

## Planning Tools and Policies under Neoliberal Politics for Urban Renewal: Other Stories

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### Abstract

This paper provides a literature review on planning tools and policies available for urban transformation in cities from the Global South – ‘other stories’ – with common economic contexts that suited neoliberal regeneration strategies. It calls for a perspective on comparative urbanism since it is essential to look for case studies focused outside the Anglophone core in order to contribute for a postcolonial agenda. The method used for case studies choices was based on scientific platforms research using relevant keywords to produce a critical review. The results point out that the urban renewal processes analyzed have generated similar outcomes on urban and social realms such as displacement, social inequalities, deprivation of rights and physical changes of the urban environment as they are part of city’s reclaim for business, middle-class and market forces based on state-led and policy-driven approaches.

**Author Keywords.** Urban Renewal, Urban Policies, Neoliberal Policies, Global South, Mega-events.

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### 1. Introduction

This literature review provides a contribution to decenter the discussion on urban planning tools and policies for regeneration strategies from a traditional Anglophone core. It is addressed strategies for urban renewal in distressed urban areas and it indicates the main tools and policies developed by the state in order to foster urban transformation through land redevelopment projects. It discusses the role that central or local government play when laying conditions, foreseeing and creating opportunities for urban renewal to take place and the relations between state and the (real estate) market on the neoliberal politics. Case studies outlined were chosen from relevant researches focused at different geographical contexts - South Europe, Asia and Latin America - but contained under the general framework of neoliberal politics.

The policies analyzed involve the use of the gentrification, the rent gap and informality (informal settlements) as emerging urban planning strategies, the articulation of public private partnerships, the exceptionality measures, the establishment of flexible planning tools such as building codes, land use and zoning plans and also the insertion of agents, institutions and organizations within planning systems to assure the processes’ celerity. According to [Alexandri \(2018\)](#), legislative tools promoting gentrification are mostly connected with planning and are backed up by emblematic architecture, surveillance tactics and economic incentives while planning activity is framed as a spatial technology of liberal government ([Watson 2009](#)). This paper provides a review of experiences in different cities to compare the neoliberal policies

and the diverse market-led approaches to reclaim a city for business, middle-class and market forces towards urban transformation (Janoschka and Sequera 2016). To propose a shift away from the Global North experiences the paper draws on researches that cover urban renewal issues in Global South contexts and the results of neoliberal politics towards planning regeneration strategies within this specific realm.

The case studies collected include examples in Guangzhou, China, Taipei City in Taiwan, Rio de Janeiro in Brazil and Santiago, Chile. Another example come from Southern European experiences, in Athens. Since gentrification has similar facets in Spain and Latin America some Spanish insights were also included (Janoschka, Sequera, and Salinas 2014). The case of Bilbao enlightens the discussion about the politics of scale (González 2006) and Valencian experiences provide an understanding of the depoliticization character of market-led developments (Tarazona Vento 2017). The processes analyzed have generated similar outcomes on the urban and social realm: dispossession, displacement, social inequalities, deprivation of rights and physical changes of the urban environment.

The openness of the terms – urban regeneration or urban renewal – points out for an umbrella concept that might embrace all sorts of interests, claims and desires has a rather obscure aspect that needs to be exposed. On the cases presented, urban renewal achieved through land redevelopment due to massive projects implementation often resulted in major displacement and dispossession of the lower income population, changed the physical character of important heritage areas and led to violent repression of the right to the city. Even if the analysis of case studies pointed out major impacts for the underprivileged population, resistance and protests against the urban transformation in order to maintain the local inhabitants' rights to housing, education and health was observed. Resistance is reported in relation with housing affordability after gentrification processes.

Regeneration represents a solution to uneven the development of capitalist production - a rudimentary compensatory mechanism to structural inequalities, a struggle to fix capital (Pugalis 2016). Different names have been used to tackle massive urban transformation projects: urban regeneration, urban renewal, urban sustainability and social-mixing. Alexandri (2018) states that they all represent urban policies that promote gentrification - and, as it will be outlined, also other policies targeted to promote opportunities for the real estate market - even if those synonyms are used to disguise the real intention. Social construction around the issues and objectives of the intervention performs a decisive role in shaping policies and practices for the urban transformation and processes can be influenced by a variety of meanings, modes and scales of practice. These characteristics allow an ample scope for mutability, creativity and also abuse, therefore urban regeneration success is multidimensional, relational and situated (Pugalis 2016).

In order to assure the spaces for investment, neoliberal policy application have paved the way for successive re-appropriation of strategic portions of urban space by the most affluent stakeholders in decision-making processes (Janoschka and Sequera 2016). In the Latin American context, for instance, the socio-spatial structure, the concentration of poverty in central urban areas and informality - either on settlements and on economy - create fractures on the city that are easily to be penetrated by market-oriented redevelopment strategies. Informality produces a different way of organizing the politics, housing and economy and so, urban theories should understand this fragility in order to propose policies and tools for reshaping the cities. The post-colonial agenda proposes this shift in urban theory towards the inclusion of realities from the 'ordinary cities' (Robinson 2006) and so a new generation of urban studies are produced that take into consideration a bigger repertoire of cities and ideas

apart from the ones that shaped urban theory in the last years (Robinson 2016). It is necessary to build a new vocabulary of concepts to understand and analyze the multiple forms of metropolitan modernities that the dominant theorizations of global city-regions rooted in the EuroAmerican experience have failed to deliver (Roy 2009).

The income gaps between rich and poor in these countries are much higher than in the Global North countries and popular classes in these cases are not income differentiated only but go along with ethnicity and race concerns. The Anglophone theories for urban planning erases and overgeneralizes the picture of different weight and informality in the social and economic structures in each country (Harris 2018). Watson (2009) affirms that neoliberalism appears to introduce a new, or perhaps newly framed, set of values to the conduct of political, social and economic life and to seek actively to hegemonize them. These values direct institutional change minimizing the role of the state, encouraging non-state mechanisms of regulation (usually on the form of public private partnership), privatizing public services, creating policy rather than delivering services and introducing ways of performance management (under the establishment of private institutions and organizations working together with the public sector).

