Introduction: changing Latin American urban space

A driving force in the way urban space is valued and used in Latin America is the historic emphasis on the traditional center, or downtown. This cultural prioritization of “centrality” can be linked to colonial town planning. The Spanish royal family coordinated plans for the design of its colonial cities via an imperial system of governance and control. The planning rules were laid out and then rigorously enforced through the Laws of the Indies in the early 1500s. More specifically, a subset of these laws, called the “Royal Ordinances for the Laying Out of New Towns,” dictated the first urban planning and engineering rules for cities in the Americas. (Stanislawski 1947). Using ideas borrowed from the Greeks and Romans, Spanish town engineers were instructed to build cities in a “grid-iron” configuration, anchored by a central square (plaza mayor) set within a rectangular street grid. The ordinances stated that the key institutions – the church, the government palace, the market – would be sited on or near the main square. Larger cities would have a number of secondary nodes in the form of plazas geometrically dispersed and equidistant from the main square.

The main plazas both literally and symbolically encapsulated the powerful role of church and state. Centrality was enhanced by locating not only the main institutions and social infrastructure (markets, church, etc.) on or near the core, but also the elite members of society, whose homes were adjacent to the center, alongside key facilities of the colonial era – the customs house, royal granary, royal tobacco warehouse, and royal treasury. Further, the royal ordinances made it very clear that indigenous and subaltern members of society were to be kept at a distance or pushed completely away, as revealed in these words from the original language of the ordinances: “All settlers, with greatest possible haste, are to erect jointly some kind of palisade, or dig a ditch around the main plaza so that the Indians cannot do harm” (Nuttall 1922: 252).

From an urban design perspective, Latin American cities evolved through three phases prior to the 21st century. In the first phase, from around 1500 to 1800, cities were compact, and the status of their residents was defined by the proximity of their homes to the main plaza. In the second phase, in the 19th century, European immigration increased, and linear corridors extending from the downtown core defined new zones of high status and upper-income residence. Meanwhile, the poor lived in emerging “slum quarters,” close to the city center or nearby industrial districts. During the third phase, from the 1940s onward, giant waves of rural-to-urban migration brought millions of landless peasants to the cities. This eventually produced a large-scale socio-spatial
polarization of rich and poor, with the poor forced to find shelter on the least desirable land in squatter settlements and shantytowns, mainly isolated in districts on the urban periphery. Meanwhile, the rich concentrated in a cone-shaped area roughly defined by downtown and an elite corridor that connected the city center to a second high-status zone on the periphery. These two zones for the wealthy were served by streetcars, and later by automobiles (Griffin and Ford 1980).

For most of the second half of the 20th century, as land closer to the center became scarce, urban growth was pushed towards the urban periphery and was dominated by *asentamiento irregulares* (irregular settlements) – squatter settlements and shantytowns that evolved as poor rural migrants began arriving in cities in the 1950s. Indeed, to speak of urbanization in Latin America, is to recognize that most of the outward urban expansion was due to unplanned invasions of land, and subsequent informal settlement construction by the most disadvantaged citizens.

The plight of the urban poor still remains a critical issue in Latin American urbanization (see Mangin 1967; Cornelius 1975). A dominant narrative of this continuing plight has been that of “uncertainty.” Migrants to the city were caught in a vortex of perilous circumstances. Unable to survive from subsistence agriculture in their rural lands, they arrived in large cities and faced high unemployment, lack of capital, and discrimination. Their only choice was to create their own “spontaneous” settlements, often on precarious and unwanted land: near toxic pollution sources or urban nuisances like airports or prisons, on unstable flood-prone hillsides, or at the bottom of steep canyons and floodplains (Davis 2006). Further, these city dwellers often found shelters only through land invasions or fraudulent property deals with less scrupulous investors.

