Introduction: Indigenous Urbanisation in Latin America

AIKO IKEMURA AMARAL, London School of Economics and Political Science, UK

PHILIPP HORN, University of Sheffield, UK

DESIREE POETS, Virginia Tech, USA

The racism that structures Latin American societies is also manifested in space, shaping processes of urbanisation. Latin American cities, often imagined as spaces of modernity, progress, whiteness and/or whitening, have historically been marked by the invisibilisation and exclusion of Othered – such as Black and Indigenous – peoples. Through reified socio-spatial divides, anti-Indigenous racism, for example, continues to uphold the common misrepresentation of Indigenous peoples as essentially belonging to rural hinterlands and forested areas, fundamentally traditional and refractory to the national ideals of 'progress'. Indigenous peoples' presence in and migration to the city is, consequently, misapprehended as a process of acculturation and identity loss. But the presence of Indigenous peoples in urban contexts is nothing new. Latin American towns and cities were all built on Indigenous territories and sometimes atop Indigenous urban centres (Mumford, 2012). Furthermore, many grew out from or developed by incorporating *aldeamentos* or *reducciones* – Portuguese and Spanish colonial settlements that (often coercively) concentrated Indigenous peoples and exploited their labour (Bessa Freire and Malheiros, 2009). If not a novelty, urban Indigenous presence has grown since the second half of the 20th century, with over half of the Indigenous population in the region expected to live in cities by 2030 (UN-Habitat, 2010).

Concomitantly, Indigenous communities and territories have been increasingly affected by urbanisation and urban Indigenous movements have emerged across the region.

Recognising these historical and contemporary trends, this Special Issue focuses on Indigenous urbanisation in Latin America and the associated changes, ruptures and continuities that it entails. It stems from a workshop held in Sheffield (UK) in March 2019 (funded through the Events Grants Scheme of the former Institute of Latin American Studies – now Centre for Latin American and Caribbean Studies – at the University of London, and the Postcolonial Studies Association) during which a variety of common threads emerged across disciplines and particularities of research loci. Building on the debates held at this event, this compilation of articles develops four interrelated themes regarding Indigenous urbanisation in the region, introduced briefly below.

First, the Special Issue offers a more holistic conceptualisation of Indigenous urbanisation and its implications for the reconfigurations of Indigenous identities and practices. Emphasis is put on push and pull factors contributing to rural-to-urban migration trends nationally in Bolivia (see contributions by Horn and McNelly) and from rural/urban Bolivia to urban Brazil (see Ikemura Amaral's contribution). The articles also move beyond a focus on migration to reflect on (i) historical intra-urban transitions – as discussed in Horn's analysis of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial Indigenous urbanisation patterns in Santa Cruz; (ii) the growing urbanisation of the Indigenous countryside – as explored in Alderman's study on the changing materiality of housing construction and 'city thinking' in the rural municipality of Charazani; and (iii) Indigenous multilocality across rural and cityscapes – explored in detail by Sertã in her ethnographic study on the circuit of seeds that are cultivated by the Sateré-Mawé in Amazonian cities and villages.

Second, different contributions provide a critical analysis of processes of ethnogenesis and racialisation that articulate questions of authenticity for Indigenous peoples in cities. For example, focusing

on bottom-up practices of Mapuche associations in Santiago, Brablec explores how Mapuche associations use language revitalisation workshops to promote identity recovery and reverse trends of Indigenous language loss otherwise considered common in urban settings. While emphasising the workshops' emancipatory potential, Brablec also highlights their limited impact in a context where government authorities fail to provide sufficient financial support. In her analysis of the 'indianisation' of Bolivian migrants in São Paulo, Ikemura Amaral underscores the paradoxical effects of mobility on Indigeneity. Whereas urban Indigenous peoples from Brazil, like the Pankararu, are expected to perform authenticity in order to claim Indigeneity, Bolivians in São Paulo are racialised as 'Indians', highlighting the Othered, foreign character of Indigeneity in Brazilian cities.

Third, the articles also investigate intersectional inequalities within Indigenous communities. Horn's article, for instance, reveals how Indigenous youth and women increasingly challenge patriarchal relations, sexism and intergenerational conflict within their own communities. He does so by emphasising interests and concerns shared among lowland Indigenous peoples in Bolivia, many of which challenge rural-urban dichotomies by seeking to combine demands for Indigenous rights – that remain restricted to rural areas – and claims for universal basic services available in cities. Sertã's article, in turn, shows how Sateré-Mawé women's leadership in the city allowed them to challenge gendered relations within the community, in which leadership was traditionally male.

Forth, some articles also focus on politico-economic relations and Indigenous representations within urban popular economies, addressing some of the ways that Indigenous peoples make a living in the city, where they negotiate capitalist market relations. In this context, one common source of income for Indigenous peoples in Brazil, as Sertã's article illustrates, is the manufacturing and selling of Indigenous handicrafts. Their access to markets where they could autonomously sell these goods, however, is often difficult and inconsistent. The involvement of brokers, who buy the handicrafts at cheap prices and resell

them for a profit, also reproduces exploitative relations. Ikemura Amaral also underscores exploitative labour conditions faced by Bolivians working in the garment industry in São Paulo, often described as a form of slavery, for which migrants' putative indigeneity is presented as a contributing factor. While distancing themselves from these labels, her interlocutors partially corroborate associations that reinforce a representation of migrants' practices – and, ultimately, that of Indigenous peoples – as anachronistic and antimodern. Against such representations, McNelly's contribution emphasises the role of Indigenous practices in the production of the region's 'baroque modernity'. Building on his fieldwork in El Alto and on a theoretical discussion on the place of Indigeneity in (post-)colonial Andes, McNelly focuses on the relation between the popular economy and Indigeneity to explore how urbanisation produces new iterations of what it means to be Indigenous while also transforming the meanings of urban modernity in Latin America.

In sum, the articles in this Special Issue demonstrate how Indigenous peoples have always been and will remain present in Latin American cities. As they show, the lives and struggles of Indigenous peoples in urban contexts challenge strict rural-urban divides and once and for all negate theories of acculturation that would relegate 'authentic' Indigeneity to a rural, pre-modern past. Instead, urban Indigenous practices are illustrative of what Silvia Rivera Cusicanqui (2012: 96) has described as Indigenous modernity, as practices that are 'fully modern and yet grounded in Indigenous technologies and knowledges' and that constantly recreate, transform, transpose and reproduce the dynamic and diverse character of Indigenous social, territorial, political, economic and cultural practices. This is the argument that we collectively put forward in this Special Issue, which, we hope, contributes to the growing recognition of urban Indigeneity and the struggles of Indigenous peoples in urban contexts.

References

Bessa Freire, J. R. and Malheiros, M. F. (2009). *Aldeamentos indígenas do Rio de Janeiro*. UERJ: Rio de Janeiro.

Mumford, J. R. (2012). *Vertical Empire: The General Resettlement of Indians in the Colonial Andes*. Durham: Duke University Press.

Rivera Cusicanqui, S. (2012) 'Ch'ixinakax Utxiwa: A Reflection on the Practices and Discourses of Decolonization'. *South Atlantic Quarterly* **111**(1): 95-109.

UN-Habitat (2010) *Urban Indigenous Peoples and Migration: A Review of Policies, Programmes and Practices*. UN-Habitat: Nairobi.