Moreover, Lees (2012) highlights the importance to understand the term 'neoliberalism' on ongoing practices of gentrification under the Southern agenda, since it has been more often framed within North American experiences. The characteristics distinguishing the 'other stories' contexts set out a framework for conceptual reflections to understand the processes of organization of the cities located in the Global South. 'Other stories' searches for an approach towards the construction of a post-colonial agenda on urban theories, attentive also to historical difference, since the social structures and way of producing urbanity is particular (Roy 2016), the capitalistic production model is especially harmful for the parts of the world that concentrates the biggest amount of urban poverty.

In the neoliberal logic, in which the state powers are dominated by the market forces and sometimes, even by supranational governance institutions, the function of the state remains that of organizing the dominant classes, that use their influence to turn economic and spatial power to their own interests, and disorganizing the dominated classes, that suffer the consequences of the severe processes of urban restructuring (Alexandri 2018). The state takes in the financial risks, boosts speculation while investors enjoy the profit of their developments, usually prevenient from the emerging rent gap or the established situation of informality under which the inhabitants are subjected.

Within the cases presented, urban renewal may happen for different purposes and under diverse conditions. Regeneration might have cultural or violent character and take place in different timing or it can appear as an opportunity due to the emerging rent gap. Informality (informal settlements) might leave room for agents to reclaim and redevelop a certain area, through violent displacement of the population. In other cases, mega-events and flagship projects' implementations engage with the political environment and requests physical conditions that enable urban transformation, usually through the embedment of private-public institutions that organize and lead the whole process, surpassing legal framework and planning systems (López-Morales 2016; Janoschka and Sequera 2016; Vainer 2011; González 2006).

## 2. Materials and Methods

The cases discussed on this article were fetched through academic research platforms on the scope of the article. Relevant keywords were selected and composed in diverse forms so a

critical research on Scopus and Web of Science platforms could lead to the cases, among them: 'planning tools', 'gentrification', 'urban policy', 'urban renewal', 'zoning', 'neoliberal', 'exceptionality', etc. The selected approach was established in order to reach examples from outside the Anglophone core, and to find articles produced under the 'other stories' framework designed for this paper, either in urban planning, geography and sociology journals. It was taken into consideration the relevance and impact of the journals identified and also the novelty and date of the articles chosen. Most of the case studies are documented and written between the 2010s. The cases then were compared to provide a table that could portray an overview of the cases, concerning the common ground that tools and planning policies for urban renewal under the neoliberal framework are subjected. The analysis involves the further themes: scale of intervention, role of the state, participation of civil society, stakeholders of decision-making processes, urban regulation tools, mechanisms and opportunities for the regeneration to take place, the displaced and the physical outcomes resulted after the intervention.

A theoretical framework is important to be defined, since the Global South delineates particular conditions for urban renewal, especially for concepts such as gentrification and displacement. The article draws from the 'geographies of gentrification' concept, focused on describing the ways in which gentrification and displacement processes take place on contexts away from Global North. [Lees \(2000\)](#) contextualizes gentrification around the social, economic and political circumstances of the Global South and leads the analyses to understand the facets under which processes of displacement and dispossession might occur. It is discussed the use of the term gentrification in different contexts outside the Anglophone core due to its specificities. It is argued that even if gentrification takes place differently in Latin America, the term could be applied to urban realities in the region if they are critically re-articulated in three key dimensions: the creation, assemblage and transformation of real estate market, the focus on the symbolic dimensions and the key role that displacement plays for the politics and geographies of gentrification in Latin American cities ([Janoschka, Sequera, and Salinas 2014](#)). It is important to bear in mind the political, economic and social structures of those countries, especially with regard to the role that the state plays for enhancing gentrification processes.

[Inzulza-Contardo \(2016\)](#) presents an analysis on the phases of gentrification processes around the world, in which the author places the phenomena in Latin America on a third wave moment, namely 'The return of gentrification' around the 2000s. While other countries have already been suffering the influences of gentrification since the 1970s and then a less intense phase in the 1990s, the Latin American and some European and American cities testify a return in the 2000s, together with globalization effects such as more intense capital accumulation that created a different profile of population gentrifying the cities: trendy artists, yuppies and finally a major influence of the government intervention, either through the creation of urban policies, incentives or through the establishment of public private partnership.

The concept of rent gap, coined by [Smith \(1979\)](#), the difference between the potential ground rent level and the actual ground rent capitalized under the present land use is relevant for this study since it represents a central point to explain land de-valorization that triggers developers to seek for profits on investments in degraded central areas and then, the consequent valorization due to the implementation of these projects. [López-Morales \(2016\)](#) on research developed for the city of Santiago draws on the rent gap theory and affirms that it helps assess the political economy of large-scale, property-led urban redevelopment as a problem of uneven extraction, and distribution of ground rent and its surplus value. This aspect leads to the major reconfigurations that have been taking place in the organization and production of

new real estate markets as a precondition for gentrification in many Latin American cities. Amongst others, central city areas have been targeted by national developers and transnational investment funds that exploit the enormous rent gaps resulting from long-term abandonment. It is not by chance that such debates have been reported primarily from Chile and Brazil - the two Latin American countries with the most unequal distribution of wealth (Janoschka, Sequera, and Salinas 2014).

This paper also offers a perspective on comparative urbanism: as claimed by Lees (2012) it is essential to look for comparisons and examples focusing on the Global South towards a postcolonial agenda. The choice for the comparison of different cities draws on Nijman's work (Nijman 2007), in which the author claims that comparative urbanism has the potential to answer important conceptual questions in urban studies since somehow it forces the researcher to explicate what it is to be compared and it compels to define the city in time and space. The systematic study of similarities and differences among cities or urban processes, addressing descriptive and explanatory questions about their extent and manner might offer an important perspective to describe transformation in the 'Other stories' contexts.

