improvements and official recognition to include better tents or stalls, Hari Raya lights, related social-cultural events and incorporation in government and tourist literature. Such formalization continued through the



transition period of 2005-2009 when the redevelopment of Geylang Serai saw the demolition of the blocks of flats, the adjoining market and also the 'Malay Village': a poorly conceived tourist-oriented cultural display center. Temporary measures were put in place for the market and the resettlement of residents amid plans for a new Malay civic center on the earlier Malay Village site. This development to be named *Wisma Geylang Serai* is targeted for completion in 2017.<sup>15</sup>

Throughout these changes and continual uncertainty, the Ramadan bazaar has continued and indeed prospered, underlining not just the formal/informal aspects of a seasonal event. It has also confirmed Geylang Serai's status as the center of Malay-Muslim identity comfortable in its own space. The bazaar may be seen as an example of a resilient cultural practice delicately balanced between traditional and official management policies, grappling with both endogenous and exogenous change in an increasingly diversified and demographically changing Singapore. Hosting this seasonal, traditional event which acts as both as an anchor and barometer for the Singapore Malay-Muslim community has created in Geylang Serai a significant sense of place, a 'bottom-up' natural, organic evolution schooled to function within a framework of boundaries, limits and the realities of sub-optimal outcomes. Today this act of resilience means having to contend with challenges to racial categorisation,<sup>16</sup> the deleterious impact of transformational economic changes, pressures of relentless consumerism, the "march of monoculture"<sup>17</sup> and the realities of possible marginalisation resulting from Singapore's selected immigration policies. While earlier upgrading exercises were a timely continuation of Singapore's successful record in urban redevelopment, the implications of forthcoming changes on cultural identity and sustainable sense of place are still to be felt.

The ongoing physical challenges to Geylang Serai are linked to a major redevelopment programme slated for Paya Lebar Central, as outlined in the Urban Redevelopment Authority (URA) Master Plan in 2008 and Prime Minister Lee Hsien Loong's announcement in 2011. The Ramadan bazaar's natural resilience and survival instincts will be tested from 2017 with the opening of *Wisma Geylang Serai* and the completion of the overall Master Plan. Contesting voices have been raised within the different stake holders, namely Malay-Muslim government representatives and associated interested parties. While overtly greeted as positive, timely, benevolent and supportive of 'regeneration', some cautionary concerns which need reiteration remain, namely the position of Malay Muslims as a significantly designated, possibly suspect 'Other' in a Singapore historical narrative replete with presumptions, assumptions and condescension.<sup>18</sup>

## **ENDURING CHALLENGES AND CONCERNS: WHITHER WISMA GEYLANG SERAI?**

Singapore's success story of economic growth coupled with social stability has seen Singapore's Malay-Muslim community benefit along with other groups. However, beneath the veneer of the dominant narrative of "racial harmony" obtained through a prosperity consensus pact, critical observers have deconstructed the situation as a case of 'hegemonic multiculturalism' through the less than visible realities of numerical power dynamics, unequal power status, and attending complex, intertwining strands of history, politics, economics, prejudice or just plain ignorance. Operating in both personal and public spheres, the place of a minority group is one of navigating, learning and adapting to spoken and unspoken realities.

There are occasions when the discussion of issues, framework of debates and presentation of policies are reduced to simplistic and condescending assumptions regarding race and cultural understanding within the compartmentalised identity markers of "Chinese, Malay, Indian, Other" (CMIO). This is complemented by the superficial dominant prism of seeing each other through the "3 Fs" of "Food, Fashion and Festival"<sup>19</sup> 'Play nice' encounters, useful as they are in some circumstances, ignore how the dynamics of majority–minority relations bestow a degree of power on the former. The end result does not necessarily always present a more inclusive or empathetic understanding of another's culture, aspirations and values. A prolonged disconnected reality between unequal power components can result in a group being progressively 'marginalised' in a manner that reflects both bureaucratic nimbleness, linguistic inventiveness and a racialized perspective. One such case is the fate of the historic Singapore district of Kampong Glam with its rich cultural and spiritual memories and associations.

Within Kampong Glam, gentrification pressures such as in Haji Lane and creeping incidence of alcohol-serving establishments in Bussorah Street, have in the last few years underlined for the Muslim community this disconcertingly uneven power balance. The Malay Heritage Centre in Kampong Glam, is the result of a negotiated and/or imagined representation of the community as deemed by selected groups, privileged individuals and multiple agencies. Representations of any narrative is a contestable issue though "manufacturing consent"<sup>20</sup> which can give the impression that it can be executed without both tangible and intangible social, cultural and economic costs for selected groups. The concern here is that the proposed *Wisma Geylang Serai* will become another candidate for the establishment of a negotiated and/or imagined representation of the community.

Power dynamics principally means the ability to reimagine traditions, control narratives and along with that embed a narrative to suit a broader 'official' history that can sometimes perpetuate, enforce and justify power structures. Doctrinally, it can also facilitate the erasure of memory and with that further disempowerment. As such, for a minority community to assert privileged claims or psychological ownership in land scarce

Singapore, a seasonal space's face and fate resides with the state and state-defined interests. This is not to assert that government directed development programmes are inherently ruthless or unaccommodating in their economic pursuit but that in considerations of heritage and identity there are competing perspectives whereby the final decision lies in the hands of the governing body.

In any negotiating process over spatial use and evolving identity, the result also ultimately reflects how these different perspectives and concerns intersect with current economic policy thus resulting in an evolving and fluid justification for a policy decision. In the redevelopment of heritage spaces or an ethnic enclave/quarter, processes of commodification and touristification now seem almost inevitable responses to demands for commercial viability. This approach leads onto the dominance of the aforementioned "3Fs" approach to multiracial understanding. As it is, it is 'diversity-lite' or a superficial iceberg understanding. The notion that a culture can only be economically viable through some form of commodification as a result of development is not only short-sighted but an infantilization process that reduces the culture to a *persembahan* (presentation) with the repeated use of the word "to showcase" devoid of any sense of awareness on how debilitating that term can be.

Of course, the Malay-Muslim community is cognizant of the value of the comprehensive renewal projects of the area. The balancing act between community and national interests is laudable and often represents negotiation and accommodation between Malay-Muslim community leaders and business interests also managed by Chinese, Indian and other entrepreneurs. The demolition of iconic buildings, the rebuilding of a new, double-storey Geyang Serai market, still the only 'halal' wet market in the country, with the continuation the annual Ramadan bazaar all speak of an adaptive community, a responsive government and a shared understanding on the importance and viability of Geylang Serai. Crucially, the project was not a specifically tourist-centered project like the ill-fated Malay Village.

Urban redevelopment programmes, economic development projects and integrated planning are not without trade-offs and (un)intended consequences. Malay members of parliament and community leaders are indeed engaged in a delicate balancing act within the larger picture of the national development but for ordinary citizens, small businesses and interested individuals, the impact of such changes underlines further the need to adapt and adopt resilient measures in response to policies and decisions within the framework of some of the restrictive conditions enumerated earlier. For this author, one of the reasons for the failure of the Malay Village was that the community rejected the concept of its artificial landscape, the cultural shows, the incongruity of interests, the remaking of identity, the state-directed invention of tradition and the commodification of culture. Is eschewing "development thrust upon them"<sup>21</sup> an example of resilience?

## **PAYA LEBAR CENTRAL: PERILS OF “CONNECTIVITY”?**

In the negotiation, accommodation and balancing of varied interests and ensuring the community’s survival, identity and heritage, a fundamental question remains when development is being sold to the public: who benefits, who loses? With the demolition of the Malay Village many small businesses catering to local needs had to relocate or discontinue their operations, a major cautionary note was the certainty of high rentals that would automatically exclude them from relocating to the new *Wisma Geylang Serai*. In the URA Master Plan of 2008 “Paya Lebar Central-Space for the Community”, Geylang Serai is marked as “growth areas” and targeted for development as “lively commercial center with distinct cultural identity”.<sup>22</sup> The 2011 land tender brochure “A Bustling Commercial Hub at the Fringe of the City” peddled a similar line:

Paya Lebar Central will be a bustling commercial centre , with a mix of office, retail, hotel and attractive public spaces. Nestled between Tampines and the city centre with about 12 hectares of land available for development and a potential commercial floor space of more than 500,000 sqm, Paya Lebar Central will be a sizable fringe center, like Buona Vista and Novena, while differentiating itself with its unique local character. The area is well known for its distinctive local Malay character with its many shops, eating places and activities such as the popular Geylang Serai Market and the Hari Raya Bazaars that line Geylang Road every year during the Ramadan period. Well landscaped, uniquely designed public spaces in the area will further add character to the area and provide the setting for community events.<sup>23</sup>

This plastic, tourist approach to development continued in the following descriptions underlining the critical observations earlier on the solipsistic prisms on which a cultural heritage is being viewed and to be represented: an embedment of power structures presented as economic benevolence?

Existing developments like Geylang Serai Market and festivities such as the Hari Raya Bazaars along Geylang Road contribute to the distinctive local Malay identity of the area... Think of Hari Raya and chances are you will associate it with the festive bazaars at Geylang Serai. A buzzing, lively commercial stretch of markets, sundry shops, retail centre and hotels, Changi/Geylang Road is the spot to soak in the distinctive local character of the area.

Geylang Serai will see the completion of the redeveloped Geylang Serai Market in 2009. A new civic centre will also be developed next to the market, which will house a Community Club, Community Development Council offices and possibly even a community library.

A new plaza beside the civic centre will be a natural focal point for staging community events such as festive activities and bazaars. The design of the new civic centre can take into consideration the heritage and special character of the area. In addition, there is opportunity to explore incorporating a gallery in the civic building to showcase the local heritage and history of the area.<sup>24</sup>

On *Wisma Geylang Serai*:

In addition, there is the programming sub-group led by the Malay Heritage Foundation, as well as the connectivity and urban design sub-group chaired by URA. The latter will seek ideas on how to apply appropriate architecture and design touches to the area, and ways to improve connectivity between buildings.<sup>25</sup>

Physical connectivity would also be in the shape of proposed pedestrian passages linking Geylang Serai market, *Wisma Geylang Serai* and the Paya Lebar mass rapid train (MRT) station. The connection is to improve “the flow of people from one end of the Paya Lebar area to Geylang Serai and back... which will liven up the area”.<sup>26</sup> The supposition that the area is deemed currently ‘dead’ would surprise many of its visitors, residents and retailers! Convenience with this “connectivity” is not disputed but what might emerge from physical connectivity of bridges to the social, economic impact of numerical, financial, cultural assimilative powers are not to be underestimated.<sup>27</sup> There are hidden costs and economic implications such as high rentals and marginalisation of small businesses which almost always impact on the most socio-economically vulnerable whose livelihood resides in their ability to compete on a level playing field.

### ***WISMA GEYLANG SERAI: A HOUSE IS NOT A HOME?***

The anchor of this envisioned enlivened area as a cultural attraction is *Wisma Geylang Serai* with a prominent role for the Ramadan bazaar. The suggestion here is that the seasonal space will now have a permanent place, possibly forgoing the annual ritual of temporary structures and amenities. Indubitably, there are possible positive outcomes to the proposed bazaar being housed in a plaza attached to a civic center. However the extreme seasonality of the Ramadan bazaar demands careful spatial planning. No doubt, the specter of the Malay Village looms large, but possibly lessons have been learned on assuming that top-down directed identity could be foisted on a community. Some would contend this is merely another phase in the evolutionary nature of the formalization of informal trade and the history of Geylang Serai Ramadan bazaar.

Other countering voices however would suggest that this formalization of the bazaar even with its attending amenities but amplified bureaucracy denude the event of its character, its identity and its charm, the very qualities touted as a main selling point. There is a fear it would morph into another flea-market, a slightly grander *pasar malam*, another shopping mall with the ubiquitous big-chain stores<sup>28</sup> but at worst a tourist trap that would cater not to the community but to a targeted, hope-for-visitors deigning to visit, as an all-purpose touristification exercise, a fringe ethnic quarter to see local ‘native minority’ ‘performing’ within anthropological ethnoscapes.<sup>29</sup>

With *Wisma Geylang Serai*, a Malay-Muslim area is not to be negatively associated as an unattractive ‘ethnic enclave’ but as an acceptable and viable space, presented as a commodified ‘ethnic quarter’. In the essential “politics of recognition” framework, this form of uninformed or expedient “misrecognition”<sup>30</sup> of identity reflects the previously discussed complexities in deconstructing relations in a multiracial society and with that the survival impulses and expressions of resilience by a minority community. The perils of being an “imagined community” continue through to the annual Ramadan bazaar in Geylang Serai with the possibility of sub-optimal outcomes for selected groups. There is a thin line between affirming and touristifying an identity and culture; a balance that usually pays an overwhelmingly healthy respect for the bottom line at the expense of cultural and spiritual integrity as made evident by the transformation of Arab Street, Haji Lane and Bussorah Street in spite of declarations in 2006 to maintain its religious integrity.<sup>31</sup>

While the range of proposed facilities is indeed heartening, not so its conceptual articulation. Cultural affirmation is to be manifested and deemed sufficient by “appropriate architecture”, “design touches”, “distinct in terms of design and architecture” and as ever “to showcase” local culture<sup>32</sup>. Ultimately any civic community center’s viability relies on a living, breathing community in whose name it is established and who could attest to a genuine, respectful and meaningful connection to this physical representation. To be treated or framed as convenient props for cultural ‘shows’ will not suffice in the long run. While the building of a civic center can be a positive first step in recognising a community’s heritage, its ultimate representation, spatial retail and public use are still subjected to the political and economic agendas not necessarily congruent with the demands of respectful and empathic relations with the ‘other’: still an expression of top-down, state power and therefore as the ‘official culture’ of the community.

So is *Wisma Geylang Serai* an exercise of co-opting an ‘other’ or respecting a significant component of Singapore’s multiracial landscape? A culture is not for ‘consumption’ and when a physical house does not necessarily confer one the emotional security of a ‘home’, it will be not be truly embraced.

### **GEYLANG SERAI: *DALAM KOTAK INGATAN KITA (IN OUR MEMORY BOX)***<sup>33</sup>

In the new Geylang Serai market which celebrated its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary with a commemorative book, “Vibrant Geylang Serai: Heritage in Harmony”<sup>34</sup>, the relational and indissoluble links between the different cultural aspects of the area continue to be embedded. The market is described by the Minister of Manpower Mr. Tan Chuan-Jin as special and popular to the Malay community: a cultural hub for the Malay community.<sup>35</sup> Apart from noting the services and goods available for the community especially its status as the only ‘halal’ market, the commemorative book also stressed its contributory role in establishing racial harmony and integration while serving *all* communities. Concurrently, the Minister’s codicil was significant in his assertion that it cannot remain a hub by government decree but one that should be supported by the community itself. A sub-headline of the only Malay daily newspaper, *Berita Harian*, continues to assert this positive recognition with a similar caveat “...masyarakat Melayu perlu terima hakikat suasana dijangka berubah sejajar perubahan landskap”<sup>36</sup> (*Malay community needs to accept the fact that the environment will change in line with changes to the landscape*). Certainly support for Geylang Serai but not a guarantee of sustaining the area’s cultural heritage with the additional subtext that ‘failure’ would be due to the community inability to sustain its viability amidst inevitable changes. As analysed earlier, changes are not unwelcome, but by whom and for who are the changes being made: who wins, who loses economically, culturally, spatially and personally?

In analysing the possible direction and evolution of Geylang Serai and the Ramadan bazaar, the cautionary tale would be the gentrification of Kampong Glam Islamic district especially Haji Lane and Bussorah Street. Will the bazaar’s character be affected by the physical entity of *Wisma Geylang Serai* and with that the interpolation of more government organizations, exogenous business interests and possibly trendy establishments catering to an economically influential group who will carve for themselves a new ‘playground’ in which the Geylang Serai heritage space will form the *mise-en-scène* for leisure pursuits? As evident in Bussorah Street, the Sultan mosque makes for a picturesque backdrop and ‘atmosphere’ but overlooks self-serving disrespect for a sacred space. Will *Wisma Geylang Serai* replicate this outcome which would therefore demand greater vigilance from the community but still framed within the unequal power framework of numerical and political dynamics?<sup>37</sup>

There will be increased potential for ‘encroachment’ if the nature of the business landscape changes to attract a different sort of clientele. Lobbying efforts to retain the Islamic identity in Kampong Glam and prevent further erosion of its cultural integrity were countered by a claims of lack of compassion for business interests or that the community is being either not pragmatic or demanding ‘special rights’ instead of a community wishing to retain significant, sacred spaces from being assimilated by a hegemonic juggernaut. To request the community to play by the rules of economic pragmatism or economic competition is to ignore the structural and invisible privileges available to hegemonic groups which may be expended at the expense of “irreplaceable cultural traditions”.<sup>38</sup> In this transformation, a culture can be packaged, homogenized and consumed with a minimal or compromised role for the community in its evolution and direction.

While not championing a form of a bubble for the Malay-Muslim community in Geylang Serai, there is a need for a protective *cordon sanitaire* from the assimilative powers of multiple hegemonic economic and social forces. To be accused of a blinkered perspective or a less than open-minded attitude to other experiences is a specious argument that ignores the realities and legitimacy of a minority group which is entitled, just as with a dominant group, to maintain and nurture values considered profoundly important. In a country that claims to be a proud and successful version of multicultural harmony, there is not only a need to be continually reminded of the obligation not just of inclusion and empathy but to engage in a relationship that is respectful and dignified, eschewing forms that singularly demean, touristify or commodify a culture in terms of “cuisines, costumes and celebrations” which is a “3Cs” variation of the “3Fs”.

In the assessment of the future of Geylang Serai and the bazaar, one pessimistic contention is that ...the settlement of Geylang Serai...constitutes the part of the jigsaw that depicts Malay identity. Any authentic representation of culture, of course, cannot be compartmentalized in such a way, but it will not be surprising to see the settlement of Geylang Serai become as commoditized as Kampung Glam with its heritage center. Because of the fluid nature, social planning for people’s needs is difficult, but the level of difficulty can vary depending on the political system and government policy.<sup>39</sup>

If Geyang Serai goes the way of Kampung Glam with decreasing space and opportunities for spontaneous, authentic acts of expression, the Ramadan bazaar might either adapt by transformational changes that dilute its original character or cede its premier position to other Ramadan bazaars in Tampines, Woodlands or to Muscat Street near the Sultan Mosque. Clearly, these areas lack the emotional or historical cache of Geylang Serai but to call ‘time’ on the area and the bazaar is also to overlook the resilient nature of the event from



both the Malay-Muslim community, and the Chinese and Indian business interests dependent on the unique character of the bazaar.

The Ramadan bazaar continues to retain its powerful hold on the community and in spite of lamentations of business interests and visitors over disappointing aspects of 2013 event, the bazaar continues and adapts to changes to maintain the balance of being relevant to the needs of a changing Malay-Muslim community and economic viability.<sup>40</sup> Amidst intermittent predictions of its declining popularity especially since the major renewal project of 2005, the Ramadan bazaar has met its own set of challenges in an expression of resilience to changing trends and regulations. The bazaar is highlighted in the national media, extensively covered by the Malay press and television news during the weeks before and during Ramadan. On 27 June 2014, the Malay 8 o'clock evening news (*Berita@Geylang Serai*) was broadcast live from the Joo Chiat Complex to launch the start of the bazaar, as was the lighting up ceremony attended by senior members of the government. The institutionalization of the bazaar to become a notable social and political event has been positive in giving it quasi-official status, but such status that also cedes a degree of control to official management.

In this, a noteworthy change to the management of the bazaar came in 2014 with the establishment of a 'Hari Raya Light Up' committee consisting of grassroots leaders, Malay-Muslim organisations and business associations, headed up by two members of parliament. The theme adopted of *adat dan agama* (custom and faith)<sup>41</sup> was to nurture understanding of Islamic faith and culture. Much was made of introducing Islamic motifs and information on the accompanying decorations with plans for more cultural programmes before and during the duration of the bazaar.<sup>42</sup> As a response to the general consensus of a highly disappointing light up in 2013, followed with subsequent allegations and investigations of irregular activities, the creation of the committee was welcomed as an adroit response to a perceived problem.

Concurrently, the spatial redistribution of stalls to newer fringes of the district and, in 2014, on the grounds of the demolished Malay village, has added a positive adaptation to temporary dislocation. The event continues to add annual layers to the memory bank of the increasingly diverse and exciting selection of traditional and new products to mark the fast and to celebrate Hari Raya at the end of Ramadan. Reflexive in catering to changing tastes and expectations, there are contemporary twists to traditional goods, combination of both direct and online sales as marketing strategies and entry of 'exotic' new stalls to the mix.<sup>43</sup> What was once new, such as Turkish or Japanese foods and Chinese Islamic calligraphy stalls, are now joined by reflexology services and even an African handicraft stall<sup>44</sup>. In 2014, the space afforded by the demolition of the Malay Village also opened up pedestrian spaces for stalls along one side of the road and the provision of

chairs to rest or consume recently bought food. A much welcomed additions to safety measures, the open area also facilitated the new addition of fair rides and a flower nursery to add to the bustling atmosphere. The use of this temporary space (and all within legal and regulated demands of the necessary government agencies) on which *Wisma Geylang Serai* is to be completed by 2017, and use of other existing spaces of the past is evidence of the bazaar's natural ability to adapt optimally to whatever spaces become available for the moment.

The mixture of the traditional and new products adapted for the community needs reflect an economic instinct of survival as well as the impact of globalisation and technological changes. Without losing any of its traditional identity, the Ramadan bazaar continues through adequately buoyant numbers, challenges from other increasingly popular and at times bigger bazaars in other parts of the island with a sizable Malay community and even from mega Ramadan bazaars across the border in the Malaysian state of Johor.<sup>45</sup>

### **RAMADAN BAZAAR AS INTANGIBLE CULTURAL HERITAGE**

Resilience, expressed in the capacity to recover quickly from difficulties, involves the investment of tradition. While this paper has placed much stress on the physical character of the Ramadan bazaar, it is the components of an intangible cultural heritage, transmitted from generation to generation that have been constantly recreated by the Malay-Muslim community in spite of environmental restrictions and rapid economic and social change. In the Ramadan bazaar may be found those elements of human creativity such as cuisine, dance, drama, song and spirituality which, among so many others, make up the total sum of 'Human Treasures':

It also includes traditions or living expressions inherited from our ancestors and passed on to our descendants, such as oral traditions, performing arts, social practices, rituals, festive events, knowledge and practices concerning nature and the universe or the knowledge and skills to produce traditional crafts.<sup>46</sup>

In Singapore, such shared repositories are cherished by the website "Our Stories, Singapura Stories".<sup>47</sup>

With the loss of sacred spaces such as those around the Sultan Mosque being lamentable and hurtful, the path to further destruction in Geylang Serai must be halted through increased public awareness, not just within Singapore but also at regional and global levels. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO, 2013) presently identifies 281 intangible cultural heritage inscriptions,<sup>48</sup> but to date

Singapore has not ratified the treaty, and therefore cannot submit recommendations. Surely it can only be a matter of time before the Singapore government, which is so mindful of leveraging economic opportunity in an increasingly competitive and globalised market, seeks to celebrate, protect and formally share with the wider world its most distinctive cultural treasures.

