

# Spaces of Progress and Development in Latin America: An Introduction

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Since the independence of the former Spanish and Portuguese colonies in the early nineteenth century, the planning, construction, and the physical interventions in rural and urban spaces, but also their symbolic conceptions served Latin American statesmen and intellectuals to assert their national identities.<sup>1</sup> At the same time, space-related constructions and imaginations were used to express a belonging to superordinate spatial categories, which these elites deemed especially “modern”, “progressive” or “developed”. Such external points of reference and belonging changed over time and were never mutually exclusive. In this issue, we thus argue that in Latin America the ideas of “progress” and “civilization” and later of “development” and “modernization” have been key for the formation of nation states and national identities. These ideas were linked to imagined spatial categories and their physical manifestations. The processes of nation building, however, were not free of contestations. State institutions, local elites, transnational experts, and subaltern actors provided different interpretations and expectations concerning urban and rural spaces. Some of them formed these ideas by looking and travelling beyond their borders. In this issue, we therefore look at the intersection of global, national, and regional discourses on “progress” and “development” in the production of urban and rural spaces in Latin America.

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Highlighting continuities and ruptures, the articles span from the nineteenth through the twentieth century and focus on two highly significant time periods. Two contributions look at the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, when national elites in the Southern Cone sought to “civilize” their fellow citizens through the construction of new and mostly urban spaces in order to rank high on an imagined scale of (European) progressiveness. Three contributions then focus on the decades after 1945, when “development” became the main rationale of local, national, and transnational actors who intended to “modernize” Latin American nation states anew. This initially meant mostly following “Western” development models, but later also trying to invent South-South inspired “Third World” versions of development.

Following key propositions of the spatial turn that “recognizes the constructed nature of space, acknowledges the simultaneity of various spatial frameworks and the centrality of [...] historical actors [...] in defining spatial orders”,<sup>2</sup> we argue that the category of space provides a privileged vantage point to study ongoing processes of Latin American nation building and identity formation. Moreover, as Angelika Epple has demonstrated with her concept of “relational history”, we also show how spatial entities such as nation states can only exist in relation to each other. Relations are not an abstract phenomenon, but related to concrete actors that can be identified. In this issue, we thus pay special attention to how different actors communicated and negotiated about space. Interestingly, Epple applies her concept of “relational history” to both “imagined and effective geopolitical entities”.<sup>3</sup>

Similarly, our approach in this issue is defined by the simultaneous analysis of concrete instances of urban and regional planning, on the one hand, and of constructions and imaginations of symbolic spaces and belongings, on the other. We thus bridge the gap between different strands of literature that have hitherto primarily analysed either the material or the symbolic spatial dimension. We argue that these spheres cannot be thought of separately and that over the course of nation building and other forms of identity formation, different spatial dimensions continuously overlap. Our empirical analyses show that with each concrete instance of urban and rural planning under study, the involved actors also claimed their country’s belonging to imagined spatial entities to which they attributed qualities such as “progressiveness” or “modernity”. More often than not, these imaginations implied a gaze across the Atlantic towards Europe, across the Rio Grande towards the United States, or throughout the “Third World”. Tracing these imaginations thus also embeds our case studies in a global history perspective.

Consequently, with this issue, we further aim at placing Latin American history and historiography more firmly in global history – a field from which the world region has

2 M. Middell and K. Naumann, *Global History and the Spatial Turn: From the Impact of Area Studies to the Study of Critical Junctures of Globalization*, in: *Journal of Global History* 5 (2010), pp. 149–170, at 155.

3 A. Epple, *Relationale Geschichtsschreibung: Gegenstand, Erkenntnisinteresse und Methode globaler und weltregionaler Geschichtsschreibung*, in: *H-Soz-Kult*, 2 November 2017, [www.hsozkult.de/debate/id/diskussionen-4291](http://www.hsozkult.de/debate/id/diskussionen-4291) (accessed 22 November 2022).

