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THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL DISPUTES IN THE LANDSCAPE OF URBAN RURAL INTERFACES. APPROACHES FROM TUCUMÁN (ARGENTINA)

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I. INTRODUCTION

Landscape, as an object of study and an interpretative component of territorial reality, recovered importance during the last twenty-five years of the 20th century, starting from a theoretical and practical repositioning that understands it as a social product, built and given meaning from concrete social relations and actions (Berque, 1997; Bertrand, 2008; CEP, 2000; Nogué, 2007; Nel Lo, 2007).

The European Landscape Convention and its later implementation through policies that promote landscape management and zoning, constitutes a point of inflexion in the consideration of landscape in the territorial public policy. Specifically, the experience accumulated came from countries like the England, Scotland, Belgium, France, Spain, among others, which nourished this document from different perspectives, although convergent in their valuation. One of the instruments that can be taken from this Convention is the “landscape catalogs”. This is a knowledge and planning tool to identify and evaluate landscapes and their diversity (Nogué, Sala & Grau, 2018). This progress, in terms of consensus and landscape-related instruments, had repercussions in Latin America. The Santiago de Cuba Declaration on Cultural Landscape in the Caribbean (2005), the Ibero-American Cultural Landscape Charter (CIPC) and the Latin-American Landscape Initiative (LALI, 2012) are some of the epigones of the Convention. In this context, studies on landscapes in Argentina have become more notorious in recent decades, driven by authors like Naselli (1992), Aliata and Silvestri (2001, 2003), Zusman (2018) and Pintos (2013) among others. This constantly renewed set of records and discussions shows that landscape is a growing concern as an object of study and planning. Alongside the emergence of the landscape as a notion, it also becomes relevant in the production of scientific knowledge related to the understanding of territorial phenomena. In particular, the strong transformations of metropolitan territories, which reconfigure the landscapes of the rural-urban interface, begin to be studied. Segura (2014:2) confirms that “the urban expansion of metropolitan areas increases not just the inequality in access to the city, but it also consolidates segregated social circuits and networks”. But not just in access

to the city, but also to nature, to rurality and to the dynamics of reproduction itself. It is the rurality inserted in metropolitan areas that presents a set of attributes which urban planning would not be capturing in their theory-methodological approaches or in their empirical references (Estevez, 2012; Agudelo Patiño, 2012). These are phenomena which especially affect Latin American metropolis and express the disputes, not only economic and social, but also those which underlie the perception that societies have of their relationship with the landscape (Montellano Loredo, 2015).

In this context, the purpose of this work is to identify the analytical-descriptive categories of metropolitan interface landscapes which allow characterizing the expression of socio-territorial inequalities in the RUI, in light of the analytical perspectives that the social construction of landscape provides. The initial assumption is that dualist categories to analyze landscapes in the RUI are limited to consider all the components that underlie its materialization, as well as the differential forms of landscape production associated to the appropriation of common property in a context of growing neoliberal urbanization.

Theoretically speaking, this research is based on the stance of the landscape that is part of the post-modern cultural revolution and its new conceptualizations which move away from the strongly cosmetic views, typical of modernity to characterize them as a social construct. Lindon & Hiernaux (2010) say that the “spins” are multiple (cultural, humanist, relativist, interpretative) and have affected the geographical concepts and categories used to decipher relations of societies with space since the 1980s. These new perspectives made investigation about the facets of reality, which previously had not been of interest for geographical knowledge, possible.

From these perspectives, the concept of landscape would allow uncovering territorialities and identifying the production processes of the RUI from the plurality of discourses, along with new emerging valuations inscribed in the multiple and continuously renewed society/nature and built environment relations.