## NOTES AND REFERENCES

<sup>1</sup> *Geylang Si Paku Geylang* is the title of a Malay popular folk song sung in rhyming couplets and in groups with lyrics urging returning together to Geylang Serai.

<sup>2</sup> Imran bin Tajudeen, "Geylang Serai: An Introduction", 2 January 2014, Accessed July 10 2014 <http://singapurastories.com/the-important-crossroads-and-its-great-eastern-hub/>

<sup>3</sup> Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade & Industry, Republic of Singapore, "Population Trends 2013 (Singapore)": Department of Statistics, Ministry of Trade & Industry, 2013) Accessed 10 July [http://www.singstat.gov.sg/publications/publications\\_and\\_papers/population\\_and\\_population\\_structure/population2013.pdf](http://www.singstat.gov.sg/publications/publications_and_papers/population_and_population_structure/population2013.pdf), p. 3

While Malays are almost homogeneously Muslims, there are Indians who are Muslims and but not regarded as a separate category but grouped together in CMIO as 'Indians'. Culturally, their practices are similar to Malay-Muslims with minor variations.

<sup>4</sup> Sharifah Mariam Alhabshi, "Urban renewal of traditional settlements in Singapore and Malaysia: The cases of Geylang Serai and Kampung Bharu," *Asian Survey*, 50 6 (2010), p. 1152

<sup>5</sup> See also Gordon Allport, *The Nature of Prejudice* (Perseus Books: 1979).

<sup>6</sup> There are various contesting versions as to the origins of the name Geylang Serai: 'Geylang' could possibly be an evolution or corruption of the Malay word 'gelang' which means bracelet or the word 'kilang' which means a factory or a press mill related to copra extraction or citronella oil from 'serai' plants. 'Serai' refers to the lemon grass plantation which dominated the area.

<sup>7</sup> 'Hegemonic multiculturalism' here can be described as a management of multiracial society and thus identity through direct, consistent and hegemonic management by a ruling government or authoritative body. See also Chua Beng Huat, "Multiculturalism in Singapore: instrument of social control" in *Race and Class* 44 3 (2003), pp. 58-77.

<sup>8</sup> National Archives, *Geylang Serai: Down Memory Lane: Kenangan Abadi* (Singapore: Heinemann Asia 1986), foreword. See also Adli Yashir Kuchit, *The heart of Geylang Serai*, (Singapore: Kampong Ubi Citizens' Consultative Committee, 2005); R. Powell, 'Erasing Memory, Inventing Tradition, Rewriting History: Planning as a Tool of Ideology', eds. B. J. Shaw and R. Jones in *Contested Urban Heritage: Voices From the Periphery*, (Aldershot, England: Ashgate 1997).

With the 1964 formulation of the urban renewal policy and the 1966 establishment of the Urban Renewal Department of the Housing and Development Board, extensive and integrated urban renewal programmes of the 1960s consolidated Geylang Serai's status and fortunes. For a general map of the area, see Urban Redevelopment Authority, "Paya Lebar Central, A Bustling Commercial Hub at the Fringe of the City",

Tender Brief, 2011, accessed 14 July 2014

<http://www.ura.gov.sg/sales/PayaLebarEunos8/CL/salebrochure.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> National Archives, p. 27

<sup>10</sup> “Population Trends 2013”, p. v.

<sup>11</sup> See “Pasar Geylang hab budaya masyarakat Melayu”, *Berita Harian*, Mei 10, 2014, 21; Nazri Hadi Saparan, “Chuan Jin: Masyarakat Melayu tentukan masa depan Pasar Geylang”, *Berita Harian*, Jun 16, 2014, 1; Nazri Hadi Saparan, “Usaha berterusan bagi pastikan Geylang Serai hab orang Melayu”, *Berita Harian*, Jun 16, 2014, 7. See also *Vibrant Geylang Serai: Heritage in Harmony* (Singapore: 2014); Kash Cheong, “Geylang Serai Market still going strong”, *The Straits Times*, May 9, 2014, B12.

<sup>12</sup> N. S. PuruShotam, *Negotiating language, constructing race: disciplining difference in Singapore* (Berlin & NY: Mouton de Gruyter, 1998).

<sup>13</sup> A. K. Noor Ibtisam, M. S. Mohd Zahari, S. M. Radzi, and S. Izni, “Ramadan bazaar, international tourists’ attraction and disseminating information behaviour” in *Current Issues in Hospitality and Tourism: Research and Innovations*, eds. A Zainal, S. M. Radzi, R. Hashim, C. T. Chik, R. Abu (London: Taylor and Francis, 2012), p. 396.

<sup>14</sup> R. H. T Smith, “Periodic market—Places and periodic marketing, review and prospect”, *Progress in Human Geography*, 4 1 (1980), pp. 1–31.

<sup>15</sup> *Wisma* means house or dwelling. For a general map of the location of the bazaar within Geylang Serai in 2014, see Al Hafiz Sanusi, “Bazar Geylang mula ‘bernyawa’”, *Berita Harian*, Jun 14, 2014, 29.

<sup>16</sup> Rahil Ismail, “Muslims in Singapore as a case study for understanding inclusion/exclusion phenomenon” in *Muslims in the West: Spaces and Agents of Inclusion and Exclusion*, eds. S. Yasmeen and N. Markovic (Farham, Surrey, Ashgate: 2014) (In-press)

<sup>17</sup> Helena Norberg-Hodge, “The March of the Monoculture”, *The Ecologist*, May/June 1999.

Accessed July 11 2014 <http://www.localfutures.org/publications/online-articles/the-march-of-the-monoculture>

See also Helena Norberg-Hodge, “Beyond The Monoculture: Strengthening Local Culture, Economy And Knowledge”, *Local Futures*, April 3, 2010. Accessed July 11 2014

<http://www.localfutures.org/publications/online-articles/beyond-the-monoculture-strengthening-local-culture-economy-and-knowledge>

<sup>18</sup> Ismail, “Muslims in Singapore”.

<sup>19</sup> First introduced by the authors in Rahil Ismail “Muslims in Singapore as a case study for understanding inclusion/exclusion phenomenon” (paper presented at Fulbright Symposium: Muslim Citizens in the West: Promoting Social Inclusion. Perth, Western Australia: UWA Centre for Muslim States and Societies, 1-3 August 2007).

“3Fs” is the predominant mode of expressing diversity dominant in public expressions of harmony especially in schools in the excitement of eating ‘traditional’ food, ‘dressing up’ in ethnic ‘costumes’ and ‘celebrating’ holiday festivals. The critical claim here is knowing the “facts” of the “3Fs” does not make one an ‘understanding’ multicultural individual.

<sup>20</sup> A term borrowed from Edward S. Herman and Noam Chomsky, *Manufacturing Consent: The Political Economy of the Mass Media* (New York: Pantheon, 2002). The term suggests the aggregation of information that serves the interests of dominant groups and gives the impression of popular consensus.

<sup>21</sup> Pamela Nowicka, *The No-Nonsense Guide to Tourism* (Oxford: New Internationalist: 2007), p. 30.

<sup>22</sup> Jolene Hoon, "New Centre for Geylang Serai", *Skyline*, Jan-Feb 2012, pp. 12-13. Accessed July 10  
<http://www.ura.gov.sg/skyline/skyline12/skyline12-01/files/New%20Civic%20Centre%20for%20Geylang%20Serai.pdf>

<sup>23</sup> Urban Redevelopment Authority, "Paya Lebar Central, A Bustling Commercial Hub at the Fringe of the City, Tender Brief 2011, accessed 14 July 2014  
<http://www.ura.gov.sg/sales/PayaLebarEunos8/CL/salebrochure.pdf>

<sup>24</sup> Chye Hui Sze, "Paya Lebar Central: Bustling Commercial Hub Brimming With Activity And Culture," *Skyline*, May-June 2008, accessed 14 July 2014.  
<http://www.ura.gov.sg/skyline/skyline08/skyline08-03/text/08.htm>

<sup>25</sup> Hoon, "New Centre for Geylang Serai", p. 13.

<sup>26</sup> Toh Yong Chuan, "Geylang Serai market to be linked to MRT station Connection will improve flow of people and liven up area: Minister", *The Straits Times*, May 5 2014. Accessed July 14 2014.  
<http://www.straitstimes.com/news/singapore/more-singapore-stories/story/geylang-serai-market-be-linked-mrt-station-20140505>

<sup>27</sup> Chery Ong, "Paya Lebar Central generating buzz", *The Straits Times*, June 21, 2014, C2.

<sup>28</sup> See Malay current affairs television programme *Detik's* segment on "50 Tahun Pasar Geylang" ("50 Years Geylang Market) (Singapore: *Suria*), May 7, 2014: Interview with Asst. Prof. Dr. Imran bin Tajuddeen.

<sup>29</sup> Ismail, "Muslims in Singapore", pp. 36-38.

<sup>30</sup> Charles Taylor, "The Politics of Recognition, in *Multiculturalism*", ed. Amy Gutman, Amy (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press 1994).

<sup>31</sup> Rahil Ismail, "Seasonal Spaces: Ramadan and Bussorah Street: the spirit of place," *GeoJournal* 66, no. 3 (2006): 243-256.

<sup>32</sup> See endnotes 24 and 25.

<sup>33</sup> Djamal Tukimin, *Betapa pun nyanyian rindunya, si anak geylang serai : sebuah puisi panjang* (Singapore: Persatuan Wartawan Melayu Singapura, 1999), p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> See "Singapore's Pasar Geylang Serai turns 50: A look back in pictures with pictures", *The Straits Times*, April 25 2014. Accessed July 18 2014.  
<http://www.straitstimes.com/news/singapore/more-singapore-stories/story/singapores-pasar-geylang-serai-turns-50-look-back-pictur>

<sup>35</sup> See endnote 11.

<sup>36</sup> Nazri Hadi Saparan, “Usaha berterusan bagi pastikan Geylang Serai hab orang Melayu”, *Berita Harian*, Jun 16, 2014, 7.

<sup>37</sup> Unnervingly, as the creeping sleaze of massage parlours and sex workers has become another disappointing feature of the once spiritual Kampong Glam area, the intrusion of similar undesirable activities from the adjoining Joo Chiat area into the Geylang Serai space has been duly noted. See Saini Salleh, “Gelagat warga Indonesia tidak disenangi”, *Berita Harian*, Jun 28, 2014, 6; See also B J. Shaw & R. Ismail, “Ethnoscapes, Entertainment and 'Eritage in the Global City: Segmented Spaces in Singapore’s Joo Chiat Road,” *GeoJournal*, 66 3(2006) , pp. 187-198.

<sup>38</sup> Nowicka, *No-Nonsense Guide*, p. 140.

<sup>39</sup> Sharifah Mariam Alhabshi see Alhabshi, “Urban renewal”, p. 1159.

<sup>41</sup> “Adat dan agama jadi inspirasi”, *Berita Harian*, Jun 21, 2014, 18.

<sup>42</sup> Nur Adilah Mahbob, “Lampu Geylang Serai diketuai dua AP”, *Berita Minggu*, Mei 25, 2014, 1; Hasleen Bachik, “Hiasan di Geylang Serai kembali menyerlah”, *Berita Harian*, Jun 13, 2014, 1; Audrey Tan, “Hari Raya light-up to delight history buffs”, *The Straits Times*, 21 Jun, 2014, B16; Nazri Hadi Saparin, “Bazar Bagus!”, *Berita Harian*, Julai 8, 2014, 1.

<sup>43</sup> Farid Hamzah, “Juadah kreatif di bazar”, *Berita Harian*, Julai 6, 2014, 14.

<sup>44</sup> Nabilah Said, “Geylang Serai’s buzzing bazaar”, *Sunday Times*, July 11, 2014, 4-5.

<sup>45</sup> Azahar Mohd., “Expo Raya dan Bazar Utara lebih gah”, *Berita Harian*, Mei 2, 2014, 11; Raden Zainal Mustafa, “Gerai JPM Woodlands di bazar Geylang Serai dan Tampines permudah orang menderma”, *Berita Harian*, Jun 20, 2014, 23; Nazri Hadi Saparin, Atiyah Mohd Said, Juliana Sharmine Riduan, “Rancak di bazar serata pulau” *Berita Harian*, Julai 8, 2014, 4; Gerai bazar di Geylang tidak laku?”, *Berita Harian*, Julai 5, 2014, 16.

<sup>46</sup> See “What is Intangible Cultural Heritage?” UNESCO, Accessed July 28 2014. <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00002>

<sup>47</sup> See *Our Stories, Singapura Stories (Cerita Kita, Cerita Singapura)*, Accessed July 14, <http://singapurastories.com/> The website documents Malay history and culture as contributed by members of academia and interested individuals.

<sup>48</sup> UNESCO, “Lists of intangible cultural heritage and Register of best safeguarding practices”, Accessed July 28 2014 <http://www.unesco.org/culture/ich/index.php?lg=en&pg=00011>

# **Traditional Dwellings and Settlements**

Working Paper Series

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## **SPONTANEOUS AS CONTEMPORARY VERNACULAR? AN ANALYSIS OF SPATIAL NORM IN A *GECEKONDU* SETTLEMENT OF ISTANBUL**

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**Volume 266**

Pages 19–53

2014

## SPONTANEOUS AS CONTEMPORARY VERNACULAR? AN ANALYSIS OF SPATIAL NORM IN A *GECEKONDU* SETTLEMENT OF ISTANBUL



*This paper explores the relationship of “traditional vernacular” and “contemporary spontaneous” in order to reveal the way that traditions are transmitted and new traditions are anchored in spontaneous places, by tracing the spatial practices used within the different scales of a gecekondu settlement located on the outskirts of Istanbul. Our analytical approach will be a holistic interpretation of “systems” within the built environment, concerning the dismemberment-reconfiguration processes of spatial elements such as point, node, network etc., while the second part of the analysis focuses on “evolution” and the multi-scale comparison between the traditional Turkish vernacular environment and our case study gecekondu.*

### INTRODUCTION

The lack of housing has been a serious challenge in most of the developing countries during their rapid urbanization process over more than half a century. On the other hand, building one’s own shelter is an ability people are born with, and it has been practiced throughout our human history. Ironically, this ability has been considered as a threat to the aesthetic standard of modern cities. The prejudgment accompanying top-down actions creates difficulties of qualification of the nature of these self-build actions on urban land. Furthermore, the lack of an efficient conceptual framework and the appropriate evaluation, which could be applicable to a cross-cultural, multidisciplinary context, is another weakness. Hence, our research agenda is calling for a “new epistemology” of spontaneous settlement by analyzing the integrations of spatial-social norms in the evolution of various spontaneous settlements in a rapid urbanization process.

Meanwhile, the central issue of this paper is an exploration of the relevance as well as the significance of the difference between spontaneous settlement and vernacular settlement. Our discussion starts from definition, the similarity and the difference, and then turns to the examination of approaches anchored in “system” and “evolution”. What is the role of spontaneous settlement in terms of transmitting traditions? How have these traditions influenced the socio-spatial norm in spontaneous settlement? The illustration of a *gecekondu* settlement (originally meaning a settlement built in one night by Anatolian migrants) in a Turkish context is expected to answer the research questions.

### TRADITIONAL VERNACULAR VS CONTEMPORARY SPONTANEOUS

Researches of vernacular architecture/built environment were considered to have reached a stage of maturity



in the past two decades.<sup>1</sup> Both of the terms “vernacular” and “spontaneous” employed in this research are open concepts that represent two groups of human settlements which may have overlapping areas. One group contains terms such as “folk”, “primitive”, “tribal”, “indigenous”, “anonymous” or “architecture without architect”; the other contains terms such as “slum”, “shanty town”, “informal”, “uncontrolled urban settlement”, “arrival city” and “urban village”. Meanwhile, the word “traditional” or “contemporary” somehow illustrates their pre- and post-industrialization characteristics.

With the publication of “The Encyclopedia of Vernacular Architecture of the World”,<sup>2</sup> Paul Oliver defined the vernacular as:

*“Comprising the dwellings and all other buildings of the people. Related to their environmental contexts and available resources, they are customarily owner- or community-built, utilizing traditional technologies. All forms of vernacular architecture are built to meet specific needs, accommodating the values, economies and ways of life of the cultures that produce them.”*

In comparison, Roderick Lawrence’s idea of vernacular is focused on its identity of ordinary life shaped by specific self-made physical types anchored in a specific period and place.<sup>1</sup> Similar to Lawrence, Nezar AlSayyad and Elena Tomlinson<sup>3</sup> pointed out that the vernacular in a globalizing world is not necessarily a place-based concept, but a class or social grouping-based concept. Therefore, they argued that traditional environments (vernacular) could be defined as a “process” and “practice” that become a “norm” when enough members of a social group adopt it. Somehow, the various recognitions of traditional vernacular showed a research tendency shifting from the describing of physical environment (sites, climates, material and skills and forms) into a stage where cultural identities, social needs, meaning and symbolic roles of shelters - a marriage among the architecture and social sciences, have been produced since the 1970s.<sup>4,5</sup> During the post-modernism era, among the reflections concerning the deficiency of the modernism movement, “learning from vernacular architecture” became an attraction to architects. In today’s discussion, the vernacular has been regarded as a prototype of sustainable development in terms of a physical construction method associated with the key words such as “community participation” in terms of a socio-economic aspect.<sup>6</sup>

However, “contemporary spontaneous” has suffered for a much more complicated reason. From the end of the 1980s, new approaches emerged that were trying to recognize the value of spontaneous settlements as a new paradigm for understanding the contemporary urban culture. Some researchers have reassessed spontaneous settlements by using the frameworks of vernacular theories.

Among these scholars, Amos Rapoport evaluated the spontaneous settlement as the closest contemporary equivalent to the vernacular production in the globalization context by comparing it with other professionally designed “high-style” environments.<sup>7</sup> Jean Paul Loubes admitted that the closest aspect to traditional vernacular is the ability to arrange the local resources, while the form, material and implanted culture in the contemporary spontaneous society should not be considered as the traditional way.<sup>8</sup> Paul Oliver criticized the term “local resources” as referring only to “the waste of the affluent”,<sup>9</sup> which is far from tradition, and the majority of squatter houses are erected without a tradition. Yet, by explaining the case of “*peñols nuevos (young town)*” in Lima, he has indicated, “*With the accumulated knowledge and experience gained in some settlements by two or three generations over a period of fifty years, there are indications of the emergence of new vernacular architectural traditions.*”<sup>9</sup>

These arguments have opened a discussion concerning the similarities and differences between “traditional vernacular” and “contemporary spontaneous”, as well as providing a perspective of the generation of a new order during the evolution process. We could highlight those similarities from their auto-construction method, with the organizational wisdoms of available resources (whether in a traditional way or not), and, since the majority of constructions were collective rather than individual works, the use of shared knowledge (whether traditional or contemporary) created common cultural values and the sense of belonging for the relevant demographic. We adopt Paul Olivier’s definition of vernacular as “an architecture language of people”.<sup>4</sup> Meanwhile, we could transform and apply it to a spontaneous settlement as an acculturated spatial/architecture language mixed with different accents. This analogy presents their distinct differences, and firstly shows a complex composition as a mosaic collage in terms of the built form in the daily use of space and place-making within different cultures. Secondly, the different developing rhythm, and especially the demand of adapting new elements, is forced to follow the rise of urbanization. Thus, the following discussion will focus on these two differences between traditional vernacular and contemporary spontaneous.

Extracting from the definition of traditional vernacular, it is clear that it serves only a homogeneous social group in order to reinforce their specific identity, while modern cities constitute a homogeneous system with symbolic elements<sup>10</sup> in a globalizing context. Therefore, “spontaneous” is the place where heterogenic groups meet, have conflict, adapt, and then might be acculturated with urban circumstance. Nevertheless, the on-going transition from one mode of production to another might also lead to a difficulty, as explained by Stea and Turan.<sup>11</sup> Although the first impression that people get from the spontaneous settlement is chaotic, anarchic and ambiguous, we can still recognize the *hidden orders*<sup>12</sup> or the *underlying rules* of nature, qualities, attribution, life styles and perceptions driven by people’s pragmatic needs. Several scholars<sup>7, 11, 13, 14</sup> have declared that the disordered spatial layout had been self-planned, or at least had some degree of premeditation.

To read and interpret these implicit orders, an adequate recognition of their articulations and how they have been operated is necessary. As we have mentioned previously, scholars' efforts had an inevitable tendency, which started as the substance-based perspective,<sup>15</sup> then moved towards socio-cultural identity, and has been extended to the everyday life perspective shaped by production of space (place making), the consummation of space (usage) and the cognition of built environment (image and perception).

The trace of Japanese architect Har a Hiroshi's research on “集落”<sup>16</sup> matches with this tendency. After a worldwide mapping for more than two decades, he started to recognize the settlement as an “ensemble” which contains *sub parts*.<sup>17</sup> These *sub parts* have different meanings and intersect with each other. He synthesized finally their implicit philosophy by listing 100 *parts (or lessons)* learnt from the vernacular settlement, which could be summarized as having 5 aspects: “the environment and climate”, “the specific elements”, “the spatial grammar which indicates relationship among element”, and “the perception” and “the usage of spaces”.<sup>13</sup>

Similarly, after examining the major theoretical positions in the study of vernacular environments that might also play a role in the examination of spontaneous settlements, Peter Kellett and Mark Naipier proposed a multidimensional framework, which contains the key elements of “*households, dwellings, usage, process*” and last but most significantly “*existential context*”.<sup>1</sup>

Meanwhile, Amos Rapoport, the pioneer form-culture explorer, has always focused on the visible and invisible components and their mutual influences. He illustrated “*space*”, “*time*”, “*communication*” and “*meaning*” as four natures of the general built environment in the 1982 study.<sup>17</sup> Thus, in the recent work,<sup>18</sup> he has shifted the main attention to Environment-Behavior Studies, in regarding the built environment as the organization of those four natures, together with “*the system of settings, the cultural landscape, and the fixed, semi-fixed, non-fixed features*”.<sup>19, 20</sup> He also emphasized the “*process characteristics*” with the “*product characteristics*” in order to discuss the spontaneous settlement.<sup>7</sup>

In dealing with the second difference between the traditional vernacular and the contemporary, the mainstream literature of traditional vernacular studies does mention the flexibility shaped by the primitive needs to adapt to sites and climate change, and then life change of the user. However, some scholars have criticized “*vernacular does not develop*” or “*the idea of vernacular has nothing to do with stylistics*”.<sup>9</sup> This argument has been somehow established as the precondition that traditional vernacular has reached its finality.<sup>21</sup>

Contemporary spontaneous, on the other hand, has been shaped by its dynamic evolutions in order to meet the basic survival needs. The strategy is an efficient decision-making model from the available alternatives (even though they did not have many to choose from) to achieve the maximum value with a minimal expense. These efforts of migrants are only driven by the pragmatic purpose that, through the accumulation of capital, they can achieve a better social position which will make them feel part of the city. Essentially, in such a context, two perspectives and their mutual influence have oriented the study of the evolution of spontaneous settlements.