been largely absent.<sup>4</sup> Historians have explained this absence with the origins of global history in postcolonial theory and the subsequent greater academic interest in the former colonies of the British Empire. Moreover, it has been noted that Latin American scholars have hardly applied global history approaches, mostly because of limited funding for archival research in foreign countries, but also because some of them perceive the originally anglophone approach as “academic imperialism”.<sup>5</sup> Despite these obstacles and criticism, one can also argue that the nineteenth-century historiography in Latin America in a way constituted global history *avant la lettre* as the national histories of the young nation states could hardly be written without taking their international relations into account.<sup>6</sup> As decolonization took place in Latin America much earlier than in other regions of the Global South, discussions on “progress”, “modernity”, and “development”, and how these concepts related to Europe and North America preceded or even preformed considerations of later postcolonial elites in other parts of the world. Since the nineteenth century, contemporaries and historians have reflected on whether or not Latin America belonged to “the West” or to “the Rest”.<sup>7</sup> This once more highlights the importance and ambiguity of spatial categories in the region’s past and present.

The complex relationship between Latin American history and global history is also intertwined with the concept of area studies, in which Latin American history – as practiced in the United States and Europe – has firmly been integrated since the mid-twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> Specific geopolitical interests during the Cold War led to the establishment of area studies, first in US-American academia, from where it then spread to European universities.<sup>9</sup> In comparison to global history, area studies have been rightly criticized for essentializing and exoticizing their object of study.<sup>10</sup> Other authors, however, have emphasized the need for historians with regional expertise. Specific language skills, knowledge of archival structures and traditions, and a dense network of historians working on the same region(s) are necessary for a multiplicity of perspectives – not least on global

4 See e.g. S. Schuster and G. de Lima Grecco, Decolonizing Global History? A Latin American Perspective, in: *Journal of World History* 31 (2020) 2, pp. 425–446.

5 *Ibid.*; F. Schulze and G. Fischer, Brazilian History as Global History, in: *Bulletin of Latin American Research* 38 (2019) 4, pp. 408–422.

6 *Ibid.*; S. Rinke and F. Schulze, Global History *avant la lettre*: The Historiography on Latin America between Regional Studies and Global Challenges, in: *Comparativ* 29 (2019) 2, pp. 20–35.

7 Cf. Ferguson’s controversial publication: N. Ferguson, *Civilization: The West and the Rest*, New York 2011; see also e.g. International Workshop „The West or the Rest? Latin America’s Global Embeddedness in Historical Perspective“, Free University Berlin, 14–16 June 2012, [https://www.lai.fu-berlin.de/forschung/entre-espacios/veranstaltungen/termine/archiv/Program\\_West\\_or\\_Rest.pdf](https://www.lai.fu-berlin.de/forschung/entre-espacios/veranstaltungen/termine/archiv/Program_West_or_Rest.pdf) (accessed 22 November 2022).

8 For a broad perspective on the relationship between area studies and global history, see C. Büschges and S. Scheuzger (eds.), *Global History and Area Studies* (*Comparativ* 29 [2019] 2).

9 V. Houben and B. Rehbein, *Regional- und Sozialwissenschaften nach dem Aufstieg des globalen Südens*, in: *ASIEN* 116 (2010), pp. 149–156, at 150; Middell and Naumann, *Global History and the Spatial Turn*, p. 157. For a critical assessment of US-American area studies as part of “American Knowledge for Global Power”, see D. Engerman, *Beneath Lecture: American Knowledge and Global Power*, in: *Diplomatic History* 31 (2007) 4, pp. 599–622.

10 Houben and Rehbein, *Regional- und Sozialwissenschaften*, p. 149; Middell and Naumann, *Global History and the Spatial Turn*, pp. 156–158.

processes themselves.<sup>11</sup> The authors of this issue count with this regional expertise for Latin America, but are also conscious of the constructed and arbitrary character of “Latin America” as well as other spatial categories, and are therefore interested in advancing the dialogue between Latin American history and global history. The five contributions provide novel insights into, firstly, rural and urban planning and, secondly, its relation to spatial imaginations with identity-forming potential. As such, they build on literature that has considered the history of the independent Latin American nation states with a primary focus on one of these two aspects.

