

The University of Texas at Austin
Andrew W. Mellon Fellowships Program
In Latin American Sociology

Research Workshop

The End of Public Space in the Latin American City?

Thursday/Friday March 4-5, 2004

The Governor's Room, The Texas Union

This Research Workshop proposes to explore controversial debates about the extent to which the public space, and access to it, is being eroded in contemporary Latin American cities. Participants will be invited to discuss if or how public spaces – interpreted broadly -- are being eroded or reshaped by neo-liberalism, by the progressive withdrawal of the state from traditional arenas of social policy with or without replacement by civil organisations, by changes to consumption patterns, planning policies or globalisation. From various disciplinary and research perspectives, participants will discuss the extent, pace and driving forces that shape access to spaces that were, in the past, arguably more truly “public” (or were they?). Such spaces include: plazas and parks; the street and thoroughfares; the marketplace (malls and shopping districts); transport systems; public housing and public education; and spaces of entertainment and recreation. Examined more broadly, public space is being recast as an outcome of the declining role of the state, and the pervasive shift from public to private provision of social goods. As such, new axes of social exclusion are becoming entrenched, some elements of which are clearly spatial, while others are less obvious.

But we might also be witnessing a paradox. Across the region democratization has opened up new opportunities of public space and new “publics” as citizens play a greater participatory role (and responsibility) in civics (public sphere). How far can we identify a greater acceptance of diversity notably in terms of gender and ethnicity, youth, sexuality, and other representations of difference? How have new, more global and accessible information flows opened the public sphere to greater transparency and scrutiny – probably as never before? Finally, technology opens up new spaces and access, although here, too, there may be important digital divides and segregated spaces. In short, what **is the future** of public space in Latin American cities, and what are the driving forces behind future processes that will determine greater access or further segmentation?

Program

Thursday March 4:

8.30-9.00: Welcome and Introduction

Gareth Jones (London School of Economics) and Peter Ward (UT Austin)

Gareth A Jones (LSE): Setting the Scene: A Geo-politics of Latin American cities

9.00-10.30: Public Space in the Latin American City Pt.I

Chair: Peter Ward

Gareth A Jones (LSE): Setting the Scene: A Geo-politics of Latin American cities

Lawrence Herzog (San Diego State): Globalization and the Crisis of Public Space: The Example of Mexico

Francisco Sabatini (Catholic University, Santiago, Chile): Contest for the City and Public Space: the transformation of the Latin American City

Discussion

10.30-10.45: Coffee Break

10.45-12.15: Public Space in the Latin American City Pt.II

Chair: Alejandro Portes

Vicente del Rio (Cal Poly State Univ.): Beyond Modernism: Contemporary Urban Design and the Public Realm in Brazil

Joseph Scarpaci (Virginia Tech): Changing Public Spaces in the Spanish American Plaza and Barrio: Commodifying and Conviviality as Simultaneous Processes

Ruben Kaztman (Catholic University, Montevideo): Spatial Segregation, employment and social inequality in Latin America cities

Discussion

12.30-1.30: Lunch

1.30-3.00: Public Space, New Publics & Democratic Cities Pt.I

Chair: Gareth Jones

Donna De Cesare (UT): Battle lines in the shrinking public space: Youth gangs in El Salvador and Guatemala

Chris Gaffney (UT): The stadiums of Buenos Aires: Conformity and Contestation in Public Space

Roger Magazine (IberoAmericana): Street Children, Public Space and State Indifference in Mexico City

Matthew Gutmann (Brown): The Concealment of Public Space: neoliberalism, AIDS, and the Regulation of the Public Space of Healing in Oaxaca

Discussion

3.00-3.30: Coffee

3.30-5.30: Public Space, New Publics & Democratic Cities Pt.II

Chair: Bryan Roberts

Gloria Gonzalez-Lopez (UT): Imagenes, Sexo and Censura: Gender & Sexuality Redefinitions in Contemporary Mexican Society.

Jaime Joseph (Alternativa, Peru): Public Spaces in a Segregated City: problems and perspectives from Lima

Juan Manuel Ramírez Saiz (ITESO, Guadalajara) Las consultas públicas del movimiento 'Alianza Cívica' y el espacio público en México

Jon Shefner (U. of Tennessee-Knoxville): Spaces of democratization: Neoliberalism and the strata of civil society

Discussion

7.30: Dinner: Pick-up from Hotel, transfer to Peter Ward house.

Friday March 5:

9.30: Breakfast

10.00-11.30: Round-Table Discussion: Research Priorities & Future Directions –The End of Public Space?

All Panelists and Workshop Organisers

11.30: Coffee

12.00-12.30: 'Memoria' and Editorial Meeting