The former refers to the actions of consolidation and densification – the incremental process of physical environment as one of the most distinct changes that could happen in the development of spontaneous settlement. It has received the attention of many scholars. One of the most fundamental researchers, John Turner, presented the consolidation process through a simple diagram explaining three stages of the physical state – “*provisional stage, semi-provisional stage*” and “*incipient stage*” together with their development trend – “*deteriorating, stagnating and improving change*”.<sup>14</sup> He continued to argue that primitive was not necessarily temporary, instead it could be either permanent, semi-permanent or, indeed, provisional. The wide differences at this stage depended on the wealth of their inhabitants as well as their location and the sites’ potential. Furthermore, he concluded:

*“Provisional and generally deteriorating settlements provide the very poor with strategically located ‘bridgeheads’ ... the permanently established, self-improving settlements suit the more regularly employed. These settled, new but often somewhat marginal and insecure citizens, are less troubled by hunger and the problems of physical survival than they are by the danger of losing their jobs and their saving...The self-improving settlements of securely held land and permanent building construction are the means by which these ‘consolidations’ invest their savings and protect themselves from some of the consequences of unemployment –eviction and homelessness, which can have far more serious social and psychological consequences for established and self-respecting household...”<sup>14</sup>*

Turner’s hypothesis shows that the physical evolution had an impact proportional to the self-upgrading socio-economical ability. Thus, the *fertility* of inhabitants has been used to define the notions of spontaneous settlement by Gilbert and Gugler:

*“Spontaneous settlement raises something of the sense of innovation that the poor bring*

*to their individual housing problems and also acts as a reminder that such housing, even if now solidly built, often began on the fringe of the law, sometimes after an invasion, and was usually built in some measure by the inhabitants themselves when resources became available.”<sup>22</sup>*

With a more detailed description, Peter Kellett<sup>23</sup> illustrated the dwelling consolidation process “*as a move away from the temporary materials and typologies of the natural, rural world (monte) towards the ordered, permanent constructions which represent the world of ‘cultura’.*”

The power of self-social upgrading, usually related to economic and political aspects, was the other mainly studied perspective. The role of spontaneous settlement in the urbanization process is something that traditional vernacular has never mentioned. One part, the development of informal economy towards an international market, was achieved with formal economic sectors; the other part is that the role of dwellers is not only to be cheap labor, they are actually the biggest consumer group<sup>24</sup> targeted by international retailers, especially in the market of a developing country.<sup>25</sup> Furthermore, Doug Saunders defined the evolution in three steps: *arrive-transform-upgrade* as a journey for migrants to reach the middle class, which he has observed in so called “*arrival cities*” all over the world:

*“The properly functioning arrival city provides a social-mobility path into either the middle class or the sustainable, permanently employed and propertied ranks of the upper working class. This path into the ‘core city’ is provided through housing values and legalization, business success, higher-education opportunities for migrants or their children, employment opportunities in elite or ‘official’ urban enterprises or even through simple physical connections to the city and upgrading of streets, plumbing housing and transit, allowing the arrival city’s own rising real-estate values, and the opportunities provided by sale or rental income, to create an exit path.”<sup>26</sup>*

At the end of the book he has also described a *crucial paradox* that people who have achieved social upgrading have left their arrival cities and only few arrival cities are self-renewing. From this point of view, if the settlement has functioned as a transition place, it retains a poor standard of living conditions, as its passengers (tenants) will not invest in a temporary place. The landlord, who may be among those who have succeeded in becoming a citizen, will also not invest in it, to avoid the increased rent.<sup>27</sup> Thus, the relationship between physical and social factors is somehow contradictory to Turner’s idea.

However, some situations where an inhabitant prefers to remain in the initial settlement can be concluded from our own field trips in Turkey, Kenya, China and India: 1) if there is a condition of a minority group in terms of ethnics or religion, even though the inhabitants may have reached a higher socio-economic ability, they prefer to stay with the related community; 2) if someone has a successful business rooted in the initial spontaneous settlement, they prefer to stay and keep it functioning the way it is; and 3) if the built environment of the spontaneous settlement has achieved a picturesque level and offers a more comfortable living condition for the inhabitants than in the regular formal city, the inhabitants are not willing to leave the settlement and refuse to move to an urban apartment. With the arguments above, we can assert that the evolutions of physical condition and socio-economic position are extremely important for the study of spontaneous settlement, but they are not the absolute standard against which to evaluate a spontaneous settlement, as various situations exist in reality.

Therefore, we turn to examine the other possible perspectives that have been employed for studying human settlement. Paola Jirón<sup>28</sup> proposed the concept of “*Quality of life (QoL)*”, which “*integrates all the elements, objective and subjective, of the condition in which people live in an urban community, including their needs as well as their perceptions, expectations and levels of satisfaction*”. Although the QoL is a difficult concept to comprehend, define and measure, it provides an interesting collaboration with the multidimensional perspective, which may meet the tendency as we discussed in the previous paragraph. Based on the *place-making* process, Stea and Turan define that a development starting from “*the primitive communist mode of production*” will move to “*stratification*”, then towards “*mystification*” and “*professionalization and commodification*” until it reaches “*the totally commodified environment characteristic of the Capitalist West, where places are received by exchange rather than made, and where people are products of the environment rather than vice-versa*”.<sup>1</sup>

Fujii Akira’s presentation of “*Serialization-Regionalization-Symbolization*” presents three phases for achieving the finalized vernacular schemata, which is driven by two fundamental needs – external defense and internal domination.<sup>29</sup> The first phase is to divide the selected sites into different sequences by visible/invisible *boundaries*. The second phase refers to the setting of important elements such as *valves*, so as to reinforce the identity of sequence. The third phase is deliberating the meaning of forms at a micro-macro level. Thus, by setting inner *symbols (landmarks)*, each of the semiotic fields, as well as their echoes, were established.

## **HYPOTHESIS**

The whole discussion centering on the definition, the approaches and the comparison, focusing on similarity and differences and based on multidimensional perspectives of the system and its evolution, gives us a general

cognition of these two objects. Therefore, our hypotheses are based on the existence of different phases that reveal the evolutionary nature of spontaneous settlement. The developing process drives the *initial* settlements transforming towards a *superior phase*. We have established several sub-hypotheses concerning the criteria of “superior” that are beyond the materialism and aesthetic perspectives.

- ♦ The settlement should have an inner mechanism that can maintain the operation of the district, which can also generate dynamic initiatives and innovations.
- ♦ Once a balanced status of initial mosaics appears, elements start an acculturation tendency at the community scale in order to maintain their coexistent relation and to create a new common identity; the latter phase shows the emergence of individual characters as a self-demonstration inside the frame of the first phase, in order to keep the diversity of their origins.
- ♦ The emergence of important community symbols (ex: socializing spaces).
- ♦ The quality of life, an inhabitant’s recognition should be satisfied.

The following part of this paper tries to situate the discussion in a concrete geo-cultural context, and with the analysis of a specific settlement, we aim to test our assumption about the relation between traditional vernacular and contemporary spontaneous. Most of the primary sources (interview, mapping and sketches) have been collected during our research internship in Mimar Sinan University of Fine Arts in 2011. Complementary data have been collected by our short visits in 2012 - 2014 to the case settlement.

## CONTEMPORARY SPONTANEOUS (*GECEKONDU*) IN THE TURKISH CONTEXT

As everywhere else in the world, Turkey experienced a transformation towards modernization, after the establishment of the Republic of Turkey in 1923. The period during which rural migrants were pushed to urban areas was due to several factors, such as rural mechanization and the forced settling down of nomadic groups. In the city, the newcomer (normally a single man) was homeless, sleeping in the coffee shop or trying to rent a cheap room close to the city center. They ended up constructing an informal shelter, which was built in one night on public land, and thus the appearance of the *gecekondu* process in Turkish cities reached a noticeable level around 1945, since a priority was given to industrialization and urbanization. The needs of “cheap” labor to “*they can solve their basic problems without charging the cost either to the employer or to the government*”,<sup>30</sup> related to the level of tolerance.<sup>31</sup> With the arrival of the relatives of the pioneer migrants, and with experience gained from previous construction, rural migrants could establish new *gecekondu*s near the industrial zone more efficiently. The new developed infrastructures (highways and the first Bosphorus bridge), accompanied by the relocation of industrial sites and the upper classes towards the suburban area, enlarged the municipality boundary in Istanbul. Meanwhile, since the locations of *gecekondu*s were always on empty land,

which was normally at the outskirts of the periphery and close to a possible work-place, the emergence of new *gecekondu*s towards a western-eastern direction can be observed on the mutation map (Fig.1). The migrants had learnt to negotiate with authorities for getting a basic infrastructure supplied in exchange for their vote. Thus, the settlement entered a stable and self-consolidation stage. In the mid-1970s, 45% of the population lived in *gecekondu*s and *gecekondu*s had a 39.55% share of the housing stock in Istanbul.<sup>32</sup>

Starting from the 1980s, the radical economic change that has seen Turkish society opened up to the western world through liberal policies<sup>33</sup> has influenced the decline of the industrial sector and the commercialization of land. This attracted investments from private capital and foreign capital on the real estate market. The emergence of large-scale, mostly luxurious housing complexes, shopping malls and offices in the development of the CBD area<sup>34</sup> have resulted in a big impact on not only the upper classes, but also on the *gecekondu* settlements. “*Apartmentalisation*” and “*speculation*” have become widespread phenomena stimulated by the economic change and by several laws which allowed the construction of buildings of up to four-storeys high on *gecekondu* land.<sup>34</sup>



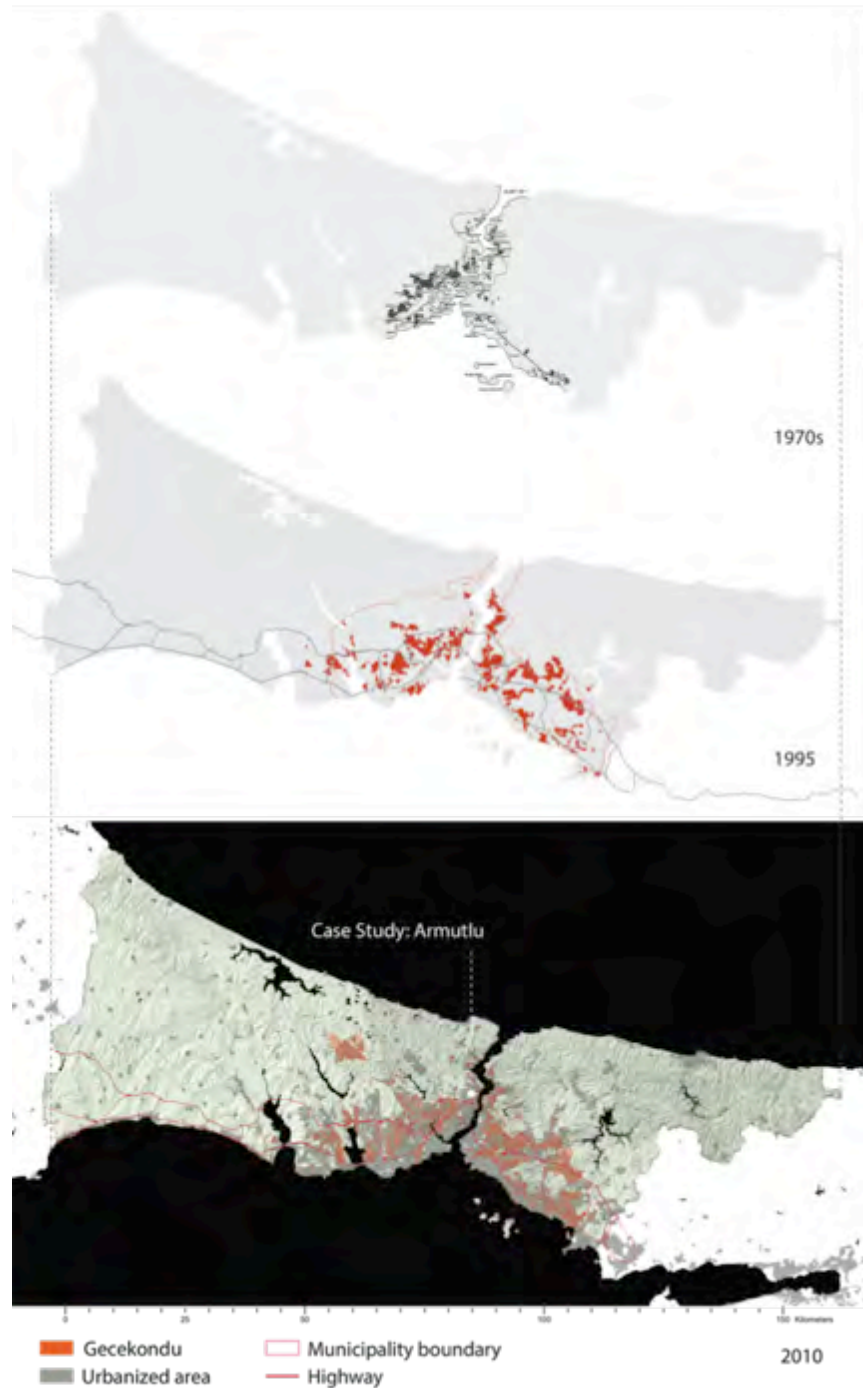


Figure 1. Mutation of *gecekondu* in Istanbul

Meanwhile, the emphasis of the “Turkish Sunni” character led to a conflict situation between authority and minority groups, and especially led to the Kurdish problem. The new wave of migrants included not only Kurdish from the southeastern region, but also the religious minority called Alevis from east Anatolia. They were escaping from terrorism and high-tension circumstances. The *gecekondu* functioned as an *arrival city* to

accept these newcomers. However, this has reinforced the political image of *gecekondu*s as always being linked to “revolutions” or “anti-government” activities. Through the years of 2000, further conflict was visible between the Housing Development Administration (TOKİ)<sup>35</sup> and the *gecekondu* residents, as well as dwellers from historical areas through the “urban renewal project”.<sup>34</sup> Thus, cleanse and relocation action targeted to develop new commercial projects on *gecekondu* lands, especially against those residents that had not profited from the previous amnesty for getting their titles, and eventually were occupying valuable land, became more visible as the dominant policy in Turkey.

Our case study, Armutlu, is in just such a difficult situation. It is located at the area along the TEM O2 highway near Fatih Sultan Mehmet Bridge. The initial development started in the 1950s. The actual value of land eventually increased, shaped by its surroundings such as ITU (Istanbul Technical University) on the north hill, the CBD zone, which shifted from the ancient economic site Eminönü to the Şişli- Mecidiyeköy-Zincirlikuyu-Levent-Maslak axis on the southwestern side, and to the south is Istanbul’s bourgeois residential area Etiler. Physically, this settlement has been well connected to the other parts of city through public transportation.<sup>36</sup> Armutlu is not an official name for this settlement, which has nearly 50,000 inhabitants<sup>37</sup> settled on a territory of 160 ha – an extremely low density if compared with other spontaneous settlements such as Dharavi in Mumbai or Kibera in Nairobi. The official administration is separated into two districts – Fatih Sultan Mahallesi (F.S.M) and Baltaliman Mahallesi. Nevertheless, the inhabitants do not use the official name in their daily life. Even on the indication panels of minibuses, “Armutlu” was written beside “F.S.M”. The two inner communities have been nominated as Büyük (Big) Armutlu and Küçük (small) Armutlu with a fluid boundary in between.

The story of Armutlu represents a typical trajectory: several migrant workers from the Black Sea region (Karadeniz, Rize, Artvin and Samsun) started to occupy empty lands and built their own shelter in Büyük Armutlu. They cultivated vegetables, raised livestock in this ancient royal hunting forest and worked in a nearby quarry. Although the number of households was only 30-40,<sup>38</sup> new migrants from Central Anatolia (Sivas, Malatya, Erzincan, Tokat and Kahramanmaraş) moved to this land after ten years. The study of Evren and İlker aligned and satellite maps (Fig. 2) show that up to the new migration wave of 1980 and early 1990, especially before the opening of the second Bosphorus Bridge, the Armutlu settlement had not been developed as a whole established group.<sup>39</sup> After the 1980s, some of the first migrants started to subdivide land and sell the enclosed plots to newcomers. In addition, a group of “*Revolutionary Left*”<sup>40</sup> entered Armutlu and invited people to build their shelter with free given land under their protection in Küçük Armutlu, where Alevis are the dominant party.<sup>41</sup> Evren and İlker have pointed out the rules<sup>42</sup> of construction set and controlled by the people’s committee to prevent the commercialization of houses, which is specifically different from other

*gecekondu* settlements during that period.<sup>39</sup> Today, although some of the rules seem to have disappeared, the communist character could still be observed when I visited Küçük Armutlu and stayed with the young generation in their cultural center.<sup>43</sup> Eventually, the conflict among the speculation group based on Büyük Armutlu, who were mainly Sunni Muslim, among those of the leftist group constituted by Alevi, Kurdish based on Küçük Armutlu and later conflicts with authority, led to sad stories, especially in the 1990s and hunger strikes in 2001. Furthermore, since the Armutlu residents still have an informal occupation of the public land which belongs to I.T.U, the military and the State, inevitably the valuable land has been considered for several projects.<sup>44</sup>

We can see from this background story an illustration of the socio-political situation in Armutlu. Nevertheless, there have been few studies focused on spatial norms and their elements inside the Turkish contemporary spontaneous.

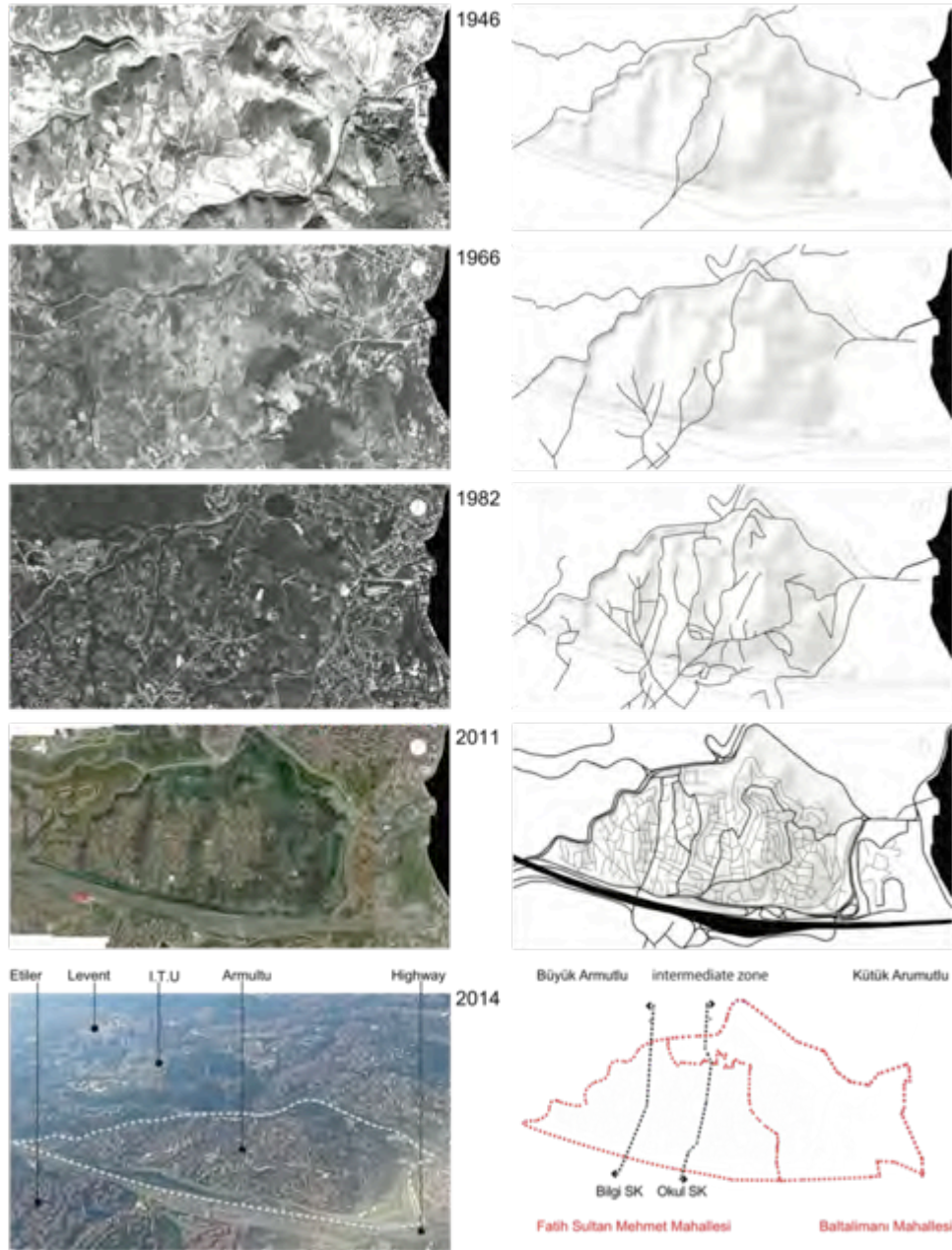


Figure 2. Development and current administration boundary of Armutlu

(Source: Satellite map from <http://sehirrehberi.ibb.gov.tr/map.aspx> and google map; Aerial photo by Min Tang)

## INTERPRETATION OF SPATIAL SYSTEM

*Without knowing any socio-political issues and knowing any contacts, I came to Armutlu alone in the autumn of 2011, holding a printed Google map in hand, and took the bus*

*from Kabataş, crossing Istanbul's biggest CBD axis. After an hour, I got off at the terminal station and of course, I got lost in a street nearby the bus station with conventional looks shops. This has broken my imagination of an "informal" settlement that has been rendered by media.*

*M. TANG*

The field trip was based on observation of the holistic built environment as a *flaneur*. Every road that I have walked has been recorded, as have the sketches and photos that focus on fragments of house, garden, street, shop, schools and infrastructures (Fig. 3). Even the dress and food has been recorded. The primary image of Armutlu has been established through mapping and random encounters with inhabitants; most of them were female. I was invited to houses. Children who were playing football in the alley took me to the primary school and I was able to connect with teachers, who have welcomed me warmly and made me participate in some of classes. During my stay in Armutlu I ate in the local kebab restaurant, and bought snacks and fruits in groceries. I took pictures of people; then the next time I will go back to the same place and bring them printed photos.



Figure 3. Observation of built environment in Armutlu. (Sketches: Min Tang 2011)



## NETWORK

Armutlu is built around four hills, which provide picturesque views especially towards the Bosphorus strait on the eastern side and the CBD skyscape on the western side. The orientation of Armutlu respects its topographic characteristic and coexists with the green system, while the road system can be seen clearly (Fig.4).



Figure 4. Green system and housing in summer time, 2014. (Photo: Min Tang)

The highway, rather than being integrated into Armutlu, has created an artificial boundary, which separates the middle-class residential zone and the *gecekondu*. There are three cross-routes that connect the two parts beside the highway. Only one is located in the center, which serves buses. Main roads in Armutlu are 6-10 meters wide, oriented from south to north to meet the transportation demand. Meanwhile, the main road works as a commercial center and a space for trade. Those in Küçük Armutlu serve for everyday life (textiles, food, café, tailor, bakery...), while in Büyük Armutlu, decoration, construction materials and electrical shops are the dominant businesses. Most of the buildings along the main road have been *apartmentalized* with multiple storey buildings. Alleys composing the main structure are 3-6 meters wide. They follow the topographic contours and connect the main road with households or passages like capillaries. They are playgrounds for children and some of them serve for the circulation of cars. The height differences offered by the topography provide a possibility to create intermediary spaces between the buildings and the road. Although there are variations in forms and privacy usage of this grey zone, they have kept a certain open-ness to the public; meanwhile the physical boundary constituted by the landscape or a lower fence still exists to

prevent the invasion of strangers (Fig.5).

