

Transnational Pedagogy:

Learning from Latin American Urbanisms

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Panel Organizer: Jennifer Tucker, University of California, Berkeley

For consideration, please send paper abstracts to jennifertucker@berkeley.edu by April 5th

What can planners and scholars based in the US learn from the urbanisms of Latin America cities? This panel follows calls to upend entrenched “geographies of theory” (Roy, 2009) by building urban planning knowledge out of “ordinary” cities (Robinson, 2006). There are good reasons to diversify our sites of knowledge production, beyond the demographic reality placing the locus of 21st century urban growth squarely in the Global South. First, Latin American cities are ground zero for a range of urban experiments: from participatory planning in São Paulo, waste picker unionization in Bogotá, urban mobility in Mexico City, to new models of urban citizenship in Quito. These experiments include dynamic interactions between state planners and civil society, from which we can learn. Secondly, old dynamics of urbanization, capitalist accumulation, relations of rule, and popular contestation are taking on new forms. Certainties of linear developmental paths, via predictable urbanization patterns linked to economic growth, have evaporated. More than ever, we need theoretical and practical strategies to grapple with the transnational production of cities, that is, the urban as made through relational connections across space and through histories of uneven development. Latino place-making within US cities is just one example of this relational production of space (Irazábal and Farhat, 2008). Finally, a growing movement of critical scholars argues that the current repertoire of ‘best practice’ urban interventions – loosely gathered under the banner of global urbanism – “persistently fails to deliver on its promise of prosperity for all” (Sheppard et al., 2013, p. 895). The problem may originate in urban and planning theory, rather than result from inadequate policy implementation or a lack of state capacity. Here, scholarship on histories of social change in Latin America can be a resource for the US planning academy. For instance, Boaventura de Sousa Santos offers strategies to translate between diverse epistemologies (2013) while Anibal Quijano’s “coloniality of power” usefully analyzes how capital continually reworks hierarchies of race and gender through place-specific histories (2000).

This panel seeks papers that center critical, empirical research out of Latin American cities in order to generate transformative theories of urbanization, planning practice and urban justice, broadly conceived. Topics might include studies of everyday planning praxis; subaltern urbanisms; regimes of regulation in zones imagined as unplanned; transnational learning; the ethics of transnational collaboration; or the politics of urban work. Ultimately we are interested in the conditions of possibility, practices of praxis, and practical interventions that generate more just human settlements.

Works Cited

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Jennifer Tucker, MPP, MA
Doctoral Candidate
City + Regional Planning
Univ of California, Berkeley
[Relational Poverty Network](#)
[Center for Race + Gender](#)