Methodologically, a case study was used (Yin, 1994; Martinez Carazo, 2006), a rural-urban meeting point associated to the Sali river within the context of the Tucumán Metropolitan System (hereinafter SiMeT). This is an area that since the 1970s has reconfigured its landscapes by inserting roles linked to the indiscriminate urban expansion in one side, and on the other, through the substitution of productive activities for an ever-larger number of extraction-based activities. The vision is focused on understanding the tensions and disputes which evidence inequalities in the outsourcing of uses of the territory and the landscape itself, on the control of common property facing the pressures of property development capital, and on the reconfigurations that the State adopts in the regulation of the territorial transformations. This work is broken down into research inquiries developed in a doctorate thesis (Llomparte Frenzel, 2018)

The work is shown addressing, from the start, the theory tools

which support the analysis to then describe the methodology used and presenting the case study. The following section presents the categories that identify the landscapes of the RUI. Finally, the conclusions state some useful considerations in the framework of this work's goals.

II. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Rural-urban interfaces and the landscape as analysis categories

A series of processes, since the end of the 20th century, linked to neoliberalism strategies, (re)design and (re)draw the metropolitan regions, and position urbanization and its expansion patterns as one of the main problems for the concretion of a more sustainable and inclusive development model. In this regard, Borja and Carrion (2016) state that the “true problems” of a global urban agenda are based on the accelerated transformation process which imposes the forms of an extensive, disperse, fragmented, segregating and atomizing urbanization, that they call “urbanization without city” as socially exclusive, economically more speculative than productive and politically solely governable through dark means, through fear and preventive repression. Indovina (2014) goes further and says that the urban conditions have been dissociated from the city as such, where morphology and urban condition are historically closely linked. In this context, the metropolitan interfaces allude to a spatial expression where urban expansion processes meet the dynamic of the rural space (McGregor et al., 2005). From there, the interface nature of these territories that express the complexities of diverse networks which articulate/disarticulate transitions between nature, the rural and the urban, and of the diverse elements these contain. This set of characteristics considers a difficulty and complexity relative to the conceptualization and delimitation of the RUI by their dual quality between two apparently well differentiated geographic forms: the countryside and the city. However, Dos Santos Pereira (2013), sees a line of authors such as McGregor et al. (idem) who oppose the use of the term peri-urban, and propose interface, inasmuch that this emphasizes their position as a contact area where urban and rural aspects coexist. In this sense, Carvajal et al. (2019) suggest the need of thinking about the RUI from the synergy and complementarity of urban and rural territories. The socio-territorial issues in the organization of the RUI have some nuances regarding their geographic context. However, it is feasible to characterize the interfaces as rural territories under tension, when the expansion of urban policies juxtaposes elements and activities that affect and generate socio-spatial inequalities regarding their own environmental risks and traits, in different ways. Traditionally, the actions and standards that affect these territories are set out from dualist postures (urban/rural, rural/natural), that are closely tied to the changes in land use. As Zazo Moratalla (2019:7) states “there is no binding planning beyond the urban frontier, -, [however] the