Nevertheless, invasion onto the public space (road) from the side of the inhabitants has been found, especially at the lowest hierarchy of the road system. Thus, passages and cul-de-sacs (dead-ends) provide a more private place since no cars or public transportation pass by. The inhabitants have started to extend their outdoor space, but this space still meets the demand of daily circulation. Especially, common spaces such as courtyards shared by several surrounding houses have been frequently observed in the case of cul-de-sacs. Paved sidewalks exist at all levels of the road system.

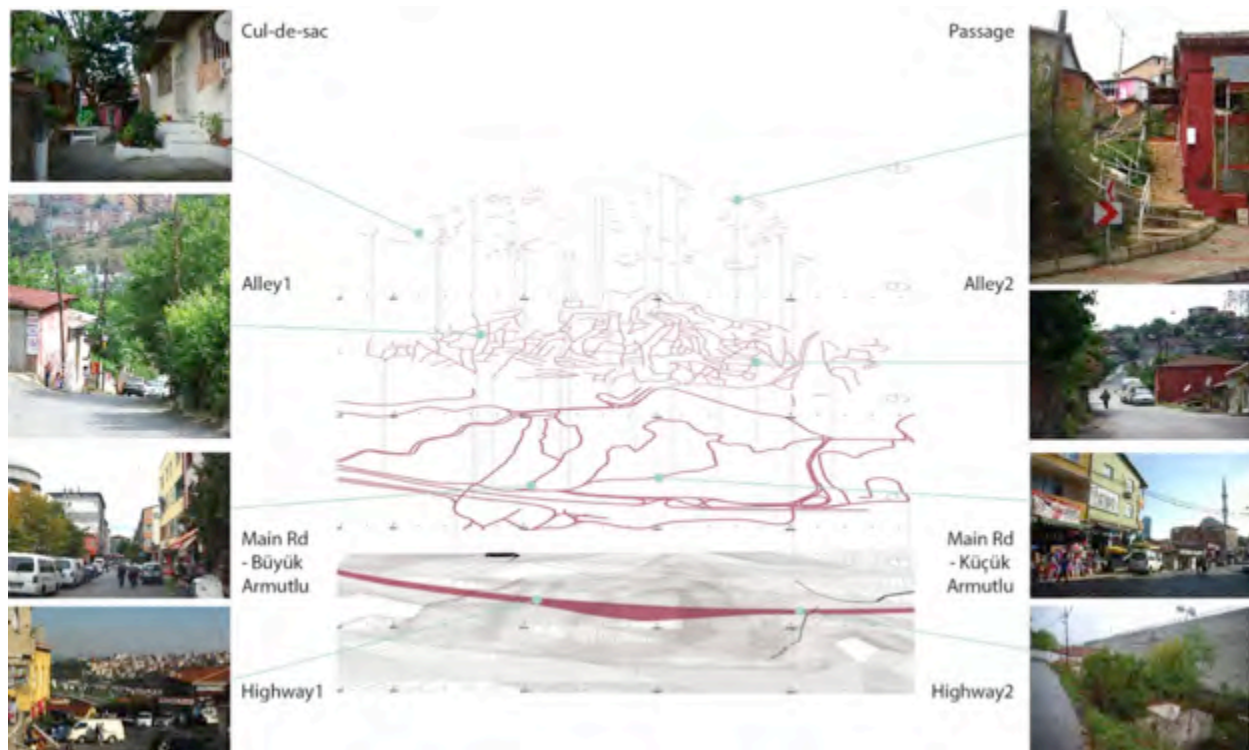


Figure 4. Hierarchy of network in Armutlu. (Photo: Min Tang)

## POINTS

We defined the “*point*” as something diffused in the settlement and which illustrates the common spatial identity of the spontaneous settlement in order to distinguish it from other settlements. As mentioned in the analysis of alleys, passages and cul-de-sacs, an intermediate zone that functions as a hinge has been observed everywhere. The further study of its morphology together with circulation route (Fig. 6) shows that the form of this space constitutes a combination of paved country yards, gardens or shallow roof covered entrance halls with sets of tables and chairs underneath. It could be an empty space as well, but we observed that shoes



have been left outside the door beside a mat. In the most extreme case, only a sofa had been placed in front of the door within a limited space to express the ambience of “someone’s territory”. For the multistoried apartments, intermediate spaces at ground level have been limited with less variation. However, the open balcony on the upper floor, as well as a semi-enclosed gallery on the rooftop, could be observed as a replacement. Scenes of vivid daily life are staged in this space. Especially during the visit on a sunny summer weekend, we saw families gathering together, sitting there, having tea and snacks. That is how it functions, as an open-air living room, with all the required features (Fig. 7).

Other fundamental elements are the green network constituted by potted plants, existing trees, flowers, lianas and even small areas of agricultural production in the intermediate space. These landscapes are integrated into the entire nature environment of Armutlu. Related information collected from interview show that dwellers consider the nature environment and the fresh air as among the most important advantages when living in Armutlu. In fact only two types of dwelling have gardens in fully populated Istanbul: one is in a *gecekondu* settlement like Armutlu, the other can be found in suburban, gated luxury villas.

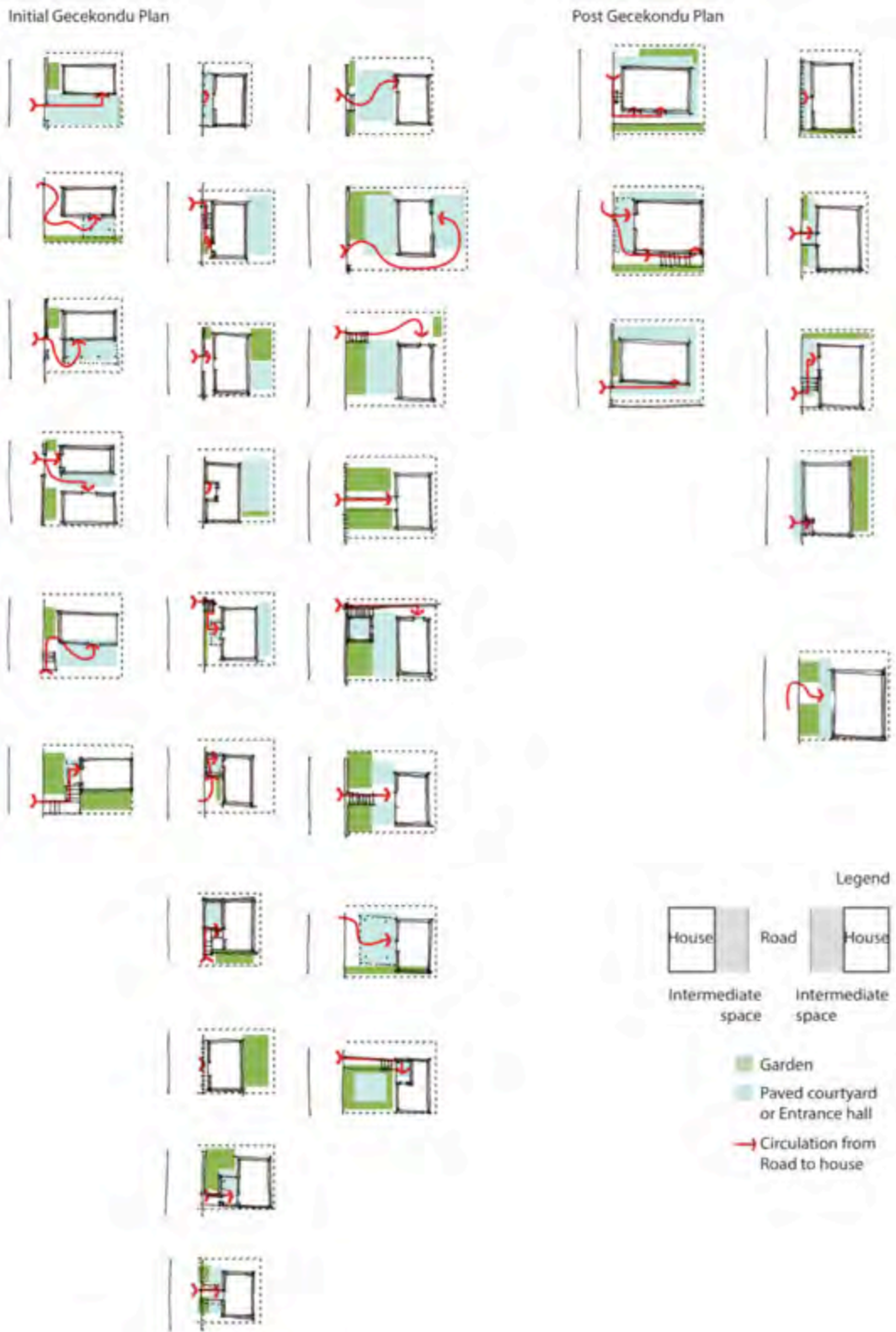


Figure 5. Intermediate zone between road and house with its key elements

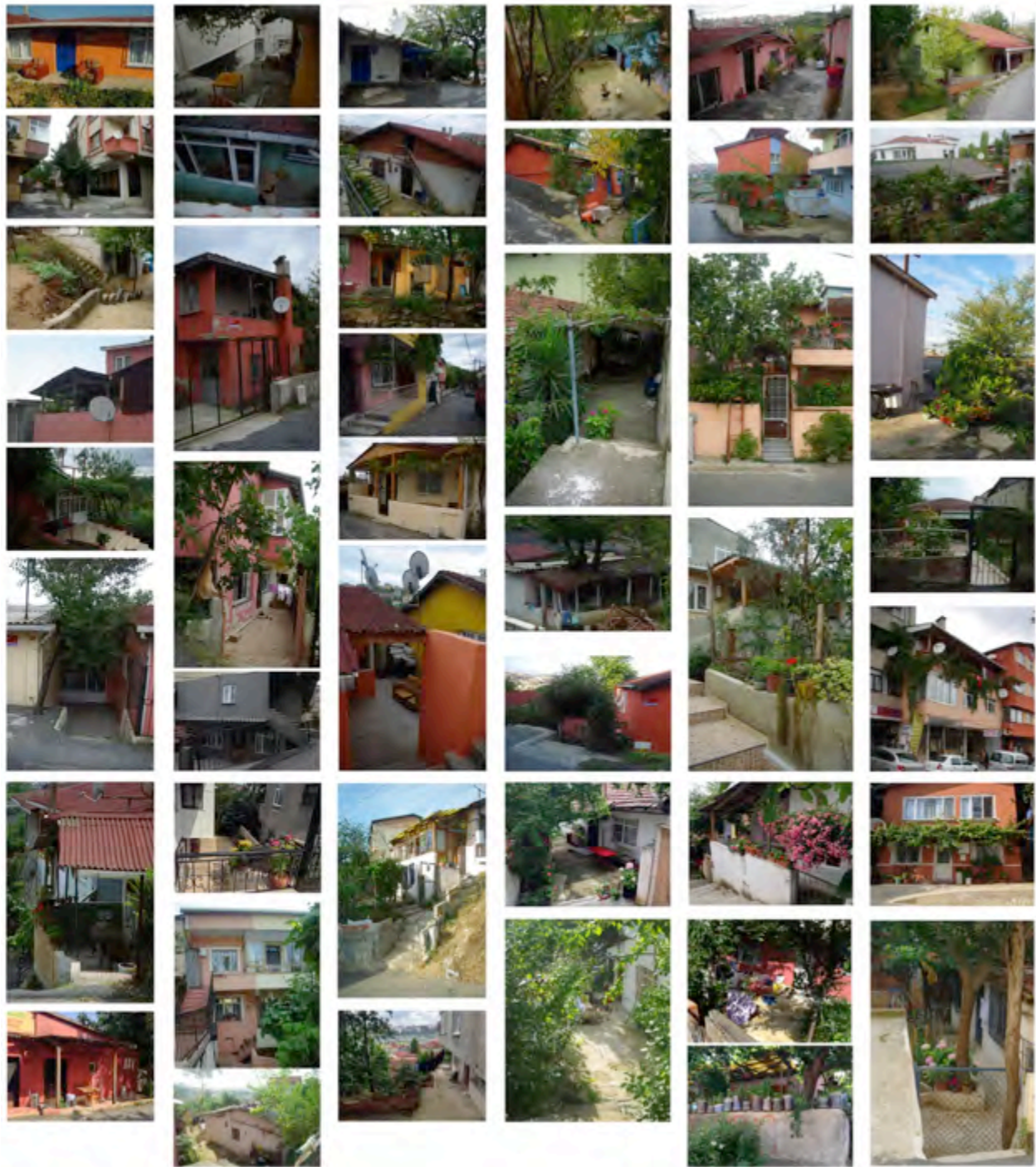


Figure 6. “Points” as spatial identity of Armutlu. (Photos: Min Tang)

## NODES

If “*points*” represent a fundamental, semi-private or semi-public characteristic, “*nodes*” refer to a public space, or precisely, a public space for a limited group of people, in terms of gender, religion or other criteria, that is situated outside the house. From this point of view, this paper prefers to use the term “socializing place” or “communication place” to show their characteristics. In Armutlu, nodes could be places like a local café, grocery, school, culture center, religion place, parks and small squares (Fig. 8). In Turkish society, a café is a place where men go every day in order to drink tea, play cards or chat with friends; moreover women are not allowed to go there. Thus, every man has his favorite café in the community.<sup>45</sup> Even the old father from the rural area, who comes to visit his son in Armutlu, goes to the local café during his short stay.

A grocery is more than a place to do daily shopping. Although globalized standard supermarkets exist in the main streets, people keep on going to the grocery, not only because of the walking distance, but also because it serves village products from original regions such as honey from Sivas or tea from Rize. While shopping, they can be cheery and chat with each other, especially with those from the same origin. Besides, it attracts children after school. They prefer to play on the street near a grocery so that they can buy snacks as they want. Thus, the owner of the grocery shop plays a role of social articulation, knowing everyone around in the community.

In the cultural infrastructure, schools are also an important place, especially for the younger generation. Armutlu has only one primary school within it. Even though it is a public school and most of the teachers have been sent there by the government, the building itself is informal. Besides the school, religious places played an important role in many cultural aspects. Because of minority social groups like Alevis have a specific requirement for the religious events. Thus the *Cemevi*, situated in Küçük Armutlu, plays a fundamental role of multifunction usage for the group of Alevis. The whole site has two main buildings, face to face, with an open space that offers sports facilities, and which were constructed in 1999. In our recent visit, construction of a third concrete building is on-going. One building has been used for religious prayer and community meetings,<sup>46</sup> and the other one, offering free coffee and tea, is a communication place for believers of all generations and genders. Youths were also around because there are several cultural courses concerning traditional instruments, dancing and language, and even mathematics lessons have been arranged in small rooms. Therefore, the *Cemevi* becomes a main communication place and core of the Alevi society with cultural-political issues. The district authority has built some public spaces, such as parks, and has built a new football ground. Parents with younger children are the main users of the park during the weekends. The newly built football ground seems popular with young boys.

## THE BOUNDARY

The strategies to construct a “boundary” in Armutlu could be underlined as the combination of natural resources with artificial elements. Micro-scale boundaries have been created by the topography by using the height difference. Inhabitants, through the construction and decoration process of intermediate spaces, referenced the privacy of inner buildings, and at the same time opened a part of life as a “front” stage to the others (Fig.9). From this point of view, physical boundaries have been blurred. One dweller has expressed to me “the culture of *gecekondu*” as a self-help and group-help in the same community. That could be one of the reasons why the “front” stage serves as a “socializing place”, especially among female friends. The other part of the boundary is invisible, focusing on the perception produced by experimental practice. Each node has a radiation range and each inhabitant has his preference of nodes. The trajectory, starting from the house, passing through a network towards nodes, produces a “personal sphere”,<sup>47</sup> which has been reinforced/reproduced by everyday access and a habituation of scene, especially the memory of symbolic elements in the trajectory. Thus, a perception of “my territory” with invisible boundaries has been accomplished, accompanied by a personalized image based on different symbols on the way. Nevertheless, the macro boundary of the *gecekondu* settlement has been shaped by infrastructure (the highway) and height difference of hills.



Distribution and Density of "Nodes"

Form

Usage



Turkish cafe house ⊕ D=200m



Grocery ⊕ D=200m



School ⊕ D=1000m



Cultural / Religion facility ⊕ D=500m



Figure 7. Distribution, Form and Usage of "Nodes" in Armutlu. Photo by Min Tang .The two photos (bottom) of the cultural center show an Alevism ceremony in the *Cemevi*, and the community meeting for all residents.

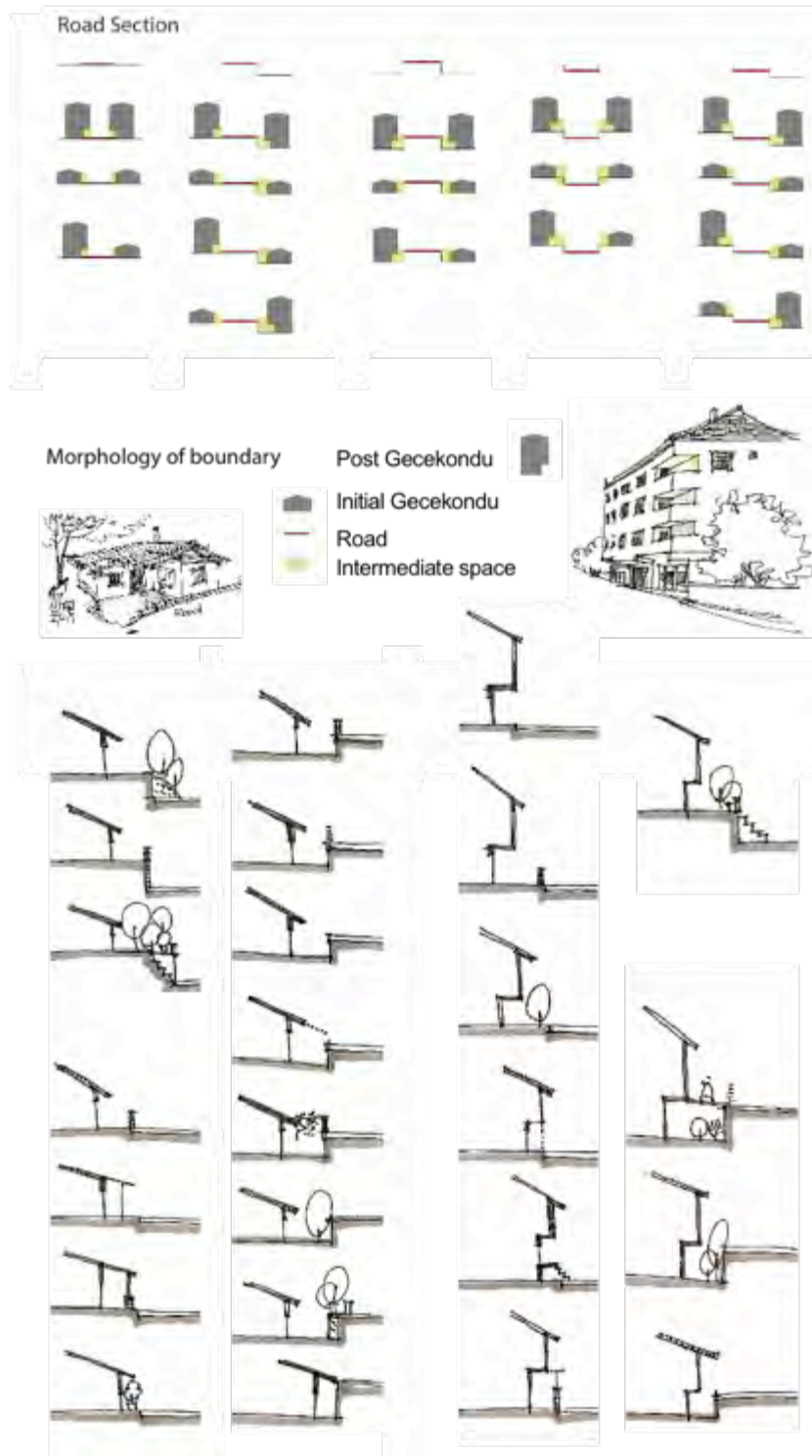


Figure 8. "Boundary" and diverse "Fronts"

## EVOLUTION

The discussion of evolution should start from the physical consolidation and densification. As the topography presented many obstacles to those who wanted to settle down, the housing begins along the perimeter of the irregular housing block, delimited by pedestrian paths. The first group of dwellers preferred to develop the land from the top of the hill, and then filled up the slope and the bottom of the valley. The consolidation process linked directly to the improvement in materials in the case of Armutlu. According to Şenyapılı's empirical research on *gecekondu* in Istanbul and Ankara during the 1970s, three types of initial material were: *sun-dried brick, timber frame with mud brick in-fill or, the stone wall with tin sheets as roof.*<sup>30</sup> Later, cinder block has become a major material for walls. Today, the shelters in Armutlu constructed of cinder block have been covered by a wall finish painted in a bright color. Some of them were exposed. However, most of the frame structures that we could observe in Armutlu are reinforced concrete, which has been seen as a phenomenon of dissemination of modernist vocabulary (le Corbusier's Domino scheme). Jirón Paola has discussed this phenomenon and concluded in the end that in the country, Brazil, of her initial hypothesis, although one might think that magazines and newspapers would have been the main avenues of architectural dissemination, actually the construction workers and inhabitants themselves carried information through their job or a third party.<sup>28</sup>

Relatives, those who came from the village and built houses near their kinship, have accelerated the extension activities in *gecekondu*. Especially, the marriage of a male family member stimulated new constructions, either beside the old core, or a new floor would be added. The densification of the inner cluster and the creation of inner accesses were the second step after the first group of shelters faced the main roads. Settlers preferred to occupy a large plot of land from the beginning: "*The general building base covers about 30-35% of the site... the rest of the land is was kept for futher extension or for speculative purposes?*", and in the very early stage the settled *gecekondu* dwelling consisted of "*a hall (2.70x2.00m), a room (3x4m)*" and the empty space which functioned as cultivated land or a garden.<sup>30</sup>

After the consolidation and some incremental extensions, the construction of common public structures like mosques and schools were built and the roads were improved in what has been regarded as *the third phase*.

Şenyapılı again pointed out another possible process that:

*"When new gecekondu areas have been opened en masse instead of on an individual basis after 1970s, they first asked assistant experienced elders in the neighborhood near them, and together with them they went to the area and occupied about 150-200 parcels*



*each about 10 ha. In the meantime, the experienced elders walked over the site, allocating land for community facilities like schools, a mosque, sports area and the like.”<sup>30</sup>*

This phenomenon is rather interesting, as it shows that the inverted development process for the appearance *nodes* was thought of in advance, and they were planned elements in some cases. However, Armutlu has followed the first way, as its school was built in 1993, and the *Cemevi* built in 1999.

