The struggle to belong
Dealing with diversity in 21st century urban settings

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Recombinant geographies of citizenship
Differentiations of the 'right to the city' in São Paulo, Caracas, and Buenos Aires

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Abstract. South America hosts several national leftist experiments proclaiming 'another world is possible' in a turn against neoliberalism, yet with divergent political trajectories manifesting acutely in rights struggles within the region's cities. Our case studies from Caracas and Buenos Aires, in critical dialogue with the landmark São Paulo case, highlight the deeply urban yet discursively multiscalar, ideologically differentiated nature of politics across cases where the 'right to the city' figures prominently. Longstanding, broad-based engagement with Lefebvre's ideas (compared to Anglophone cases) renders a situation where the right to the city becomes malleable policy, acknowledged as having radical roots but implemented with dramatically transformed implications when recombined with other scales and imaginations of belonging beyond the city. We develop the notion of *recombinant geographies of citizenship* to explain how a range of scales of belonging is invoked – and produced – in these squabbles over the city. Both state actors and variously positioned citizen groups recombine assumed correspondences between *who* belongs *where, with what* justification, *from which scale*. In 'another world,' politics may be urban in its empirical terrain but the pitch of struggles and imaginations of belonging – and thus the citizenships forged in practice – are multiscalar and recombinant. As a result, despite broad strokes of a leftward shift in South America that prioritizes urban belonging, there is enormous political leeway in these imaginative elaborations of what 'another world' entails on the ground, yielding little substantive validation of the right to the city in line with its original, revolutionary formulation.

Introduction

South America is the locus of several recent national experiments in leftward politics that announce 'another world is possible,' following the famous slogan of the World Social Fora begun in Porto Alegre.[1] But the new directions chartered by national governments in Brazil, Venezuela, Argentina, Chile, Bolivia, and Uruguay since the early 2000s represent quite divergent political trajectories (Castañeda and Morales, 2008). They all inaugurate ostensibly 'left' discourses of greater social inclusiveness and proclaim a turn away from neoliberal market priorities, yet their policy mechanisms and orientations display marked heterogeneity. Within these political transformations, there are major urban struggles over place-based belonging and the affirmation of citizenship, resuscitating imaginations of the 'right to the city' (Lefebvre, 1968) that were active in South America decades before they reached prominence in the Anglophone world. Fundamentally urban politics – i.e., tussles over the realization of rights to respectable inhabitation and enjoyment of city terrain – suffuses the emergent post-neoliberal era in this highly urbanized continent, yet cities do not necessarily constitute the scale at which discourses or claims of citizenship are pitched.

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[1] For an elaboration of the principles espoused by the World Social Forum, see the work of William Fisher & Thomas Ponniah (2003).

Instead, as key debacles in São Paulo, Caracas, and Buenos Aires evince, urban belonging in 'another world' is produced via multiple, shifting scales of imagination and legitimation that invoke the right to the city (*hereafter, RTC*) discourse but take its orientation in new, sometimes strikingly ironic directions. We turn to three strategic cases to show how the RTC is part of recombinant geographies of citizenship that hinge on urban terrain but create differently scaled allegiances that paradoxically undermine Henri Lefebvre's ideas in the continent where they have had greatest official purchase.

In Brazil, as part of the national constitution, the Statute of the City is a highly developed official platform that explicitly addresses the RTC and acknowledges the urban realm as the nexus for contemporary rights struggles (Fernandes, 2007). In this spirit, Brazil hosted UN-HABITAT's fifth World Urban Forum in Rio de Janeiro in March 2010, choosing the theme *The Right to the City – Bridging the Urban Divide* as an opportunity to showcase many experimental, ostensibly leftist urban interventions from across Brazilian cities to thousands of attendees from around the world. Yet this framing of Brazilian policy as inaugurating the 'RTC' involves major transformations of Lefebvre's original concept, which circulated widely in the region since the 1970s but only entered the policy arena in the 1990s. In Argentina and Venezuela, prominent but comparatively less sweeping official discourses on the RTC also demonstrate striking political remakings of this notion that lead in new practical directions, requiring critical comparative analysis to understand differentiations in urban rights across 'another world', where the ability to recombine geographies of rights is a powerful, if not always progressive, political tool.

This article draws on ethnographic fieldwork in Caracas and Buenos Aires, as well as archival and interview-based research in São Paulo (see Appendix), in order to dissect how the RTC is imagined and enacted with multiple scalar elements to fashion ironically exclusionary politics of urban belonging across a range of left-turn experiments. In each case, we highlight *recombination* in these cities as the politicized privileging of various, specifically scaled markers of identity in order to craft a sense of local righteousness, in maneuvers that disrupt other potential modes of affiliation or loyalty within the city, such as class similarity or physical contiguity. The focus is on the politics of citizenship – defined as struggles over who belongs in which rights-bearing community and under what conditions –

and the often raucous, everyday maneuvers that affect this politics as intersecting with visions of the RTC.

As 'the RTC' has become fundamental to so many rights claims in the region, we begin by examining the particular itinerary of Lefebvre's legacy in South America, which has enabled a diversified uptake of his ideas, sometimes directly into official urban policy. To frame our later analyses, we overview the São Paulo case, where the RTC is most cultivated in South America, yet rife with practical contradictions that illuminate the malleability of this notion. We then turn to our two main empirical cases in post-neoliberal South America: in Caracas, we show how conflicts over the rights of street vendors raise the question of *which* right to the city is being invoked; in Buenos Aires, we focus on clashes between different social groups over urban amenities as pointing to, ironically, *whose* right to the city is to be defended in 'another world'. In the conclusion, we argue that struggles over urban citizenship in this diversity of South American left-turn experiments unfold through multiply scaled logics and ideological projects in the wake of neoliberal crises, which highlights the political variability and substantive susceptibility of the RTC across the region.