The spread of gentrification and its ideologies circulation, policy mobility and importation and finally the implementation of gentrification policies in different contexts based on successful projects like Bilbao and Barcelona, is also to be addressed. The gentrification blueprint from the North works like a model to be copied and implemented in the South, in which consultants from Europe are invited to participate on the processes of policy and decision-making and shape the future city. This literature review provides a general vision on how these imported policies were implemented in the examples, in the light of the 'good practices' coming from the North, in which the completely different nature of cities, population, history and economy is not fully considered. Planning is used to create an acceptable urban environment and also to extend administrative control and sanitary conditions to the growing number of urban poor (Watson 2009).

Tools and policies discussed were chosen as important examples taken from different but similar backgrounds. They involve use of gentrification as a planning strategy, articulation of public private partnership, implementation of exceptionality measures and establishment of flexible regulation tools to promote construction indexes growth. One example regards the Floor Area Ratio (FAR), the relation between the gross area ratio and the plot area, that was elevated in some examples to expand the construction potential of a certain area. Competition between cities, in order to be included in the global panorama of 'high-class' cities and attract tourists looking for culture and art consumption patterns, have been encouraged by strategic plans to promote marketized cities. Tendencies towards the creation of a commodity-city (Vainer 2011) is general but work out differently in particular national, regional, and urban settings.

Another general character observed in the analyzed cases is the apparent consensual situation established during projects' implementation. Usually the focus is turned apart from ideological struggle to technocracy and by being the center of a populist discourse that foreclose ideological debate (Tarazona Vento 2017). Hence, these approaches might represent a threat to democracy and the conditions under which urban regeneration projects are implemented demonstrate a lack of concern with governance while agencies are designated to guarantee the process celerity and lack of civil society participation. Another interesting concept to add to this discussion is the 'politics of scale'. They are strategies used by actors to explain, justify, defend and even try to impose the link between a particular scale or scalar configuration and a political project. Presented by González (2006), it describes a bigger

picture in which these discourses are part, the 'scalar narratives'. A number of these narratives achieved the status of common sense and are used indiscriminately by policymakers and politicians to give legitimate their arguments.

### 3. Discussion

#### **3.1. *Away from the Anglophone core: Other stories from Athens, Taipei, Guangzhou, Santiago and Rio de Janeiro***

The selection of examples highlights the role of the state under pressure of politics of neoliberalism, either due to changes in the political or economic sphere during the implementation of projects to host mega events. In those cases, political strategies and policies were implemented in order to benefit private actors in processes of urban renewal and the same mechanisms are recognized in different projects in a variety of contexts. This section discusses five important case studies in which government decision-making ended up on massive urban regeneration programs leading to population displacement, social inequalities, deprivation of rights and changes of the urban atmosphere. It is important to highlight that in those cases there is no presence of a Welfare state that could configure urban life in a different way and they all have similarities such as late process of suburbanization, decay of central urban areas and recent implementation of ambitious renewal programs through public-private partnership. Even if the cases presented have common ground on conditions and outcomes regarding urban renovation strategies, they have particularities that are going to be addressed on next sections.

Similarities between the case of Rio de Janeiro and Athens orbit around the hosting of the Olympics (in the case of Brazil also FIFA World Cup). From the same Latin American context, the case of Santiago provides an interesting perspective on the use of rent gap to promote the redevelopment of the city center. The cases of Taiwan and China show the economic changes in Asian countries and the particular scale of urban transformation in Asia and in Taipei specifically, it stresses the changes in land ownership over the change of political regime. The particularity of the Asian cases revolves also around timing, since the Asian physical transformation on the last decades happened in a high-speed mode. On the other hand, some issues will take part especially into the discussion in Latin American, as for instance, questions like race, ethnicity and class have clearly different meanings in this context. In the case of Rio and Guangzhou the impact of local inhabitants' resistance is highlighted because the displaced population was fighting for their right to the city: the right to have a house, access to education, health, mobility and work. As it will be discussed, evictions and displacement usually leave the population unattended since gentrification processes in the Global South have severe implications for housing affordability.

#### **3.2. *The city of Athens and the state strategic 'absence' during urban regeneration***

The city of Athens hosted the Olympics games, and during the implementation of the project, it has seen a series of urban regeneration projects taking place in determined areas on the city center. [Alexandri \(2018\)](#) analyzes the peculiarities of the Greek planning system and how the state's absence after promulgation of regeneration projects acts as a clear strategy for inner-city gentrification, through the adoption of exceptionality measures and flexible planning tools. Still under the consequences from the recent economic crisis, Greece has seen fall in incomes, withdrawal of welfare support and unemployment, that have been accompanied by dispossession of public assets and land. In times of crisis, state dismantling is followed by increased intervention in spatial restructuring and commodity-based housing systems and neighborhoods what might favor gentrification.

[Alexandri \(2018\)](#) describes the use of gentrification as a strategy and a tool of urban revival beyond the crisis and outlines the main strategies used by the state to deliver this urban transformation process: free-market housing policies, accompanied by new entertainment and nightlife uses, alternative art and cultural projects, together with tighter control of the public space. Urban transformation is privately-led but encouraged by state policies, that sets out the opportunities for investors through fiscal incentives, permissive urban planning tools and assuring social control and order for the transformation to take place, in this sense the role of the state is defined as 'absent' by the author. The toleration of illegal private construction - from real estate investors and not from squatting and illegal settlements - and public land dispossession became a part of planning strategy, created consensus between the state and the market, which also ended up reassuring political support for the dominant political systems.