During the fourth phase of urban evolution, which began in the first decade of the 21st century, globalization began to reshape the spatial form of Latin American cities. The forces of globalization and the neoliberal model of economic development brought the elements of “fast urbanism” to the urban periphery: mass-produced, master-planned neighborhoods for the upper and middle classes, the expansion of shopping spaces and business parks, and heightened consumerism, advertising, and high technology. These forces combined to create metropolitan regions characterized by fragmentation and the formation of what has been termed an “archipelago” of gated residential spaces and fortified centers, all served by the automobile and all disconnected from each other (Sabatini, Caceres, and Cerda 2001). These closed-off “islands” of activity included gated suburbs, malls, private schools, and social and recreational clubs. As in the United States, these increasingly spread-out developments became overwhelmingly dependent on automobiles and, even in some cases, on private toll roads that allow the wealthy to get to work more quickly. These patterns can be seen across the Americas, especially in Argentina, Chile, Mexico, and Brazil (Coy and Pohler 2002).

**An urban design crisis on the periphery: global suburbs in the Americas**

Since the 1990s, portions of the North American suburban model have been exported to other parts of the world. These “global suburbs” often employ the cultural branding of the US prototypes through their place names: One of the most affluent suburbs outside Cairo, Egypt, is called “Beverly Hills.” An upper-class enclave in the outskirts of Beijing is named “Orange County.” A wealthy peripheral residential district in Hong Kong calls itself “Palm Springs.” Similar global suburbs have risen outside Jakarta, Manila, Lagos, and Johannesburg.

In Latin America, the elite or middle-class developments built on the periphery of cities are partially influenced by the North American suburb of the 1950s, though they do not necessarily look exactly like their low-density, single-family US counterpart. They manifest in different forms adapted to their cultural settings. For example, in Brazil, elegant high-rise luxury suburban towers, or *condominios fechados* (closed condominiums) define the new suburbs. In Mexico, there
are both mid-rise and high-rise suburban apartment towers for the wealthy, but also spread out, low-density subdivisions for the working and middle classes.

While the built landscapes may vary, what remains consistent across the planet is the “socio-cultural design narrative” that has come to define global suburbs. This suburban narrative is embodied by social exclusivity, an increasing desire for private over public space, the fear of crime, a preference for predictable, homogenous built environments, and a greater emphasis on consumerism and shopping within artificially constructed malls, as opposed to traditional corner stores or street-oriented shops in pedestrian-scale neighborhoods (Herzog 2015). Scholars have also suggested that Hollywood and American cinema may have influenced the construction of American-style suburbs south of the border; they argue that many Hollywood films unwittingly set up a tension between the dark, dangerous landscapes of inner cities and the idealized, peaceful, healthy image of the suburbs (Pizarro 2002).

The evolution of global suburbs in Latin America illustrates an early-21st-century fundamental reorganization of space in the urbanized regions of the Americas. Wealthy and poor are ever more separated geographically, via technology, walls, fences, or politics. The term “global suburb” thus captures both the socio-spatial reorganization that has spread across the globe, and the growing cultural/psychological importance to urban dwellers of retreating or escaping into protected enclaves within the metropolis. These new social and cultural hybrids are part of an evolving social model of cities that may well be reinforcing the conditions of inequality, allowing wealthy classes to further distance themselves from the realities of urban life. As US-inspired global suburbs proliferate in the periphery of cities in Latin America, and more generally, the Global South, they end up competing for space with the favelas, colonias, and other squatter communities that house the growing population of urban poor across the planet (Figure 3.1).

Figure 3.1 Suburban development in the Global South. A case from Tijuana.