We point to *recombinant geographies of citizenship* in these cases because the issues of urban rights and belonging are so central in each, yet all manner of scales and spaces are invoked – and produced – in these squabbles over the city. Both state actors and variously positioned citizen groups recombine assumed correspondences between *who* belongs *where*, and with *what justification* from *what scale*. These recombinations of citizenship geographies are ongoing and serve multiple interests, as this article reveals, but they are especially profound in the current South American context where the possibility of 'another world' is so promising yet ironically can also be quite imperiling.

The idea of recombinant geographies of citizenship benefits from key recent advances in scholarship on struggles over belonging in Latin American cities, as well as new theoretical insights on political geographies of inclusion. James Holston's (1995, 2008) vision of insurgent citizenship highlights how marginalized groups can make decisive practical interventions to reclaim and activate their rights as citizens. However, our conceptualization takes issue with scalar aspects of Holston's argument in its application to struggles by peripheral residents of São Paulo, especially the idea that insurgency takes form as the new

asserton of national belonging emerging boldly out of urban tribulations. Political geographers, instead, suggest contestations over urban belonging engage with power in varying locations (Allen, 2004), and spaces of citizenship can be developed by an array of subjects, not always leading to greater equity or fair incorporation. Indeed, Sallie Marston and Katharyne Mitchell (2004) point to the importance of empirically apprehending particular 'citizenship formations' among state, economy, and groups of citizens in different spatiotemporal situations, which may be quite unequal; likewise Gareth Jones (2004) underlines the labyrinthine negotiability of politics and belonging across Latin America's fractured urban spaces, suggesting a range of possibilities for citizenship formations.

Rather than urban rights accruing straightforwardly from urban habitation and participation, in the South American urban context we find conflicts where discourses of 'another world' and 'the RTC' become tools in the politics of reimagining the geographic logics of who belongs where and why, recombining elements from different scales. It is not city residence that yields, or forms the political basis for, urban rights. In São Paulo, the RTC becomes a platform for privileged populations with legal residences to exert greater control over the shaping of urban terrain through a recombination of new, localized democratic spaces with the scale of citywide development strategies. In Caracas, recombination refers to a new Bolivarian geography as yielding urban rights – a maneuver that disrupts class affiliations as well as alliances of propinquity by casting sizeable ranks of the urban poor as pariahs, outside revolutionary values (despite their sometimes staunchly pro-Chávez stances). In Buenos Aires, recombination means different social groups jockey for their rights to urban space and its enjoyment, but in ways very much at odds with the inclusion of all urban residents, laying claim to the city through recourse to membership in other geographies – from 'Europeanness' to a set of global urban values. We argue this emergent, quotidian urban politics across our South American cases goes beyond the framework of insurgent citizenship due to its unstable and recombinant geographies.

Clearly the particular dynamics of struggle and accommodation vary significantly across the region's cities. The framework of recombinant geographies of citizenship captures these general characteristics while maintaining an openness to the divergent formulations of politics and scale playing out in each case. There appear to be at least two varieties of Latin American left turns (Castañeda and Morales, 2008, pages 9-11): a reformulated, moderately

socialist axis including Chile,[2] Brazil, and Uruguay; compared to a more traditionally populist, stridently anti-US front comprising Venezuela, Bolivia, and to some extent Argentina. The two cases treated in detail in this article cover cities across these two categories, with Caracas in the latter, and Buenos Aires falling in between the extremes; São Paulo, which receives relatively minor treatment here, belongs to the former. Although these represent a strategic selected range of cases, the aim is not to demonstrate tidy adherence to these national classifications at the urban scale. Instead, these examples show how recombinant geographies of citizenship operate in very different policy contexts that nonetheless embrace the broad idea of 'another world' – as elaborated in the following section – and adopt steps to move toward that other world, often via the RTC.

Otherworldly possibilities: from Lefebvre to post-neoliberalism

In less than a decade, South America has transformed from an assemblage of vigorously neoliberal economies – doggedly enacting the prescriptions of the 'Washington Consensus' (Williamson, 1990) – into a cluster of experimental regimes calling into question the very core of that global orthodoxy (de la Barra and dello Buono, 2008). A series of deep financial quakes unhinged the region's reliance on neoliberal models, allowing for the ascendance of alternative visions of globalization and state-economy relationships, as part of a vague post-neoliberalism (Brenner et al., 2010; Sader, 2009). South America thus became a testing ground for otherworldly possibilities, ostensibly rectifying the erosive features of neoliberalism that had deepened inequalities, intensified poverty, and worsened unemployment in a general undercutting of citizenship rights across the region.

Fundamental in rejecting failed neoliberal frameworks was the discontent that arose from the monumental and often calamitous transformations concentrated in South American cities during the preceding decade (see Portes and Hoffman, 2003; Portes and Roberts, 2005). Claims on the city and its benefits now punctuate the post-neoliberal moment. The notion of the RTC, inherited from Lefebvre, has been influential in political struggles throughout the region, especially in Brazil, but also in Venezuela, Bolivia, Uruguay, Argentina, and even right-leaning Colombia (Fernandes and Maldonado Copello,

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[2] This characterization of Chile applies through Michele Bachelet's administration, which ended in 2010.

2009), with a clear synergy between this notion and the imaginings of 'another world' (Allahwala and Keil, 2005, pages 412-414; INURA, 2003). In his treatise on 'the RTC', Lefebvre noted that the "right to freedom, to individualization in socialization, to habitat and to inhabit … [t]he right to the *oeuvre*, to participation and *appropriation* (clearly distinct from the right to property), are implied in the right to the city" (Lefebvre, 1996, pages 173-174 [emphasis in original]), features he underlined as pertaining, presciently, to the creation of 'another world' (Lefebvre, 1996, page 131). Indeed, Lefebvre (1996, page 179) articulated the 'RTC' as precisely a counter to urban capitalist processes of deep commercialization, homogenization, and profit-seeking – exactly the exclusionary and alienating processes with which neoliberalism in South American cities had been associated (see Portes and Roberts, 2005).