During the 1980s and 1990s the Greek government sees the planning policies to rescale in order to align with European standards and to obtain access to European funding and, for this reason, planning control remains under national level. Changes in planning policies, to align with neoliberal politics, will be observed during the implementation of the projects for the Olympics that took place in Athens in 2004. This experience is similar to the one that will be presented in Rio de Janeiro: *ad hoc* urban regulations ([Ascher 2010](#)) implemented under a state of exception and giving a new force to clientelism. The state agencies were fragmented, creating new institutions to control and plan construction sites through public private partnerships and few attention was posed for local population. Projects' implementation, investments and privatization of public assets and land were promulgated through 'fast tracks' procedures, as special exceptions to the existing planning framework, facilitating speculation and instant abstraction of surplus values. On physical terms, gentrification has impacted in Athens mostly in former working-class neighborhoods.

The Metaxourgio neighborhood land values boost makes a good example to the speculative condition that encouraged gentrification. Another factor that favored gentrification processes was access to privileged information regarding upcoming projects to certain stakeholders, together with the expectations raised with the preparations for the Olympic games. Buildings in the neighborhood listed for preservation could not be renovate by its owners, which led to desertions. Even if tax reductions for restoration and rehabilitation were established, poor household were not included on the benefits because they did not meet the income requirements. Social cleansing was also testified in the neighborhood and migrants without living permits were arrested.

The policy mobility was also an important matter in this case. An expert in planning for inner-city regeneration from the United States has been employed in the municipality in order to implement policies coming from other country, assuming that those would apply on a completely different context ([Alexandri 2018](#)). In this way, gentrification has been the main tool to promote urban transformation in Athens especially after the economic crisis. The state has no funds for investments but leaves the city renewal projects on the hands of private investor through the creation of opportunities facilitating collaboration. Therefore, the state is a key figure in the urban regeneration process in Athens, orchestrating and driving the regeneration schemes, while the private sector gets the profits.

### **3.3. Urban transformation in Taiwan: the city of Taipei**

The case study presented by [Hsu and Hsu \(2013\)](#) about the city of Taipei shows how changing regimes of urban renewal impacted on alteration of land property tenure from government

to private owned and how these renovation processes led to the most urban regeneration aggressive scenarios and resulted in social exclusion. During the 2000s, the city of Taipei adopted urban regeneration as a key business model developed through two main tools public private partnerships and the use of 'imported' policies from abroad. Cities need to stay connected through the global cities' network and one way of assuring this connection is to 'import' policies' strategies creating alignment with the global context. Mobility networks connect cities like Taipei with places such as London through visits and seminars that disseminate neoliberal policy trends around the globe.

On the 1980s the state finances directly urban renewal activities through land appropriation law. By the 1990s the state is already overburdened by those projects and hence urban regeneration is adopted as a key business model. In the case of Taipei, urban redevelopment, gentrification and further consequences such as displacement are driven by private property developers. It is important to remark that in countries like Taiwan in which a Welfare state model of economics is not present, the economy developmental states allocate the redistribution of resources in its fundamental institutions (Kwon 2005 in "Transforming the developmental welfare state in East Asia" and Underhill and Zhang 2005 in "The changing state-market condominium in East Asia: Rethinking the political underpinnings of development" cited by [Hsu and Hsu 2013](#)). The East Asian NICs (Newly Industrializing Countries) qualifies urban squatters and run-down areas as problems of public health and physical decay, through an engineering approach to these issues that focus away from social agendas. Another fact concerning East Asian states is legitimacy, usually gained through the successful development projects - that will happen also in countries in which urban renewal projects were implemented for mega events or flagship projects like Brazil ([Vainer 2011](#)) and Valencia ([Tarazona Vento 2017](#)) - and not from democratic support of the civil society. Taiwan is characterized also by a strong interventionist government centered on economic growth and therefore urban regeneration strategies are used as the showcase of the power of state bureaucracy, trying to mitigate the urban chaos derived from rural immigration and fast industrialization processes. Urban renewal is an important tool for the developmental state and it is used to assure political favoritism and as a way to control land speculation.

In the case of Taiwan, but not only, the process of policy learning was completely drawn from Western countries to be implemented in a completely different context and the local variability of outcomes reflects that issue. According to [Hsu and Hsu \(2013\)](#), diverse social and political actors have mobilized different strategies to cope with, translate and articulate the content of the diffused policies in their own political interests. To understand the process of urban redevelopment in Taiwan, it is relevant to mention Taipei's economic role shift from manufacturing to an agglomeration of producer services. This change will impact on a spatial shift of economic activities and lead to decline in the western downtown area. The process started with demolition of old houses and with construction of new residential areas, which reveals the engineering approach of this country towards urban renovation.

The study presented by [Hsu and Hsu \(2013\)](#) divides the process of Taipei's transformation in three phases. On the first one (1950s-1980s) the renovation means were primarily state-led, demolishing and reconstructing central areas with squatting population. The second stage (1980s-1990s) is characterized by a failed state-fostered urban renewal process. The planning policies included tax cuts, floor area ratio bonus for investors (the construction potential was raised) and proposals for public-private partnerships but the economic situation made the situation difficult for investments. On the 1990s, the Taipei City Government upgraded the authority of the urban development department to a first-tier department in the city

government, in an attempt to simplify the permissions. In 1992, an urban renewal project preview the demolition of more than 2,000 houses and the eviction of 16,000 that resulted on fancy apartment building and disappearance of previous social mix present in the city center.

The third phase represents the aggressive state-engineering urban regeneration approach. The proposition of large urban operations projects required an open and competitive economy which included the privatization of state-owned enterprises, the liberalization of the domestic market, the institutionalization of BOT (Build, Operate, and Transfer) services, and the encouragement of private capital participation in the construction of public infrastructure. A common strategy to benefit private investors was to speed up the processes of urban renewal, through streamlining procedures for appropriating public and privately-owned lands. In this phase, the state was actively involved in land appropriation, incentive amplification, and protest containment by the use of police forces.