In the colonial era, large territories within the “New World” – and their inhabitants – had not been under effective control of the colonial powers. Thus, after gaining independence, the new *criollo* elites saw the necessity to “pacify” and “integrate” such peripheral regions and their indigenous inhabitants into the national territory – a process that lasted until the late nineteenth century.<sup>12</sup> In its most extreme form, this led to the extermination of indigenous populations by the military, such as in the Argentinean and Chilean South. The “conquista del desierto” and the war against the Araucanians have received much scholarly attention.<sup>13</sup> However, at the same time, creole leaders in countries such as Brazil, Mexico, and Peru used indigenous symbolism to define their new national territories and legitimize their separation from Portugal and Spain.<sup>14</sup>

In addition to these mostly violent incorporations of remote areas, over the course of the nineteenth century, urban spaces and especially the national capitals increasingly constituted a stage upon which the consolidating nation states constructed and performed their identities.<sup>15</sup> Statesmen and reformers gazed towards Europe, especially towards France, and their visions materialized in the erection of representative buildings and monuments, as well as in urban embellishment.<sup>16</sup> Trying to overcome the grid form of the streets that had dominated most Latin American towns since colonial times and was therefore associated with Spain, municipal and national authorities invited foreign urban

11 S. Hensel, *Außereuropäische Geschichte – Globalgeschichte – Geschichte der Weltregionen aus der Perspektive einer Lateinamerikahistorikerin*, in: *H-Soz-Kult*, 2 December 2017, [www.hsozkult.de/debate/id/diskussionen-4357](http://www.hsozkult.de/debate/id/diskussionen-4357) (accessed 5 December 2022).

12 See e.g. F. Mallon, *Indigenous Peoples and Nation-States in Spanish America, 1780–2000*, in: J. C. Moya (ed.), *The Oxford Handbook of Latin American History*, Oxford 2011, pp. 281–308.

13 For the Chilean case, see e.g. S. Leandro Alioto, J. Francisco Jiménez, and D. Villar (eds.), *Devastación: Violencia civilizada contra los indios de las llanuras de del Plata y Sur de Chile (siglo XVI a XIX)*, Rosario 2018. The discursive spatial dimension of the Argentinean war against the indigenous populations in the country’s south have especially been analysed by literary scholars. See e.g. J. Andermann, *Argentine Literature and the ‘Conquest of the Desert’*, in: *Relics and Selves: Articles*, <http://www7.bbk.ac.uk/ibamuseum/texts/Andermann02.htm> (accessed 15 December 2022). For a recent interdisciplinary compilation on the “Conquest of the Desert” and its repercussions, see C. R. Larson (ed.), *The Conquest of the Desert: Argentina’s Indigenous Peoples and the Battle for History*, Albuquerque 2020.

14 S. Schuster, *The World’s Fairs as Spaces of Global Knowledge: Latin American Archaeology and Anthropology in the Age of Exhibitions*, in: *Journal of Global History* 13 (2018) 1, pp. 69–93, at 69–70.

15 See e.g. A. Almandoz (ed.), *Planning Latin America’s Capital Cities, 1850–1950*, London 2002.

16 On the construction of monuments, see e.g. C. Agostoni, *Monuments of Progress: Modernization and Public Health in Mexico City, 1876–1910*, Calgary 2003; S. Rinke, *Pillars of the Republics: Early Monuments and the Politics of Memory in the Post-Colonial Americas*, in: *Iberoamericana* 1 (2001) 4, pp. 91–113.

planners and architects, mostly Frenchmen, to redesign their cities. Creating distance to the former colonial “motherland” thus went hand in hand with creating new ties to different European powers. Following the example of Georges-Eugène Haussmann in the French capital, these saw the development of Parisian boulevards and star-shaped intersections to be built.<sup>17</sup> Sanitation and hygiene became important fields of urban reform starting in the late nineteenth century. Interventions into the urban environment were fuelled by concerns over pandemic outbreaks of cholera and yellow fever, but also the endemic presence of tuberculosis. Therefore, municipalities constructed sewage systems and water supplies.<sup>18</sup> These interventions not only put a spotlight on the alleged working-class culprits of “unhygienic” lifestyles but also represented the rising power of “scientific” knowledge within urban planning.<sup>19</sup>