Now in ostensibly post-neoliberal times, various South American political actors, including some ruling national governments, have adopted the RTC as an explicit goal, referring most basically to "the equitable usufruct of cities" across social groups (Habitat International Coalition, 2005, page I.I.2.), and indeed the use of the RTC idea has become widespread beyond Latin America (e.g., Fainstein, 2010, page 5; Soja, 2010, pages 6-7). Of course, many observers (e.g., Harvey, 2008; Mayer, 2009; Purcell, 2002) would be quick to point out this kind of definition falls well short of the multifaceted, open-ended, and transformative vision of the RTC that Lefebvre (1968) originally formulated. This is nonetheless part of the same intellectual lineage, and represents only a small part of a much larger charter on the RTC (Habitat International Coalition, 2005). Understanding how we arrive at this sort of definition is helpful in illuminating why the concept has led to quite contradictory practices.

A focus on the RTC is hardly new in South America, as the Lefebvrian tradition is much longer-standing in regional academia than in Anglophone contexts, and more deeply engrained in mainstream understandings of urbanism, space, and politics due to the speedy translation of Lefebvre's key works into Spanish and Portuguese decades earlier – including *The Right to the City* (1968) and *The Urban Revolution* (1970a) in the late 1960s and early 1970s (see Lefebvre, 1969a; 1969b; 1970b; 1972), among many others (Infoamérica, 2010; Machado, 2008, pages 86-94) – almost a generation before appearing in English (e.g., Lefebvre, 1996; 2003). The vibrancy of dependency theory in Latin America at that time

provided a fortuitous environment for the adoption of key works in Marxian urban analysis, including Lefebvre's (Ferrari Júnior, 2004; Valladares and Prates Coelho, 1996). However, the most prominent scholar from that tradition in Latin America was Manuel Castells (Bassols et al., 1988, pages 460-461) – a student as well as a rival of Lefebvre (Merrifield, 2000, pages 169-172) – with a related but markedly divergent framework (e.g., Castells, 1971, 1998).[3] Despite Castells's greater influence in the region in the 1970s, several fundamental contributions from Lefebvre were already in relatively wide Lusophone and Hispanophone circulation, whereas Anglophones continued to rely on interlocutors, for example David Harvey (1973). That broad presence proved important when interest began to wane in Castells's rigid, aspatial urban contributions, leading to a search for urban frameworks with greater adaptability to local specificities and insight on the overlooked role of space, thereby leading many Latin American scholars back to Lefebvre by the late 1970s and early 1980s (Castillo Fernández, 2009, page 175; Valladares and Prates Coelho, 1996). Brazilian geographer Milton Santos – who spent some years during Brazil's military rule exiled in Paris, within some of the same academic circles as Lefebvre – played no small part in this resurgence, highlighting the more flexible Lefebvrian approach and encouraging a greater critical focus on the production of space in Brazil and elsewhere in Latin America (Anselmo, 2006, page 60; Godoy, 2008, page 130; Moreira, 2000; Souza, 1988).

This earlier and multi-phased adoption of Lefebvre gave his work a deep, resonant reception in the region, but such concepts were not politically expedient until relatively recently. In the tumultuous and tragic evolution of South American politics, key ideas from the left gained prominence in the late 1960s, only to suffer the murderous purges of Cold War dictatorships, squelching their viability in the 1970s and 1980s, with variations across particular countries (see Collier and Collier, 2001), and troubled 'transitional' democracies extending well into the 2000s. Now, as part of the imagining of otherworldly possibilities,

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[3] Raised in Spain, clearly Castells had greater facility in Spanish than Lefebvre, but Castells also directed research in the liveliest, most influential center of Latin American academic production in the early 1970s – Santiago, Chile, with the headquarters of the United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America/CEPAL – while positioned at the Interdisciplinary Center for Urban Development/CIDU (Castells, 1973, 1983, page ix; Gorelik, 2005, page 123). Frameworks from Santiago reverberated throughout the region until the military *coup* by Augusto Pinochet in 1973 prompted a 17-year dictatorship and sharp downturn in the intellectual prowess of the Chilean capital (Becerril-Padua and Garcés, 2004; Bromley, 1992, page 253).

these discourses are prominent again and there is newfound support for policy frameworks structured around the principles of the RTC – and the alternative configurations it conjures (see Purcell, 2002). The rhetoric of the World Social Forum is deeply committed to these urban ideals (INURA, 2003), yet there are few examples where the conversion from prose to praxis occurs in any sustained way among ideological stalwarts, despite extensive invocation (Mayer, 2009). Instead, there is a remaking – or recombining – of Lefebvre's ideas by actors across South America who have long been exposed to these notions, now taking them up with quite different imputations as they make them into policy or persuasive campaigns invoking that powerful promise of 'another world'. There is a crucial, politicized recombination of allegiances away from the immediate priorities of everyday life toward grander notions of belonging and righteousness, and yet with a rhetoric that suffuses everyday common sense; in South America, moreover, it is the RTC – decades after its initial reception in the region – that ironically recombines with other priorities to realize 'another world' quite at odds with the imagination of leftist urban thought. Brazil and its largest city, São Paulo, underscore how these contradictions can play out.

São Paulo: What kind of right to the city?

