From slum to neighborhood
Informal settlements, safety and presence of State in a mid-size city in the Argentinean Patagonia

Puerto Madryn, Chubut

Sergio Andrés Kaminker (IDAES-UNSAM/ CENPAT-CONICET)

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Design practice for urban safety and security
IUAV, Venezia, Italy
17th October 2013
Goals

Understand the dynamics of conflicts and changes in the transition “de asentamiento a barrio” of the Northwestern part of the city

Describe how the population of the settlement and its seven neighborhoods were produced

Identify main issues, representations and actions driven by the community and their consequences in the everyday experience of living in the city
Puerto Madryn, from “pueblo” to “ciudad intermedia”

Cuadro 1. Población total de la población en los últimos 5 censos nacionales de población, vivienda y hogares.

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Main reasons of attraction of immigrants and national migration: work and “The representation of a quiet and safe life in contact with nature”
Puerto Madryn, from “pueblo” to “ciudad intermedia”

Cuadro 2. Crecimiento relativo de la población en los últimas cuatro décadas según datos de los censos nacionales de población, vivienda y hogares.

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The dynamic of residential segregation: informal settlements in Puerto Madryn

- Two momentos in the construction of residencial space

  Until the end of the 1980’s: State, public companies and ALUAR. Public housing and economic lots.

  From the end of the 1980’s: growth of the formal real estate market, suburban lots and informal settlements.
One slum, seven neighborhoods: Pujol Norte
Transitional moment 2011-2012:

- Change of municipal government. What happened with safety in terms of crime and violence and insecurity of tenure and forced evictions (related)

  From zero tolerance to the consolidation of the neighborhood

  From the organization of resistance to the presence of state
Urban safety: demands and dimensions in the slum

• Before 2011

Political (real) threat of eviction
(some actually took place)

Occupation of houses due to the lack of police
(“aguantaderos”, places where criminals went to hide)
small thefts and situations of violence in public spaces
by “criminals” from the “outside”

“I was beaten up by some girls, that were there near the school. I was arriving with a couple of bags and they told me “Bolivian”, as usual...One neighbor saw this and yelled...Another time, some kinds, they were not so big (...) They started to sneak inside the houses while people were working...”
Urban safety: demands and dimensions in the slum

• Before 2011

Police as a threat
“Police came and we ended up without money and without cable”

Communitarian organization to resist. Whistle, quick answers from the neighbors
“One morning, police came at 4 or 5 and pass on the machines, they kicked the doors, broke everything. People were sleeping...So that’s why we realized we needed to have a whistle because you can’t do anything to the crowd. But one by one, when you are sleeping...They were going to kicked us out in the same way....When we arrived there it was too late...That’s why we ended up occupying the offices of the municipal governmente”

Common origin (or racism) as a risk as well as a solution ("solidarity between people from the same country")
“Between neighbors we take care of each other pretty well because almost all are from the same places
Urban safety: demands and dimensions in the slum

• From 2012

No more occupation of houses. Houses where criminals hide were reported by neighbors... But there are still some inside... though only few talked about these...

“I tell the police, what do we do with them? But they also look after themselves... If they make mistakes, they have to do them in other places... If there are parties, if there are shootings, then we call the police...”

Social violence linked with alcohol drinking in informal bars

“Clandestine shops... They are sitting there drinking outside... Girls pass... Violence no, uncertainty because there are young boys, girls too... there bothering... On the other side (of the road), that side is terrible... There is always fights...”

Gender based violence being denounced by local leaders

“There were some family problems in the neighborhood. I don’t like the kids to see those things parents do. I have to work with the police”
Urban safety: demands and dimensions in the slum

- From 2012
  - Social control changed. Local leaders of the community calling the police
  - Direct links with city political leaders and its consequences (benefits and pressure over alternatives)
  - Atomization of organization and problems of representation
Final words

• The experience of the informal settlements tend to be complex. In places where the main demand was the presence of the State authorities and the invisibility of the groups, the authorities were the main threat, besides the impossibility of a real protection against crimes and social violence in its different forms (GBV, racism, xenophobia).

• When the local government changed its policy towards the settlement, local leaders linked to the city political leaders gained control over the neighborhoods but lost representation.

• Even though the experience of the communitarian organization prevented many problems, the presence of the state made it possible to address social violence in a more effective way (the excuse of violence in the private sphere lost support)