Source: Photo by L. Herzog
Two design and spatial trends are notable in the shifting structure of the Latin American periphery in the 21st century. First, gated communities and fenced suburbs are now spreading into zones that were previously occupied by only squatter communities. The new gated suburbs in Latin America are called “barrios privados” (private communities) in Argentina, *condominios* in Chile, *conjuntos* or *urbanizaciones cerradas* in Ecuador, *condominios fechados* (closed condominiums) in Brazil, and *fraccionamientos cerrados* in Mexico. In Buenos Aires, middle- and upper-class suburban enclaves are now surrounded by illegal settlements and garbage dumps. In general, on the Latin American periphery, we are seeing luxury residential quarters served by highways juxtaposed against squatter communities – literally enclaves of wealth sitting alongside vast swaths of poverty (Borsdorf, Hidalgo, and Sanchez 2007).

This trend alludes to a dramatic shift in the scale of segregation. In the 20th century, large-scale segregation was the hallmark of urban form, with rich and poor profoundly separated in space. Today we are seeing what one scholar terms “small-scale segregation,” in which wealthy and upper-middle-class enclaves are spread across the metropolitan region (Sabatini, Caceres, and Cerda 2001). These enclaves, often adjacent to squatter neighborhoods, are fortified with fences and walls and are built on plots that become available depending on topography, land markets, and other factors.

The second recent trend in the Latin American periphery lies in the tendency to build mega-projects that are not merely gated communities, but rather gated cities – giant developments of 30,000 and more inhabitants – in Chile, Brazil, Mexico, and elsewhere (Jones and Moreno-Carrasco 2007). They are often products of direct foreign investment and influenced by foreign design and marketing strategies. The original mega-suburb was probably Alphaville, on the edge of São Paulo, Brazil; its construction began in 1974. Scholars point out that Alphaville and other projects in São Paulo were influenced by North American ideas about suburbs and marketing (Caldeira 2000). Another example is the elite suburb of Santa Fe, on the western outskirts of Mexico City. Its development involved US and other international investors as well as the building of foreign-owned commercial, industrial, and office developments (Valenzuela 2007).

Both these early-21st-century trends in the Latin American periphery underscore the overwhelming role of exclusion as the emerging structuring force in the social and geographical construction and design of urban space. This exclusion is not only observed in the formation of gated elite and upper-middle-class residential zones, but also in the rise of highly protected, often fortified, privatized business centers, schools, leisure and recreation spaces, and shopping malls. Exclusion, isolation, and fragmentation also hint at a corresponding loss of community and public life resulting from the steady decline of walkable, community-oriented public spaces. This kind of new urban sprawl has also been environmentally destructive, unleashing more pollution from automobiles, trucks, and buses using the new peripheral roads, and eradicating forests and other natural ecosystems as these suburbs push further into exurban spaces.

**Sense of place and “slow urbanism” in Latin America**

If the suburban model is an example of design influences flowing from north to south in the Americas, there is also evidence of an opposite force (flowing south to north) that might alter American cities – what might be termed “Latino slow urbanism.” Western cultures have become habituated to “fast living” on a variety of levels. In the cities of North America (United States and Canada), residents are accustomed to traveling fast, typically in their cars and often on mammoth systems of freeways. The average American travels 12,000 miles per year, almost double the distance traveled by citizens in most other industrialized nations. Americans also suffer from a time crunch, by working longer hours than other global citizens. North America’s urban dwellers live
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at an accelerated pace within a built environment (spread-out suburbs, freeways) that exacerbates this pattern. This ethos of fast living has both environmental and ethical costs that cut across every major layer of people’s lives – food, clothing, shelter, and ecology. This fast-urbanist development pattern adds more traffic, air pollution, and noise.

But alternatives to the “fast urbanism” paradigm are emerging. The “Slow Food” movement, born in Italy in 1986, pushed back against the globalization of fast food, fast life, non-sustainable food production, and the eroding of local economies. Slow Food later gave way to the “Slow Cities” movement, or Cittaslow, also born in Italy. The Cittaslow charter argued that globalization wipes out uniqueness and generates mediocrity (Cittaslow 2009).