Brazil's federal Statute of the City (*Estatuto da Cidade*), codified in 2001, stipulates there must be a "guarantee of the right to sustainable cities, understood as the right to urban land, to housing, to environmental sanitation, to urban infrastructure, to public transit and public services, to work and to leisure, for present and future generations" (Estatuto da Cidade, 2001 [translation by author]). This legislation, furthermore, requires all large cities in the vast Brazilian urban network to draft new participatory master plans working toward achievement of the RTC (Saule Júnior, 2008). These priorities emerged out of urban social movements in the 1970s and 1980s that had Lefebvre's inspiration at their core; after long struggles for a more progressive urban agenda, the RTC sublimated from heterodox Marxist incantation to law of the land in the early 2000s.[4] São Paulo, among the many Brazilian

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[4] Personal interviews with: Lúcio Kowarick, Departamento de Ciência Política, Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil (5 June 2009); Anderson Kazuo Nakano, Instituto Pólis, São Paulo, Brazil (26 June 2009). Researchers note that the late dictatorship and post-dictatorship period in São Paulo were a particularly

cities now grappling with the statute, is most prominent in its innovations (Caldeira, 2009; Caldeira and Holston, 2005). Yet despite official advances in São Paulo through broad-based initiatives of social participation, considerable transformations occur in the shift from idea to practice.

Holston (2008) demonstrates in careful detail how inhabitants of the *paulistano* periphery have struggled to build and protect their own modest homes in hardscrabble neighborhoods where conflicts over rightful property ownership have been intense since the 1970s, and engagement with the Brazilian justice system has proven risky and taxing as residents seek to stake their claims on the city. Since the 1990s, Holston finds a significant shift in both the discourses of mobilization and the establishment of legal precedents that highlight citizen rights to property. This develops within the same context as the Statute of the City, but is not exactly connected to it; instead, Holston (2008, pages 292, 394) argues this demonstrates the prominence of the RTC in contemporary Brazil. Holston depicts this as an imperfect victory, yet considers it an important transformation. Indeed, it does signify a major change as a rather partial advancement in justice, representing the ratification of rights to citizens specifically because they are property holders of some kind (Holston, 2009). In our reading, this inaugurates a quite skewed RTC, instilling an even more pernicious bias against those without legal or quasi-legal title than already exists in Brazil – the most inequitable country in the Americas. The scale and space of citizenship thus becomes the home, if a Brazilian is fortunate enough to own one.

What, then, is gained by the RTC in Brazil, and in its most robust realization in São Paulo? Numerous Brazilian scholars – some directly involved in the process of urban reform that buttresses the Statute of the City – highlight both theoretical and empirical biases of the RTC as it is currently reshaping development in São Paulo. Most broadly, legislative analyst José Roberto Bassul highlights how the Statute construes the RTC specifically in favor of property owners and especially large landholders:

> "Although the precepts of urban reform [in Brazil] … invest in the formation
> of consensus and the generation of pacts, it cannot be ignored that there are
> unequally conflicting poles in the dispute for the right to the city and that,

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charged, fecund political moment when key ideas from Marxian thought were mainstreamed (Kowarick, 1994).

given present circumstances [of the design of the Statute of the City and relevant master plans], that inequality tends to grow" (Bassul, 2004, page 151 [translation by author]).

Focused on São Paulo specifically, urban planner Flávio Villaça underlines how the *paulistano* participatory Master Plan (*Plano Diretor*), formulated with the impetus of the Statute of the City, creates imbalances in development interests favoring the same kinds of privileged groups; moreover, Villaça draws attention to how the Plan, positioned within a new framework of urban social justice yet reinforcing inequalities of who deserves what kinds of rights and where they are active, becomes a "socially accepted truth" (Villaça, 2005, page 90 [translation by author]). In further confirmation of these trends, urbanist Mariana Fix (2004, 2009, page 51) details the mechanisms through which the Statute of the City accentuates the significant geographic concentration of wealth and quality urban infrastructure that already marks São Paulo so starkly, thus eviscerating the efforts toward a democratized form of development. From other quarters, urban policy consultants in São Paulo – some advocating the importance of sustaining the Statute of the City, others questioning its reliability as a policy instrument – frequently expressed concerns about the susceptibility of participation to highly skewed socioeconomic interests during interviews in mid-2009. In the experience of these policy consultants, wealthier residents demonstrated an ability to frame public discussions as they wished due to the greater amount of funding at their disposal to pursue particular initiatives, familiarity with marketing and public persuasion, or even access to policymakers themselves.[5] The result is an arc of concentrated development via the Master Plan that follows both the locations and the interests of private landholders despite the egalitarian aims of the Statute and its vocabulary of the RTC.

Altogether, then, we see even in the case that most vigorously seeks to establish the RTC, and where insurgent citizenship is clearly documented, there are other – and undermining – geographies of citizenship in formation. Other cases show the RTC in play

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[5] Personal interviews with: Anderson Kazuo Nakano, Instituto Pólis, São Paulo, Brazil (26 June 2009); Nábil Bonduki, Conselho Regional Engenharia, Arquitetura e Agronomia, São Paulo (27 June 2009), Brazil; Ermínia Maricato, Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo, Universidade de São Paulo, Brazil (29 June 2009).

in different ways, where recombinant geographies of citizenship are transforming the scales and spaces of urban politics. If the São Paulo case leads us to question *what kind of right to the city* is being cultivated, Caracas and Buenos Aires yield further disquieting insight onto the remaking of the RTC – highlighting *which right* and *whose right* – with their recombinant citizenship geographies, as detailed in the next section.

The variation of political orientations among major city governments within South America – which is much greater than the differentiation across the national presidencies embodying some kind of left turn (Goldfrank and Schrank, 2009) – signals these urban struggles are not necessarily finding their optimal scale for political realization in the city itself. Instead, alongside the rhetoric of otherworldly possibilities, there have been formulations of new imaginaries and discourses of belonging, as well as justifications for action, that jump between or crisscross the scales of city, nation, and beyond. These intricately multiscalar pitches and practices recombine citizenship in novel geographic arrangements across South America.

