

# **CONTINUITIES, TENSIONS AND BREAKDOWNS IN THE INHABIT PRACTICES, IN THE FRAMEWORK OF THE TRANSFORMATIONS OF 'TRADITIONAL' NEIGHBORHOODS.**

## **THE CASE OF GÜEMES NEIGHBOURHOOD 2000-2016**

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### **SUMMARY**

The present thesis is part of the field of urban studies and proposes as structuring axes the intersection between public policies, the neighborhood and the inhabit practices (de Certeau, 1996, 1999; Gravano, 2003) in the framework of the transformations of the urban space in the pericentral neighborhoods, also known as traditional neighborhoods in the city of Córdoba, particularly what happened in *Barrio Güemes*, during the period 2010-2016.

The purpose of the approach is inscribed in knowing and making generalizable contributions to the understanding of the inhabit practices as a unit of analysis. In this framework, the research problem is formulated in the following question: how are living practices modified in the framework of urban transformations, in a capitalist mode of production? Therefore, the general objective is: to understand the dynamics (continuities, tensions and ruptures) in the inhabit practices, within the framework of the main socio-urban transformations that occurred during the period 2000-2016 in the Güemes neighborhood of the city of Córdoba .

Hence, four specific objectives emerge: i) identify and describe the main works and policies of the State at all levels; ii) characterize the principal actors, bonds, logics of occupation and use of urban land; iii) analyze and interpret the information corpus produced by the mass media about the construction and representation that they carry out in the neighborhood; and iv) understand the social tactics of reconstruction of daily life and the redefinition of significant spaces.

For this approach, the case of Güemes neighborhood is taken as a unit of study. The spatial (or physical) clipping of the empirical work is located in the city of Córdoba<sup>1</sup>, and is located on the periphery of the central area. This location allows us to understand the emergence of the first urban expansions as a consequence of demographic growth and how these were transformed into the first neighborhoods. The temporary cut is delimited between the years 2000 and 2016, intentionally supported by two significant events: the population census (2001) and the celebration of the *Bicentenario de la Independencia de Argentina* (Bicentennial of Independence in Argentina, 2016).

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<sup>1</sup> According to the last National Census (2010) in the city there were 1,391,000 people. Córdoba is considered the second most important city after Buenos Aires, although it disputes the position with Rosario. It is also the second most populated, its history harbors various struggles, has significant economic and cultural development, and attracts students from other provinces due to the presence of multiple university institutions.

The proposed methodological perspective is qualitative (Hernández Sampieri, 2006), which, together with the detailed analysis of statistical data, enables an in-depth study of the complex socio-spatial reality without leaving aside any aspect of it. In this sense, there is no overlap or greater relevance between the quantitative and qualitative information, but rather an enrichment with both sources. The field work is organized in five moments and through the implementation of the following techniques:

- 1) Analysis of the contents of the documents (for example: plans, ordinances and municipal catalogs) on the historical-spatial events of the neighborhood until 2016.
- 2) Analysis of statistical data: population census (national 2001 and 2010 and provincial 2008). Exploration and geolocation of business authorizations. Description and location of buildings with architectural value. Determination of land values in 2009 and 2013, collation and transfer to dollar currency.
- 3) Selection and analysis of the informative news of the newspaper with the largest circulation (*La Voz del Interior*) of the province of Córdoba during the mentioned period.
- 4) Participant observations and photographic record of neighborhood daily life, both weekdays and weekends.
- 5) Semi-structured interviews: which made it possible to delve into the regular, ambiguous and contradictory of the inhabit practices.

In that sense, the practices are understood as elementary actions of the "arts of doing" that ordinary people implement in their daily lives: to circulate, to cook, to work, to connect. Also, through them they resignify the spaces, give them an assessment (positive or negative), identify themselves as part of the identity and, in turn, recognize places of (dis) encounter and circulation path.

