

Scales of Gentrification in Intermediary Cities: A Challenge for Ecuadorian Territorial Planning

Alfredo Ordonez¹, Boris Orellana-Alvear¹, Tania Calle-Jimenez²,
and Esteban Orellana¹

¹Universidad de Cuenca, Cuenca, Ecuador

²Escuela Politécnica Nacional, Quito, Ecuador

ABSTRACT

Intermediate cities have specific characteristics due to their size, population, economy, and regional dynamics. The metropolises represent poles of attraction that do not allow the development of the surrounding villages. These poles absorb peripheral accentuations during their boundary expansion processes. Not far from this phenomenon, it is observed that intermediate cities act similarly in front of smaller towns, having a repeated effect than their higher similes. The relationship between villages leads to emigration and population immigration and can be confused with gentrification processes. For this reason, it is necessary to differentiate the original inhabitants of neighborhoods or areas that have been displaced from those who have preferred to change their place of residence by free will. The various study scales are directed towards understanding the phenomenon within a block, neighborhood, sector, city, and territory, with the desire to understand the gentrifying phenomenon's propagation speed.

Keywords: Gentrification, Intermediary cities, Planning, Land use planning, Urbanism, Planning instruments, Ecuador

INTRODUCTION

At the global level, the processes of transformation of territories have determined a marked trend of occupation of rural areas and the growth of human settlements at different scales. In the last century, existing data show growth and work of cities to the detriment of the rural population.

In the Latin American context, the population growth rates in the main cities expose phenomena of migration and immigration displacements from the periphery to the city. Conversely, the occupation of rural areas and the removal of productive activities result from the interest of finding new and better conditions for uses such as housing, commerce, industry, and other activities that impact the value of properties. This phenomenon affects the resident population's displacement and the gentrification of these territories.

This behavior is not unique to metropolises. From the point of view of the concentration of capital, it is common for spaces to be reformed through their modification of activities and assignment of uses. Thus, urban regeneration

or recovery projects are carried out to solve the problems of depopulation and insecurity. These new facilities and infrastructures will transform these sectors' logic and social, cultural, and economic dynamics due to their substantial impact on the land market and property values.

However, these trends are also found in smaller settlements and at different scales. The importance of the so-called intermediate cities stands out due to their imports resulting first from emerging growth. This article aims to provide an approach that allows us to understand this relationship and the need to address the processes of population displacement and its derived problems, such as gentrification, through the instruments established in the current planning regulations.

INTERMEDIATE CITIES AND THEIR IDENTIFICATION IN THE ECUADORIAN CONTEXT

Intermediate cities have been used to identify a range of cities with a secondary and generally complementary role to the higher hierarchy or main centers within a territorial system. In national settlement systems, intermediate cities are essential not only because they are more numerous than large cities and use the characteristics and functions attributed to them, which go beyond the amount of population they house. The concept of intermediation becomes superlative because it gives meaning to the role that intermediate cities play in their system as articulating elements among themselves and with other levels and territorial scales that go from the global to the local and, in this last context, to the rural.

The identification of intermediate or intermediary cities in Ecuador is not new. In 1986, Carrión D., Hardoy J., Herzer H. and García A. compiled the book *Ciudades en Conflicto*. Local power, popular participation, and planning in the medium cities of Latin America several approaches on the growth, characteristics, and roles of intermediate cities, and specifically Hardoy J. and Satterthwaite D. give from their perspective a relationship between "...the visible pattern of urban centers of different sizes..." with "...the distribution of economic activities other than agriculture" since this distribution reflects "...the economic, social and political organization", all this in a context of national analysis.

In 1996 Carrión F. in referring to intermediate cities, differentiates them from Quito and Guayaquil -considered as primate cities with a strong national connotation and hierarchy- and gives them a more local and even regional scope of action, linked by their political and administrative role as provincial capitals, which allows them access to economic resources from the State, and that present new fractions of capital arising through the association of commercial, agricultural and financial capital, the reflection of which are the indicators of population growth that will mark differences, special mainly the new inhabitants do not necessarily participate in the urban rents that are generated and accumulated for the benefit of the owners of the land in these cities.

At present, intermediate cities have come to surpass the parameters established concerning the hierarchies by population size traditionally assigned

to them in the analysis of urban systems and incorporate critical aspects in which the intermediation of scale and role in urbanization and development, urban-rural relations of urbanization, human scale and shorter living distances, among other factors, take precedence (Llop, Borja, Vargas, Blanc); These elements not only broaden the concept of intermediate cities but are also related to transformation processes, especially urbanization and land use transformation, which on many occasions entail the risk of promoting displacement and consequently gentrification.

By 2020, Ecuador will have no less than 18 cities with between 50,000 and 300,000 inhabitants, the vast majority of them with a population between 50,000 and 300,000. However, in the absence of specific studies classifying them as intermediate cities, the existence of other cities should also be considered, which without reaching this population range are functionally positioned as being close to large towns inconsequently present more aggressive dynamics of capital accumulation, changes in the structure of land use and incidence of the land market in their expansion and development process.

THE REGULATORY FRAMEWORK FOR TERRITORIAL PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT IN ECUADOR

Understand the normative structure of planning in Ecuador; several elements must be identified to determiners and scope of planning in terms of its scale and intervention. At the end of the 20th century, the institutionalization of planning at the national level allowed the central government to propose planning instruments that incorporated a physical approach considering regional interventions to make decentralization processes viable. Thus, these plans are derived from national lines and came at the time to raise partial executions, incredibly, lines at the micro-regional level, denoting an exciting exercise of articulation between national policy and local development (Vincenza Anna, 2018).

