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Planning for urban indigenous peoples and ethnic diversity: moving from theory to practice in La Paz and Quito

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In the former colonies urban expansion and migration to the city challenged historically established patterns of ethno-spatial segregation. Approximately fourty per cent of the world's indigenous population already live in cities (UN-Habitat 2010). Current research on urban indigeneity takes two positions: Some studies emphasise that indigenous peoples' could not improve their living conditions by moving to cities. The evidence provided in this literature suggests that they remain disproportionately poorer than other urban residents and continue being confronted by exclusion and discrimination (del Popolo et al 2007; Hodgson 2011; Li 2000). In addition, urban indigenous peoples are often reported as outlawed from specific indigenous rights-based agendas ratified by international organisations and governments since the 1980s (Speiser 2004; UN-Habitat 2010).

Other scholars – mainly working on cities in the global north – have developed frameworks which emphasise 'what could be done' to plan for more inclusive cities in which the interests and demands of indigenous peoples are taken into account (Jojola 2008; Porter 2010; Sandercock 1998). This research highlights that planning – guided by Western understandings of individual/ universal rights – often contradicts indigenous collective/ communitarian worldviews. To depart from dominant planning models and practices which oppress the indigenous 'other' these scholars – influenced by theories on communicative action, multiculturalism, or agonistic democracy – argue that planning should emphasise difference instead of erasing it, adapt a decolonial approach, and focus on building consensus between different groups. Such studies have been critiqued for their assumption that culturally different groups – living in deeply divided societies – can find consensus (Watson 2003; Yiftachel 2006). In

addition, despite offering useful ideas on 'what could be done' to create more inclusive cities, these studies do not offer examples on 'what is actually done' in policy and planning practice in cities where governments – at least on paper – promote diversity and recognise indigenous rights.

This paper intends to address this knowledge gap by introducing findings from recently completed comparative urban research in Bolivia and Ecuador – two countries which recognise urban indigeneity and intercultural urban development principles in political constitutions. By way of contextual background the paper briefly describes how urban indigeneity has been incorporated in Bolivia's and Ecuador's new constitutions. It then introduces a conceptual framework that goes beyond recent frameworks on planning for ethno-racially diverse cities (Porter 2010; Sandercock 1998), elaborating a practice-centric approach which focuses on a variety of social actors – such as planners, policy makers but also ordinary urban indigenous peoples – involved in translating indigenous rights into urban policy and planning practice (Touraine 2000). It emphasises the importance of an asset accumulation framework (Moser 2009) for the study of ordinary indigenous people's interests, demands and associated practices to claim their constitutional 'rights to the city'.

A brief description of the research methodology – a qualitative, comparative case study approach – is followed by a presentation of results from research conducted in La Paz, Bolivia and Quito, Ecuador which highlights a set of conflicting realities in the way indigeneity is actually addressed in urban policy and planning practice: A first finding of this paper is that specific indigenous rights and planning models which advocate the design of more inclusive, intercultural and diverse cities – such as those established in Bolivia's and Ecuador's new constitutions but also the one's developed by planning scholars such as Sandercock (1998) – are unlikely to materialise in practice in settings where public officials responsible for their implementation hold a range of preconceived notions (ie of cities as non-indigenous spaces), follow different political priorities (ie addressing the interests of the wealthy and not of indigenous peoples), or operate in conflictive political environments (ie when operating in areas affected by municipal boundary conflicts). Nevertheless, the paper also shows that urban planning practice in La Paz and Quito was not monolithic as some actors – ie

those representing Quito's zonal administration or La Paz's intercultural unit – openly addressed urban indigeneity.

Second, the findings presented in this paper challenge generalisations made in previous studies which – guided by static, essentialist, or romanticist understandings of indigeneity – portrayed urban indigenous peoples as 'others' who express interests to preserve their traditions and exercise their collective rights (Jojola 2008; Porter 2010). Instead, it is demonstrated that urban indigenous peoples articulated multiple and contradictory interests and demands. The use of an asset accumulation framework was hereby useful as it uncovered how demands for land – a particularly important asset for indigenous peoples – were often associated with the preservation of a communal and traditional lifestyle but also with aspirations to lead a modern and capitalist life in the city. In terms of the latter aspect, urban indigenous peoples were not that different from other city dwellers. It is therefore argued that the application of 'western' planning models which focus on the provision of individual/ universal rights and services should therefore not automatically be interpreted as anti-indigenous. Instead, such an approach may in fact be responsive to the interests of most urban indigenous peoples.

Third, the findings challenge understandings of 'harmonious' indigenous communities and, instead, reveal that leaders – who played a key role in negotiating access to assets such as land with government authorities – not always had the collective interests of their community in mind but often (ab)used their position to enrich themselves personally and to preserve their powerful position. Hence, governments should pay more attention to power relations and internal conflicts occurring within the heterogeneous indigenous communities with whom they work. They should create invited spaces which are open not only to leaders but also to ordinary indigenous residents including women and adolescents.

While mainly referring to La Paz and Quito, the findings presented in this paper are also relevant to other cities which are composed by large indigenous population groups who claim their rights for recognition and inclusion. The outcomes emphasise that, instead of following a set of *a priori* assumptions of what constitutes a decolonial and more inclusive urban policy and planning approach, it is important to identify what

indigeneity and indigenous 'rights to the city' actually means for different social actors involved in urban governance but also to indigenous target groups themselves. In order to achieve this, future research could apply the conceptual and methodological approach used in this paper to other 'ordinary' cities and produce theoretically-informed, empirically-grounded and policy-relevant findings on the different, potentially contradictory, and constantly changing meanings of indigeneity as legal, lived, and planning category in diverse global urban contexts.

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