In the view of late nineteenth- and early twentieth-century statesmen and intellectuals who were inspired by positivism, Europe was the origin of “progress” and science the means to achieve it. This credo even entered national symbols, such as the Brazilian flag, which includes the maxim “Ordem e progresso”. Importantly, these decades also saw the influential conception of the countryside as the “barbaric” other to the Europeanized cities. These “barbaric” lands were inhabited by indigenous peoples and other rural populations and were constructed as a remnant of the past or stylized as a “tabula rasa” or “desert”. In order to “civilize” them, Latin American politicians advised and actively recruited (Northern) European immigrants.<sup>20</sup>

The late nineteenth century was nevertheless also a time when voices hinting at the many idiosyncrasies of the American continent started to make themselves heard. A case in point is Cuban writer José Martí, who in 1891 claimed “Our America” (“Nuestra América”) for Latin Americans, to whom he referred to as “Americans”.<sup>21</sup> In his essay, he asserted an “own” cultural and symbolic space, but also Latin America as a geopolitical space in view of growing US-American aggressions towards its “backyard”.<sup>22</sup> In the fol-

17 See e.g. A. Almandoz, *Urbanization and Urbanism in Latin America: From Haussmann to CIAM*, in: Almandoz (ed.), *Planning Latin America's Capital Cities*, pp. 13–44.

18 For recent literature on the repercussions of cholera and yellow fever on the hygienic transformation of urban and rural landscapes in the case of Argentina, see A. Carbone, *Epidemics, the Issue of Control and the Grid: A Nineteenth-Century Perspective from Buenos Aires*, in: *Planning Perspectives* 37 (2021) 1, pp. 9–26; C. S. Dimas, *Poisoned Eden: Cholera Epidemics, State-Building, and the Problem of Public Health in Tucumán, Argentina, 1865–1908*, Lincoln 2022. An already classic study of tuberculosis in the city of Buenos Aires has been published by Diego Armus in 2011 (*D. Armus, The Ailing City: Health, Tuberculosis, and Culture in Buenos Aires, 1870–1950*, Durham 2011).

19 On the general role of medicine and public health in Latin American nation building processes, see e.g. J. Amador, *Medicine and Nation Building in the Americas, 1890–1940*, Nashville 2015; H. McCrea, *Diseased Relations: Epidemics, Public Health, and State Building in Yucatán, Mexico, 1847–1924*, Albuquerque 2010. On medical knowledge and urban planning, see Diego Armus's case study on hygienist Emilio Coni (*D. Armus, Un médico higienista buscando ordenar el mundo urbano argentino de comienzos del siglo XX*, in: *Salud Colectiva* 3 [2007] 1, pp. 71–80).

20 See e.g. T. Halperín Donghi, *Proyecto y construcción de una nación: 1846–1880*, Buenos Aires 2007; D. F. Sarmiento, *Obras completas*, vol. 23: *Inmigración y colonización*, Buenos Aires 2001; R. de Titto and J. Myers (eds.), *El pensamiento de Domingo Faustino Sarmiento*, Buenos Aires 2010.

21 J. Martí, *Nuestra América*, Barcelona 1973.

22 See e.g. J. Raab, *Pan-amerikanisches Ideal und US-amerikanische Vormacht: Jose Martis Sicht des “vecino formi-*

lowing decades, the United States would grow in its importance as a hostile other against which the rest of the American double continent united and formed a “Latin American” identity. This conflictive relationship has produced scholarly interest ever since.<sup>23</sup>

On the level of the nation states, the centenaries that were celebrated in the first quarter of the twentieth century constituted an important landmark for the nation building processes and a moment of reassessment of the last one hundred years since independence. These were also occasions on which the supposed national characteristics of each country were exposed.<sup>24</sup> Some Latin American states had already presented themselves to international audiences by participating in World Fairs since the 1850s. Nevertheless, as a growing body of research shows, the World Fairs and centenaries also served as platforms to stage the individual Latin American country as predominantly European and as a part of a symbolic European space.<sup>25</sup>