Recombinant geographies of citizenship

This section broaches two cases of these recombinant geographies. One polar form of left-turn politics is observable in Venezuela, while Argentina finds itself in between the Venezuelan model and the Brazilian pole discussed previously. In Caracas, the city is a showcase of Hugo Chávez's program of spectacular socialism, funded by the largesse of booming petroleum production but carried out in the metamorphosis of mundane activities and environments in the *caraqueño* core. Buenos Aires exhibits a more piecemeal approach to crafting post-neoliberal policies, and an overall lack of coordination – or outright antagonism – between urban and national governments, yielding a context riddled by socioeconomically dissimilar groups staking distinctly scaled, quarrelsome claims to the same urban public spaces.

Spectacular Socialism in Caracas: Which Right to the City?

Among the many left turns across South America, the turbulent metamorphosis of Venezuela led by Hugo Chávez has garnered greatest attention, prompting either ire or admiration. In a 'Bolivarian revolution', Chávez has asserted the need to recapture the

wealth of extensive Venezuelan resources from a small traditional elite, channeling this largesse to the country's vast ranks of poor, underserved citizens. The heart of this schema is Chávez's major expansion of social spending by using petroleum revenues in a project of 'oil socialism'. As many analysts assert (see Castañeda and Morales, 2008), this is the most pronounced and extreme version of the new Latin American left.

Despite its Robinhoodesque appeal, Chávez's revolutionary program faces broad criticism regarding the nature of spending derived from oil profits due to lacking accountability and questionable effectiveness (Penfold-Becerra, 2007; Weisbrot et al., 2009). The most famous project spearheaded by Chávez is the network of *misiones*: community-based, government-funded initiatives ranging from community health services to vocational education that serve poor neighborhoods. The *misiones* are indeed making the neediest parts of the city more habitable through the delivery of crucial goods. This is part of what the Chávez administration highlights as an explicit commitment to the RTC, which the Venezuelan president has made a cornerstone of many ostensibly Bolivarian proclamations (see Jungemann, 2008, pages 17-18; Organization of American States, 2007). In this dynamic context of invigorating impoverished *barrios*, vibrant constituencies have formed that are often politically savvy and self-determined, while simultaneously geared toward maximizing benefits from Chávez's programs (Fernandes, 2010), suggesting significant movement toward fulfillment of the RTC. But another, less vaunted program related to *caraqueño* street vendors has created deep tensions surrounding the right to city, exposing contradictory implementation and raising the question of which RTC is being enacted in Caracas.

Confronting a depressed urban economy and blatant deprivation in the tracts of substandard housing that riddle the Venezuelan capital, Chávez made it an early revolutionary priority in 2000 to help poor *caraqueños* realize the RTC, which he interpreted as the ability of all urban residents to maximize the utility and potential profitability of the city – in this case through informal vending on sidewalks and plazas (Rojas, 2010, pages 61-63). Caracas has an especially large collection of expansive open spaces in the form of parks, promenades, wide boulevards, and other ostentatious icons of urban design reflecting the Haussmannian aspirations of prior leaders (Almandoz, 1999; González Casas, 2002); these were followed by several Corbusian and brutalist flourishes that augmented the stretches of

concrete-laden yet open spaces in the city (Hernández, 2004). As such, the possible sites for vendors to pitch their stalls are numerous and widespread. Indeed, the early 2000s saw more than a tripling in the number of people using outdoors sites throughout Caracas to sell their wares, from an estimated 20,000 in 2000 to 72,000 in 2002 (Rojas, 2010, page 58). Such a spectacular demonstration of this kind of RTC was nonetheless relatively short-lived.

The Chávez administration and municipal allies, especially Mayor Freddy Bernal, enacted a swift turn in the Venezuelan discourse on the RTC. After a brief period of support for street vendors, by 2005, these informal workers became the target of *chavista* programs of eradication in order to 'humanize' and beautify Caracas. An analysis of the recombinant logics and everyday practices of this conflict reveal a multiscalar struggle over citizenship and urban belonging. Complicated shifts began to occur as street vendors were removed *en masse* from their vast and fairly haphazard encampments in the city center, with assurance of reaccommodation elsewhere – a promise now unfulfilled for several years. The rhetoric accompanying both this removal and the subsequent harassment of those who have lingered to vend clandestinely characterizes these informal-economy *caraqueños* as infringing on the ability of other residents to enjoy the city.

The vendors become urban waste, cluttering the cityscape, a symbolic transmogrification that vendors begrudgingly confirm: "we represent trash".[6] For the Chávez administration, this new tack of limiting clandestine use of urban space is an important step in improving the city, both for the benefit of *caraqueños* generally and for the overall image of the Bolivarian Revolution in its showcase setting – a crucial strategy for maintaining the upkeep of Chávez's image on the global stage in the most trafficked of Venezuelan locales, including Casco Histórico (the historic center of Caracas) and shopping boulevard Sabana Grande.