Apartment buildings were observed, especially in Büyük Armutlu. These have been defined as “*Post-Gecekondu*”<sup>48</sup> or “*Apartmankondu*”<sup>49</sup> to indicate that the initial *gecekondu* have been replaced by high-rise apartments by individual contractors.<sup>50</sup> The commercialization boom of *gecekondu* has less impact on Küçük Armutlu, due to the self-regulation of the leftist group. The initial *gecekondu* housing is still the dominant style in eastern Armutlu.

Meanwhile, Armutlu is still accepting new migrants and functions as an arrival city. Among the inhabitants that we interviewed, the longest serving ones came to Armutlu in the 1970s. These families were upgraded as their offspring (with three generations) either had a successful established business or received a higher education at university. Some of them moved out of Armutlu and rented their houses to newcomers. One Alevis family that I met in 2011 settled in Armutlu in 2009. They initially rented a whole *gecekondu* house for 550TL per month. The three elder daughters together with their parents worked in the middle-class area near Armutlu. The two younger daughters had to stay at home after high school in order to help in doing housework. They could not go outside Armutlu without their father’s permission. A change has occurred at my recent visit after two years. Two and half years previously no one had internet in this family; at my recent visit the three young teenagers had smartphones in their hands, and shared their daily life photos on Facebook with makeup, western style dresses and high-heeled shoes. Furthermore, one of the youngest girls is preparing for the university entrance examination for the architecture department.

Furthermore, the usage of space has been also changed. Although Armutlu had an informal status, the transformation process in terms of land use was triggered by its approximate location to the business district of the upper class. First, a butcher and steakhouse named *Dükkan* was opened on the southern hill, offering services for elite groups who came in their fancy cars. After *Dükkan*, a Ferrari service station and a French bakery were opened in the district. They chose Armutlu because of its cheap rent and easy access by car. Meanwhile, the registering of companies there met some problems, because the officials at the city planning office said it was not possible to register a building without an official title (*tapu*). Nevertheless, the authorities

tolerated *Dükkan*, and business is booming. There are also some integration events bringing the different classes together. The open-air bazaar, held every Sunday in Armutlu, attracts not only *gecekondu* dwellers but also modern women from middle-class residential zones nearby. The transformation of space use towards services that target the upper classes and common events that can bring all the people together, could be regarded as an integration of the different social groups.

## THE TRADITIONAL VERNACULAR AND CONTEMPORARY SPONTANEOUS IN THE TURKISH CONTEXT

Traditional Turkish built environments are “Turkish rooms-*Odda*”, which are on a micro scale, “Turkish houses - *Türk evi*” on a mezzo scale, and “Turkish streets and districts - *Mahalle*” on a macro scale.<sup>51</sup> The study of mezzo and micro has been focused on the house plan typology, material, form and function of the elements. Sedat Hakkı Eldem has produced surveys of 1500 Turkish houses from different regions and has elaborated not only the common elements of the Turkish traditional houses (rooms, halls, and stairs), but also a classification of housing typology based on the localization of hall (outer hall, inner hall, central hall or without hall).<sup>52-54</sup> The roll of a hall (*hayat* or *sofa*) is multifunctional. It serves as a circulation area which connects the stairs to the rooms but it also functions as the place where the whole household assembles, getting together for activities such as chatting, eating and even sleeping. The open hall type (Fig.10) was regarded as the *basic configuration*, underlined by Eldem and Kuban as the origin of the traditional Turkish house that was based on the dichotomy of semi-open and closed spaces.<sup>55,56</sup> Later, the alternative approach to examining the element of the Turkish house was by use of “spatial syntax” by Bill Hillier. Orhun and Hillier have extracted two *genotypes* from sixteen examples according to their spatial organization. *The deep core house* is where the hall at the first floor is amongst the most integrated spaces of interior space, but is relatively separated by exterior spaces and views. In a house of *shallow type*, the integration core has been shifted to a paved yard on the ground floor. The garden is the second most common space with a shallow character from the outside, but also quite segregated and enclosed from the street.<sup>57</sup> The other elements, like the kitchen and bathroom, occupy less important positions and they do not even exist in the main building.

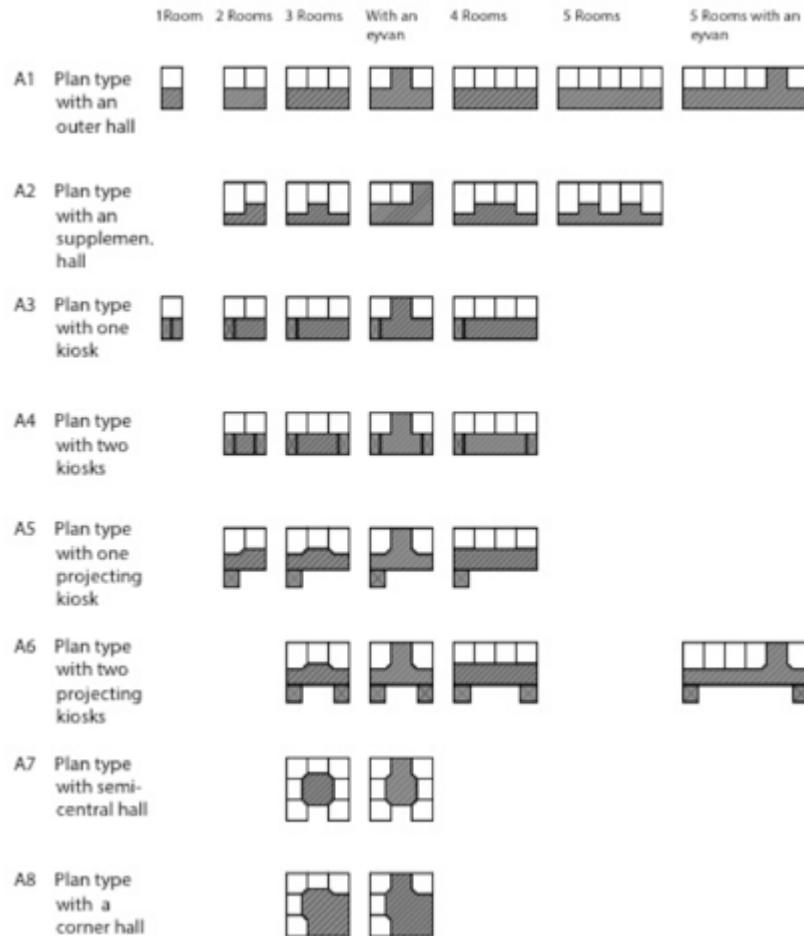


Figure 9. Plan types with an outer hall (Eldem, 1984, pp.26-27), cited by Cagdas, Gülen. “A Shape Grammar: The Language of Traditional Turkish Houses.” *Environ. Plann. B Environment and Planning B: Planning and Design* 23, no. 4 (1996): 443-64.

In terms of the Turkish town, Necdet explained the process of the *mahalle* as: “*In Turkey, mahalle and the system introduced by it is as old as rural settlements...The established mahalle boundaries are usually related to socio-economic factors and their social structure is based upon family organization*”.<sup>58</sup> He has further indicated the repetitive densification process of a core family towards a core group. Until a certain number of inhabitants arrived, the core families together with other rich families would donate money to build public infrastructures like mosques and schools. Other symbolic facilities have been regarded as part of the *mahalle* system, such as coffeehouses, groceries and guest rooms. The diversity of services (barbershop, tailor, ironmonger and carpenter) is only possible in units with more than 750 residents.<sup>58</sup> Turgut has further emphasized the hierarchy of the special organization as cul-de-sac, street, road and square, to carry people successively from the private to the

semi-public-private, up to the public spheres of life. In the traditional Turkish society, spatial organization reflects social structure and cultural-religious norms. The enclosed characteristic of a house towards the street is a symbol of control: the female needs to stay in the private realm of the home; while for a man, remaining indoors is somehow *dishonor* and they definitely need to have socialization spaces somehow outside of the home.<sup>55</sup>

It is clear that our interpretation of Armutlu through the orientation of “*points*” and “*nodes*”, and their important roles on both household scale and community scale, shows the transmission of traditional vernacular philosophy onto the contemporary spontaneous. Although the size, material as well as the form of the basic element, hall, courtyard and garden, had a huge variation and evolution, these spaces retain their symbolic meaning and have received a transformation to meet the life in the city. Some of the “*points*” and “*nodes*” have emerged during the first stage of *gecekondu* construction together with the basic room. The social relationship is still a fundamental base in the *gecekondu*, and the organization of different space usage according to gender and other needs coming from the vernacular lifestyle, has illustrated the aspect of conservation among social groups in Armutlu.

The fundamental change is the outdoors-indoors relationship, as the boundary is much more transparent in Armutlu. A fluid space in order to promote socialization has replaced the solid wall and the enclosed upper floor. The change is also due to the active role that women play in the free urban circumstance.<sup>59</sup> Modern elements and spaces, like equipped kitchens and bathrooms, occupy an important role nowadays in the house, especially for housewives based on our interview.

## CONCLUSION

We started this paper by questioning the role that the contemporary spontaneous played in the transmission of the traditional vernacular, as well as the impact that the latter could give to spontaneous settlement. In the analysis of the Turkish case, Armutlu shows that the key features, which are elements of identity - “*points*” in its spatial schemata, have learnt from the traditional vernacular by adopting abstract, symbolic elements in architectural scale. This could also be observed among different social groups. The concrete physical attribution in terms of materials, forms or localization has been either transformed or personalized in order to meet the requirements of life in the city. Its social attribution has been transformed as well from a private characteristic to a semi-public characteristic. Meanwhile, some of the “*nodes*” kept a semi-private attribution, allowing access for certain groups according to their cultural-religious demand. The physical boundary has been blurred in comparing the traditional vernacular, due to the modernization acculturation. The

transformation of space usage and activities between Armutlu and the surrounding areas has created some gaps in the social boundary.

The other aspect is that economic status in Armutlu is proportional to the house and built environment. Residents have invested in their houses and are satisfied with the living conditions. Therefore, most of the initial dwellers did not abandon this *gecekkondu*. New constructions can be observed, and new migrants are still entering Armutlu. The case proves that the role of the contemporary spontaneous has functioned as a transmitter which connects traditional vernaculars and contemporary cities. It has not only been nourished by the traditional culture, knowledge and the lifestyle, but has also adapted new elements. These settlements have created a new norm, more precisely a new order of indoors-outdoors relation and an ambiguous attribution beyond public-private dichotomy, as could be learnt from the analysis of Armutlu.

Finally, we would pre-qualify Armutlu as a case which could be placed at the superior phase. Nezar AlSayyad emphasizes that study on this subject could not be detached from geography, or from certain area-studies discourses.<sup>60</sup> The requirement of profiling various cross-culture case studies is indispensable for our future research. A comparison study will be proceeding, based on the synthesis constituted by schemata of *superior mechanism* from each case. Hence, we can somehow create prototypes based on the spontaneous schemata that have different characteristics as references for the future of the contemporary spontaneous.<sup>61</sup>

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16. “集落 Juraku” means human settlement. But in the Japanese academic context, they are more focused on the traditional vernacular settlement when using this notion.
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  37. City buses connect it with Kabataş, minibus (dolmuş) which cross all the main streets of Armutlu linked it efficiently with all its neighbors and especially the economic axis where the metro line is connected.
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  42. We got this information during our interview with an inhabitant in the Cemevi, a public place and

- religious place for Alevi in Küçük Armutlu. They mentioned that 80% of dwellers in Küçük Armutlu would follow the religion of Alevism, and among them, 30% of dwellers are Kurdish in terms of ethnicity.
43. No houses in Küçük Armutlu can be larger than 120 square meters. The only condition of overcoming the limit is the structure of the land where the house is located. Nobody can rent out or buy his house. No house can have more than two floors except cases such as the necessity to find a house for a married child. A man who already has a house cannot settle in Küçük Armutlu. All the inhabitants of Küçük Armutlu must obey the basic moral values.
  44. The youth were extremely interested in my Chinese nationality, and keep talking about the communist topic with the name of “Mao”.
  45. The technical park project by I.T.U has been planned in 2003 on the I.T.U part land. During my recent visit to Küçük Armutlu in June 2014, I have heard from the inhabitants that a urban renewal project of TOKI has been planned in Armutlu.
  46. They always go to the same cafe.
  47. We experienced both religious prayers and a community meeting at the end of 2011. The former refers to the ceremony where men and women wear their traditional costume and dance together. They allowed the people from the external world join them. Their religious leader announced that “Today we have people from the other part of the world join us as we are equal human beings.” The community meeting was held in a room beside the ceremony one. The subject was about Toki's project. Not only the Alevi people, but also other dwellers attended it. The total was around 100 people.
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62. For example the more venacular characteristic schemata or the more industrialized schemata could be two different prototypes.



**Traditional Dwellings and Settlements**  
Working Paper Series

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**“SUBVERSIVE” SPATIAL PRACTICES  
IN THE URBAN FRINGE OF SÃO PAULO**

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**Volume 266**

Pages 54–

2014

## “SUBVERSIVE” SPATIAL PRACTICES IN THE URBAN FRINGE OF SÃO PAULO



*This essay aims to articulate the historical entanglement norm/subversion underpinning recent spatial practices of the working class at the urban fringe of São Paulo. These subversive practices have challenged traditional ways of accessing land, home ownership and urban services. They are mostly labeled as informal, illegal, and unplanned. Yet, the “informal city” label is unstable, as unstable is the sharp divide between formal/informal. Land, House and City are the three scales that organize this essay. They correspond to the spatial practices of “Neto”, a favela resident. He bought a piece of land informally, self-constructed his house, and upgraded his favela surroundings bit by bit. At all scales, his spatial practices appear to be at once subversive and allowed by the norm.*

*“Is it dangerous to walk around the neighborhood?”*

*“It depends on where you are going”*

*“I’m going in the favela”*

*“There, yes, it is dangerous; why do you want to mingle with favelados?”*

### INTRODUCTION

In a *boteco* (bar) in Tremembé, a northeastern district in the periphery of São Paulo, everybody is watching Brazil-Colombia at the World Cup 2014. Bottles of beers and small yellow/green flags are everywhere. The few words of Pedro, from Bahia, entail the Brazilian “differentiated citizenship”<sup>1</sup>: a historically inherited different entitlement to full citizenship of the ruling- and the working-class, here reproduced among the poor. Now that Pedro has a job as an ironmonger and owns a single-family house in the *Sítio do Piqueri*, he feels more entitled than people in the favela to full citizenship. Although he was a *favelado* 25 years ago, now he owns a house *and* the land underneath. People living in legal *loteamentos* (land subdivisions), like *Sítio do Piqueri*, set a clear divide between them and the squatters in the favelas. The former bought the land (although in most cases some degree of illegality made the transaction possible); the latter occupied it without permission (on private or public land).

However, both spatial practices—squatting and semi-legal transactions—in the urban fringe of São Paulo have challenged since 1980s established ways to access the Land, the House and the City. These three scales structure the essay. This order of scales follows the lived experience of Neto, who bought a piece of land, built his house and worked everyday to bring the city into a favela in the northeastern periphery of São Paulo. One cannot understand Neto’s spatial practices without situating them into a broader socio-historical context. Hence, each section of this essay begins with an historical overview of land distribution, housing and urban policies in Brazil and, more specifically, in São Paulo.

The first section (Land) depicts squatter settlements and illegal land grabs as alternative to—but entangled with—orthodox ways of accessing the land. Both squatting and illegal transactions have historical origins grounded into a tradition of unequal distribution of land in Brazil. The second part (House) confronts working class’ practices of self-construction with governmental low cost housing policies and provisioning. Finally, the third section (City) explores working class’ bottom-up claims for- and contribution to incremental urbanism, as differing from top-down infrastructure planning and development. Over the last decades these working class’ spatial practices in São Paulo have subverted the hierarchy of agencies over the production of space. Yet these bottom-up practices originate from within the prevalent system: in São Paulo, norm and transgression, hegemony and subversion appear entangled in a relational *raison d’être*.

## **LAND**

### **Dividing the Immense Brazilian Latifundia**

Unequal distribution of land in Brazil has been pervasive since the Portuguese claimed the territory in the 16th century. In 1548 the Rules of Government allowed Crowns’ agents of the New World to selectively distribute land for economic exploitation or Christianization. According to the Royal Emissary Act discovered or conquest lands were part of the king’s patrimony, administered through a system of royal grants (*sesmarias*). This system permitted expropriations of uncultivated lands and reallocation for a rent of one-sixth of the annual production, upon verification of the prospective owner’s capacity to real production. However, to further attract colonizers, the cultivation of the land in the immediate present ceased to be the unique condition to rent it. Annual incentives were offered to invest in lands destined to future export production of

sugar, coffee, and cattle. In 1822, the year of its independence, Brazil was divided in “enormous latifundia for slaveholding, aristocrats, and commercially oriented ruling class.”<sup>2</sup>

In this context, squatting on imperial lands was diffuse among those who couldn’t apply for *sesmarias*, and tolerated on empty lands. Actually, if the squatters had cultivated the occupied land, registered their claims, and paid taxes for a consistent period, they were eventually entitled to legalize their rights and hold the land with the title of *posse*. As it was often sufficient for the squatter to mark the cultivation with a footpath, the boundaries of the *posses* were often different and bigger than the official ones.

These practices of rough land division on the ground created ambiguity over land property. At the same time, the Crown’s method of granting *sesmarias* over vague land divisions exacerbated this imbroglio. This seemed to be a refined strategy to raise any quarrels between owners, rather than against the king. On their part, landholding elites learned to use the practice of squatting as a way to expand their holdings over public lands. Since then the law was interpreted by all parties for personal interests through intricate meshes of legal and illegal practices and transactions. As a result, when the Imperial Constitution (1824) and the Land Law (1850) legitimated the private property, very few owners had full legal titles over their lands. To further complicate this enmeshment, the Republican Constitution in 1891 ambiguously demarcated indigenous lands as abandoned or vacant. Individual Brazilian states therefore acquired these *terrae devolutae* under the agenda of transforming them into productive lands for socio-economic purposes.<sup>3</sup>

The Brazilian Republic inherited thereby a tradition of misrule and a technocracy of land grabbers over land management, a tradition reproduced and amplified during the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century. The rapid transformation of Brazilian society and economy from rural to industrialized one, in fact, created massive urbanization in a matter of decades. This phenomenon exacerbated disputes and subterfuges in the access to urban land to the extreme that nowadays “Brazilian law regularly produces unresolvable procedural and substantive complexity in land conflicts.”<sup>4</sup>

### **Accessible Land in the Periphery of São Paulo**

In São Paulo the massive urbanization during the 20<sup>th</sup> century was even more evident than in the rest of Brazil. Its acceleration was due to the expansion of coffee production and the development of an emerging industry.<sup>5</sup> The population of the city from 1940 to 2000 increased tenfold, from 1.3 million to 10.5 million people,<sup>6</sup> giving birth since 1940 to the so-called center-periphery urban model of expansion of São Paulo and its Metropolitan Region. This model assumes the center as the radiating core for infrastructure and services: the less central the location, the less serviced and connected. The periphery of the city is thus the result of immigration of poor people from the North to the South and centrifugal, uneven forces (industrialization, state interventions, and real estate speculators) pushing the working classes from the center of the city to the hinterland. The working classes living in the periphery have learnt how to use legal complications over land to their advantage. It is precisely the level of semi-legality in land access—characterizing urbanism in the periphery—that guarantees their right to land ownership. In the periphery, where there is no infrastructure or secondary urbanization (schools, hospitals, etc.), the cost of a piece of land has been accessible to the poor. At the same time, in response to an always-crescent demand of land, rampant entrepreneurs have found several ways to make the periphery profitable for themselves, through wild practices of speculation.

Another way to access land in the periphery has been, as in the past, through the occupation of unused lands by squatters, with the further legalization of the illegal. The typical process of squatter settlements is a pattern following four basic phases: “land invasion, social formation, physical consolidation, and urban maturity.”<sup>7</sup> It can range from single initiatives, to collective mobilizations, to organized squatting by political parties. On occasion, the endorsement or promotion of squatting by political parties, such as in the case of the Progressive Democratic Committees of the Brazilian Communist Party (PCB), were seen as a way to acquire votes, often with the support of land owners in search of infrastructure for their lands.<sup>8</sup>

The periphery of São Paulo is therefore the result of the interaction of “developers, who divide, sell, and speculate, and settlers, who purchase or squat on seized land,” private or public.<sup>9</sup> This articulated system of land access has created an uneven geography of squatter settlements and informal land subdivisions, irregularly complemented by public housing units.<sup>10</sup> Current landholding in the periphery is thus based on the instrumental misuse of the law based on ambiguous historical legitimacy. A “fundamental relationship between usurpation and legitimation” characterizes its development: “usurpation initiates settlement and precipitates the legitimation of land claims.”<sup>11</sup>

I'm going to address this problematic by looking at a specific site of the northeastern periphery of in São Paulo, *Cabuçu de Cima*. The São Paulo Municipal Housing Agency (*Sehab*) has outlined this area of the *Tremembé/Jaçana* districts as one of the Perimeters of Integrated Action (PAIs). PAIs are priority urban perimeters for which the *Sehab* aims to deploy strategies of urban development.<sup>12</sup> In this area of 1,100 hectares currently live 220,000 residents<sup>13</sup>, 80,000 of which within the boundary defined as Special Zone of Social Interest (ZEIS I).<sup>14</sup> The relevance of choosing *Cabuçu de Cima* as area of investigation consists in its uneven geography of land tenures as representative of the whole periphery of São Paulo. In 2006 *Sehab* elaborated maps of land tenures and infrastructure provisioning in *Cabuçu de Cima*. These maps highlight in different colors squatter settlements, subdivisions (*loteamentos*) not yet urbanized, and urbanized yet not legalized settlements (*assentamentos urbanizados*) that can be former favelas or *loteamentos* (Fig. 1). Quite often these areas overlap, giving birth to webs of legal issues that *Sehab* is trying to solve. To understand the formation of this landscape of tenures it is necessary to look at the history of the northern periphery of São Paulo and *Cabuçu de Cima*.

### **The Northern Periphery of São Paulo and *Cabuçu de Cima***

The expansion of São Paulo in the North has occurred between the *Tietê* River and the *Serra da Cantareira* (8,000 hectares of Atlantic forest), which marks the end of the Municipality of São Paulo in the North. At the beginning of 20<sup>th</sup> century the northern fringe of the city was mainly constituted by big latifundia and used for leisure and religious aims. While some urbanized settlements (i.e. *Santana* and *Freguesia do Ó*) functioned as weekend residence for farm owners, rural dwellings of the poor occupied the hills, organized around small churches and parochial congregations.<sup>15</sup> By 1920, during the rationalization of the water sources in the *Serra da Cantareira* and the production of potable water, the Tramway and the urban fabric expanded towards the *Tremembé/Jaçana* districts. The Tramway also set tenure and social geographical divides between valuable areas “this side” of the railroad (*aquém da linha*) and the poor one, “behind the railroad” (*além da linha*). It was complemented after 1935 by the new road system, traced on the tracks of the old routes leading to the hinterland of the state. This part of the city wasn't in reality characterized by massive industrialization. The few industries and working settlements established firstly at the margins of the *Tietê* River, then along the railroad and afterwards, with the development of a diffuse bus service, sideways the road system. Between



1940 and 1960 occupation of land by the poor in this area grew, exacerbated by inefficient housing policies and elite oriented planning initiatives. During the years of dictatorship (1964-1985) the massive involvement of economic sectors in housing production increasingly led to a diffuse use of land for private profit: in 1976 the land held for speculative purposes in São Paulo reached 43% of the area available for building. By 1980 the outlying areas of the city had increased by 480 sq km<sup>16</sup>, while the Brazilian economy was about to collapse. The housing shortage of the 1980s caused an increase in squatter's housing movements, and after 1981 organized land invasions increased.

