

# Looking for alternatives in the city of the slopes

Housing as a process to reduce  
socio-spatial segregation in Lima, Peru

Pablo Muñoz Unceta

## Reflection

*This reflection is part of the graduation project report. This same text is reproduced in chapter 16. There are references to other chapters and literature that are not included in the present text. For any clarification, please download the full report.*

Seen under the framework developed in this graduation project for urban development, the reflection is presented from end to beginning. Firstly, a reflection on the outcomes of the process attempts to answer the research questions and sub-questions. Secondly, a reflection on the process puts forward a discussion on the methods used for the research. Three final reflections are presented. On the one hand, a discussion on the place of the research and its “original context” in the chosen bodies of knowledge tries to reflect about the contributions it makes (1) and its transferability (2). On the other hand, a reflection on ethical dilemmas and limitations (3) aims at raising some recommendations for further research.

## Outcomes

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Research questions and sub-question are used to reflect about the outcomes:

*RQ 1a: What are the relations between housing, urban development and socio-spatial segregation in Lima?*

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Concerning the work developed, the main two found aspects that relate these three issues are **property and centrality**. Control of land in central areas of the city through private property has determined the patterns of socio-spatial segregation in the city of Lima (chapter 5 & 6). In the last decades, in connection with the increase of land value of former peripheral areas, these relations have been transferred to the *barriadas* and reproduced segregation in these areas, pushing low-income population to low-value land on the slopes.

These relations have influenced housing policies and mechanisms by assuming that property was the main driver of value. Housing has been understood as the provision of dwellings (housing as a noun: chapter 2.3) and the securing of land tenure in low-value urban areas. Without the existence of centrality or mechanisms for its development, individual property didn't provide value and, therefore, segregation remained the main outcome of urban development.

*RQ 1b: What is the potential of housing to reduce socio-spatial segregation and produce a more just city in Lima?*

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First of all, the potential of housing relies on the capacity to change our understanding of it. Housing understood as an object will always be limited to market influence and will depend on the ability of the public sector to counterbalance its weight. In contexts like Lima, where institutions are weak, this approach on housing will reinforce the desires of the private market, often controlled by few families and investment groups.

On the contrary, if we understand housing as a process, according to the work developed (as an example, chapter 14.2), housing has potential to **create value, develop centrality and propose alternative configurations to manage resources (including property)** in relation to the first two. These three issues both unfold and include the potential Turner (1972) claimed housing had to achieve personal fulfilment by assuming "responsibility for decisions that shape one's own life".

Housing as a process, or housing as a verb (Turner, 1972), brings the possibility to share the decisions made in the process of urban development and include those who are usually excluded. This demands a new approach as well on property. Individual low-cost property has proven to be of little use to urban problems (Fernández-Maldonado, 2015), such as socio-spatial segregation. Moreover, a piece of individual land or a house in a disconnected area with no facilities or services cannot bring the same potential for economic or personal fulfilment than a centrally located property. Housing as a process has potential to propose new models of management of resources and space that are based on the collective rather than the individual. This, combined with the potential of each location (see SRQ 1),

could provide opportunities to decrease market influence through association and collectivity.

*SRQ 1: What does it mean a just city in the context of Lima in relation with socio-spatial segregation?*

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In chapter 4.4 a definition of a just city is proposed. It is based on Fainstein's (2011) three principles of equity, democracy and diversity, which are later developed through the theory review. Nevertheless, justice is a contextual concept that changes through time and the negotiation of different actors and groups in society. Therefore, the definition of a just city developed in this work (and done by one student) is rather a reflection based on applying theory on spatial justice in a context like Lima. In this respect, some key issues are put forward:

**Equity** is related to many things, but if the main goal is to overcome spatial segregation, **location needs to be understood as an asset to be distributed**. This involves several aspects and may have different consequences. For example, the distribution of risk-free areas may involve on site relocation to safe areas, or the mitigation of risk when possible. Basic living conditions are necessary for the later development of urban qualities like centrality or integration.

**Democracy** is more related with the process of decision making. As Healey (2003) observes, process has already process outcomes, such as the exchange of knowledge or different rationalities getting closer to each other. Under the framework of this graduation project, democracy and the process of decision making will be relevant in their **potential to arrive to collective management of resources**.

**Diversity** is a concept with deep differences in western societies and the Global South. While the former tend to be more homogeneous societies (even though this is changing nowadays) and diversity is to be fostered through the empowerment of minorities, the latter are often extremely heterogeneous societies in which majorities were dominated by colonial minorities. **Open meeting space** has a key role in the acknowledgment of structural conflicts and the preservation of existing diversity in a society in which the ones who are different rarely meet.

*SRQ 2: What lessons can we extract from the history of urban development and housing policies in Lima?*

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This research question is widely answered in chapters 2.2, 6, 8, 9 and 10. The reflection of the multi-scalar analysis (chapter 12) already summarizes the findings on this respect, so this won't be developed here.