Both the Slow Food and Slow City movements are largely about protecting sense of place and local culture (Mayer and Knox 2006). The idea is to preserve both local ecology (agriculture, vegetation, grown in local soil, water, etc.) and human tradition (cultural practices), both of which allow diverse parts of the planet to generate their own unique foods, styles of consumption, and ways of life. This is then extended to urban buildings and spaces in the form of conservation, green spaces, walkability, appealing public spaces, improved public transit, and eco-friendly design (Knox 2005).

There are qualities of urbanism and urban design in Latin America that inherently embrace this “slow urbanist” perspective. Latin American slow urbanism qualities include memory, ritual, art/design, walkability, and the cultural power of streets and public spaces. Of course, one must be careful not to reduce this idea of “Latino slow urbanism” to a cultural stereotype. The term “slowness” here refers only to the pace of change in urban design.

To speak of memory in Latin American urban design is to acknowledge the collective force of three powerful historic layers that define the heritage of the urban built environment: indigenous, colonial, and modern. These three periods have left an indelible and lasting imprint on the physical form of cities; for example, some national governments have even gone so far as to legislatively preserve that “cultural patrimony” as a valuable part of their heritage (Herzog 1999; Scarpaci 2005). In Mexico, for example, for more than five decades, the national government has created legal protections for its cultural patrimony, as well as at least two cabinet-level agencies to manage historic properties (Monnet 1995). More recently, national governments have been employing historic preservation policies to jump-start economic development in old city centers in Cartagena, Montevideo, Buenos Aires, Havana, Mexico City, Quito, Valparaiso, Santiago, and Rio de Janeiro, to name a few salient examples (Scarpaci 2005).

In today’s global economy, historic buildings and public spaces have immense value in urban design for redevelopment, and in stimulating economic sectors such as tourism, entertainment, design arts, and cuisine. The experience of living in and using historic spaces involves a set of rituals that are inherently connected to a “slow” urban lifestyle, one that scientists argue contributes to higher levels of public health, since it involves walking, socializing, and being part of a community (Pucher and Buehler 2015).

A number of scholars have discussed the rituals surrounding behaviors in or near public squares and plazas in Latin America (Figure 3.2) (see Arreola and Curtis 1992; Scarpaci 2005; Herzog 2006). These rituals involve everything from casual meeting, discussions of politics, eating, dating practices among young teens, children playing, and mothers interacting, to having one's shoes shined, reading, or gambling (Low 2000). More formal rituals include the weekly flag ceremony on the zocalo in Mexico City, or the annual “grito” (shout) of “Viva Mexico” on the same zocalo, the evening before Mexico’s independence day (Herzog 2006).

Art itself is important to Latin American urbanism. The legacy from the building of cities remains embedded in both the built environment (in the form of buildings, streets, plazas, gardens, patios, and other spaces from the past), as well as in the artwork (paintings, murals, sculpture,
photography, film, and so forth) that celebrates culture and place in Latin American cities. This is seen, for example in the proliferation of street murals, public art, outdoor craft markets (Figure 3.3), and high-profile architectural commissions as part of the overall renaissance and redevelopment of historic urban centers in cities like Buenos Aires, Valparaiso, Montevideo, Rio de Janeiro, and Santiago. Valparaiso, Chile, stands out as one of the critical examples of a city where progressive politics, murals in public spaces with populist themes like social justice or housing rights, and street art have become embedded in the aesthetic landscape of the historic center, part of the reason why it was declared a UNESCO World Heritage Site in 2003 (Palmer 2008).

In historic centers and downtown areas of Latin America, there has been a revitalization of slower forms of transportation – trolleys, streetcars, bicycling, and, of course, walking. The city of Curitiba, Brazil, has been celebrated as a cutting-edge example of the implementation of sustainable urban practices. One of Curitiba’s great accomplishments has been the successful construction of a Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) network throughout the metropolitan region, a system that is based on creating dynamic, high-density centers near bus stations, or along linear transit lines, with walkable neighborhoods along the corridors and around the stations. This model is being copied in other cities in Latin America, including Bogotá, Columbia; Rio de Janeiro, Brazil; Santiago, Chile; Guatemala City; and São Paulo, Brazil. An estimated 32 cities in Latin America have adopted some form of BRT lines, amounting to 20 million weekly users (Schlaiker 2011).