In 1985, right in the middle of the so-called Brazilian 1980s "lost decade," a massive occupation involved the areas of *Cabuçu de Cima* belonging to the *Santa Casa* (Holy House). Part of this occupation led to court-mandated evictions. The state government intervened by building *Jona Rural*, the first Housing Complex of the area, to host evicted families. "This was one of the first raids that take place in the wake of the democratization process of the country, which reduced the chances of recovery of possession, in view of the social use that was intended to give empty and idle land."<sup>17</sup> Almost the entire area of the *Santa Casa* was gradually occupied through further invasions, sales of plots promoted by tenants of the *Santa Casa* and *grilagens* (land scams) arranged by land grabbers. The Municipality of São Paulo supported the occupation of at least three subdivisions: *Vila Gabão* in 1982 (60,000sqm), *Jardim Filhos da Terra* in 1983 (152,000sqm) and *Jardim Palmares* in 1984 (30,000sqm). In these cases, families acquired the area with funding from FUNAPS (*Fundo de Habitação Popular*), administered by a council of residents and administrators and run from within the *Sebab*. These settlements have developed at the foot of the *Serra da Cantareira*, characterizing the urban fabric dissolving into the forest. Here the relationship between dwellings, topography, and the existing river basins is problematic: squatter and illegal settlements are a skin-like fabric following the rugged topography underneath. Geological and geotechnical risks challenge the dwellings on the slopes, while hydrological risk involves others developed along rivers and canals (Fig. 2).

*Guapira I* is a favela in *Cabuçu de Cima* that presents very complex relief with steep slopes (Fig. 3 and 4). Originally a private area, it was occupied in 1988 and expropriated by the Municipality in the cause of social interest in 1991. 1,920 inhabitants live in a total area of 49,270sqm, for a total density of 535.78 inhabitants/ha.<sup>18</sup> Neto, from Bahia, is one of the residents of *Guapira I* that didn't squat, but rather bought there a piece of land in 1989. For a plot of 6x29m he gave a pre-payment to someone later identified as a land

grabber. Neto then began to pay 1.5 of a minimum wage a month for almost one year. Before the end of the first year, in 1991, the Municipality of São Paulo under mayor Luiza Erundina intervened to expropriate this area for public utility. Neto's payments were monthly deferred to the bank, as evidence of his being a good payer. The money transferred to the bank was at some point refunded to Neto, who therefore doesn't own the land. However, the house that in the meantime he had built on the plot belongs to him. Its construction has been an incremental spatial practice, as alternative to the packaged, delivered state housing blocks design by architects. The next section firstly describes top-down social housing policies and provisioning in São Paulo, then Neto's bottom-up practice of self-construction.

## HOUSE

### Housing Policies and Provisioning in São Paulo

Until the 1930s in Brazil housing for the working classes was provided by the private sector, through either companies' worker villages or rental housing, namely *cortiços* (tenements). *Cortiços* were highly profitable investments due to the low construction cost. When they became obstacles for urban renewal initiatives they were demolished and their residents forced to move toward less desirable areas of the city.<sup>19</sup>

Governmental housing policies began in the 1930s with Getulio Vargas' centralization, at a federal level, of policies to house the massive population of industrial workers. This kind of populism eventually released the private market from the responsibility of social housing without developing an all-encompassing public policy that could respond to the real demand. Between 1937 and 1964 only 140,000 dwellings for rent were produced: "a lot of publicity for a modest response of public housing programs."<sup>20</sup> Moreover, the Tenant Law (*Lei do Inquilinato*, 1942), that froze the rents in São Paulo for some twenty years, caused a dramatic decrease in private investments in rental blocks. This policy, initially intended to help masses, actually forced workers to find alternatives to the insane and overcrowded tenements in the center. They moved to the outskirts to build their own houses.<sup>21</sup> For some politicians this strategy was a solution to low-cost housing demand, without any investment of government funds. As already stated, squatting on private or public lands became, like in the past, a practice to access land, complementary to illegal transactions to buy it.

During the Brazilian dictatorship, housing production was the economic leveler in times of crises, made possible through the creation of the National Housing Bank (BNH). This initiative ended up promoting construction of housing units without urban services.<sup>22</sup> The index of efficiency of the model, in fact, was the number of units produced rather than the quality of life provided. This generated large *dormitorias* (dormitories), distant from the central areas, often poorly served by public transport and with almost no infrastructure or urban services. Moreover, the financing of the system never really managed to benefit the poor, those earning less than 5 minimum wages. Those excluded from the so-called “Brazilian miracle” began to mobilize around the urban question, demanding regularization of illegal settlements, the construction of educational and health facilities, and the deployment of infrastructure in favelas.<sup>23</sup> In 1979 PROMORAR was established as a federal program allowing squatters to stay in the occupied lands and helping to upgrade existing shacks. Other programs (PRÓFAVELA, PRÓAGUA, PRÓLUZ) aimed to bring infrastructure in the favelas between 1979 and 1981. In 1980s “lost decade” the economy collapsed and the state asked citizens to invest in the construction of their dwelling, in exchange for fiscal deductions and more flexible building codes. Between 1989 and 1992 mayor Luiza Erundina implemented the *autogestão* (self-management) program for the working class, for which the government provided funding, materials and technical assistance and the residents managed the construction work and the budget.

During these years Neto bought the land and built his first self-funded house, before the municipality expropriated the land. The way he built is a counter-history of conventional social housing provisioning. Its practice of self-construction is both an incremental learning process and the conquest of full citizenship through homeownership.

### **Autoconstruction (*autoconstrução*) in the Periphery**

If the poor have always built their homes, autoconstruction is a vernacular term referring to the practice of self-built houses that began in Brazil in the 1940s. The periphery of São Paulo is a landscape of different stages of autoconstruction and incongruous types of buildings where everything, from street paving to walls, seems unfinished. Houses facing the main streets are painted two-story dwellings with stylish features and architectural details, while off the main streets they are provisional shacks of block or wood, mostly unpainted.<sup>24</sup>

Autoconstruction is a process that focuses on the very materiality of the urban experience. The provisioning and the use of materials as well as their everyday maintenance inform this experience. Central to this type of knowledge is the always-changing perceptions about how urban materials can be reassembled through different relations and interactions. It is an everyday experimental immersion in space and time that transforms housing into a verb<sup>25</sup>. The rules of this “game are always to make do with *whatever is at hand*.”<sup>26</sup> In this process the agency of the *thing-power*<sup>27</sup> is the “capacity of things...not only to impede or block the will and designs of humans but also to act as quasi agents or forces with trajectories, propensities, or tendencies of their own.” Low-cost construction materials, in fact, define the very physicality of the space and limit its potential for further expansion (i.e. floor layering). Yet, at the same time, they represent not only what they are—a clay brick, a corrugated metal sheet, etc.—but mostly an imagined possibility. Hence, in the everyday process of autoconstruction, spatial practices and imaginaries mingle together. These imaginaries about the possible, a better life, and progress for all were fundamental in forging the political mobilization of the working class in the peripheries. During the national-developmental project of modernization autoconstruction “has symbolized progress, growth and social mobility,”<sup>28</sup> transforming the residents into the agents of urbanization. This belief in a universal progress for all citizens nourished the modernist dreams through the military regime and after, in spite of the fact that differentiated citizenship and inequalities were still exacerbated.

Neto is pride of his house. He lives there with his wife and his sister in law. His daughter has instead moved closer to the center. Neto began to build his house in 1989. The steep plot was accessible from a path located at the top of the slope, while at the bottom it was limited by the presence of a river. The difference in height between the two levels is around 12m in 29m of land. Neto built a two-story house, one floor below street level, but opened towards the valley. After the expropriation in 1991 the Municipality of São Paulo canalized the river underground, and Neto decided to expand his house towards the new street at the bottom of the slope. He sold his former house and built a new one with the access at the bottom of the plot. The bill of sale allowed him to stay 90 days, while providing the necessary funds to build the new three-story house. This new house had a second floor for his family, a mezzanine for his sister in law, and a garage at ground floor level, with the entrance to the house. A year later, Neto completed the house with a shelter for the laundry, partially

occupying the roof terrace (Fig. 5); 30cm of iron bars are left (as usual in practices of autoconstruction) out of the pillars, in case of further expansion of the construction over the whole roof level.

Neto could build a three-to-four stories house because he chose from the beginning to erect solid foundations on 100x100cm piers, to allow incremental loads. Those who didn't dimension the foundations properly now are dealing with height constraints for their dwellings. And yet, looking at the fuzzy consistence of the structure one might question the whole stability of the fabric. The dimensions of the pillars are limited to the essential, and some of them don't follow necessarily a grid; beams are not necessarily weaved from pillar to pillar; and the hand-made concrete somewhere let the inner irons bars exposed to the air. The slabs appear rather solid: they are made of prefab concrete and iron bar beams, hollow bricks between the beams, and a cap of reinforced concrete on top. The technology of the walls follows the rule of gradually lightening the weight from the bottom to the top. Hence while cement blocks are used for the ground floor walls, lighter perforated clay blocks are utilized in the second and the roof level. The second level has a kitchen, one double bedroom, one single bedroom, a small living room, three restrooms, and a balcony. The mezzanine has a bedroom, kitchen, and a restroom. A main external stair connects the three levels so that accesses to the rooms are from an external corridor (Fig. 6). This is also, for the most part, the only source of natural lighting and ventilation, so that the rooms are not really naturally illuminated. The ventilation seems adequate thanks to the louvered glass windows mounted in each room and the air draft running up the hill through the corridor. Neto's house is well built; it has tiles covering the floors, inspection boxes for water tubes, and painted walls. Other houses in the neighborhood are unfinished, at least on the outside, with exposed brick walls and rough pavements. They expand in three dimensions in an uneven way, as a mass growing from inside to outside wherever there is space to do so. They call this system the *puxadinbo* (little nudge) that gives birth to complex overlapping and entanglement of floors, activities and people. Each house here grows as a glove with its resident's resources and abilities, following the constraints and the change of the topography. This always-changing socio-environmental organism would be difficult to define in a packaged brief for the architect, from the beginning of its conception.

After building his house, Neto began to upgrade the favela with the other residents. The city in fact, with its infrastructure and services, was there yet to come.

## CITY

### The Center-periphery Model and the Right to the City

In Brazil Government at the turn of the 19<sup>th</sup> to the 20<sup>th</sup> promoted major urban interventions to produce improvements to the neighborhoods of the dominant classes.<sup>29</sup> According to Ferreira in the first decades of 1900 the basis for a “social geography”<sup>30</sup> in Brazilian cities were already established. This geography reserved the center for the upper classes, commerce and business activities; the periphery for the working class, polluting industries, and the marginalized society (mental hospitals, lunatic asylums, etc.). This was partially due to 1900 Law 498 that allowed intensive use of land for worker settlements outside a certain urban perimeter, in exchange for municipal tax payments by the owners. In São Paulo the urban law in 1910 aggravated this social geography. This law established four zones of the city (central, urban, suburban and rural) and, while most of the legislation concerned the central and urban areas, it left the suburban and rural unplanned. In 1930 the Plan of Avenues (*Plano de Avenidas*) of Francisco Prestes Maia further reinforced this center-periphery urban model, by triggering the concentric expansion into the hinterland. The plan employed the concept of connections between neighborhoods through radial avenues. If Maia’s purpose was to decongest the city center, he rather accelerated the centrifugal dispersion of the poor and the urban fabric from the center to the periphery. New roads in fact incentivized the development of new means of mass transportation: the bus *versus* the trolley. Until the 1970s “the law itself guaranteed the exceptional status of the periphery: while it carefully regulated the defined urban perimeter, it left suburban and rural areas unregulated, and therefore open to exploration and exploitation.”<sup>31</sup> Far from being absence of governance, this little control from government authorities is in fact a condescending means of producing urban space, or a “conceded informality.”<sup>32</sup>

Since the late 1970s selective state planning interventions worked along the tradition of differentiated citizenship, exacerbating patterns of urban segregation and the crystallization of the peripheral status. Public policies targeting the center of the city (demolitions of *cortiços*, evictions of the poor, and unsustainable high rents for the low-income working class) “consolidated the center for the upper classes while public neglect made the periphery feasible as repository for the poor.”<sup>33</sup>

The more the poor autoconstruct their houses, the farther the urban fringe (new squatter settlements and illegal land subdivisions) is displaced from the center of the city. However, through autoconstruction the working classes created new forms of property ownership and new kinds of participation in law. In this way they developed a new sense of citizenship, strengthened by their becoming tax payers and consumers within the city. This “insurgent citizenship”<sup>34</sup> has destabilized dominant ways of accessing citizenship, by claiming for and obtaining the right to the city, as “the right to its legal order and urbanization available in the center.”<sup>35</sup>

The working classes were critical in incorporating “directives from the point of view of the poor”<sup>36</sup> in the 1988 Brazilian Constitution and in the *Estatuto da Cidade* (City Statute) of 2001.<sup>37</sup> In 2009 the Municipal Housing Agency of São Paulo (*Sehab*) launched the Municipal Housing Planning Program (MHP), a massive 16-year (2009-2024) plan to improve living conditions in the peripheries of São Paulo. MHP’s agenda includes upgrading favelas, land regularization, developing housing units, and watershed provisioning. It targets *Cabuçu de Cima*, within the Program “Favela Urbanizations,” focusing on urbanization and regularization of tenures of irregular and precarious settlements. The program also includes the resettlement of families in risk areas, and improvements in existing dwellings. In *Cabuçu de Cima* approximately 30,000 families will benefit from this program.

Neto has learnt to add limited infrastructure to his dwellings bit by bit, through a process of socio-material engineering. According to McFarlane “for most urbanites, urban learning occurs through social and spatial practice in the city.”<sup>38</sup> This everyday incremental urbanism has been central for Neto to understand the city through dwelling. Since he arrived in *Guapira I*, a *favela* in *Cabuçu de Cima*, he began to mobilize the community to urbanize it. Being *Guapira I* built on slopes, major problems arose while it rained. Brown water washed earth and garbage down the paths, littering the accesses to the houses. Neto began gathering funds for the pavement and drainage works in four streets. He collected circa 340,000 Reais (150,000\$) to contract the work that was done in 1999 (Fig. 7, 8). Since then Neto wakes up every morning and inspects the public spaces of the *favela*, searching for street pavements cracks, power inefficiency, punctual landslides, and drainage and sewage emergencies. His neighbors ask him for advice about how to expand the porch of their houses on the sidewalk. He reads in the *Passeio Livre* (Free Sidewalk) municipal booklet that there is a

minimum of 1,20m to be left empty for the passage of disables and 75cm for trees and ramps. The same guide illustrates step by step how to pave a street or a sidewalk by yourself.

Neto has a straightforward vision of his role in the upgrading of the neighborhood. He doesn't mingle with politics, for he wants to keep the possibility to push for things to be done, independently of who has the political power. He can rely on a network of people within the community that helps him filing claims online at the Citizen Service System (SAC, *Sistema de Atendimento ao Cidadão*). Here is his method: he identifies a problem; say a hole in the sidewalk. He takes note of the problem, describing it in the technical language proper of municipal technicians—his daughter will then fill in the official form with a better handwriting.

If necessary he asks his friend Juan to take pictures of the hole and print them. He then goes to Luiz, who files the claim online, attaching the text and pictures. Neto then follows the process by informing the technicians at the *Subprefeitura* (Submunicipality) of *Tremembé/Jaçana*. When this is not sufficient to obtain an answer, he gradually involves more citizens, the community, the schools and if necessary, the local newspaper. The community knows that Neto gets things done. Between 2006 and 2012 he filed more than 200 claims concerning maintenance of the road system, drainage, urban cleaning, street coding, light installation, and landslides. This is a voluntary, time-consuming job: if it would be paid, Neto would not have enough power to negotiate with his interlocutors at municipal and state level (water, sewage, electricity, and housing agencies). Moreover, when the problem concerns state and municipal agencies (i.e.: sewage canal and sidewalk) he is the “independent” player who makes the connection between them. This is at least his view of the process.

The work of Neto is about daily activity of public space maintenance: the official favela upgrading programs follow other schedules and scales of intervention that cannot solve the micro-urgent needs of the community. Moreover, his work is not limited to *Guapira I*. He brings me into a steep stair in the *Guilherme Bude*, a favela close by. Even if it is not *his* favela, Neto thinks he should cross the boundaries if no one does it. In this small steep passage the web of water tubes of the houses is so dense that there is no more earth. The rain then is contributing to carve the remaining earth adjacent to the houses. “This is a problem to be solved by the architects,” Neto says. In fact, he has already called Leticia, at the *Sehab*. The *Sehab* has now embedded this



area, and others signaled by Neto, in the brief for the architectural firms dealing with the favela-upgrading projects. Bottom-up and top-down spatial agencies meet here, in this tiny path.

## CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

Unequal distribution of land in Brazil has been pervasive since the Portuguese claimed the territory in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. In fact, the Brazilian Republic inherited a tradition of misrule and a technocracy of land grabbers over land management that was reproduced under colonial, imperial, and dictatorship regimes. This tradition has been amplified during the entire 20<sup>th</sup> century, exacerbated by massive urbanization, and continues until today.

Brazilian working class has learnt to use the misrule of law at its own vantage, to access land, home ownership, and urban services in response to public policies (evictions, demolitions, and high rents which made access to the urban center impossible for the low-income working class) that reserved the center for the upper classes. The periphery of São Paulo is a story of “constant displacement and transformation”<sup>39</sup>: the more the poor self construct their houses and urbanize their neighborhood, the farther the urban fringe (new squatter settlements and illegal land seizures) is displaced from the center of the city. But the periphery is also the liminal space where new forms of social identities and resistance have emerged, challenging traditional discourses and forms of dominance over urban space. Through the peripheral production of space the poor have in fact contrasted traditional social inequalities, acquiring citizenship rights, and invigorating new forms of participatory planning. Their practices have also been informed by norm and embedded in new regulatory regimes.

Norms and transgressions have informed the production of space in the periphery, at the scales of Land, House and City. I’ve explored these three scales of the built environment through the story of Neto. While dwellers in his favela invaded the land through invasions organized by the PT, a political party, Neto bought a piece of land from a land grabber. The real owner of the land, the municipality of São Paulo, reclaimed the land, giving Neto his money back. Neto built his house with his money and the technical assistance of the municipality. He then worked everyday to bring the city into his favela in a constant dialogue with the Submunicipality of *Tremembé/Jaçanã*.

Neto's story offers an account of articulate entanglement between norm and subversion in the production of space in the periphery of São Paulo. At all scales the periphery is a liminal space where divides like planned/unplanned, legal/illegal, and formal/informal simplify the complex relationship between established spatial practices and their counter-cultures.

## FIGURES



Figure 1. Cabuçu de Cima PAI n.8. (Map by Sehab)

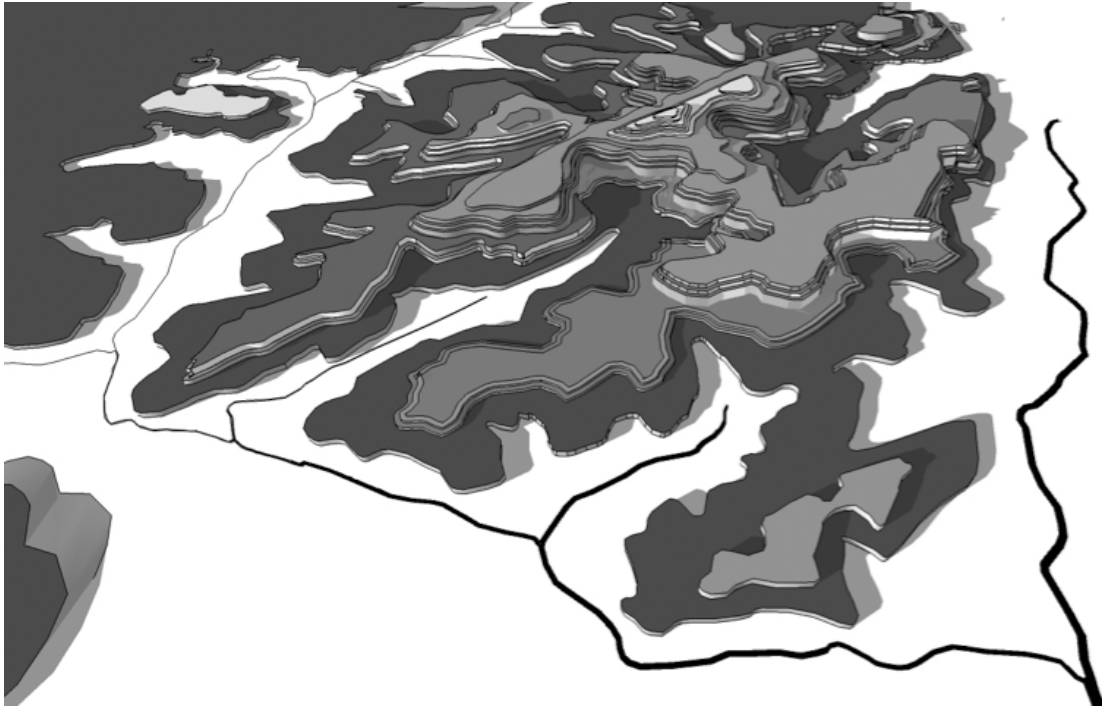


Figure 2. The Rugged Topography of Cabuçu de Cima and the River Cabuçu. (Illustration by the Author)



Figure 3. Squatters in Guapira I, 1988. (Photo by SS Foto e Video, São Paulo)