The ensuing duty of rebuffing vendors from the streets of Caracas shifts to a more general responsibility of 'the people', or those everyday Venezuelans who ardently support the Chávez regime and its revolutionary programs. This modest rank-and-file further vilifies the vendors as if they were not from similarly challenged backgrounds or facing comparable struggles. Instead, 'the people' cast vendors as deviants as well as scale-jumping arbitrageurs

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[6] Personal interview with: Johana, street vendor in Sabana Grande; Caracas, Venezuela (20 November 2007).

who compromise the potential achievements of the revolutionary effort at its most sensitive core. As one neighborhood resident explained amid a vast mobilization, there were many reasons for her staunchly *chavista* stance against the vendors:

> They are dirty and thieves. Do you know how many people they steal from every day? They don't really make a living by selling that garbage on the streets. … They are organized into mafias and steal from people walking by and some of them are even selling drugs. A lot of them aren't even from here… they are Colombians, here to sell their drugs and exploit us. You see, why don't they join a government program and learn how to do something legal? They know they won't be able to make money that way and they want things easy.[7]

Confronted by these characterizations as criminal aliens who amount to human refuse, and as sudden outcasts of Chávez's transformative project, the vendors continue their work on the streets, struggling against brutality from a range of sources, including police and armed robbers in one of the continent's most violent cities (see Briceño-León, 2007). Yet, in our field research, we found a growing movement among vendors to direct their struggles toward still another political shift in the management of the city streets. Rather than dwell on the ambiguity that has resulted in this case of *which* RTC, vendors have increasingly pushed for an emphasis on the right to dignified and sufficient work within the Bolivarian revolution. Although their stances have turned to counter Chávez, after having been some of his fiercest supporters in the early 2000s, vendors are recasting their allegiance to the Venezuelan nation. Vendors and others in left-leaning but anti-Chávez coalitions are investing their energies in a transcalar project to defend their rights to the city, to work, and to basic freedoms as citizens, thereby trumping the squabbles over access to city space that revolve around specifically urban discourses.

This composition of the shifting and diversifying opposition to Chávez debunks claims of fundamentally class-polarized political divides in Venezuela, mischaracterizations that swirl especially among hardline anti-*chavista* commentators in the US media and elsewhere.

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[7] Personal interview with: Maritza, resident of Candelaria and member of local *chavista* communal council; Caracas, Venezuela (27 January 2008).

Instead, it is possible to understand the reshaping of this conflict over the RTC as a rescaling of fundamentally urban political struggles. Access to urban space as a livelihood strategy gains currency through recourse to justifications that inhere in other scales of belonging, especially the nation. Yet these must confront other rescaled adversaries, such as those that posit the eradication of vendors as an endeavor that serves the extranational needs of framing the revolution in an appropriate light and thwarting any subversives from unsympathetic regimes, especially the powerful phantasm of Colombian infiltration.

Chavista socialism in Caracas is thus spectacular on more than one account. Beyond the spectacle of remaking the Venezuelan capital in line with the principles of a broader redistributive revolution, this program of urban transformation has sparked other spectacles that contradict pronouncements of progress for all citizens of Venezuela. This configuration of counter-spectacles prompts a transcalar jockeying over what constitutes citizen obligations and rights that center on the terrain of the city itself but reach far beyond it in the effort to enlist favorable rationalities and justifications for their claims on urban space.

Sociospatial Fractiousness in Buenos Aires: Whose Right to the City?

While they have not borne the same hefty hopes as Chávez, the current president of Argentina and her late, predecessor husband have incited a self-styled transformation from the legacy of the neoliberal 1990s. From 2003, President Néstor Kirchner led Argentina through four years of relatively steady recovery from deep economic crisis, when the first lady – Cristina Fernández de Kirchner – rose from the Senate to be elected president in 2007. Both Kirchners have lambasted neoliberal proponents for seeking to sap the country of its resources, carelessly upending the livelihoods of everyday Argentines. They have thus developed reputations for impressive semantic stands taken against formidable adversaries – not least the International Monetary Fund (Gutman and Cohen, 2007) – but have exhibited patchy, sometimes ill-advised followthrough on issues from finance to electoral reform (Castañeda and Morales, 2008), and suffered a range of pitched quarrels with opposition groups.[8]

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[8] The political trajectory of the Kirchners became more complicated when Néstor Kirchner died suddenly – following cardiovascular surgery – in October 2010 at the age of 60, near the middle of his wife's first presidential term and while he was still actively participating in various levels of Argentine politics.

One of the sharpest conflicts arose during the early months of Fernández de Kirchner's administration, culminating in the heart of Buenos Aires and pitting the vaunted urban core against another Argentine cultural cornerstone: its hallowed pampas countryside. What began as policy scuffles over pricing controls became a legendary battle demonstrative of the sociospatial fractiousness of the Kirchner era. For roughly one week in February 2008, the capital experienced an eerily dark paralysis due to near-suffocation by the thick smoke of burning agricultural fields carried directly over Buenos Aires by fortuitously shifting winds. Farmers set their land ablaze to protest Fernández de Kirchner's regulations limiting exportation of bovine products in order to keep domestic prices low in the highest per capita beef-consuming country in the world. Fernández de Kirchner (2008) decried treachery and selfishness by land-owning oligarchs, symbolic of an old elite. Opposition groups countered with images of humble agrarian workers devastated by *kirchnerista* controls and vowed theirs was a cross-class coalition that would not back down until they were allowed to determine the use of their own land, which they were doing *de facto* by scorching it. Agrarian interests were also, essentially, demonstrating their RTC – not through its active use but by showing their power to seize and cripplingly control its utility.

The episode demonstrated precisely how volatile and emblematic the RTC had become in Argentina since its marked left turn under the Kirchners. Although the Kirchners have not exactly embraced this as a hallmark discourse (Fernández Wagner, 2008), their 'post-neoliberal' rhetoric reflects a semblance of progressivism (Gago and Sztulwark, 2009), while its ambiguity and contradictions have created a politics of confusing cross-claims by multiple groups. In this context, diametrically opposed city-level politicians in Buenos Aires, as well as widely different social classes, have either mobilized RTC discourses or acted to stake exclusionary claims to the city – much like the farmers – in moves that are antithetical to a broad-ranging RTC. These maneuvers only make sense when we pose the question of whose RTC, a consideration so against Lefebvre's formulation but which appears fundamental in how citizenship geographies are being recombined in Argentina today.

These very different assertions of a RTC are most evidently in conflict in Puerto Madero, the newest neighborhood of Buenos Aires, where a humble weekend market or *feria* has grown dramatically after commencing at the district's edge in 2004. Puerto Madero

holds a unique status in the Argentine capital as a privately managed territory that, while not gated, advertises a high level of security and exclusivity to accompany its extremely high-end living spaces.