Globalization has also found its way to the historic core of many downtown districts, like that of Mexico City. The attention to redevelopment through the lens of protecting historic spaces...
is a lesson that other regions of the world can point to. For example, UNESCO’s designation of Mexico City’s historic center as a World Heritage Site provided crucial international recognition of the historic infrastructure of downtown, and it became a focus of opportunity for global investors soon after the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) was signed in 1993. This had the additional impact of attracting international journalists to cover Mexico, and thus redressing the negative stereotypes of Mexico City spread by some foreign media sources. For much of the late 20th century, international news coverage in Mexico City focused on negative events: political corruption, the devastation of the 1985 earthquake, the problems of air pollution in the early 1990s, and reports of crime against foreign visitors, particularly in the form of taxi cab kidnappings. UNESCO’s designation reminded the world design community that the central core of Mexico City is a rich assembly of historic buildings, streets, patios, and plazas, and that there are important stories to be told about their histories (see Malkin 2005).

**A new urban design prototype: the transfrontier metropolis**

Globalization in the 21st century has produced new forms of spatial relations in the Americas, including the emerging prototype of a unique kind of global urban space – what might be termed a “transfrontier metropolis” (Herzog 1990, 1999). The gradual acceleration of transnational banking, offshore manufacturing, multination trade blocs, global communications, digital technology, and the international division of labor have all shaped a profound “internationalization”
of urban space. No longer are cities merely artifacts shaped by local stakeholders; increasingly, urban centers have become containers developed and transformed by international actors, from corporate investors and transnational financial interests to transborder marketing entities and cross-national governmental organizations. To accommodate the forces of globalization, the city has been forced to reinvent itself; sprawling “edge cities” and dense high-tech corporate business districts are just two recent responses to the globalization of the metropolis. But the transfrontier metropolis is a unique form of globalized urbanism in the Americas, especially on the Mexico-US border.

Transfrontier metropolitan regions typically consist of two or more settlement core areas located around an international boundary. Over time, these areas fuse together to form a single ecological and functional city/region, whose socio-economic, cultural, and ecological integration is a hallmark of the ways in which 21st-century global processes transcend national boundaries. More than ten million people today live in transfrontier metropolitan regions that blanket the 2,000-mile boundary from Matamoros-Brownsville to Tijuana-San Diego (Figure 3.4). Citizens on either side of the boundary are increasingly drawn together into a web of north-south relations, where the Global North vs. Global South and developing vs. developed dichotomies are cast aside, as urban neighbors become part of a common transnational living and working space.

Since the rise of the nation state in the 19th century, cities usually evolved in locations entirely inside (and often distant from) the boundaries of sovereign nations. Yet, during the late 20th century, this pattern began to loosen in some regions across the planet, and notably in North America, as population, economic resources, and infrastructure migrated towards the edges of nations, leading to the formation of city regions that sprawl across international boundaries. By the second decade of the 21st century, this pattern has become well entrenched.

Cross-border metropolises are urban configurations that can potentially benefit from the interplay between the flows of goods and services in a globalizing economy and the proximity of territorial borders. Open borders offer opportunities for cross-border metropolises to reinforce their position at the heart of global economic networks and affirm their autonomy as cross-border regional entities (Sohn 2014). And the process of what has been called debordering allows cross-border metropolises to use the border as a resource, which allows the bordering nations to benefit from the comparative advantages on either side (for example, less expensive

Figure 3.4 The Tijuana-San Diego metropolitan region.

Source: Photo by permission of Keith Pezzoli, San Diego
labor on one side of the border, technological expertise on the other; specialized micro-level skill sets and products on one side, and demand for those outputs on the other).