Moreover, besides incentives for construction, Taipei municipality proposed the increase of 200% in Floor Area Ratio Bonus for the renewal of houses constructed before 1980. As in the case of Athens, the authors describe close connections between developers and the dominant political party that received donations for political campaigns. The effects of social exclusion are clear either through directive displacement, marginalizing the working class or through exclusionary displacement, in all stages of urban redevelopment.

### **3.4. China and the city of Guangzhou: Gentrification building the “world-class” city**

The city of Guangzhou represents a case of urban policy that shifted from fighting the ‘blight’ to the elimination of the ‘obsolescence’, which signifies the rise of neoliberal urban policies in China. In this case, [He \(2012\)](#) demonstrates two waves of gentrification in the city of Guangzhou. The first one, as a modest experiment by sporadic housing redevelopment and a second wave in which a new city, a ‘re-imagination’, is proposed as a neoliberal urban strategy. Gentrification of the city center led to demolitions, rebuild and price raises, expelling the original local population of the area. This example concerns rights’ issues and during the projects’ implementation conflicts have gone deeper while struggles for a right to participation started to rise and this is an example in which gentrification resistance from the local population has led to the proclamation of a contested battlefield for the claim of rights, raising awareness on the right to the city.

The case study presents the two waves of gentrification that foster urban transformation in Guangzhou. Moreover, a huge amount of investment from the state and private sector have fueled a number of large-scale redevelopments in Chinese cities since the 1990s, which generated peculiar cityscapes and inevitable displacement. The first wave of gentrification in Guangzhou took places from the 1980s until the 1990s in a form of sporadic, high-density housing development and, like in the Taiwanese case, investments were mainly private. On this phase, most of the projects targeted old urban neighborhoods designated as dangerous and dilapidated housing areas. The second wave takes place around 2005, by the time Guangzhou was selected to host the 16th Asian Games and the government used the opportunity to launch a massive urban redevelopment plan. Central neighborhood housing areas were considered ‘obsolete’ even if they were not under physical decay. A neoliberal ideology dominated the municipal government politics so urban land and resources should be optimized by market forces. High density in central areas were raising property prices and offered a good condition for real estate speculation so foreign investors were invited to

promote gentrification in the central city, especially from Hong Kong, through marketing events, which channeled a large influx of capital in the area (He 2012).

The physical impact of the redevelopment was the dramatic reshape of the cityscape, as well as the socio-spatial configuration. Low-income neighborhoods give place to upscale housing estates and tertiary industries that completely changed the image of the city and led to the loss of the traditional city center identity. Urban policies for renovation aligned with neoliberal politics and valued the replacement of whatever was considered 'old' by ways to materialize the plan for spatializing capital accumulation through the construction of new buildings. With these logics, more than 2000 years of history were erased from central areas and it is estimated that more than 10 million m<sup>2</sup> of buildings were demolished. These interventions were facilitated by flexible urban planning regulations, as discussed in previous examples, for instance in restrictions on Floor Area Ratio that were applied to maximize profits for private developers.

Despite the displacement of a huge number of dwellers to suburban areas of the city, the case of Guangzhou has an emerging character of resistance from local population. Displaced population were relocated on the outskirts without access to employment, education or healthcare and the displacement processes were usually violent whereas its composition procedures were often obscure. Lately, the generalized dissatisfaction of households led to movements' organization in order to get their complaints heard by the local government, raising awareness to their right to participation. Under the pressures from different social forces, the municipality finally agreed to revise a commercial redevelopment plan for one neighborhood of the city, to enlarge the preserved parts, and to carry out a self-help redevelopment experiment.

Academics, activists and resident representatives also joined the movement. Neoliberal politics have transformed the spaces and the urban environment of Guangzhou and replaced original inhabitants and traditional buildings in central city by contemporary architecture and commercial activities. Even if urban redevelopment is carried out by local government, gentrification has been used as a tool to allow market forces in this process, that in China presents itself in a particular facet, in the words of the case study's author: "Gentrification in China is a 'go to the city' movement, rather than a 'back to the city' movement by capital and people" (He 2012, 2829).

### **3.5. Santiago, Chile: Urban planning tools flexibility for the inner-city**

The experience described in Santiago shows the impact of the emerging rent gap combined with flexibility measures on urban regulation tools in central areas of the city. Two different scholars were chosen for the description of this process. Inzulza-Contardo (2016) discuss about the physical transformation of the urban environment in the inner-city and exposes the 'new typified gentrification' taking place in Santiago, while López-Morales (2016) uses the rent gap theory to explain the process of dispossession of inhabitants under neoliberal policies for exploring land in central areas capitalizing housing units. On the first example, attention is drawn for the experience of global gentrification in historic neighborhoods in Latin America to the understanding of the new building typologies raising from the private investments in the central city and how it has affected the city landscape. Santiago has experienced rapid changes since the 1990s which affected the identity and memories of many inner-city residents.

Inzulza-Contardo (2016) develops an analysis centered on architectural features of the new buildings to understand the transformation of the environment in the city center. Santiago has seen a diminishing population in central areas in the last years and the municipality

targeted strategies for repopulation. Different housing proposals for the area have been developed and the author analyzes the physical dimensions and argues that great number of these flats are designed without balconies or terraces and raise from the basement upwards in an attempt to maximize the available space that the local master plan allowed for this area. Also, flexibility on the urban planning regulations, such as the land use plan, increased the construction possibilities. The real estate agencies and government are identified as the gentrifiers and are criticized by the way in which they proposed the reshape of the city. One main concern is about the physical impact that this kind of architecture types has in the historical city center of Santiago since they are not capable to deliver ideal social mixed neighborhoods, present on the previous condition of the city center.