Since the arrival of the *feria*, the two entities legally responsible for maintaining public space in Puerto Madero – the Government of the City of Buenos Aires (GCBA) and the neighborhood's private management firm, the Old Puerto Madero Corporation (CAPM; *Corporación Antiguo Puerto Madero*) – held very different views on the matter. The GCBA embraced *ferias* as a channel for the low-cost development of employment opportunities in the city (Novick, 2003). In the words of former urban governor Aníbal Ibarra, who personally acted to bring the *feria* to Puerto Madero, the emergent weekend festival was a way to support microentrepreneurs, "to be able to improve employment, with subsidies or very cheap credits granted".[9] For Ibarra and several offices of the urban state, these microenterprises were integral to helping Buenos Aires recover from the neoliberal crisis, fueling a "phenomenal explosion of tourism".[10] Coordination among several urban government offices enabled this achievement, which the former governor highlighted as distinguishing his administration while helping realize the RTC.

The CAPM, however, saw such a presence as encroachment in its privileged territory – out of place in the premier public space that Puerto Madero represented. As Rodrigo Ramírez, a CAPM administrator, explained matter-of-factly:

> Puerto Madero is another world, a completely different world. It's a place located 5 minutes from the central business district (*microcentro*), and it's a place that appears as if it were far from all that. That's to say, it's a bubble. … Anybody can come to Puerto Madero, come take a walk, use the installations: public space, recreational space, soccer fields, tennis courts – all free. It can all be used, accessible to whomever.[11]

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[9] Personal interview with: Aníbal Ibarra, former Chief of Government, Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires (4 August 2006) [translated by author].

[10] Personal interview with: Pablo Batín, administrator in Subsecretaría de Turismo, Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires (15 July 2004) [translated by author].

[11] Personal interview with: Rodrigo Ramírez, administrator in Corporación Antiguo Puerto Madero, S.A.; Buenos Aires (9 June 2004) [translated by author].

But as for the rest of the neighborhood – living, working, entertainment – he enumerated, "not just anyone can go to Puerto Madero, not whoever, if they don't possess an elevated economic rhythm." After all, Ramírez elaborated, the land in Puerto Madero sells as "the most expensive square meter in the Capital," with a particular "target public" for business and residence that can reach the "extremely elevated" nature of the district.

Although the Corporation enjoys unilateral decision-making rights regarding the development of offices and apartments, it could not affect the vending and gatherings mushrooming on weekends. The problem, for CAPM, is that the *feria* along the coastline falls in a hazy area of quasi-jurisdictions. "The coastline belongs to the GCBA, but in 1999 there was a caretaking agreement (*convenio de padrinazgo*) signed that transferred the maintenance responsibility for all green spaces in the Southern Coastline. … In legal terms, the coastline is not ours, but … when you make an adoption, you take charge of everything." The Corporation had worked to recover the coastline from a state of overgrowth and disrepair, with the return of the GCBA to stake its legal claim on the area for the *feria* seeming an ungracious act of despotism. Ramírez cast the situation as "going in the direction of misery, heading toward being Colombia or some other, let's say, tyrannical country".

Disputes over the *feria* have remained unresolved, leading Ramírez to relate its jurisdictional limbo via another, perhaps allegorical example:

> Puerto Madero does have a grave problem, which is a pack of hounds, of, let's say, abandoned dogs. They're quite a lot. Sometimes there are bands of ten, fifteen dogs … and they get violent at times, bite people. … It's one thing to have a dog, raise it and all the rest, but wild dogs damage the sense of what would be the neighborhood. The complaint [about the dogs] originated here. [The GCBA] gave us the right to intervene, we talked to an organization that deals with domestic animals, and I sent out the municipal dogcatcher. But it's not like that exactly. Well, suddenly [the GCBA] intervened and said they couldn't do anything with respect to the issue because they can't sacrifice an animal. They can't sacrifice an animal, nor can they pick them up and take them to another place either. These are called 'Problems Without A Solution'.

The vexing dilemma of volatile strays encapsulated what Ramírez saw as competing interests and irreconcilable urban publics in the post-neoliberal moment. Yet despite the embarrassment of having gone to the dogs, Ramírez underlined that, in broader terms, the CAPM represents a model that sets an example for other cities in the world in terms of public space and urban amenities (see CAPM, 1999). The Corporation had already assimilated the lessons of other port cities that redeveloped their waterfronts, but superseded them by innovating specifically in its roles of governance and public space management. Instead of creating a festival marketplace, Ramírez was proud to have specialized in "the preservation of public space … rendering a rather tranquil place", setting a "precedent" of "knowledge for other cities of the world" regarding optimal enjoyment of urban space – if only for a particular public.

The situation in Puerto Madero thus entails a complex of rights to the city that dialogues with understandings of proper norms for the support of livelihoods and the pursuit of happiness from cutting-edge sites around the world. As elite residents turned to the Corporation to resolve their conflicts, they signaled their trust in having a few cosmopolitan standards delivered: tranquility, order, security, and cleanliness. If these represent a boundless RTC, in the sense that their conceptualization might originate elsewhere and could feasibly be desirable by anyone anywhere, then they are also proprietary, in the sense that they belong to whoever has innovated in achieving them, and the people they represent. Whether it is the Corporation or, for example, the countries of the European Union where many people in Puerto Madero hold secondary citizenships (see Centner, 2011a), these sources of innovation are tools for outdoing the insufficiencies of Argentine social rights. The very legitimacy of these claims to greater but exclusive rights lay in distinguishing themselves from the depraved condition of citizenship they see as having evolved in Argentina more generally. This is, therefore, a recombinant geography of citizenship that enables claims on the RTC, but through an oblique, multiscalar formulation that requires significant savvy to manipulate (Centner, 2011b).

