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TRADITIONAL DWELLINGS AND SETTLEMENTS REVIEW

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University of Southern California, Los Angeles, U.S.A.

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WHAT POLITICS IS THIS PLACE? (POST)GLOCAL POLITICS IN LATIN AMERICA'S PUBLIC SPACES

Clara Irazabal

The IASTE 2004 conference proposes that "postglobal is not an end to globalization but the emergence of a different kind of engagement that is sharply at odds with the visions of liberal, multicultural globalization. Here, both religious fundamentalism and imperial hegemony begin to emerge as the new forms of." Yet, there are other types of (post)globalizations (Sklair, 2002). And at least one such alternative form of global engagement is that which (desperately) holds on to the visions of a liberal, multicultural globalization in the politics of nation building, particularly as enacted in urban spaces. Focusing on this form, this paper interrogates the role of both traditional and post-traditional Latin American urban places in the present (post)glocal era, where the post-traditional is understood as a spatio-political repositioning that unsettles the historically developed relationships between places and meanings.

While many scholars have argued that public space is a prerequisite for the expression, representation, preservation, and/or enhancement of democracy, there are also many examples in recent history of public spaces being used for the deployment and reproduction of totalitarian regimes. Thus, whether for or against (and with regard to the range of positions in-between), public spaces have been, and continue to be, privileged sites for the enactment and contestation of stances on democracy and citizenship. Such a polyvalent use of public space has been well demonstrated in Latin America.

There has been a long and multidisciplinary tradition of studying the contemporary use and meaning of urban spaces. Yet most of these studies focus on North American and European cases, and most emphasize analysis of everyday experience. This paper aims to make novel contributions to this arena of study in two significant ways: first, by focusing on Latin American cases, which have been understudied (at least in the literature in English); and second, by emphasizing the exploration of extraordinary uses and meanings of these spaces rather than their everyday experience. By exploring different contestations of uses and meanings in public spaces, the paper sheds light on the contemporary, convoluted redefinitions of citizenship and democracy in Latin America — and by extrapolation, the world.

This study will theoretically and empirically contribute to the exploration of the two-tiered concept of society as lifeworld and as system that Jürgen Habermas discussed in his *Theory of Communicative Action* (1981). It will also shed light on the difference, yet complementarity, between processes of "making life" and "making history" enacted by ordinary people in ordinary spaces at extraordinary times (Flacks, 1988). In addition, the study positions the scrutiny of democracy and citizenship in physical urban space, empirically grounding these critical debates, reawakening awareness of the role of space in the politics of culture and the culture of politics, and adding this underexplored spatial dimension to the prevalent sociological and political-science perspectives on the transitional dynamics of democracy and citizenship in Latin America.

URBAN PUBLIC SPACE UNDER POSTGLOBAL CONDITIONS: DOES IT STILL MATTER?

Amer A. Moustafa

This paper examines the state of urban public space — and its corollary, urban public life — under the incessant assault on all that is public that is part of the present rhetoric and practice of globalization. Present "postglobal conditions" actually reflect a revised globalization that is increasingly shrill and patently American. Such conditions persist in celebrating the entrepreneurial spirit, upholding a laissez-faire ethos, intensifying the power of multinational corporations, weakening the leverage and potential of public action, downsizing government, and limiting its role to that of facilitating market mechanisms. It is not untimely, nor inappropriate, under such conditions, to revisit the state of urban public space.

Simultaneously, dazzling developments in information and communications technology have created new possibilities for different kinds of public spaces whose nature, role and impact remain to be fully understood. What is certain is that the digital revolution has become central to contemporary discourse on urban public space and the public life with which it is conventionally associated.

Cities throughout the world — but especially those urban "nodes" best connected within the grid of global networks — are grappling with the question of urban public space — its provision, maintenance, consumption, and even relevance. Within the