The overall positive image of Europe and Latin American elites’ desire to culturally belong to the “Old World” showed its first important fissures during the First World War: In the face of the use of new biochemical weapons by the warring parties, the former “cradle of civilization” was now increasingly perceived as a site of horror and violence that was no longer worth admiring.<sup>26</sup> Because of this intellectual estrangement from Europe, but also due to economic restraints that resulted from WW I, many Latin American states entered a nationalist phase in the interwar period. Collapsing European markets for Latin American raw materials spurred timid attempts at import-substituting industrialization and autarkic tendencies. Apart from the rise of nationalist parties in the 1930s, the Spanish and Catholic heritage – the nemesis of nineteenth-century liberal elites – was “rediscovered”. Revisionist historians and others in this phase redeemed a Hispanic cultural space from which, according to them, all Latin American nations had originated and to which they still belonged.<sup>27</sup>

After the Second World War, the United States became increasingly influential within Latin America and, in many respects, an example worth emulating. This leading role was reinforced during the Cold War, when Latin America became the target of US-American development aid and covert military interventions that aimed at preventing the spread of

dable”, in: H.-J. König and S. Rinke, *Transatlantische Perzeptionen: Lateinamerika – USA – Europa in Geschichte und Gegenwart*, Stuttgart 1998, pp. 139–190.

23 G. Livingstone, *America’s Backyard: The United States and Latin America from the Monroe Doctrine to the War on Terror*, London 2009; L. Schoultz, *Beneath the United States: A History of US Policy Toward Latin America*, Cambridge, MA 1996; G. Weeks, *US and Latin American Relations*, New York 2008.

24 See e.g. S. Scheuzger and S. Schuster (eds.) *Los Centenarios de la independencia: Representaciones de la historia patria entre continuidad y cambio*, Eichstätt 2013.

25 For overviews of this vast field of literature, see C. Hoth de Olano and S. Schuster, *Exposiciones y cultura visual en América Latina: Introducción*, in: *Iberoamericana* 21 (2021) 77, pp. 7–13; N. Sanjad, *International Expositions: A Historiographical Approach from Latin America*, in: *História, Ciências, Saúde: Manguinhos* 24 (2017) 3, pp. 785–826.

26 S. Rinke, “Ein Drama der gesamten Menschheit”: Lateinamerikanische Perspektiven auf den Ersten Weltkrieg, in: *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 40 (2014), pp. 287–307; S. Rinke, *Im Sog der Katastrophe: Lateinamerika und der Erste Weltkrieg*, Frankfurt am Main 2015.

27 For the case of Argentina, see e.g. M. Goebel, *Argentina’s Partisan Past: Nationalism and the Politics of History*, Liverpool 2011.

Communism.<sup>28</sup> In the wake of modernization theory and Walt Whitman Rostow's "stages of economic growth", "development" became the main rationale of local, national, and transnational actors who intended to "modernize" Latin American nation states. In many cases, these development projects were directed at rural areas and peripheries that governments considered to be not yet integrated into the national territory.<sup>29</sup>

While at first welcoming North American expertise and funds, from the late 1950s onwards Latin Americans became increasingly critical of this external interference and together with the search for alternative models of development, different spatial categories came to the fore: "Latin America" and the "Third World".<sup>30</sup> Originally conceived by intellectuals from the South American continent in the 1850s, the term and spatial category "Latin America" assumed new prominence after the Cuban Revolution of 1959. During those same years, the "Third World" gained momentum as another spatial and geopolitical concept with far-reaching consequences. First coined by the French demographer Alfred Sauvy in 1952 for countries with a colonial past that belonged neither to the capitalist nor the socialist bloc, the concept was later adopted by the countries in question.<sup>31</sup> The Non-Aligned Movement and the Group of 77, both established in the 1960s, became important forums for the appropriation of the term "Third World", and Latin American countries were among these movements' main protagonists.

