



Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Habitat International

journal homepage: [www.elsevier.com/locate/habitatint](http://www.elsevier.com/locate/habitatint)

## Lifestyle migration and socio-spatial segregation in the urban(izing) landscapes of Cuenca (Ecuador) and Guanacaste (Costa Rica)

Femke van Noorloos <sup>a,\*</sup>, Griet Steel <sup>a,b</sup>

<sup>a</sup> International Development Studies, Dept. Human Geography & Planning, Faculty of Geosciences, Utrecht University, P.O. Box 80.115, 3508 TC Utrecht, The Netherlands

<sup>b</sup> Institute for Anthropological Research in Africa (IARA), Faculty of Social Sciences, KU Leuven, Parkstraat 45, Box 3615, B-3000 Leuven, Belgium

### ARTICLE INFO

#### Article history:

Received 13 April 2015

Received in revised form

31 July 2015

Accepted 8 August 2015

Available online xxx

#### Keywords:

Lifestyle migration

Gentrification

Spatial segregation

Urbanization

Latin America

### ABSTRACT

Globalization and changing mobility patterns have significantly altered the urban landscapes of Latin America over the past decades. Efforts by the state and the private sector to regenerate urban areas and free up land for the sake of investment and wealthy city dwellers have shaped processes of privatization and socio-spatial segregation. While 'privileged mobilities' such as lifestyle migration can be assumed to play a role in such urban transformations, research on the link between urban change and lifestyle migration in Latin America is still in its infancy. This paper focuses on the impact of lifestyle migration on the extent and speed of socio-spatial change in intermediate cities and urbanizing regions. More concretely, the paper underscores the importance of lifestyle migration in shaping contemporary urban space in Latin America by comparing socio-spatial transformations in Cuenca, an intermediate city in southern Ecuador, and the urbanizing coast of Guanacaste province in northwest Costa Rica. These research sites currently are two of Latin America's main destinations for international lifestyle migrants, and hence are experiencing escalating real estate development. Both areas have developed into increasingly exclusivist spaces and as such show that intermediate cities and urbanizing regions can no longer escape the spatial segregation, gentrification and inequality that used to be associated almost solely with metropolitan centers.

© 2015 Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved.

### 1. Introduction

Under the influence of globalization and changing mobility patterns, urban landscapes in Latin America have changed significantly over the last decades. Cities are increasingly characterized by social exclusion, crime, and the physical creation of class barriers (Angotti, 2013; Portes & Roberts, 2005; Roberts, 2010). In geographical terms, boundaries between center and periphery might be blurred, but in terms of socio-economic opportunities the distinction between poor and more prosperous urban residents is still very sharp (Perlman, 2010). Some of these urban transformations can be traced back to concerted efforts by the state and the private sector to 'regenerate' urban areas and free up land for the sake of investment; the possible consequences include gentrification, displacement, and, indirectly, socio-spatial segregation

(Inzulza-Contardo, 2012; Janoschka, Sequera, & Salinas, 2014). While the roles of local elites and traditional mobile groups such as foreign entrepreneurs and tourists in this process have been documented (Steel, 2013; Torres & Momsen, 2004), few authors have explored the role of lifestyle migration in current transformation processes in Latin American cities.

The role of mobilities in engendering urban transformations has been widely recognized in relation to South-North migration, yet when it comes to reversed flows of lifestyle-related mobilities (North-South), the literature is more scarce and recent.<sup>1</sup> The fact that lifestyle migration has surged only recently in many areas, together with the difficulty of capturing the phenomenon in statistics, renders it largely invisible in urban debates. Nevertheless,

<sup>1</sup> There has been some conceptual confusion around the phenomenon of lifestyle migration. At least a variety of terms is used for similar phenomena including residential tourism, retirement migration, amenity migration, North-South migration, and second home development. In accordance with Williams and Hall (2000) we conceptualize lifestyle migration as a hybrid form of privileged mobility that ranges from permanent migration to prolonged tourism.

\* Corresponding author.

E-mail addresses: [HJ.vanNoorloos@uu.nl](mailto:HJ.vanNoorloos@uu.nl) (F. van Noorloos), [g.steel@uu.nl](mailto:g.steel@uu.nl) (G. Steel).

lifestyle migration is a salient aspect of current globalization processes; its influence on urban space is evident in cities and incipient urban areas such as Cuenca, Ecuador; Panama City, Panama; San Miguel de Allende, Mexico; Granada, Nicaragua; Guanacaste, Costa Rica; and Northeast Brazil.

In Latin America, most lifestyle migrants are North Americans who move either temporarily or permanently to the continent in search of a more relaxed lifestyle, a lower cost of living and better weather conditions. Together with wealthy domestic migrants, returnees and foreign entrepreneurs, they are investing increasingly in Latin American real estate markets and converting specific areas of the Latin American city into new spaces of consumption more amenable to Western lifestyles. Cuenca and Guanacaste are two of Latin America's most popular destinations for international lifestyle migrants, and as such are experiencing escalating real estate development. In this paper we elaborate on how this recent process has accelerated and extended pre-existing processes of socio-spatial segregation in intermediate cities and urbanizing regions,<sup>2</sup> suggesting that segregation is not confined solely to metropolises and megacities of the continent.