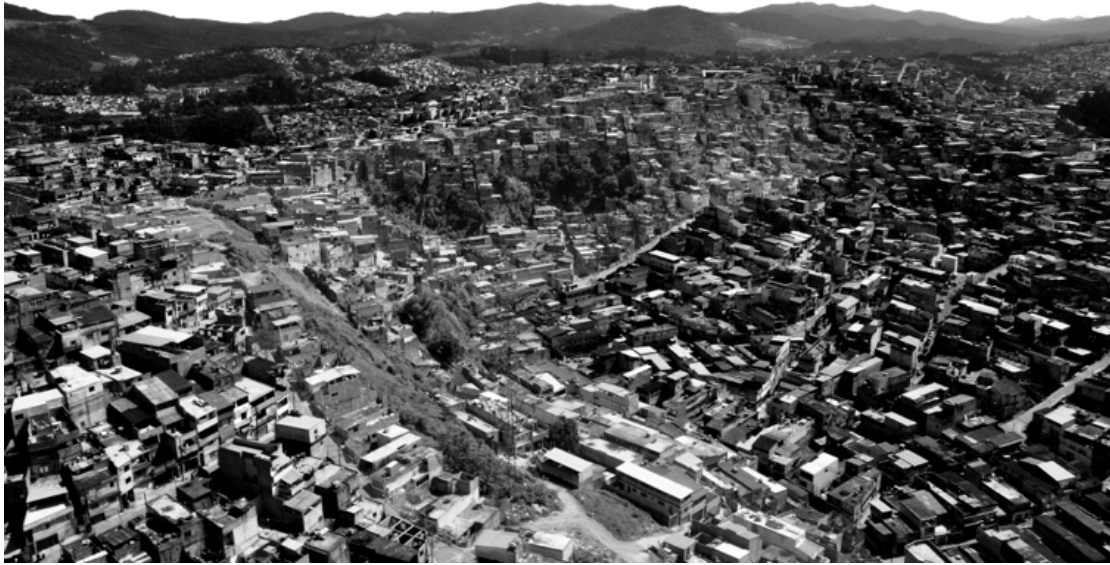


Figure 4. View of Guapira I, 2014. (Photo by the Ferroni-Herenu Arquitetos, São Paulo)

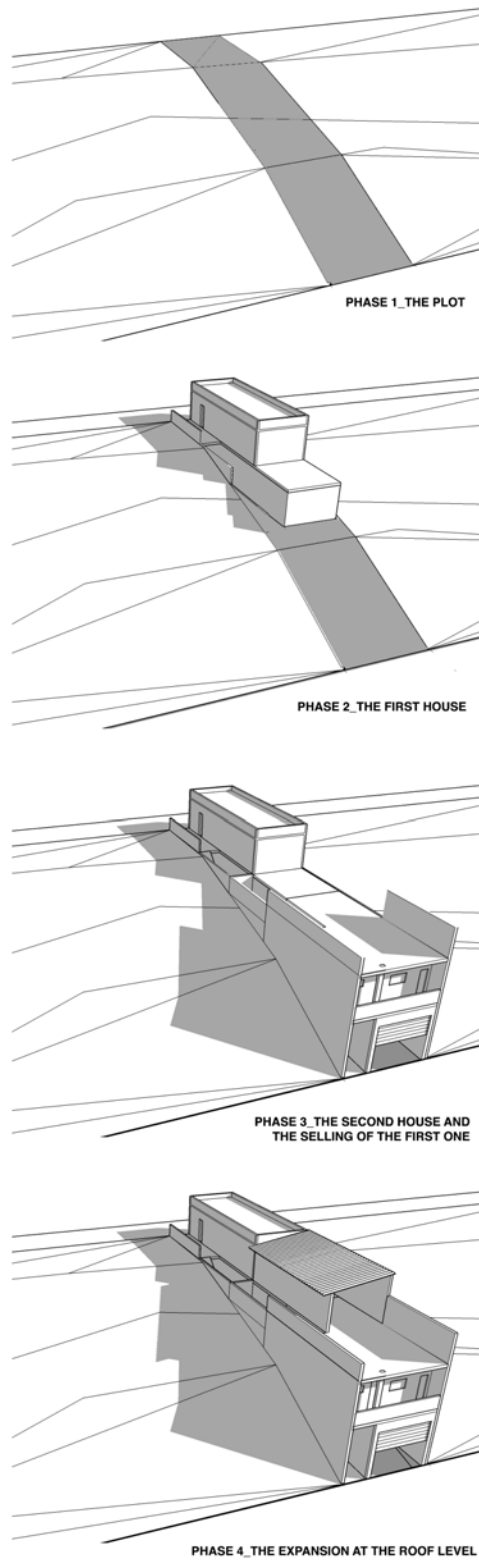


Figure 5. Autoconstruction of Neto's House. (Illustration by the Author.)





Figure 6. The External Staircase of Neto's House. (Photo by the Author)



Figure 7. Conditions of the Streets in Guapira I, 1995 (Photo by Neto)



Figure 8. Paving of a Street in Guapira I, 1999. (Photo by Neto)

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**NOTES AND REFERENCES**

<sup>1</sup> Holston, James. *Insurgent citizenship: Disjunctions of democracy and modernity in Brazil*. Princeton University Press, 2008.

<sup>2</sup> More details can be found in Holston, James. "The misrule of law: land and usurpation in Brazil." *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 33, no. 04 (1991): 695-725.

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<sup>4</sup> Holston, James. "Insurgent citizenship in an era of global urban peripheries." *City & Society* 21, no. 2 (2009): 245-267.

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<sup>7</sup> AlSayyad, Nezar "Informal Housing in a Comparative Perspective," *Review of Urban and Regional Development Studies* 5 (1993).

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

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<sup>10</sup> *Squatter settlements*: located on either public or private land. In both cases, the land has been occupied in a spontaneous or organized fashion against the legal owner's will, and with no legal relationship established between the residents and the landowner (Pólis Institute, 2002); *Informal subdivisions*: developed below the minimum standards set by the Federal Land Subdivisions Law (6766/79, amended by Law 9785/99). This includes two subcategories: *irregular subdivisions*, which occur when a subdivision project is approved by the municipality at the request of the landowner, but the development deviates from the approved project; and *illegal subdivisions*, which occur when a subdivision is developed without approval from the municipality.

<sup>11</sup> Holston, James. "The Misrule of Law: Land and Usurpation in Brazil"



<sup>12</sup> Three strategies of urban development deployed in PAIs are: the formation of social networks to broaden and diversify the agents and the initiatives involved in urban changes; the development of an urban plan for the perimeter (or part thereof); and the creation of a system to audit and evaluate the implemented programs.

<sup>13</sup> Secretaria Municipal de Habitação. *Cabuçu de Cima. Guia de Centralidades*, SeHab Urban Plan for Cabuçu de Cima, São Paulo, 2012.

<sup>14</sup> The Strategic Master Plan (Municipal Law 13,430/02) and the Strategic Regional Plans (Municipal Law 13,885/04) demarcated the ZEIS 1. This zone includes areas occupied by low-income people, including favelas, precarious settlements, and housing developments of social interest, where there is public interest in land tenure, production, and maintenance of social housing. Within the boundaries of ZEIS1 the flexibilization of subdivision and land use parameters (measure of lots, roads, and setbacks) allow the regularization of the existing settlements. This instrument of planning aims at preserving low-income dwellings from large real estate developers, for which the defined parameters (such as the forbidden combination of lots) demotivate any speculative initiative.

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<sup>29</sup> Whitaker Ferreira, João Sette. “A Cidade Para Poucos: Breve História da Propriedade Urbana no Brasil.”

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<sup>32</sup> Altröck, Uwe. “Conceptualizing Informality: Some Thoughts on the Way towards Generalization,” in *Urban Informalities. Reflections of the Formal and the Informal*, Ashgate Publishing (Burlington: McFarlane, Colin and Waibel, Michael, eds., 2012), 171–93.

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<sup>34</sup> Holston, James. *Insurgent Citizenship. Disjunctions of Democracy and Modernity in Brazil*.

<sup>35</sup> Goonewardena, Kanishka, Stefan Kipfer, Richard Milgrom, and Christian Schmid, eds. *Space, Difference, Everyday Life: Reading Henri Lefebvre*. Routledge, 2008.

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<sup>37</sup> The social right to decent housing has been established in Art.6 of the Brazilian Constitution—regulated by the Federal Law 10, 257/2001 of the *City Statute*—and Art.79 of the Strategic Master Plan—Municipal Law 13, 430/02.

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**FUTURISTIC TRADITIONS: RETHINKING  
“HYBRID” IDENTITIES ON THE SOUTHERN  
SIDE OF THE US-MEXICAN BORDER**

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**Volume 266**  
Pages 79–103  
2014

## FUTURISTIC TRADITIONS: RETHINKING “HYBRID” IDENTITIES ON THE SOUTHERN SIDE OF THE US-MEXICAN BORDER



*Latin America is the most urbanized and unequal region in the world; it is manifested in the “peripheral” fabric (squatter settlements). “Peripheries or borders”, are informal-formal spaces of contradictions and ambiguities; they are contingent zones where the happening allows new ways of bonding. This paper argues that hybridity and hyper-hybridity are the condition for the construction of peripheral identities; here, spatial traditions are re-shaped daily. Using examples from Mexican border cities, it is proposed to rethink the hybrid in peripheral settlements with a futuristic vision; it will be essential in order to participate, as professionals, in the new urban structure.*

### INTRODUCTION: TRADITION, IDENTITY, AND SPACIALITY

Human beings are continually shaped by space and places. Human life is defined by geographical location of the objects; but it is also by the way that artifacts are “looked”.<sup>1</sup> According to Henri Lefebvre, in the early modernity, the reflexive thought emphasized the binary oppositions like subject-object, open-closed, signifier-signified, continuity-discontinuity, center-periphery, among others. The “accentuated dyads” became in the paradigm of the Western philosophy; however, “...*One always has Three. There is always the Other.*”<sup>2</sup>

On this basis, Edward Soja advances to consider not only the built environment (real/reality) and the thoughts it has had about it (real/imagined), but including “the othering” (hyper/real?) or Third Space. Generally, the social production of the space is understood as a historical sequence of geographical changes resulting from the dynamic relationship between humans, nature, and built environment. Since this real/real moment (First Space), it is possible the generation of a large database, and the accuracy of the information obtained; although, the First Space constitutes a partial perspective. The real/imagined or Second Space is concentrated in the conceived space, rather than perceived one. In its purest form, the Second Space is ideal; here, materiality is understood through the thoughts. From “the othering”, the spatial particularity is analyzed as lived space, which is represented by the everyday life. The lived space includes a complex system of symbols sometimes coded, sometimes not; it is an open-ended space that offers new possibilities beyond the traditional spatial approaches.<sup>3</sup>

In the current times, facing the paradigm of the post-global world<sup>4</sup>, the question of identity seems to be in the *center* of the discussions. The connection between identity, traditions, and territories is undeniable. However, in a world that is local and global at the same time, with a society based in networks, “moving” in the space of

flows<sup>5</sup> more than in the space of places, a critical review of this relation, and the concepts linked with it, looks necessary.

Territories are defined by human action; their more formal expressions are called states and nations, the city-state institutions have their bases in the agrarian societies. According to the Western historiography, the city-state and the city-empire reached their most advanced forms in Athens and Rome. Although, there are parallel and intersecting histories in Egypt, China and Southeast Asia, Africa, in upland Mexico, and Peru. The concept of the state evolved in the form of empire and, later, to the "imagined community" of the nation or nation-state; the city was subsumed as a symbolic force "*...the definition of citizenship shifts from inhabitant of the city to inhabitant of the...state.*"<sup>6</sup>

The construction of the identity could be a complex process since it derives from a multiple and contradictory sources. The *Oxford English Dictionary* explains that "identity" comes from the French word *identité* which means "*quality or condition of being the same... distinct impression of a single person or thing presented to or perceived by others...*"; agreeing with British sources, it derives from the Latin *idem*: same. In the dictionary "identity" has several definitions, most of them interrelated; in some point, it is presented as personality, repetition, and individuality; it is also defined as: "*Absence of distinction between people of different ethnic groups.*"<sup>7</sup>

Hence, it seems that identity is permanently about the recognition of the difference, and from there, to establish the sameness.<sup>8</sup> People could have plural identities even with contradictory positions. The construction of identity uses information from past, geography, collective memory, biology, institutions, history, individual fantasies, power and faith. Societies process all these materials and rearranged in its meaning, according to social determinations and cultural projects implemented in their social structure and their temporal spatial framework.<sup>9</sup>

The development of constituting elements of identity such as language, history, ethnic groups, religion, among others<sup>10</sup>, is related with territories. National identities are the result of this association. Following Gordon Mathews, nations are created by governments, which use state institutions and multimedia to shape the thinking of people. With the establishment of a national identity, it is possible to talk about cultural identity; however, it is formed by considering, not only national identity, but also ethnic and cultural market sources.<sup>11</sup> Arjun Appadurai explains that, in global circumstances, it is necessary to redefine ourselves beyond the nation (postnational identities). The idea of nations as "imagined communities" and its role as producers of people through nationalist discourses requires a close examination. It is the turn of the postnational imaginaries; it means the consideration of other links that defined social groups, not only ethnic-territorial ties.<sup>12</sup> Borders as territories are clear examples of these. (Fig.1)



Figure 1. Monterrey, Mexico. A Guadalupe Virgin as part of the surface of the artifact. Two swans painted with the colors of the soccer team. (Source: author)

In the last few decades, there have been a lot of discussions about globalization as the “new” modernity, and the survival (or not) of the tradition under these circumstances. According with Paul Oliver, in all societies, traditions symbolize the continuity between past and present; they are handed on from generation to generation. Oliver explains traditions as a system of rules.<sup>13</sup>

For Nezar AlSayyad, tradition is about process, and it still operates in the present time, it can be found in real and virtual places. *“Tradition...does not end. What may have ended was our conception of it is a reservoir for revered authentic values”*. AlSayyad points out that nowadays what is lasting in tradition is the temporary; it is the way to find the immutable. For some scholars, tradition as culture is about choice, since the options and alternatives identities are available in the information flows. *“Tradition in built form [and spatial experience] will always be what we make and sustain every day and everywhere through the occasionally contemptuous and ever-changing act of living”*.<sup>14</sup>

According to Castells, the contemporary society is a network society, characterized by the existence of the space of places and the space of flows, the timeless time and the hope of the glacial time, the electronic home,



and the virtual reality as an everyday matter. Nowadays, the built environment is not enough to express cultural identities, spatial experience is in the core of the scholar discussions and urban interventions; with the emergence of multimedia, the fundamental dimensions of the human life (space and time) were substantially changed, thus, the relation between architecture (the materiality of space) and society were transformed too.<sup>15</sup> Futuristic traditions are enclaves in the core of day-to-day activities, the survivals will be those which allowing people adapt and adopt "difference" as a legitimate form of identity.<sup>16</sup>

This paper is divided in four sub-headings, all of them constitute ongoing hypothesis, from here, could be possible to learn how to change the world at the same time to imagine it. MEXICO STRIP: THE LATIN AMERICAN BORDER introduces the area of study as well as emphasizes the south side of the border as a different region with its own identity and particular traditions. In the second sub-heading, INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS AS BORDERS, it is proposed to shift the idea of border, re-localizing it at the informal settlements in order to establish them as common nodes between the principal cities and the emergent ones. And the question, HYPER-HYBRIDITY, THE BORDER CONDITION? It is explored beyond hybridity itself and its manifestation (or not) in the border built environment; thinking in a border circumstance, allowing to consider any kind of possible future for the idea of tradition. Finally, THINKING ON FUTURE, MAPPING TRADITIONS, it is suggested to examine the conventional maps, adding on them the prefix post; the post-maps constitute a tool to track border traditions.

### **MEXICO STRIP: THE LATIN AMERICAN BORDER**

When talking about borders it is talked about physical and virtual walls. Jordi Borja explains that cities were born and developed to cultural exchange, they were conceived as places where different people, could coexist peacefully; thus, the walls of the first cities, provided defense against external enemies. Nowadays, the circumstances are dissimilar; to the cities arrive, most of all, immigrants who are used as cheap labor, and tourists. Walls and urban boundaries are used for those in power to exclude people and legitimize hegemony (and some times criminal actions). The Berlin Wall was used to maintain a dictatorial regime; the walls between Israel and the Gaza region, protect the Jewish population for territorial expansion; the border wall between Mexico and the United States, is more as the same: the wall is used as a sophisticated and cruel form of exploitation<sup>17</sup>. All border walls are urban shames.

About the US-Mexican Border, Michael Dear wrote *Why walls won't work?*, where he proposed two main ideas: Third Nation before the Wall and The Third Nation of the Mind, in order to repair the division between these countries. The concept of Third Nation is built from local traditions, and it is anchored to the borderland between two nations-states, "*The idea encompasses nations of people, identity, territory, and practice*"<sup>18</sup>. Dear

explains that here, the nation refers a community where people identified themselves sharing history, territory, and cultural traditions; the “citizens” also develop strategies to defend their “nation” against external dangers. The author recognizes that the interchange between the sides of the border, not always is in the sense of the Third Nation (traffic of drugs, guns, and people)<sup>19</sup>. The concept of the Third Nation is in fact, an effort to define the identity of the US- Mexican border, it is based in the idea of “shifting identities”, and it represents an optimistic perspective.

Following a global socioeconomic order, Latin America could be a border itself: South America versus USA-Canada, South America versus Europe. It is not East, neither pure West; it is the new “hybrid” world located “at the south of the border, at the west of the sun”. Always living under economic crisis, the Latin Americans represent the “tsunami” that breaks in the US-Mexican limit; the South side of the US-Mexican boundary is the last Latin American border, it represents “*The Other*”.

The Mexico Strip is a region of 3,145 km, located in the South side of the US-Mexican Border. About borders between countries, they are only considered the cities that adjoin at the limit line; in the case of the US-Mexican border (the South side), it is talked of 23 border cities; according with the number of inhabitants and their location, the most important are: Tijuana (West. 1.456.613 people, including Tecate and Rosarito.), Ciudad Juárez (Center. 2.700.000 inhabitants), and Reynosa (East. 608,000 dwellers).

Beyond this conventional way of thinking, it is Los Angeles, California in the North-West side of the border with 3.792.621 of inhabitants, and 18 million of population if it is considered the metropolitan area; around 6.000.000 of “Angelinos” is Mexican. Thus, in the South-East side of the border there is Monterrey with approximately 5 million of inhabitants distributed between 11 municipalities which constitute the metropolitan area. In a broad sense, the border is the outside area, a territory with undefined boundaries, not only some points along the margin.

There were earlier manifestations of city-state in the upland of Mexico, in the region known as Mesoamerica; the name of Mesoamerica was given by Paul Kirchhoff to identify a cultural super area located from southern half of Mexico to Central America. In words of Kirchhoff, the north edge of *Mesoamérica* adjoined with nomad tribes of inferior culture, constituted by gatherers and hunters<sup>20</sup>. Some scholars call this area *Aridoamérica*; the region was occupied by *Chichimecas*, a warrior indigenous group also called “barbarians” or “savages”<sup>21</sup>. In a national sense, *Aridoamérica* always has been considering border, the excluded area. Currently, Aridoamérica includes the states of Baja California, Sonora, Chihuahua, Coahuila, Nuevo León, Tamaulipas, among others; those states represent the region of the south side of the US-Mexican Border.

Political divisions (borders) have two sides: North and South; beyond the geographical reference, the North is identified as the wealth area, the homeland of the developed countries, the global citadel; while the South side is the poor zone where develop is the promise “place”. The south border is aspirational; the limit line could be penetrable, the rehearsal for crossing line is the everyday life and the transfer of the limits is the strategy to survive. Etymologically, border derives from the Latin *bordatura*, that means edging (the action of moving by insensible degrees).

In *Borderlands/ La Frontera*, Gloria Anzaldúa explains that “*living on borders and in margins...is like trying to swim in a new element, an “alien” element...never comfortable but home...*”. She defined herself as a border woman, growing between two cultures, surviving in the “other” Mexico, a space full of contradictions, where the “clash” of differences shapes the border identity. Anzaldúa thought a feminine border; as a mestiza, she defended the mixture of races, arguing that the fusion results in a race with hybrid progeny, which considers perpetual transition (inclusion more than exclusion) as a part of everyday life. Here, the ambivalence is the key piece for the “self-construction”<sup>22</sup>. If the future is about breaking paradigms, Anzaldúa believes that it will belong to the “border mestiza”, capable to change reality in order to create a new culture.<sup>23</sup> Even when she thought the idea of border from the north side (Texas and California), she was “south” all the time.

Following bell hooks ideas related with center, periphery, and margins it could be possible to understand the Mexico Strip as a “south side”, and its relation with the construction of identity and traditions. In *Yearning*, she talked about margins as particular places where “happening” would allow new ways of bonding; bell hooks considered them as present-future locations of resistance struggle, and where it is possible to build the “double cross” between conventional (and oppressive) binaries: “*Living as we did—on the edge- we developed a particular way of seeing reality. We looked both from the outside in and from the inside out. We focused our attention on the center as well as on the margin. We understood both*”. From this particular decentered position, bell hooks links identity and subjective to define a Black feminism, and from there to reconstruct the blackness. This edging place is risky but necessary; it offers multiplicity spaces of difference, which are simultaneously central and peripheral, they are sites of struggle and repression. Marginality it is not only about discourses, it is about “tactics of habitat”, it means, a certain way of life expressed in the everyday life activities.<sup>24</sup> (Fig.2)



Figure 2. Latin American future cities will be shaped by “border” traditions. (Source: author)

The Mexico Strip is the south side of a powerful border, it represents a key decentered position for the reconstruction of the Latin Americanness. The south-continent has always been characterized by the concentration of population in a few cities. Although, nowadays megacities as Sao Paulo, Mexico City, Buenos Aires, among others, concentrate only 14 per cent of the urban population; while more than a half of urban inhabitants live in “secondary metropolis” like Monterrey, Juárez and Tijuana. The informal settlements are fundamental links between this city-categorization; they constitute the borders in the border; urban analysis and proposals should start from here.

### **INFORMAL SETTLEMENTS AS BORDERS**

The sedentary processes were vital to the consolidation of the agrarian society, from here was possible the consolidation of the state institutions. Almost all city-state of the ancient world were organized with a center, axes, channels of communication, and peripheries; the center (citadel) enclosed the materialization of economic, political, military and religious power: temples, palaces, market, food store, were designed buildings to protect and to control the urban life. From physical evidence, it could also be speculated the use of radial and concentric zones as a residential area; the first ring, near to the sacred center, was occupied by better-established residents; the less preferred areas were found in the periphery of the city, away from the gates.

In the city-state, the governmental power expresses itself through the administration based on writing; monumental buildings represent the professionalization of economic, ideological and military domination; moreover, institutional structures grow stronger in order to maintain stability and to ensure cultural continuity; in addition to these changes, the patriarchy, as a social order, is becoming defined, so the built environment and the activities of everyday life that took place inside and outside of the city, they have become more centralized.<sup>25</sup> Until the nineteenth century, the vast majority of the population used to live outside the main city.<sup>26</sup>

Considering the urban force (agglomeration) as the key piece for the comprehension of the urban phenomenon, Edward Soja proposes to change the conventional sequence of the social organization and place the city before the Agricultural Revolution, causing not only the development agriculture itself, but also the emergence of farming villages, rural life, shepherds and farmers, the writing, class formation, and the state<sup>27</sup>. On these basis, it is possible to continue the human development process: proto-urban ---urban/rural -- urban -- neo proto-urban (informal settlements) --- future cities--- \_\_\_\_\_.

The word “periphery” derives from the Latin *peripheria* that means “*circumference*”, or “*each of the three regions of air*” that surrounded the earth. The *Oxford English Dictionary* also defines it as “*A line that forms the boundary of something... the circumference of a circle or other closed curvilinear figure; a perimeter*” and “*The external boundary or surface of a space or object; something forming such a boundary; a border, an edge...*”.