But globalization has also produced an opposite trend that runs counter to de-territorialization and debordering; we can call this trend rebordering. Rebordering deals with the securitization of state borders. Although the potential security threat that borders represent was already a concern before September 11, 2001, it has become a defining paradigm for many governments after the terrorist attacks. As a matter of fact, this ideology has had a major impact on the policy shift towards greater border security, particularly along the US frontier (Andreas and Biersteker 2003). In the name of the “global war on terror,” a sharp increase of controls (at the borders and potentially everywhere) has unfolded, along with the implementation of networked systems of surveillance and, in some cases, the erection of walls and security fences. National borders are seen as a line of defense against various threats. Beyond the issue of terrorism, the securitization discourse also serves to control immigration and reduce the number of migrants from the South entering the North, mainly for economic reasons.

One of the important qualities of the emerging transfrontier metropolis is that it serves as a prototype of an urban place that softens rather than hardens the meaning of the international boundary line. One can argue that the debordering character of a cross-border metropolis should be the goal along the entire Mexico-US border. Indeed, this argument was made long ago by well-known urban designers Kevin Lynch and Donald Appleyard in their “Temporary Paradise” study of the San Diego-Tijuana region (Lynch and Appleyard 1974).

The Tijuana metropolitan region at the California-Mexico border is, indeed, a case in point. It is projected to grow from 1.8 million in 2015 to 2.7 million in 2025 and will need some 300,000 new housing units to accommodate its expanding population. Urban designers are employing the virtues of Latino slow urbanism and placemaking to redesign downtown Tijuana. They are drawing upon Mexican design traditions of public space, lively streets, music, and local food, all of which have become critical tools for rebranding and rebuilding the future of downtown Tijuana.

One of the tenets of the new redevelopment vision for downtown Tijuana will be shifting the construction of housing away from sprawling suburbs that many residents have abandoned (see Herzog 2015), towards the downtown core, possibly building up to 10,000 housing units over the next decade and adding about 30,000 new residents to downtown (Urban Land Institute 2013). The strategy builds around salvaging or upgrading the unique urban design elements of the center of Tijuana: the street-friendly small galleries, business ventures and shops in the abandoned spaces along or near Revolution Avenue; the nearby pasajes (covered spaces) that had been created as markets more than five decades ago.

Tijuana’s advantages are arguably built around the power of centrality and the vibrancy of spaces near the plazas and streets in the older part of town. A place-based design and economic development strategy are arguably being connected to art, design, regional cuisine, locally manufactured beer and wine, and boutique stores selling Baja California-produced food, beverages, clothing, crafts, or other folk products. Innovative experimental projects have already sprung up; they include a new office building in a previously run-down section near downtown, with spaces for galleries and design studios, a new design college with a rooftop public space, micro-breweries, a food truck space called Telefonica Gastro Park, remodeled restaurants, banks, and a redeveloped former government complex called Estacion Federal, close to the boundary. Local cuisine in Tijuana is now attracting international attention, thereby adding gourmet food spaces as part of the overall redevelopment and design strategy.

Tijuana’s center already had historic buildings, from the original California Mission Revival-style Jai Alai building to old cantinas, dance halls, movie theaters, and stores that could be refurbished to create a sense of place and local identity and attract the “creative class” back into the center.
Tijuana’s downtown also has potentially valuable public spaces— including the previously mentioned “pasajes” (covered market spaces) as well as several historic plazas (Plaza Santa Cecilia, Parque Teniente Guerrero) and the widened pedestrian tourism promenade, Revolution Avenue. These spaces have historically served as valuable gathering places. The thinking is now to reinsert them into the “mental maps” of residents, investors, and visitors alike. Further, the design strategy also includes the creation of mixed-use developments that will bring more residents and density to the downtown core. These new projects are being marketed to millennial families and designed around a future, more sustainable urban model of walkable space that partially eliminates the wasteful use of cars. This echoes the global “new urbanism” and “smart growth” movements, but with an uniquely Mexican “slow urbanist” flair, anchored by the plazas, pasajes, and vibrant street life of downtown, and by nearby neighborhoods along the border.