studies of the city must overcome this reductionist vision”. It is here where the landscape acquires an explanatory value of the transformations of the territory and allows exploring the complexity of the phenomena that take place in the RUI. Landscape is a pertinent category for territorial studies, fostering not just a “spatial reading, but a shared understanding which includes the different scales and power levels involved in the access to resources the environment offers” (Urquijo & Barrera, 2009:227). Since the landscape is a means to strengthen and sublimate cultural identities, it is also a device to learn and conceptualize the periphery (Zanini, 2012). We understand landscape as “any part of the territory just as the people understand it, whose nature is the result of the action and interaction of natural and/or human factors” (European Landscape Convention-CEP, 2000). This notion, closely linked to Latin American reality, was taken on and enriched by the Latin American Landscape Initiative (LALI, 2012), on incorporating the time-space pair into the definition and, from there, arguing that the landscape is also a resource, a melting pot of the intangible of Latin American communities, an asset, a value and a right. Both perspectives coincide in saying that the notion comprises all landscapes, exceptional or ordinary in nature (Pastor et al., 2016). Meanwhile, Nogué (2008) says that there are a number of landscapes that have lost a good part of the territorial discourse and the landscape imaginary that produced or gave sense to them at some point but that later, in their dynamic conformation process, the base imaginary was substituted. These are the “landscapes of fear”, “hidden”, “unequal” “aterritorial”, among many other labels (Nogué, 2007; Duran, 2007; Muñoz, 2007) which are becoming “visible” from this rebirth in concern for the landscape which has made them the focus of research, especially in Latin America (Hemerly & Coelho, 2007; Lindón 2007; Montaña et al., 2005; Pastor & Sánchez Fuentes 2009). Both the CEP and LALI suggest the writing of instruments that favor data collection to define actions and interventions like landscape catalogs. Bearing in mind what has just been said, it is understood that landscape cataloging is a task that needs a critical approach, which allows seeing diverse connections between populations and their locations; at the same time, analyzing the different dimensions where urbanization-induced globalization takes place (Pedroli et al., 2006). These instruments could end up defining landscape units that are objective and consensuated by different social players, or even end up only showing fragments of everything the landscape represents. Therefore, the usefulness of visible elements of the landscape for morphological analysis is limited given that what is visible is only the final stage of a long sequence of development (Contreras Delgado, 2005). Thus, using this, the landscape as an analysis category is not just defined by its materiality, but also by the valuation of the social subjects who live there and identify themselves with it in a continuous process of the production of meanings and new materialities (Palang, 2006). The landscapes of the RUI will be addressed from this perspective.

III. METHODOLOGY

Methodologically speaking, the work is supported by a case study, corresponding to the area along the Sali river, where urban and rural territorialities of the metropolitan systems meet. It is considered that this unit of analysis can provide an empirical basis for the interpretation and understanding of the reality present in the RUI in Latin American intermediate cities, looking to contribute towards renewed visions about managing and planning the landscape.

Once the methodological strategy from the case study was defined, the work continued using successive approaches through an inductive movement. This decision allowed addressing the landscape and its cataloging in a holistic way, without defining landscape units a priori, but rather identifying and characterizing them through a dialog between conceptual categories, the perceptions of social players within a theoretical approach framework adopted to understand the RUI. In this way, and through the intensive use of qualitative techniques to recover the biography of the landscape (Roymans et al., 2019), the memories and practices which built and produced it, laying importance on dynamic, perceptive and experiential elements (Nogué, Sal & Grau, 2018). The databases provided by the Atlas ID of the Ministry of the Interior, Public Works and Housing of the Republic of Argentina were resorted to, to define the character of the RUI as the main source to identify the fixed dynamics versus the residential fabrics, territorial uses, densities and habitational conditions that define the morphology of the territory. As a complement, demographic indicators were used, starting by processing the Redatam databases corresponding to the National Census of the Population, Homes and Housing (2010).

The work was carried out using qualitative techniques. In the first stage, 30 in-depth interviews with key players were conducted between 2012-2016 (Table 1). Key players have been considered as those who built the landscapes with local presence, who intervened in the space with their own goal regarding their interests or aspirations and, those who can affect the processes (Pirez, 1995). The idea of "multiterritoriality" is recovered, namely a multiplicity of agents building territories at different scales of Haesbaert (2011). These techniques were complemented with other participative ones like social mapping, destined to display the daily landscapes and the perceptions they are subjected to by the different players. The following stage comprised the decoding of a set of expressions using discourse analysis and social cartography analysis techniques. The saturation of the information allowed identifying variables of the landscapes linked to the outsourcing of land uses, to the nomadism of extraction activities, the control and access to common property and the reconfiguration the State adopts. This data was the foundation to check the arguments and to corroborate

conceptual categories worked upon by different authors, which from the phenomenological and perceptual define the landscapes against the rural urban interfaces. The Arc Gis 10.1 licensed software was used to prepare the maps and specific cartography. This was done on a 1:50,000 scale.