By drawing on these two cases, we aim to deepen the debates by eliciting the role of lifestyle migration in contemporary urban transformations and patterns of urban socio-spatial change in Latin America. At the same time we widen the geographical basis of the lifestyle migration debate by including urban and urbanizing regions and by focusing on Latin American destinations, and thereby provide new insights into lifestyle migration's local implications. First we introduce a conceptual outline on urbanization, spatial segregation and lifestyle migration; then we present the two case studies of Cuenca and Guanacaste; and we finalize with some concluding reflections.

## 2. Urbanization, spatial segregation and lifestyle migration in Latin American cities

Across the globe, globalization and neoliberalism have left their imprint on the urban landscape. As cities started to engage in 'entrepreneurial urbanism', the focal point of urban governance moved from managerialism or strategies that were primarily oriented towards the State-led provision of services and facilities for the urban population, to an entrepreneurial stance on economic development (Harvey, 1989). Neoliberal policies have transformed the city from a center of production and work to a place of global capital in which the urban space has been converted into what Smith (1996) calls the 'revanchist city'. Privatization and commodification of urban space often result in displacement and gentrification, for example through rapidly rising consumption prices and real estate values. Nasser (2003) argues that this rising expense burden results in social exclusion and creates 'outsider' zones, over which locals have lost participatory power.

In Latin American cities, this neoliberal approach to urban development has resulted in the increasing commodification of land. This conversion of land into a marketable commodity has been intensified by a real estate boom dominated by foreign investors, national elites, transnational migrants, and lifestyle migrants such as old and early age pensioners. In the neoliberal era, a significant portion of foreign investment has flowed into the real estate sector; Latin America's less industrialized urban areas such as those in Ecuador and Costa Rica are no exception (Roberts, 2010). These investments, with their social exclusion mechanisms, are not

without consequences. Processes of gentrification – typical to Latin America are gentrification through housing revitalization (Inzulza-Contardo, 2012), the privatization of public space, as well as commerce and tourism-related gentrification (Janoschka et al., 2014) – in tandem with increased urban crime and violence, have led to a rise in socio-spatial segregation. Angotti (2013) speaks in terms of "enclave urbanism" as the conscious design and development of fragmented cities and metropolitan regions in Latin America. He argues that these separate enclaves contribute to "the fragmentation of urban space into exclusive, elite residential enclaves and ghettos, malls, and business districts" (Angotti, 2013:11). Indeed, the number of gated residential communities has skyrocketed across the continent (Alvarez-Rivadulla, 2007; Borsdorf, Hidalgo, & Sánchez, 2007; Coy, 2006). In other words, the creation of new real estate markets is intrinsically linked with gentrification in Latin America; these developments in turn are closely interlinked with active government and private sector-led regeneration strategies and land market liberalization (Inzulza-Contardo, 2012; Janoschka et al., 2014). However, the role of new and different privileged consumer groups – such as lifestyle migrants – in the increasing monopolization of space and urban functions, as well as socio-spatial segregation, has not yet been systematically analyzed.

While lifestyle migration is leaving clear marks on the social, economic, cultural and spatial landscapes of many regions in Asia, Africa and Latin America, the literature pays scarce attention to the implications of the phenomenon for the destination areas located outside of Europe and North America, and their populations. Despite recent calls for a better analysis of lifestyle migration's effects (Janoschka & Haas, 2013; van Noorloos, 2012), a thorough empirical and in-depth account of lifestyle migration's local consequences and responses in the global South, moving beyond the migrants themselves, still seems challenging apart from some notable exceptions. Some studies – while acknowledging the inevitable complexity of measuring change in a multifaceted global context – do provide accounts of local impacts such as the economic implications of lifestyle migration and residential tourism (Hoogendoorn & Visser, 2010; van Noorloos, 2012; Visser, 2004) or of socio-political conflicts and struggles over space and meaning – including land and water conflicts (Bastos, 2013; Bonilla & Mordt, 2011; McWatters, 2009; van Noorloos, 2011). Others address shifting local power relations and inequalities (Aledo, Loloum, Ortiz, & García-Andreu, 2013; Barrantes-Reynolds, 2011; Janoschka, 2009) and spatial and environmental change (van Laar, Cottyn, Donaldson, Zoomers, & Ferreira, 2013; van Noorloos, 2012; Román, 2008; Spalding, 2013). However, many of these studies focus on rural areas.

In terms of urban areas, various authors observe the importance of segregated urban areas, such as gated communities, in contemporary lifestyle migration in Latin America (Jackiewicz & Craine, 2010; Matteucci, 2011). Enriquez (2008) frames lifestyle migration in coastal urban areas in Puerto Peñasco, Mexico as 'defensive urbanism' consisting of condominium complexes and gated communities that are closed off from their surroundings through high-level security, regulation and walls as well as with a lack of public access (e.g., restricted access to beaches) that implies the privatization of public space. Such defensive urban types confer social and economic exclusivity and distance (Enriquez, 2008). Their peripheral and diffuse character, set apart from the pre-existing urban nucleus, further engenders a social separation between lifestyle migrants and other populations (see also Matarrita-Cascante & Stocks, 2013). Urban fragmentation and segregation also can take different forms; network-type enclaves (Rodgers, 2004) and gentrified inner-cities surrounded by peripheral local neighborhoods are other possibilities.

It is notable that the changes related to lifestyle migration

<sup>2</sup> Cuenca (Ecuador) is an intermediate city while Guanacaste (Costa Rica) is a coastal region in which tourism and real estate have generated urbanization on a smaller scale.

Download English Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/en/article/10502341>

Download Persian Version:

<https://daneshyari.com/article/10502341>

[Daneshyari.com](https://daneshyari.com)