These shifting scales of citizenship are not limited to the jockeying of elites. Rather, they are visible in a range of struggles over the geography of citizenship in Buenos Aires that demonstrate a city where fragmentation, characterized by geographies of class separation and a lack of interaction across those spaces (Prévôt Schapira, 2000), has given way to

fractiousness. The difference is that fractious geographies emphatically entail interaction, but of a raucous and often violent sort – from conflicts over 'urbanity' among poor sectors (Centner, 2011a), to jeopardization of informal settlements by new government recognition programs following global logics of regularization (Sehtman, 2009), to increasingly aggressive development strategies by middle-income groups that hedge nationalism and divergent socioeconomic interests (Kanai, 2010), among others. Such pointed upheaval distinguishes the Kirchner era and its particular brand of left turn. These situations of claiming and disclaiming rights to the city all involve groups that had largely been fragmented and non-interactive during the neoliberal period, but now come together conflictively, invoking differently scaled legitimacies as they duke out the terms of their belonging in post-neoliberal urban space.

Conclusion: right to the city, left to the future?

In October 2009, the International Olympic Committee awarded the hosting of the 2016 Summer Olympiad to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, after a lengthy bidding process that culminated in presentations by teams representing the four finalist cities. The Brazilian head of state and longtime left-wing icon, President Lula, participated in Rio's showcase in Copenhagen, underpinning the major national effort signified by the campaign to bring the Olympics to the city. In the course of slideshows and brief films about the city's preparations, there were repeated references to inclusive and egalitarian planning. This entailed, for example, the installation of an expansive mountain biking venue in the infamously impoverished northern sections of Rio – an area of dense, sprawling *favelas* (shantytowns). The new park-like setting for adventure sports was explicitly reaching out to local marginalized youth in an attempt to integrate them with Olympic development, even as this construction would displace existing *favela* settlements.

Yet in the days after Rio prevailed as host city, Lula himself hailed the Olympics as a dramatically positive event not only because of its urban improvements and benefits hypothetically accruing to all citizens of Rio, but also to Brazilians more broadly: it was "the end of the inferiority complex", Lula exclaimed, with Brazil finally being able to take its rightful place among the "great nations" (*Folha de São Paulo Online*, 2009). The national and global import of this victory for the city was thus striking.

In this kind of moment – with Brazil's most left-leaning president welcoming a mega-event to Rio that will bring extensive foreign investment but also incur staggering costs and involve significant upheavals for urban residents, especially the most marginalized – where is the RTC? The multiple scales through which this politics operates are plain and underscore that struggles over the city take root in a range of very different spaces. But the RTC, as equal entitlement to the opportunities and indeed the creation of urban space, is held in abeyance by one of the presidents most personifying imaginations of 'another world' and leftward turns in South American politics. Furthermore, it is Brazil where the RTC is most thoroughly codified and protected by the Statute of the City, but in the case of Rio it appears very credibly threatened as the city enters a breakneck developmental race to stage the Olympics. We find, then, that the RTC is left to the future: it is something to be forestalled, a promise on which the left itself intends to deliver, but that the left is leaving for another time and space.

This vignette and the accounts of São Paulo, Caracas, and Buenos Aires highlight power-laden remakings of city terrain that will be the legacy of a range of left-turn presidents while insuring that very un-left transformations happen in the name of bolstering 'another world'. These struggles over belonging and urban space that enlist so many other scales of politics point out just how recombinant are contemporary geographies of citizenship across the left turns of South America, each representing 'citizenship formations' (Marston and Mitchell, 2004) that are quite particularly and complexly scaled, and in which the RTC becomes a rhetorical centerpiece despite the multiple kinds and levels of belonging invoked. Rather than 'spatial justice' emanating from a commitment to the RTC (Soja, 2010, pages 95-110), or straightforward attainment of urban citizenship through city-based tribulations (Holston, 2009), we find recombinations that differentiate what the RTC means in practice in each citizenship formation. From the geography of landownership in São Paulo, to the geography of Bolivarian loyalty in Caracas, to shifting geographies of righteousness in Buenos Aires, each of these is a skillful albeit paradoxical recombination of the basis for urban rights that represents the culmination of powerful projects to create 'another world'.

This post-neoliberal setting is precisely the kind of juncture in which Lefebvre imagine the 'RTC' would obtain: as a corrective against a particularly exclusionary, regressive form of urban capitalism. With numerous experiments in citizenship that supposedly embrace the 'RTC' underway, South American cities have become a kind of laboratory where recombinations are occurring that bring together power and logics from multiple scales, casting the meanings of citizenship anew while also altering the spaces in which it is valid. Urban politics is thus extensive but the RTC is practically evasive in these politically charged times, as the discourse of 'another world' clearly can assume many potential valences. Where 'another world' holds greatest prominence in the political imagination, the right to the city is left to the future – perhaps as the most clearly unifying feature of these divergent left trajectories.

Appendix: methods

      This article draws on field research in São Paulo, Caracas, and Buenos Aires that varied in focus, nature, and duration, in addition to extensive document analysis and bibliographic tracing of the transnational development of Lefebvre's ideas in Latin America. Centner conducted 25 months of ethnographic fieldwork and 97 strategic interviews in Buenos Aires between 2003 and 2009; he also conducted archival research and 18 interviews in São Paulo in mid-2009. Rojas completed 17 months of fieldwork in Caracas during 2005-2008.

Appendix: abbreviations

CAPM: *Corporación Antiguo Puerto Madero, S.A.* (Old Puerto Madero Corporation, Inc.)

GCBA: *Gobierno de la Ciudad de Buenos Aires* (Government of the City of Buenos Aires)

RTC: right to the city

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