The changes materialized in certain urban spaces, both in Latin American cities (Buenos Aires, Salvador de Bahía in Brazil, Mexico City, etc.) and in other parts of the world (New Orleans in the United States, the district of Kreuzberg-Friedrichshain in Berlin, the port of Hamburg in Germany, etc.) demonstrate how these spaces are transformed according to the capitalist mode of reproduction. Since these were spaces that at some point fulfilled hierarchical economic-social functions and later, due to the very dynamics of capitalism, the over-accumulation, they stopped being profitable and became "obsolete" spaces. In this sense, the omission of public and / or private actions, the neglect and growth of conflictive social situations (crime, insecurity, degradation) in these spaces, works as an argument for local governments to start planning the future and modernizing them.

In this way, urban policies are proposed with the aim of promoting renovation or rehabilitation actions to economically boost certain sectors. Two discursive elements appear as enablers of the

urban renewal process: tourism and patrimony. In this sense, under the patrimonial recovery of certain places, the territories are made more dynamic, so that tourism becomes an economic tool that produces an excess of surplus value. The punt in value of tangible and intangible assets attracts the influx of visitors and, at the same time, is economically profitable. However, projects often take into account morphological and physical variables, leaving in the background the impact on the nearby space and the relationships between the inhabitants and their territory.

Currently the spaces chosen by the municipalities and for public and/or private intervention are the neighborhoods, since they are spaces close to the center and considered strategic. In general, the argument is the need to rehabilitate or renovate little-used or degraded areas in order to improve the quality of life of the population and boost the sector (Brites, 2017; Guevara, 2012). Since the 2000s, the neighborhood has witnessed an unusual growth process. The number of craftsmen skyrocketed and the variety of products offered, the businesses that are part of the commercial, gastronomic and cultural offer of the neighborhood emerged. For several years, it has introduced new economic actors that can be observed in the opening of commercial galleries; located on the axis of the streets Belgrano, Achával Rodríguez, Fructuoso Rivera and the growing appearance of buildings around the historic artisan fair; where it is sold and exhibited different pieces of plastic art, gastronomy, businesses of cordobes designers and even the inclusion of the idea of "sustainable development" in the ceilings of the galleries.

The modification of the normative corpus, the appearance of high-rise buildings and the economic boom resulted in: the valorization of urban land, feedback in space with the location of new commercial activities and cultural services. At the same time, new residents appeared in the neighborhood space with other habits and practices that dispute the ways of living in the place. In that direction, the neighborhood is witnessing the gradual expulsion of antiques buying and selling businesses for the benefit of uses related to recreation and leisure: bars, restaurants with internationally recognized brands. Everything seems to indicate that it is a process of commercial gentrification with peculiarities of the neighborhood studied.

In addition, the published headlines demarcate and establish two ways of imagining the neighborhood: the modern/desirable and the backward/undesirable. Thus, the Güemes neighborhood is built in the discursive hegemony of the city with a set of images, representations, that condition or mark relationships between different neighborhood areas, problems and acting strategies of intervention and use of space. In this sense, and according to what has been analyzed, discursive forms from the end of the 19th century and the beginning of the 20th century warn that for the city there is only one possible type of neighborhood: one that must constantly be intervened, modernized, transformed and turned into merchandise.

At the risk of simplification, these transformations were the product of the political-ideological changes, of the urban management models and instruments put into play in the various historical moments, and of the inhabitants' own social and cultural practices. In this way, the analytical look will focus on the transformations of the inhabitat practices of the residents of the Güemes neighbourhood, within the framework of the metamorphosis of the urban space (crossed by tendencies of mediatization and commercialization of the experience) that combined a process of intersection and associativity between public policies and real estate expansion.

Since the fact of research is never a closed process, renewed lines of research were established for its future continuity. In relation to this thesis, it is proposed to retake the Güemes neighborhood and carry the analysis until 2019. That is, to continue with the analysis of public policies oriented to the production of urban land in the Güemes neighborhood, focusing on the municipal management of the period 2015-2019. In this framework, questions are held about the link between the State and private actors and their positions in this neighborhood space, and how they modify the uses of urban land.

Furthermore, it is proposed to carry out a historical reconstruction around urban studies and the figures of public-private convergences as expressions of the resolution of urban problems in Latin America. Since it was proven that these convergences are here to stay and reconfigure spaces, the new work plan will try to focus on these inter-institutional networks and their material impact on social, state and market dynamics. Along these lines, it is proposed to inquire about the urban-neighborhood restructuring processes from the public policies related to the various institutional agencies that affect the neighborhood space.