*SRQ 3: What are the relationships between spatial structure and socio-spatial segregation?*

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The exploration of this graduation thesis started by looking at spatial structure through parcellation, as it has often been done in morphological studies (Vernez Moudon, 1979). Even though there is a clear influence of parcellation and property on the control of the land and the reproduction of segregation, the work developed

shows how this influence differs in relation to centrality, and therefore, value of land. The example of Huaycán in the multi-scalar analysis (chapter 9) shows how the key feature used to develop centrality and opportunities for development in a low value area was not parcellation but **density and local integration**.

Both density and local integration can be seen as inter-related collective variables. The more people live in the same area, the higher it is the economic potential for a local business to thrive (see the comparison between Huaycán and Horacio Zevallos described in chapter 9 - outcomes). Whereas integration depends directly on the spatial structure of the street network, density is a variable that can be achieved in different ways (PREVI, briefly mentioned at the end of chapter 8 is an example of low-rise high density development). Local integration of the street network is therefore the basic framework in the proposals developed (chapter 14.2).

A different relation between spatial structure and segregation is found on the metropolitan scale. As explained in chapter 11 for the specialised cluster of activities in El Ermitaño, activities such as hotels benefit from global integration and big parcel structure in central areas. **Parcel structure** and, therefore, property are thus relevant variables to work with in these cases in order to overcome spatial segregation. Parcel structure includes features such as the fringe between private and public space or the internal subdivision of property within a big redeveloped parcel (see chapter 14.4).

*What are the relationships between the decision-making process and a just city in the case of Lima?*

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The relationship between these two issues is defined by **who makes which decisions**. There are decisions, such the location inside the metropolitan structure (**where**) and the way people relate to their direct environment in terms of housing activities (**how**) that are nowadays left to the market. Being able to choose where and how to live depends on each family's income (chapter 6.2) and what the market offers to each socio-economic level. Neither the public sector nor the civil society have a say in these two matters. They depend on the potential benefits of the private sector.

Changing this scheme is not an economic matter (it would not be more expensive if other sectors had agency on those decisions. See an example in chapter 14.2), but one of redistribution of power and benefits. By having an active role in the making of these decisions, public resources could be focused and civil society's resources could be used to increase possibilities to overcome socio-spatial segregation.

*What is the role of housing to reduce socio-spatial segregation?*

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This research question was devised as an exploratory question. As such, it was used in the exploratory phase of the designs. Different potential roles of housing are proposed in chapter 14, specifically in sub-chapters 14.2, 14.3 and 14.4. Housing there is presented as a means for integrating settlements, supporting existing economic or social practices, fostering collectivity or creating street life, among other roles that aim at reducing socio-spatial segregation.

*What sort of tools, policies or strategies should be implemented or changed in Lima to reduce socio-spatial segregation?*

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This research question is also developed in chapter 14 through the examples showcased. Nevertheless, the main conclusion is that there is a strong need to change the focus in housing policies and urban tools. They should shift from the provision of housing to an understanding of it as a basic process for personal fulfilment and social collaboration. This would lead both to a redistribution of responsibility for important decisions and to maximize the potential of space in different areas of the city.

## **Process**

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This graduation thesis is an attempt to combine the knowledge and experience developed over several years in Lima with the approach and methods learnt in the EMU program. In this sense, the initial guess was to use the lens of urban morphology to develop an alternative view on already known topics. Urban morphology would provide a framework to understand the relations between space, activities and decisions. A given context creates conditions that alter the activities people develop and these, in turn, alter back the context (Hillier, 2000). Similarities with this very basic framework were later identified in many authors and literature reviewed and used in later steps of the graduation project (McCartney & Krishnamurthy, 2018, in their attempt to apply morphological studies in informal areas; or Turner, 1976, in his approach on housing as a verb).

This basic framework was later combined with Spatial Justice and Urban Studies on the Global South in order to understand *what* to look at and, more importantly, *why* looking at it. The combination of the three bodies of knowledge was necessary in order to develop an alternative view on urban development under two main goals. If alternatives were the expected outcomes, an alternative approach was needed. First, to avoid a quantitative approach on the 'housing problem' (Calderón, 2016). This is not only present in many official policies (Municipality of Lima, 2013a & 2013b; DNU, 2012) or existing research (Calderón, 2016; Ludeña, 2004), but also on my own previous work (Conurb, 2016; Rodríguez & Muñoz (eds), 2016). Second, a direct translation of western views into the Latin American context was to be avoided. Already many authors have reflected on the bad consequences that direct transfer of policies have had in different contexts (Watson, 2016). Even though that is not an easy task (myself as a student and professional have been mainly in touch with western views, both in education and practice), it was worth it to attempt at looking for alternatives in new literature and see existing practices in Lima under a new lens.