Complementarily, the capacity to plan the territory from an urban planning perspective fell on the Ecuadorian Municipalities according to the Organic Law of Municipal Regime w, whose first version dates back to 1971. It is an essential purpose to “plan and promote the physical development of the canton and its urban and rural areas,” taking into account the national and regional plans for economic and social development guidelines. The cantonal programs were, in turn, to be harmonized with other jurisdictional administrative units at the rural parish and provincial levels (evidencing a desire to have a planning structure with different planning scales), for which the municipality determined the cantonal physical development regulatory plans and the urban development regulatory plans that guided the decisions for urban, semi-urban and agricultural subdivision and use and the issuance of the respective construction permits.

Once the Organic Law of Municipal Regime was repealed in 2010, the Organic Code of Territorial Organization, Autonomy and Decentralization came into force, a legal instrument that determines the competencies of the different levels of decentralized government (regional, provincial, cantonal

and rural parish), including the power to plan development and formulate land use plans in an articulated manner. It should be noted that this instrument maintains the exclusive control of the Municipalities (now called Municipal Decentralized Autonomous Governments) to organize the territory of their jurisdictions not only through the exercise of preparing the Development and Land Management Plans (PDOT) but fundamentally to exercise control over the use and occupation of land in the canton, an exclusive competence that obliges the other decentralized levels to take the cantonal, municipal planning as a frame of reference.

Although the structure and purpose of national and decentralized government planning were strengthened by normative imposition, no legal provisions developed the minimum contents beyond determining diagnostic phases, proposals, and management models defined in the Organic Code of Planning and Public Finances also approved in 2010. Consequently, territorial planning and specifically the planning scales that should address the problems related to urban processes does unprocessed references until 2016, in which the Organic Law of Territorial Planning, Use, and Management of Land was issued, which develops with greater propriety not only the principles and guidelines for planning but also proposes the Land Use and Management Plan as a complementary instrument that will seek to implement more specific public policies to address the existing imbalances in the country as a result of the accelerated growth and unjustified expansion of urban perimeters, the permanent deficit in the provision of basic infrastructure and equipment, the unthinking transformation of uses, the increase in risk and vulnerability to natural disasters, the growing speculation and the exclusion of access to land for housing for the most vulnerable population.

The Land Management Law, its regulations and technical standards highlight the need to have minimum contents with a strong character of the physical environment and infrastructure analysis (support systems), duly justified in which elements of value are identified for their conservation and protection, and to understand the general distribution of activities in human settlements, all with permits to the trends of unreflective expansion of cities and influence the behavior of the land market to guarantee the right to housing as well as the right to a healthier and freedom enable habitat in harmony with nature. However, the complementary technical regulations of these plans address very limitedly the incidence of economic factors related to land rent, the transformation of activities and behaviors or economic changes of the population as well as their situation of vulnerability, since they are limited to requesting in a generic way population projections and “socioeconomic” studies of human settlement. These aspects should be substantially improved to determine the level of progress or the presence of gentrified spaces in the extra payments that make up the cantonal system. The insufficiency of instruments that provide this information implies a greater risk that the actions and proposals established by the Management Plans (of cantonal and urban scale) at the moment of implementing their vision of development through the consequent executions (regulations of use and occupation and investment in public works) generate inverse effects to those proposed initially, The lack of transformation scenarios and measures to mitigate or modify the undesired effects

lead to an increase in the uncertainty to face potential displacements and the expulsion of the population settled in the intervened spaces; Aspects that must be foreseen and consequently have policies and protection measures at different levels and scales. A recurrent example of this can be seen in the consolidated centers of cities that suffer the emptying of their oldest urban structures, where changes in the resident population occur during the execution and completion of urban reform or recovery projects since they do not receive timely assistance and accompaniment.

But this lack of content and information to identify the phenomena of gentrification is not exclusive to the constitutes of the cities (spaces that in some cases are recognized for their historical and cultural value and involve complex processes of implementation of specialized service activities such as tourism) but also occurs to a greater extent in the urban peripheries-cataloged known as expansion areas that lack programming for their occupation-, This is why it is urgent to know and learned instruments and methodologies that anticipate and make these risks visible during the process of elaboration of the plans and not extemporaneously when the undesired effects have already been consolidated. It is here where the technical and legal regulations are insufficient and imprecise in their scope, primarily to address the planning of intermediate cities since these settlements are more exposed to changes in use due to the permanent demand for land for housing and the location of other more specialized services. That Place is agricultural activities and rapidly transform rural land.

CONCLUSION

Gentrification, understood as an effect of spatial transformation and social class change, makes it necessary to reflect on the need to identify these trends not only at the urban level but also to seek answers in a broader context that incorporates rural areas as a necessary counterpart to obtain more comprehensive planning processes. Although Ecuador's planning regulations have taken significant steps to standardize content for implementation by the municipal levels, as those responsible for development and control of land use and occupation, it is clear that they need to improve the mechanisms for anticipating the effects of urban and rural planning proposals. In the case of Ecuador's intermediate cities, these dynamics of transformation and change can significantly modify not only the functioning of human settlement systems and transform the desired territorial models proposed as a premise for land use planning but also constitute a significant gap in the development of complementary instruments due to the inability to visualize the real impact of existing trends or the future effect of capitalizing on land rent without a clear orientation and adopting measures for their regulation.

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