Within this necessarily eclectic larger picture of rural and urban planning and of spatial imaginations in the history of the independent Latin American nation states, we focus on two timeframes. For the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, we trace specific elite discussions on progress in Argentina and Uruguay and the symbolic belonging to Europe or the North Atlantic. These discussions centred, among other things, on inner-city green spaces in the Argentine case and urban health infrastructure in the Uruguayan case. The mostly liberal urban elites under study contributed decisively to the symbolic conception of their respective home country, its capital, and their position in the world. Although there are entire libraries of research literature on Argentine intellectual Domingo Faustino Sarmiento's famous dichotomy that associated civilization with Europeanized cities and barbarism with the hinterland inhabited by indigenous peoples, only a few works have demonstrated how this metaphor translated into projects of urban and infrastructure planning on the ground.<sup>32</sup>

28 See e.g. H. Brands, *Latin America's Cold War*, Cambridge, MA 2010; D. C. Engerman et al. (eds.), *Staging Growth: Modernization, Development, and the Global Cold War*, Amherst 2003; G. Grandin and G. M. Joseph (eds.), *A Century of Revolution: Insurgent and Counterinsurgent Violence During Latin America's Long Cold War*, Durham 2010; G. M. Joseph and D. Spenser (eds.), *In from the Cold: Latin America's New Encounter with the Cold War*, Durham 2008; S. Krepp et al. (eds.), *Latin America and the Global Cold War*, Chapel Hill 2020; S. Rabe, *The Killing Zone: The United States Wages Cold War in Latin America*, New York 2016.

29 See articles by Frederik Schulze and Georg Fischer in this issue.

30 See e.g. E. Devés Valdés, *El pensamiento latinoamericano en el siglo XX: Desde la CEPAL al neoliberalismo (1950–1999)*, Buenos Aires 2008.

31 C. Kalter, *Die Entdeckung der Dritten Welt: Dekolonisierung und neue radikale Linke in Frankreich*, Frankfurt am Main 2011; B. Tomlinson, *What Was the Third World?*, in: *Journal of Contemporary History* 38 (2003) 2, pp. 307–321.

32 See note 20.

In his article on the planning and construction on what is now known as the Park of Palermo in Buenos Aires in the 1870s and 1880s, Antonio Carbone combines a micro-historical approach with the analysis of global, national, and regional discourses of the Argentine ruling elites in congress and in the press: On the one hand, the project's supporters wished to insert a piece of "civilized" nature into the city (as opposed to the "barbaric" hinterland) following the example of European and North American metropolises. Besides creating a healthy green space for leisure, they aimed at inscribing Argentina into a North Atlantic symbolical space. On the other hand, the opponents of the park project criticized the waste of financial means which they would have preferred to invest in the development of said rural hinterland. By both shedding light on transnational entanglements and on the many disputes that came along with the conception of the park, Carbone's contribution also hints at disconnections and the contested nature of transatlantic symbolism.

Attempts at improving the health of their nation's citizens link Carbone's article to the piece by Teresa Huhle. Her study focuses on a specific group of liberal reformers known under the term "batllistas" that dominated Uruguayan politics in the first decades of the twentieth century. Huhle analyses reform projects for children that the reformers considered prone to tuberculosis and in the realm of maternal and children's health – the construction of the Pereira Rossell Hospital. Her contribution shows how these material manifestations of concern for the "citizens of tomorrow" were embedded into discourses on "progress" and "civilization". Thus, the reformers aimed to showcase Uruguayan social policies in general, and health reforms in particular, in order to claim the small republic's belonging to an imagined community of "civilized" nations. "Civilization" was thereby located in Europe and Uruguay considered itself a "European" island among "barbaric" neighbours.

The following three articles consider the time period after 1945. Here, we look at attempts by states to "modernize" peripheral regions through agrarian and industrial development and at the reactions of the local populations. While states framed these projects in nationalist terms as a final integration of their national territory, the inhabitants of the regions in question often had different views. Frederik Schulze analyses how Latin American elites pursued nation building through the development of "underdeveloped" regions in the 1940s and 1950s. By applying the Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA) programme to river basins in Peru, Mexico, and Brazil, the respective governments hoped to finally gain economic independence. Interestingly, they attempted to reach that objective through the importation of a foreign, namely a North American, model that – as Schulze shows – was adapted to local requirements. In many cases it actually rather served as a label promising "modernity" than as an accurate technical model to be implemented. Also taking into account the local, often indigenous, population residing in the regions in need of "development", the author demonstrates that the governments' view of these spaces was only one among many coexisting and conflicting perceptions of these regions.