López-Morales (2016) analyzes the same city to understand to which level the rent gap influenced gentrification in the city center, developing an investigation on the land values before and after urban redevelopment in the areas. In his research, it is contrasted the ground rent captured by original resident, usually a small-plot landowner, with the average sales price of the new accommodations supplied in the area. The objective is to understand whether or to what extent, displacement happened and how it excluded original inhabitants. The inner *comunas* (neighborhoods) have responded to the 'back to the city' movement of the middle-class with strategic policies that allow the private market to capture the vast rent gap left from the city center shrinking population, whereas social housing has increasingly been allocated to the suburban areas of Santiago, where land is still cheap.

Concerning land use policies, the potential ground rent had been elevated due to new zoning plans for the central areas that permitted higher Floor Area Ratio (FAR). These indexes can only be achieved if the existing housing stock is demolished and the developer has the possibility to acquire adjacent plots, then new buildings can be constructed with the plots joint together. The main question posed by the author is whether owners with smaller land plots that sold their land to the developer would find similar affordable replacement in the same area using the rent-gap-derived value. The result observed in this research is that, in fact, the displaced residents lost their central location. Policies used to attract investments to the city center were considered a political success for the Chilean state, since it covered the main issue that was to attract new inhabitants to the inner metropolitan areas, even though the displaced population represented also a big figure.

This case demonstrates also the enormous capacity of the extremely powerful real estate and construction sector in Latin American economies - in Chile, they represent 13% of the GDP (López-Morales 2016) and 6% of the construction business in Brazil (IBGE 2016), for instance - which assure for developers participation on the decision-making processes and ability to permeate different levels of planning system control. However, the policy that displays a bigger success in terms of attracting high-rise building to the city center are the establishment of fixed FARs by the local authority established in the *comuna*-level master plans. In Chile, each *comuna* has autonomy to develop a master plan for their area so they can establish their parameters for construction and this situation creates a competition in between them that aim to attract investments from real estate developers. In this scenario, the *comunas'* master plans play a central role in defining where and when the real estate market might choose to act. Another impact the hyper densification had in the neighborhood level has to do with environmental issues: larger shadow casts from high buildings, traffic and sewage congestion and loss of water pressure (López-Morales 2016).

In Santiago, the state is not absent and plays a necessary role to establish the real estate market, especially in the *comuna*-level. Gentrifiers in Chile are identified as the large-scale

developers buying land from small land owners to then develop and sell with comfortable profit rates and the real estate market, which is considered the transformation agent of the social geography of the city. The discussion of the important role of the real estate agents, the construction sector and the relation they establish with the governmental institutions in different levels adds to the discussion of urban regeneration schemes in Latin American, identifying important aspects of how gentrification processes take place in this context.

### **3.6. Rio de Janeiro: The state of exception during mega events projects' implementation**

Rio de Janeiro is a key case to analyze in order to understand processes of displacement during the mega events projects' implementation since the city hosted the 2016 Olympics and the 2014 World Cup events, which triggered the development of a variety of urban regeneration projects in the city. A remarkable example is the *Vila Autódromo* case, a favela area with population that had been removed before from another place, resettled in this area and then removed again for the implementation of the Olympic Village (Sánchez, Oliveira, and Monteiro 2016). This is not exception in Brazil, rather a rule for dealing with informal housing and squatting. Rio de Janeiro represents a unique example of a strategically planned and assembled long-term reconfiguration of urbanity, fostered by the expansion of capitalist market rules towards areas of social, economic and territorial organization that were previously structured by different accumulation processes. The transformation of the city derives from broad changes in urban life and is paired with an implementation of exceptional planning policy regimes (Janoschka, Sequera, and Salinas 2014).

It is important to outline the framework under which urban planning and social policies take place in Brazil. Illegality is indeed functional - for the archaic political relations, for a restrictive and speculative real estate market and because of arbitrary law enforcement. Abundant regulatory legislation (zoning plans, construction schemes, visual codes, land use regulations) divide space with the radical flexibility of the illegal city, giving away the fractured institutionalization character (Maricato 2000). As in the case of Athens, the rigidity of regulatory plans does not assure that the rules are going to be completely followed, since important stakeholders might take the lead and advocate for exceptions in legislation during approval and execution of special projects. Moreover, Rio de Janeiro presents an extraordinarily spatial proximity between wealthy and poor residents and favelas until today represent "a threat to urban planners, as they are reminders of different and non-market-conformist ways of organizing territory" (Janoschka and Sequera 2016, 1185). Since the 1990s urban planning policies and strategies raised different forms of symbolic and physical violence over inhabitants.

The strategic plan for city of Rio de Janeiro, named *Rio sempre Rio* - in free translation Rio always Rio or as critically and ironically called by Vainer (2000) "Rio finally Barcelona" - was a result after hiring Catalan urban planners and architects to create a strategic vision for the future Rio de Janeiro outlined in a plan (Arantes 2000; Vainer 2000). The strategic plan sets out ideas, policies and strategies that create the place with the right conditions for hosting the Olympics and FIFA World Cup. From a critical point of view, Vainer (2000) analyzes the Strategic Plan of Rio de Janeiro transformation of misery into a landscape issue when it states about the 'strong visibility of vagrants'. The transformation of poverty into a physical dimension was explicitly formulated by the Catalan technicians invited for the elaboration of the plan, when they included the 'weight of poverty' into the social vicinity category. In Brazil, the strategic plan tool deregulate, privatize and fragment, whereas at the same time, leaves room for the market and reinforces the idea of an autonomous city that needs tools and

mechanisms to compete to other for investment, as a urban machine to produce revenue (Maricato 2000).

Another dimension of the mega events is to produce a particular political atmosphere, in order to create consensus around the projects' implementation. This atmosphere should mask political and ideological divergencies, since all citizens are expected to be united on the common interest affirming the competitiveness of their city. The tactic is to present a project without winners or losers, supported by iconic architecture that represent the image of the city and economic growth. Depoliticization is central to the maintenance and advance of neoliberalism and the institution of a political culture is indispensable to the neoliberal growth strategy (Tarazona Vento 2017).