## **Relevance, scientific context and contributions**

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This research is developed under the broad umbrella of Latin American studies. It draws from much research carried out in Peru (Calderón; Fernández-Maldonado; Matos; Turner) and other Latin American countries (Abramo; Sabatini). The topic of urban development in Lima, especially the development of *barriadas*, has been widely studied before. The major contribution of this work is may be the combination

of different bodies of knowledge (spatial justice, housing studies, urban morphology and studies on the Global South) and, specifically the use of the alternative lens of urban morphology to see the causes and consequences of urban development process and their relations with the spatial structure. In this sense, the multi-scalar analysis, the use of place syntax tools and the conclusions on the relations between spatial segregation or integration and elements of the spatial structure beyond parcellation and property may be the main contributions of this work. Moreover, it is hoped that the alternative development of John Turner's (1972, 1976) approach on housing may provide new insights to the study of urban development and socio-spatial segregation in Lima.

### **Transferability**

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Even though some of the approaches, borrowed from authors such as Jennifer Robinson (2006) and John Turner (1972, 1976) have already been applied in Lima (Fernández Maldonado, 2015) or similar contexts, transferability of the method and designs of this graduation projects should be dealt with carefully.

Approaching cities as ordinary and avoiding lenses that rank them in a ladder towards development or modernity (Robinson, 2006) allows us to get rid of prejudice and explore new alternatives. Not all cities are on one same track. "Survival activities" (*vaso de leche*, *comedores populares* or *wawa wasi* in Peru, see the purple box at the end of chapter 9) are a good example of an alternative way of development, based on the capacity of local organized groups of women to manage resources and redistribute them in their communities. These types of activities, supported by public programs, provide opportunities and distribute not only resources but also decisions. They are based on specific cultural characteristics of Peru and, even though it is difficult to directly transfer them elsewhere for this same reason, they provide useful reflections and alternatives to the increasing homogenization of urban development in most areas of the world. In the same way, the reflections and work included in this graduation project aim at providing alternative views that might be useful in other places. The emphasis on understanding housing as a process is a good example of the issues that could be transferred to similar contexts.

Nevertheless, most of this graduation project is based on a multi-scalar analysis and a reflection of the spatial and social conditions of the specific context of Lima. Proposals are tailored to this context and, therefore, difficult to directly export. Even if some of the described problems and contexts are similar in other cities of Latin America and the world, their specific characteristics are often different. As an example, even if socio spatial segregation is experienced in Lima, Santiago de Chile and Rio de Janeiro, the spatial characteristics in each place differ. While Lima experiences a graduated pattern of segregation, Rio de Janeiro is a fragmented city in which, despite being close, the fragments are isolated in themselves (Gonzalez, 2019), and the high-income areas of Santiago de Chile developed into an enclave in the East of the city (Moya, 2019). The spatial characteristics are, thus different, and the strategies and projects should differ as well, even though they may use the same alternative approach on housing and urban development.

## Ethical dilemmas and limitations

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Some limitations to this work are part of a common discussion between design disciplines and social sciences in Latin America (as well as in other places in the world). While the former tend to speculate on possible alternatives to existing problems and sometimes oversimplify complicated issues, the latter tend to focus on the study of the causes, which are often so overwhelming that action seems futile. Issues, such as fragmented administrative organization (touched upon briefly in chapter 5.1), weak institutions and lack of governance or structural corruption define and influence many of the urban issues in Lima, including socio-spatial segregation. Despite their strong influence we should not paralyse or prevent us from developing alternatives that go beyond the current status quo and devise the potential space has in these. Whereas we should be aware of their presence and not underestimate or forget their huge influence in urban development.

Besides this discussion, there are many other ethical dilemmas encountered during the development of this graduation thesis. As a contextual and dialectic concept, the reflection on a just city for Lima should be built in a conversation between several and different actors and consider different perspectives. Methods such as interviews or focus groups on specific topics related to justice, or more abstract discussions on the issue could help to build up this dialogue. Due to the limitations of this work in time and budget, neither of these were carried out. They remain though as a recommendation for further work.

Another recommendation for further work is to develop a more thorough design exploration that gives more depth to the reflection. Due to time limitations, the cases and amount of design examples shown is rather small. Even though it was enough to provide examples used to answer the research questions, there might be gaps and generalizations that could be reduced by exploring different settings and cases, such as the diversification inside high income enclaves or development related with infrastructure in different scales.

Other ethical dilemma is related to the lack of up-to-date or official data. Much of the data used in this graduation thesis has been collected during several years of work in and with institutions in Lima. Some of the data used is not openly accessible, published or official. Plans and studies in Lima are dismissed and rejected by new administrations when political power changes. In this process, data is lost or dismissed, often ending up only in the hands of the professionals that worked in the project. Therefore, permission to use the data is often impossible to get. Since this is an educational research in the context of a MSc graduation project, permission to use the data was not requested. Nevertheless, any further publication or development of this work, would need to deal with this issue.

Finally, it is important to highlight that this graduation project is developed by a Spanish person who, despite working in Lima for 7 years, developed his architecture studies in Madrid and is currently pursuing his post-master studies in Delft, The Netherlands. It should be acknowledged that, despite my close bonds and relations with Lima, the views that influence this work will to some extent be those of a foreigner, issue that has positive and negative consequences.