Georg Fischer presents a different example of national self-assertion through state-driven development. He looks at a rural area in the Brazilian state of Minas Gerais and the ac-



companying spatial imaginaries. At the height of the military dictatorship in the 1970s, farmers of Japanese descent from southern Brazil were resettled to the Cerrado region. These farmers brought along technical innovations that stood in stark contrast to previous production methods of the local agrarian population. As opposed to the earlier Peruvian, Mexican, and Brazilian case studies analysed by Schulze, the project in the Cerrado that was supervised by the state rather relied on local knowledge production. This new model of industrial agriculture was then transferred to other regions of Brazil and later to other parts of the Global South, such as Mozambique. With Schulze's and Fischer's articles, the issue contributes to a growing body of literature on rural planning and development in Latin America in the second half of the twentieth century – a field that has been studied much less than the planning of cities on the subcontinent.<sup>33</sup> Moreover, research on the formation and transfer of development models has rarely been combined with spatial theory despite its potential to explain how the imagination of these peripheries fed into nation building processes.

Beyond discussing symbolic affiliations with the Global North and nation building through the economic incorporation of peripheries, we also shed light on the superordinate spatial category of the “Third World” in relation to the question of urban growth and housing in the 1960s and 1970s. Historians have closely studied urban planning in Latin America for other periods, such as its relation to hygiene at the turn of the century or housing under the populist regimes of the 1930s–1950s.<sup>34</sup> However, the influence of development theories and the “Third World” discourse on urbanism have not received the same scholarly attention. The question regarding if and how the spatial categories of “Latin America” and the “Third World” found expression in concrete approaches to housing solutions has not yet been answered. The focus of Katharina Schembs' article thus lies on how the discipline of urban planning became ‘latinamericanized’ from the beginning of the 1960s onwards. Development theories at the time, such as *desarrollismo* and dependency theory, fostered the examination of local conditions – as opposed to the previous importation of urban reform models from Europe and the USA to Latin America. She argues that especially in the field of public housing, references to other Latin American countries initially multiplied, giving way to hints at “Third World” countries towards the second half of the 1960s. In the selected case studies Chile, Brazil, and Mexico, urbanists aspired, albeit to varying degrees, to shape urban planning for the “Third World”. The article demonstrates how different spatial scales continuously overlapped while the housing deficit was being managed. With the instalment of authoritarian regimes across the region from the early 1970s onwards, Latin American

33 See e.g. A. Cazorla (ed.), *Planning Experiences in Latin America and Europe*, Montecillo 2015; A. Chastain and T. Lorek (eds.), *Itineraries of Expertise: Science, Technology, and the Environment in Latin America's Long Cold War*, Pittsburgh 2020; S. Lorenzini, *Global Development: A Cold War History*, Princeton 2019; C. Unger, *International Development: A Postwar History*, London 2018.

34 See e.g. A. Almandoz, *Modernización urbana en América Latina: de las grandes aldeas a las metrópolis masificadas*, Santiago de Chile 2013; Armus, *The Ailing City*; A. Ballent, *Las huellas de la política: Vivienda, ciudad, peronismo en Buenos Aires, 1943–1955*, Buenos Aires 2009.

governments, however, gradually withdrew from the housing sector – with the notable exception of Mexico.

This issue, with its contributions on post-WW II planning processes also adds to recent scholarship on the formation of Latin American experts during the Cold War, which aims to differentiate the common image of Latin America as a sole importer of foreign expertise.<sup>35</sup> In sum, this selection of articles demonstrates the relevance and fruitfulness of the category of space in Latin American history. For two crucial periods of time, it combines the analysis of tangible urban and rural planning with the investigation of imaginary spaces on different scales. We consider this approach of relevance not only for colonial and post-colonial contexts and look forward to a transregional discussion with the *Comparativ* readership.

35 Chastain and Lorek, *Itineraries of Expertise*; S. Rinke and D. González de Reufels (eds.), *Expert Knowledge in Latin American History: Local, Transnational, and Global Perspectives*, Stuttgart 2014; F. Schulze, *In Search of El Dorado: US Experts and the Promise of Development in the Guayana Region of Venezuela*, in: *History and Technology* 35 (2019) 3, pp. 338–363; F. Schulze, *Wissen im Fluss: Der lateinamerikanische Staudammbau im 20. Jahrhundert als globale Wissensgeschichte*, Paderborn 2022.