Moreover, concerning urban planning regulation, it is important to highlight that land use and zoning plans were left aside, because it is often too rigid and restrictive to market ideals. On the politics of scale, different political levels are constrained to governmental institutions that might configure special agencies with privileges regarding legislation and regulation and they are provided with attributions and responsibilities that should be in the hands of the government. This is legitimated in name of efficiency - a condition for the preparation of mega events - but it loses in terms of transparency and social and political control. The creation of *ad hoc* regulations generates discontinuities in the legal space of the city, promote the 'city of exception' and leaves room to subsidies and fiscal favors to protect the private investor and also gives a certain liberty for municipalities and state to have bigger debt than established by the responsibility fiscal law and to other legal blemish (Vainer 2011).

Policymakers often use debates originally from the academic research as a basis to legitimate and justify a particular approach to urban policy that focuses on economic competitiveness (González 2006). The scalar narratives assure megaevents to be accepted because it is included on the complex network of market forces and economic and political interests that articulate on the global, national, regional and local realms. In this example it is possible to see how disciplinary regimes might foster the strategies of displacement and dispossession by (real estate) markets. In Rio de Janeiro, while the right to housing is accomplished, the right to the city is now constantly denied to the urban poor, forced to live their areas under violent circumstances to give place to new urban developments.

### **3.7. Synthesis-table: Processes of urban transformation, agents and impacts**

The synthesis-table (Figure 1) includes the most important aspects contained on the urban regeneration processes concerning phases, agents and impacts of transformation. The data used to complete the table is available on the literature reviewed and relates with the scale of urban renewal, the actors involved in the process and the role they play on the schemes, policy making strategies and also the outcomes for the population and for the physical environment. It represents a systematized mode to compare the common features and differences of urban renovation implementation in each case study. The first aspect outlined is the area of analysis and demonstrates the scale of the urban intervention in relation with the city. Renovation is mostly targeted at the city center but not always. In the Brazilian case, for instance, regeneration happened through the implementation of facilities for the mega event of the Olympics and World Cup and these buildings are located in different areas of the city and rather far from the historic city center (Sánchez, Oliveira, and Monteiro 2016). In Guangzhou, the scale of analysis is central, but it takes also the periphery, in order to understand the reality of displacement. In Santiago, the analyzed areas of urban

transformation concern the neighborhood scale and are localized in the city center and it is similar in the case of Taipei and Athens.

The role of the state is mainly recognized as a facilitator of the process and it might be more or less active. In Athens, the state is described as 'absent' but as a matter of fact it plays a major role on policy making to create opportunities for gentrification, as in Guangzhou and Santiago. In Taipei, the role of the state might change over time, but during the biggest period of urban renewal it appears more as a facilitator than as investor. In Brazil, the state is identified as either an active investor as a facilitator of the process. In the matter of civil society participation in urban regeneration projects it is relevant to note that, in most of the cases, local population did not engage with the proposals' implementation. Even if some processes involved a certain level of participation they lack on effective results in terms of governance and more information on this matter was not available on the articles reviewed. Participation is observed mostly in the form of protests but that, in any case, did not prevent evictions and were usually repressed under violent circumstances such as in Guangzhou, Taipei and Brazil.

On these processes, the most relevant stakeholders should be pointed out to understand who bears the power of transformation of the cities. The state is listed in all of the cases and, in most of them, the real estate market and developers play a major role in decision-making. In countries like Brazil and Chile, they have decisive role for the implementation. In some cases, land-owners are also part of the decision-making scenario, even if they are later displaced by the urban transformation scheme. Supranational organizations are also present in the case of Athens and in Brazil the figures of FIFA and Olympic committee show up. Tools and planning policies are the key factors that enable the projects to take place. They are divided between urban regulation tools and other mechanism on the form of policy-making or opportunities taken by stakeholders to deploy their business. From the urban regulation basket, it is important to highlight the flexible urban land use and special zoning plans created for those urban regeneration projects. The grant of building permits and land use, zoning plans and building codes changes into more flexible regulation were part of the exceptionality measures imposed to facilitate the processes to approve and construct massive urban projects.

The establishment of public private partnerships, together with the creation of institutions and foundations responsible for projects' management, is a common legal tool in almost all the cases studied. Other mechanisms important to be mentioned are the rent gap, informality and mega events, all seen as opportunities by the stakeholders to start a development on urban renewal. Gentrification, imported policies from abroad and speed-up procedures assured that the projects were implemented on a short period in order to target effectiveness in the implementation. The politics of scale was a common characteristic in almost all those cases, when it is testified changes on the political strategies to adapt the projects' needs, either scaling up or down. Violent repression was also a relevant - and effective - mechanism used to make sure the transformation would take place.

The displaced are always the most fragile population, meaning low-income and/or immigrants because of evictions or because they are not able to pay for the higher prices. The case of Taipei also includes war veterans and rural-urban migrants on the displacement scenario. Physical impacts noted from the experiences concern transformation of the previous urban environment, whether because of the demolition of existing buildings or due to the changes of predominant uses (residential to commercial and services). Changes on the building heights is also observed as well as demolition of architectural heritage. As an effort of comparative urbanism (Nijman 2007) this table intends to provide a synthesis of the cases and portray it in

systematized way in order to address descriptive and explanatory issues about the extent and manner of similarities and differences to explain the process to which these cases were subjected.