According to the forecasts, Latin America is the most urbanized (and unequal) region in the world, concentrating 80 per cent of its population in cities. The territorial organization of cities, states, and nations is in a concentric way. As long as the cities were growing, peripheries were appearing; borders are constantly delocalized; in the twenty-first century, the periphery is located at the center of the city as well as on its margins. In many Latin American cities, the first boundary area was blurred by new urban development (infrastructure, housing, commercial areas, communication bases and channels, financial citadels, governmental buildings, among others). Regardless the geographical position of the peripheral settlements, their everyday life is based on “border” culture, it means, a particular cultural identity.

Latin American futuristic cities will be “born” from the peripheral settlements (*favelas, barrios populares, and villas miseria*). Border settlements are the homeland of the “outsiders”, they use “double-cross” glasses to see the world; the possibility of future is always present, and it is a multi-layer future. Traditions are crucial. (Fig. 3)





Figure 3. Peripheral settlements as the key piece of the urban development of the south-continent.

(Source: author)

### **HYPER-HYBRIDITY, THE BORDER CONDITION?**

Multiple and shifting are the key cultural components of border spaces; thus, hybridity and hyper-hybridity are the border condition. Related with people, the word hybrid derives from the Latin *“ibrida”* that means *“... of human parents of different races, half-breed”*. It is defined as *“anything derived from heterogeneous sources, or composed of different or incongruous elements...a compound formed of elements belonging to different languages”*. In the dictionary it is explained that when the prefix *“hyper”* is used with nouns, it means *“going across, transposed”* and also *“...beyond, overshooting, excess, extravagance”*. Thus, hyper-hybridity implies something such as an exaggerated hybridity, or beyond it.

Current times are modern times, now as before *“everything is pregnant of its contrary”* and *“all that is solid melts into air”*<sup>28</sup>. Hence, postmodernism is another way of modernism. David Harvey explains that, from a postmodern perspective, the representation of the world is fragmented, and full of uninterrupted connections, that it results in changeable pieces of it. *“Deconstructionism”* represents a powerful stimulus to postmodernist ways of thought; thus, the collage is the primary form of postmodern discourse, *“...producers and consumers of cultural*

*artifacts participate in the production of significations and meanings living it open to recombine those elements in any way they wish. The effect is to break (deconstruct) the power of the author to impose meanings or offer a continuous narrative.*"<sup>29</sup> This process creates a double reading, of the piece in relation with the real/real, and of the fragment as a part of a totally different context made up by connections.

If hyper-hybridity displays the multi-dimensions of spatiality, one may wonder if hybridity is virtual; and if it is, what is its relation with other concepts like hyper-reality and simulation. Most of the times, European scholars considering that only in places such as Las Vegas could be possible the "frantic hyperreality"; according with Umberto Eco, American people created the "absolute fake" in order to satisfy their obsession for the "real thing"<sup>30</sup>. Capitalism could be considered the world economic system, since it is applied in most of the countries around the planet. Capitalism is based on consumption; capital promotes the value of reality/reality, only to invalidate it, by making reality in useful product and indication of wealth.<sup>31</sup> (Fig. 4)

Jean Baudrillard, points out that simulation uses models to create somewhat "real" without a real origin; simulation generates hyperrealities, which have signals of truth (real). Simulacrum is a continuing circuit without references or limits; it exchanges for itself. Representation is a simulation; there is a shift from signs to mean the real, to denial the sign as value.<sup>32</sup>

AlSayyad explains another kind of simulation, a distributive one with limitless effects; here, simulation "*...turns against the entire system of resemblance and replication...*", selecting all the options to multiply the potentiality of simulacrum.<sup>33</sup> Hence, it should be suggested that this mode of simulation is used in the hybrid everyday life of the south border, and sometimes it is expressed in the surface of the built environment, it recreates places that are not reality/reality but hyper/reality. Simulation uses nostalgia to represent the real, a "second-hand truth" obtained from the life experiences kept in memory.



Figure 4. A Little store located in Tanques de Guadalupe (Monterrey, Mexico); it was founded by Don Mino, now it is worked by Mino's daughter, in memory of his father. Capitalism and patriarchal tradition. (Source: author)

In the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the word virtual is defined as “*senses relating to particular qualities or virtues...producing, or capable of producing, a particular result...senses relating to essential, as opposed to physical or actual, existence*”. Rob Shields explains that virtual has been used to produce channels of communications and from there, “make present what is absent”. Virtual could be considered an edge, constituted by liminal spaces where nothing is absolute, neither real nor imagined, but an uninterrupted simulation.<sup>34</sup>

According to Gordon Mathews, “*any one of us can, at any moment, have access to any image or idea originating anywhere in the contemporary world, or from any cultural moment of the entire human past*”.<sup>35</sup> In the global era the construction of identity ranges between nation, ethnic, and market identities, even if we have access at any cultural-temporal possibilities, the selection is not free but it seems to be. People choices are determined by gender, class, religion, citizenship, place, ethnicity and capital. The choice process is performed negotiating with others; the social world plays the role of a gatekeeper.<sup>36</sup> Yes, the choices are determined by external forces, but the sense of freedom in the selection is, in a certain way, liberty. The sense of choosing is an urban right.

In southern borders, culture, as well as spatial experience, they are hybrid; both of them make references of virtual places. In borders virtually is experienced as a part of the everyday “real” life<sup>37</sup>, thus, it is



hard to think in virtual as an independent concept. In the middle of the discussions trying to find what is real or virtual, one thing is clear: “...*the emergence of the virtual has fundamentally transformed the way we conceive of our present reality*”.<sup>38</sup> Virtually is inside the mind of the border inhabitants, is a cultural habit, a hybrid one, hence the blurring of limits, the mixture of ideas and memories (intoxication and mystification of signs), are common practices, they determine border spatial experiences.

The role of the everyday life is crucial for the comprehension of borders, it develops spatial patterns of historical ideas, social actions, and routine, “*People extend themselves –mentally and physically- out into space much as a spider extends its limbs in the form of a web. We become as much as part of these extensions, as they are of us*”.<sup>39</sup> “Border” inhabitants choose fleeting and transient elements of spatiality, it means, everyday life activities and *flexible-surfaces*<sup>40</sup>, to express themselves.

Lefebvre explains that “*Everyday life is a moment made of moments (desires, labours, pleasures-products and achievements-passivity and creativity-means and ends-etc.)...the dialectical interaction that is the inevitable starting point for the realization of the possible*”. And the possible includes the connection of images, knowledge and memory, working together in the recover of a unity; the everyday life is the place of recurrence. Henri Lefebvre compares it with music; both of them are flow, time (number) and movement, even so they are based on repetition “...*it is always there thought it recedes, seems to be nothing much, nothing, “nothingness”; but look again it has grown infinite beside your finitude, ocean by strip of sand...*”<sup>41</sup> (Fig.5).

Border spaces are not free of oppression, hegemony, and spatial injustice; in the globalized world, cultural identities and traditions are determined by power forces; however, the “sense of choose” is the first step to shape the identity-subjectivity of the border inhabitants, and this rough effort represents the continuing spatial resistance. Hyper hybridity as border circumstance will shape coming traditions.



Figure 5. During the day, the space is used by the women, they decided the “tactics of habitat”. The proto-hyper-surfaces are common in the settlement.

## THINKING ON FUTURE, MAPPING TRADITIONS

There is an association between future and the perception of time. Castells explains that the network society lives a sustained present, it means the dominance of a timeless time<sup>42</sup>. Under these circumstances, it would seem that everyday life in border settlements does not have time for anything, but the repetition of old traditions; to think in future looks worthless.

The selection of the cultural elements that shaped identities, it is not an autonomous process; traditions are defined by asymmetrical power relationships<sup>43</sup>. In 1978, Edward Said wrote his fundamental text *Orientalism*; Said criticizes the prejudices and ideas about the East made from a European perspective; he defined *Orientalism* as the set of institutions that establish statements, rules and views about East, it means, a Western style of powerful restructuring, which has authority over what it is defined.

*“...My contention is that without examining Borderism as a discourse one cannot possibly understand the enormously systematic discipline by which culture of formality [planning included] was able to manage-and even produce-the Border politically, sociologically, militarily, ideologically, spatiality, and imaginatively during current times... The*

*exteriorly of the representation is always governed by some version of the truism that if the Border could represent itself, it would; since it cannot, the representation does the job, for the power [capital], and *faute de mieux*, for the poor Border...*<sup>44</sup>

Border identities are shaped by the recurrence of “traditional” traditions; peripheral inhabitants embrace them uncritically. Frequently, old traditions do not contribute in the subject development, but the opposite. There are old traditions (conventional), border traditions (invented-evolving) and new traditions (futural); the last category represents the spatial hope.<sup>45</sup>

“Invented traditions” is a term that Eric Hobsbawm use to identify *“a set of practices normally governed by overtly or tacitly accepted rules and of a ritual or symbolic nature, which seek to inculcate certain values and norms of behavior by repetition, which automatically implies continuity with the past...”*<sup>46</sup>; invented traditions have a datable period. According to Hobsbawm, old and invented traditions, share the characteristic to be invariable; customs cannot allow inflexibility; although, *“The decline of custom inevitably changes the tradition with which it is habitually intertwined”*.<sup>47</sup>

Spatial hope is a utopic expression. The concept of the spatial justice appeared in the last decade of the twentieth century, when it is reconsidered the urban proposal of Henri Lefebvre. Agreeing with Edward Soja, the complete justice is unachievable; the author explains that justice and injustice are infused into the urban geographies of all scales: from the intimacies of the house to the global world. Border geographies have spatially environmental injustices, which are affected by the climate change and global warming. The recognition of the oppressive geographies could create spaces of resistance; Soja argues that from its remapping, it will be possible a critical spatial consciousness and from there to work for hope alternatives to change unfair geographies<sup>48</sup>.

Henry Lefebvre explains that the “right to the city” is related with the right to information, to be different or to choose difference. In the phrase “to have the right” are implied civil and human rights. The citizen has the right to live and to build his city in a different way, challenging the vision imposed by the state, the market, the bureaucracy, and the spatial professionals (including scholars).<sup>49</sup> Hence, to rethink the hybrid in the peripheral settlements with a futuristic vision (“hyperreal” everyday life, evolving traditions, urban rights); it will be essential in order to participate, as professionals, in the new urban structure.

In *Revolución urbana y derechos ciudadanos*, Jordi Borja established an initial list of “citizen rights” (urban rights), like: the right to housing and place; the right to public space; the right to the beauty; the right to healthy natural environment; the right to difference (preferences, urban behavior, and personal relationships), among

others<sup>50</sup>. The urban rights are a contribution to the geopolitical culture; thus, as public politics, they can modify costumes related with old traditions, this process is the basis for the creation of border traditions.

Futural traditions are going to build spaces of hope; before that, many invented traditions will take place. The proposals of urban professionals need to be thought as utopias, but believing that at least part of “the dream” could be possible. Hence, the mapping of border traditions seems a hopeful project.

In “Del rigor de la ciencia”, Jorge Luis Borges<sup>51</sup>, talked about a map with the size of the empire (formal planned city), a map that became useless and was abandoned outside the realm; over its ruins the border inhabitants re-built daily its own maps.

The word map came from the Latin *forma*, and it is defined as the drawing or representation total/partial of the earth surface; the maps show the distribution of physical and geographical aspects. The informal urbanization is border-territory; it constitutes the peripheral fabric of the modern Latin American cities; as the result of the emergency planning, its documentation is uncommon; their maps are satellite photographs.

Since the Age of Discovery, maps have been documented the historical sequence of the things in the space, the resulted information is consider as real/real facts; however, in contemporary world, the materiality of the urban-architectural phenomenon is no longer enough to express the society that produces it; the virtual reality is a part of everyday life. Thus, the idea of map needs to be examined.

In recent years urban scholars have considered that a better way of understanding the cities and urban experience is through films; from there, the “citizens” build images of the world, that is to say cognitive maps. Songs, videos and literature (history included) also help to build the social image of the metropolis; and therefore, movies could express border and conventional traditions.

Border settlements have never been part of the formal city maps; their registration should be considered with multiple layers, as dynamic, flexible and simultaneous (graphical maps plus cognitive maps plus multimedia plus \_\_\_\_\_).

Hence, the best way to document “borders” is capturing fragments of everyday life, and then later join them knowing that not only represent real / real facts, but also virtual and imagined realities. Maps, it means the "forms" of physical places, as well as their changing virtual counterpart, are tools that enable the transformation of reality, through the mapping it is constructed the hyper/real geography. Combining measurable information, literature, experiences, films, memory, and “tactics” of habitat, it is possible to see

beyond the conventional maps; this strategy does not substitute the real facts, but it also allows one changing the way they are seen.

The conventional maps (drawings) will represent the maps of location; from there it will be possible to build an infinite number of cognitive maps or approach maps (windows to territory), when these “new” maps are drawn they are transformed into maps of re-location, thus in this point there are two options: to add more approach maps or to trace a critical pattern, to create maps of intervention. The mapping process follows an uninterrupted spiral. The first approaching of fragments of cognitive maps<sup>52</sup>:

a) Data and graphical maps. Monterrey is located in the northeast of Mexico; the metropolitan area of the city, is constituted by twelve municipalities; it has 5,000,000 inhabitants; within the metropolitan area of Monterrey there are registered 60 “polygons” of poverty. The *barrio Independencia* is considered the first periphery of the city; in a map of Monterrey dated in 1894, the barrio appears as part of the regular trace of the metropolis (Fig.6), the peripheral neighborhood was planned to shelter stoneworkers from San Luis Potosí. Around 1950, “La Indepe” was expanded southward, the orthogonal trace was lost, and the “border” geography gained presence. In recent years it has been used as a strategic point of transactions between different groups of the organized crime. As the city was growing up it became in a central area.



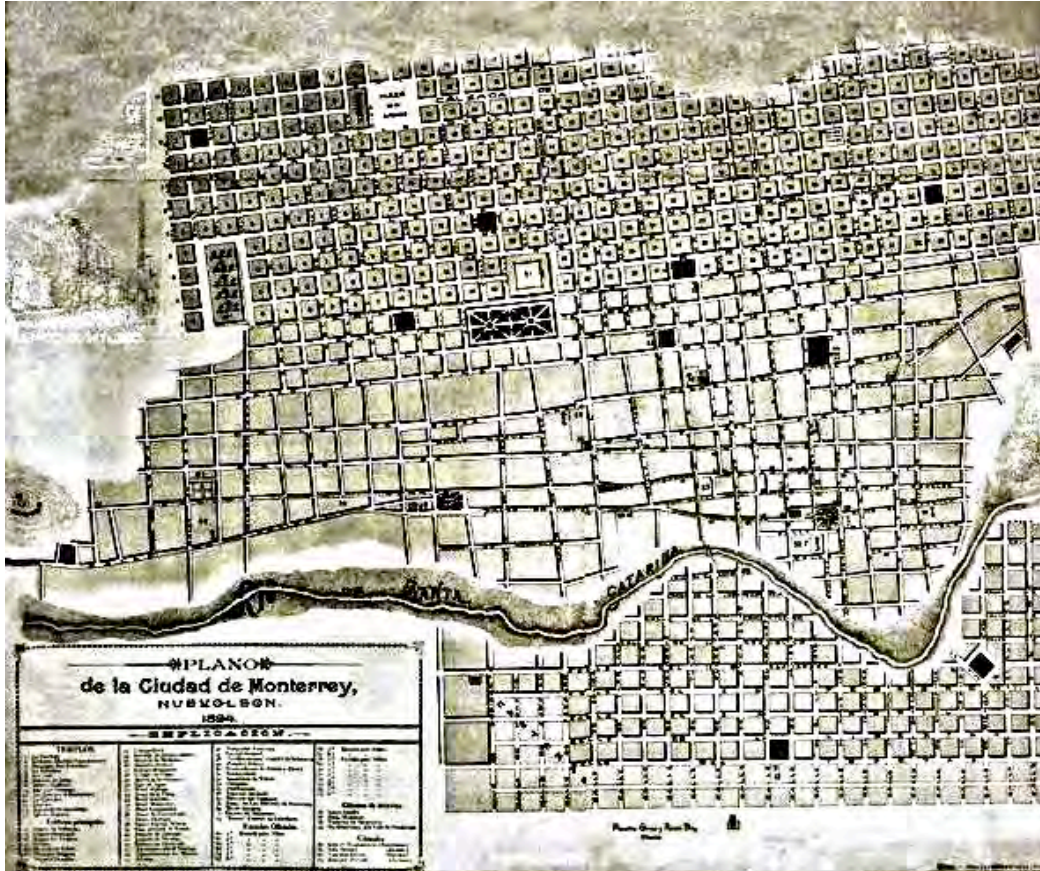


Figure 6. Map of Monterrey, Mexico, dated in 1894. The Santa Catarina River, worked as virtual Wall, beyond it was founded the first peripheral settlement.

b) The “other” Cleopatra. Estela is the Queen of the barrio *Neo-Independencia (Tanques de Guadalupe)*, she has been living in the settlement for more than 30 years. She organized the people and distributed the land between families who took the south area of the mountain; during many years they have been tried to be part of the formal city, offering the purchase of the property, even they paid for the drawing of site maps; although, everything has been useless.

Nowadays, Estela represents 300 families; because of their informal condition, the procurement of basic services and urban infrastructure, has been a constantly struggling. The achievements are obtained from the local organization, strategic alliances with political parties and leaders, and the negotiation with internal power forces (neighbors, army, and "drug cartels"). The barrio has its own transport and security networks; the security of the settlement is based on communication by cell phones, if a stranger enters the neighborhood, he or she is intercepted, also if there is a presence of a drug cartel, the routes are immediately modify.

c) Ángel<sup>53</sup>. September 25<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Monterrey, Mexico. The *Governor of the State* and his team are in the neighborhood for the opening of a “Community Center”; and Ángel is looking at them through the sight of his 50bmg gun.

Ángel lives up to the hill, from there he is aware of all the movements in the area: the activities of his neighbors, the presence of the visitors, the “flacons” of the different drug cartels doing their job in every corner, an “army” of communication antennas Dish an VETV, decorating the roof of each housing; and finally, the largest “inside” city . For his vigils, Ángel always has a six-pack of beer, a marihuana cigar, three different cell phones, and an ipod with his favorite music (*corridos*).

The opening is finished, Ángel receives a message announcing the presence of a governmental security convoy, after reading it, he dropped the gun on the table, while he is singing...

d) Tigres del Norte (songs: Jefe de jefes and Mi buena suerte)

*Tigres del Norte* is a group of popular Mexican music, its style is known as *regional mexicana* or *norteña*; it was founded in 1968 and its members are born in Sinaloa, but they have a lot of years living in San José California, they are known for including in their repertoire *narco-corridos*, songs about the life of Latin American drug cartels, but also romantic songs are included.

*Jefe de Jefes:* / *Soy el jefe de jefes señores me respetan a todos niveles... han querido arañar mi corona los que intentan se han ido muriendo*/. (Boss of the Bosses: /Gentelman, I am the boss of the bosses, I am respected in all levels...many people have wanted scratch my crown, those who have tried it, now they are dead/).

*Mi Buena Suerte:* / *...Eres la consentida, la dueña de mi vida, porque me has hecho feliz...mi medallita, mi escapulario, dame por siempre tu protección*/. (You Are my Good Luck: /... You are my darling, you own my life because you have made me happy... you are my religious medal, my escapulario, please give me your protection for ever/).

e) Cidade de Deus (2002). A film by Fernando Mireles

This film tells the story of a group of people living in the social housing development “Cidade de Deus”; the movie also shows the process by which the settlement was “favelized”.

– A picture could change my life, but [in *Cidade de Deus*] if you run away, *they* get you, and if you stay, *they* get you too. It’s been that way ever since I was a kid...Sorry. I forgot to introduce myself. My name is Rocket [and] that’s Shaggy. To tell the story of the City of God, I have to start with him...

(initial dialogues of the film)

Paul Oliver remarks the importance of considering transmission as the core of traditions, adding that not only the texts or documents have a role in this process, but also other forms of transmission like: Oral, dance, play gesture, painting, mimicry, acting, modeling, among others.<sup>54</sup>

Traditions could be represented by words and images, also it is possible to represent an image with words; each of these elements could be de-constructed in urban manifestations. From here, multiple connections could be made (Patriarchal tradition- Fig. 5 - Cleopatra-Estela- Tanques de Guadalupe- you are my darling- Fig. 1- my religious medal-I am the Boss of the bosses- City of God- negotiation with internal power forces- Fig.7. Informal condition- [in *Cidade de Deus*] if you run away, *they* get you, and if you stay, *they* get you too-the routes are immediately modify- Ángel lives up to the hill, from there he can be aware of all the movements in the area- Fig. 8); each of them would be a map, it means, a layer in the mapping process.

Maps are representations of geographies (realities/hyper-realities); they should be constructed collectively, as a part of the everyday life. Perhaps from the superposition of post-maps of border traditions, could be possible the creation of “shifting” protocols of communication<sup>55</sup>; it might be a step in the way to restore and re-humanize the idea of *urban*. Mapping border traditions will discover that all that once was thought as the end of tradition; now it represents its future. (Fig. 9)



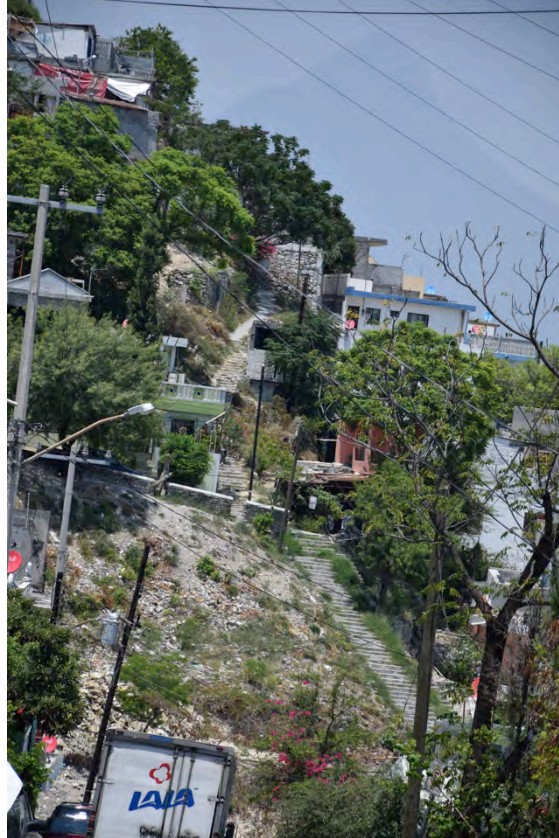


Figure 7. In Tanques de Guadalupe, the streets are flexible, because their “border” way of life.

(Source: author)



Figure 8. A window frames the large inside city. (Source: author)



Figure 9. In the XXI century, the possibility of future could be in the “nothingness”. (Source: author)

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<sup>53</sup> Original material from Taller de Proyectos Arquitectónicos (Master Program. UANL. Professor Diana Maldonado). Student: Jonathan Gallegos.

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<sup>55</sup> On the network society culture, Castells recognizes that since the contemporary society is global, there is multiplicity of cultures, living together and struggling with historical and geographical aspects from different areas of the world. The challenge is to find ways of communication, which solve the distance between each other.



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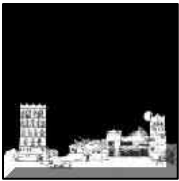
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