Conclusion

This chapter has been aimed at rethinking scholarly views on Latin American urban design. It began with a review of the legacy of colonial urbanism, the European period of the 19th century and the first half of the 20th century, and the pattern of socio-spatial polarization that dominated the second half of the 20th century. All of these historic influences have shaped Latin American urban space and set the stage for the immense change that followed.

Latin American cities find themselves in the midst of a new and transformative era of change—mainly driven by globalization, though filtered by patterns from previous eras. First, we have witnessed the burgeoning impact of the formation of “global suburbs”— elite enclaves of either gated residential space or “mega projects” like giant malls, office complexes, and large universities, all clustered in master-planned, automobile-centric, North American-style suburbs on the urban peripheries, from Mexico to the southern cone nations of Argentina, Chile, and Brazil. These elite suburbs are gradually displacing some squatter communities on the periphery, leaving what scholars are describing as an “archipelago” of fragmented rich and poor enclaves, a fundamental reorganization of urban space in this part of the world.

However, the chapter also suggests a different way of thinking about Latin American “design urbanism” and the legacy of visceral physical spaces created over centuries. It views these spaces as tied to what scholars term “slow urbanism.” From indigenous ceremonial architecture to Spanish colonial city planning, the southern cultures of the Americas embraced the notion of centrality—discrete, civically engaged gathering spaces, including plazas, market squares, gardens, patios, alleys, and promenades, as well as pedestrian-scale streets. Rituals became common civic practices that celebrated both the public spaces and the buildings around them. More recently, street murals, festivals, and other cultural activities have also enriched public spaces. These spaces, and the larger idea of civic nodes of engagement, are part of the historic legacy that defines Latin American slow urbanism. This legacy sets a standard that should be of interest to urban designers across the planet. While we often think of Latin America as negatively impacted by the more dominant cultural power of the United States or by the problems of social polarization, “slow Latino urbanism” is an example of a cultural force that might very well flow from south to north.

The very act of using public spaces suggests a way of life that is healthy for communities and for human engagement. Plazas and pedestrian-scale streets inherently create spaces for human activity, for slower movement (walking, cycling), and for meaningful social encounters both among known participants and among strangers experiencing democracy in a “third place” (Oldenburg 1999). Despite the political and economic challenges facing nations today in southern regions of the Americas, the “slow urbanist” legacy holds great promise in allowing governments to design more resilient cities, built around local/community rights, preservation of...
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historic spaces, traffic calming in the streets, less automobile use and more walking/cycling, and counteracting consumerism by creating authentic spaces for meaningful social interaction.

The chapter concluded by reviewing another form of global urban space critical to Latin American urban design in the global era: the US-Mexican “transfrontier metropolis” that now defines parts of the 2,000-mile international border. This metropolitan spatial form encapsulates both the positive and negative elements of globalization. It represents a daily, cross-border lived space whose patterns – commuter flows, journeys to school, exchange of commodities, cross-border industrial assembly, and tourism flows – can be viewed as part of an evolving trans-border functional metropolitan space that could become a critical 21st-century urban prototype with global significance. At the same time, citizen fears of terrorism, smuggling, immigration, and crime have energized a movement of “rebordering,” whereby some interests want to see frontiers walled-up and closed off. The United States, the giant force that lies at the gateway to Latin America, finds itself in a time of resurgent nationalism since 2016. As cities like Tijuana undergo innovative urban growth and redevelopment, whether they can build ongoing connections with their “twin city” partners in the United States remains a question, amidst uncertainty and battles fought in the political arena. The outcome speaks to the future of Latin American cities, which, on many levels, are more and more interconnected with North American economies and societies.

References


Further reading