	Area of analysis	Role of the state	Participation of civil society	Stakeholders	Urban regulation tools	Mechanisms	Displaced	Physical impacts
<b>Athens</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>neighborhood scale</li> <li>central area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>"absent"</li> <li>facilitator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>no participation on the process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>state</li> <li>real estate market</li> <li>landowners</li> <li>supranational organizations (EU)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>flexible urban land use</li> <li>special zoning plan</li> <li>public private partnership</li> <li>imported policies</li> <li>establishment of institutions/foundations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>rent gap</li> <li>violent repression</li> <li>mega event (Olympics)</li> <li>politics of scale</li> <li>speed-up procedures</li> <li>gentrification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>local population</li> <li>low income</li> <li>immigrants</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>changes of the urban environment</li> <li>industrial to commercial activities</li> </ul>
<b>Taipei</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>neighborhood scale</li> <li>city center</li> </ul>	3 phases: (1) state investor (2) state investor (3) facilitator	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>no participation on the process</li> <li>protests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>state</li> <li>real estate market</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>flexible urban land use</li> <li>special zoning</li> <li>public private partnership</li> <li>imported policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>informality</li> <li>politics of scale</li> <li>violent repression</li> <li>gentrification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>squatters</li> <li>veterans</li> <li>rural-urban migrants</li> <li>aborigines</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>changes of the urban environment</li> <li>land ownership transfer from public to private</li> </ul>
<b>Guangzhou</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>city scale</li> <li>city center and peripheral areas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>facilitator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>no participation on the process</li> <li>protests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>state</li> <li>foreigner investors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>flexible urban land use</li> <li>special zoning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>mega event (Asian Games)</li> <li>violent repression</li> <li>gentrification</li> <li>speed-up procedures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>local population</li> <li>low income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>changes of the urban environment</li> <li>demolition of architecture heritage</li> <li>residential to commercial activities</li> </ul>
<b>Santiago</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>neighborhood scale (different areas analyzed)</li> <li>city center</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>facilitator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>land-owners selling land</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>state</li> <li>real estate market</li> <li>developers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>flexible urban land use</li> <li>special zoning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>rent gap</li> <li>gentrification</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>local population</li> <li>land-owners</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>changes of the urban environment</li> <li>traffic and sewage congestion</li> <li>shadow cast</li> <li>low rise to high-rise buildings</li> </ul>
<b>Rio de Janeiro</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>intervention scales</li> <li>different areas of the city</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>active investor</li> <li>facilitator</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>no participation on the process</li> <li>protests</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>state</li> <li>real estate market</li> <li>developers</li> <li>FIFA</li> <li>Olympic committee</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>flexible urban land use</li> <li>public private partnership</li> <li>establishment of institutions/foundations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>informality</li> <li>mega event (Olympics and World Cup)</li> <li>gentrification</li> <li>violent repression</li> <li>speed-up procedures</li> <li>politics of scale</li> <li>imported policies</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>local population</li> <li>low income</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>massive buildings</li> <li>from residential to single use (sports activity)</li> </ul>

Figure 1: Synthesis-table: Process of urban transformation, agents and impacts

#### 4. Conclusions

The examples presented show a brief literature review on what have been studied and produced concerning planning tools and policies around the Global South under the political framework of neoliberalism. Rather perverse, the market-oriented approach for planning policies in these cities represent the project of political parties that sets conditions benefiting private sectors such as in construction and real estate segments. The construction of a concept for gentrification, identify common aspects and differentiate particularities from diverse contexts provides a contribution for the Global South academic discourse and for the post-colonial agenda.

As exposed on this paper, the main urban planning tools used to assure the hegemonic forces of capital to spatially fix in the city are incentives such as flexible land use and zoning plans that meets the criteria set by construction and real estate sector to implement new developments for the city regeneration in areas with emerging rent gap or with higher rates of informal settlements, enabling gentrification. According to Lees (2012), gentrification is polycentric, different in different countries, embedded in the soil and institutions of those countries, and, as demonstrated in these case studies, it represents a clear urban regeneration strategy that displaces the underprivileged population of the city to peripheral areas without any infra-structural support. The role of the state might change depending on the conditions imposed by the real estate market. It can be 'absent' or configure a 'state of exception' that assures planning legislation requirements are surpassed by the interests of the city's investors in the name of the creation of a market-oriented city, attending the demands of capital. The state may articulate with the private stakeholders to create agencies to manage public private

partnerships that have freedom to plan, decide, manage and implement projects and construction sites. In all these scenarios it is important to highlight that the state has chosen a pretty clear strategy to rebuild the city distressed areas. The idea of consensus building on projects implementation, specially within the mega events, denounces a particular characteristic of urban regeneration: depoliticization. By signifying the city's commitment with the creation of a 'welcoming business environment', prestige mega-projects do symbolize 'the reduction of the political to the economic' (Tarazona Vento 2017).

A series of negative outcomes can be observed on the urban regeneration processes in any places but mainly on the Global South, where the state does not define welfare approaches concerning policy-making. Despite that, the examples often show interesting experiences of population resistance. The engagement of technicians, academics, professionals with activism and social causes is a positive character of the urban transformation in the Latin American and also Spanish context, as highlighted by Janoschka, Sequera, and Salinas (2014). Furthermore, the focus on the Southern examples gives an interesting perspective on disruptive initiatives and raise awareness towards the importance of resistance and creation of an activism agenda, to counteract and combat the aggressive market-oriented strategies promoted through government implementation of policies and tools in urban planning renovation schemes. It is important to provide an understanding about the mechanisms and practices that constitutes the post-political order since it is a way to offer examples on how it could be challenged.

The studies of resistance to gentrification not only increase the transformative potential of participatory research, but also develop new emancipating positions and approaches capable of transcending the mainstream of urban research, calling for a new agenda in urban theory, that emerges from the Global South. In terms of physical results, it is possible to say that each case represents a very different outcome. Each city has particular geography, landscape and culture that lead to the formation of rather diverse urban environments even if urban regeneration projects take place under similar political conditions.

This paper carries the effort to present experiences from the Global South, to offer one perspective to learn from 'other stories' even though the examples sometimes represent an anglophone point of view for the development of their research and articles. In the end, the review is drafted from European and North American journals, researches and further theories and concepts organized and systematized by scholars funded by European research, even if authors have the aim to understand their own cities' realities. As Lees (2012) states, it would be important to decenter, not only the topics of discussion, but the theories and references itself from the Anglo-American perspective, given the opportunity of learning from different urban theory cultures of the city.

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