IV. RESULTS

Characterization of the RUI in the Tucuman Metropolitan System

SiMeT, the main urban cluster of the province of Tucuman and the fifth of the system of cities in the Republic of Argentina, is the home of two ecosystems, the San Javier mountain range to the west and the Sali River to the east. It has 982,050 inhabitants according to the 2010 Census, with approximately 84% of its population concentrated in an area of 2,367 km² (Urban and Territorial Phenomena Observatory, National University of Tucuman, 2016). Operationally, it has adopted a territorial delimitation of the RUI that falls under the SiMeT within the functional administrative entities, namely the municipalities of Las Talitas and Alderetes and the rural districts of El Timbó, Los Nogales and El Cadillal. The so defined SiMeT comprises 422 km² which represents 19% of the total surface area of the metropolitan region (Figure 1). It is worth highlighting that this territorial section contains components with a high environmental value: two wetlands in the fluvial system of the Sali River and an ecology reserve, situation that changes downstream in the more densely populated area.

The social construction of the RUI's landscapes is closely related with the productive and urban history of Tucuman. The progress of the sugar industry and the rise in population required major hydraulic works, implemented mainly in the 20th century. These infrastructures (El Cadillal dyke, La Aguadita dyke and Main Canal, watering network of the Cruz Alta sector) are located in the territory being studied and are important not just because of their operation but on being examples of the particular cultural path of that area. The Sali River is not only important for the economic and essential activities of the population, but due to its historic condition as a decisive factor in moving to the capital city of Tucuman from Ibatín a la Toma in 1685 (Llomparte, 2018). The RUI begins to form its differential traits in the mid-1960s, linked to the metropolitanization dynamic of the largest city of San Miguel de Tucuman. The conurbation of nearby populational groups and a process of production diversification lead to changes in land use in areas that were mainly set aside for growing sugar cane. The changes in policies linked to the sugar agroindustry resulting from the closure of many of the sugar mills in 1966 led to a new territorialization of the space, characterized by intensive flows of migrants from rural areas into San Miguel de Tucuman.

The urban land production towards the RUI was mediated, in general terms, by state action. This modality was accentuated

during the 70s and declined as of the mid-80s with the State virtually pulling out of the sector, which resulted in the installation of self-managed irregular settlements. This “double process” of growth began to cause marked discontinuities (spatial, social and qualitative), which ended up as fragmented and, in many cases, disjointed territories (Casares & Cytajlo, 2012). Between 1989-2010, the towns of Alderetes and Las Talitas comprised 14% of the total expansion of the SiMeT. The resulting expansion fabrics in Las Talitas, for example, were characterized by a large presence of urban vacuums representing approximately 30%, with a growing incorporation of closed urbanizations (Casares et al; 2014). Upon analyzing the spatial connotations of population growth between 2001-2010, it is seen that the area with the highest growth was the rural district of El Cadillal, with an annual average growth rate (TCMAI) of over 40 per thousand, with the SiMeT meanwhile sitting at 8.8 per thousand. This could be linked to the urbanization process that was fostered by the property development market in the RUI, which acquires a high degree of informality, unlike the expansion dynamics in the towns of Alderetes and Las Talitas, where the State and property developers co-exist as promoters of urban growth.

The diversification of the production area and the expansion of farming boundaries had a noticeable effect on the forms of the RUI; many of the representative images of cane fields were replaced by citrus plantations and on the shores of the Sali River, through the entrance of extraction and industrial activities, like brickworks, sand and gravel pits, salt mines and citrus industries, among others. This condition was exacerbated in the globalizing context that has occurred since the end of the 20th century to the present day. The 2011 census carried out by the Argentinean Mining Geological Service revealed that in the Tucuman province there were 394 brick cuttings (referring to the concavity in the ground as a result of artisanal brickworks), of which 92 were in Las Talitas (Garcia, 2017). Likewise, there is a displacement from productive use towards urban use, which has repercussions on the natural ecosystems and their great environment value, due to the advancing farming boundaries.

Analytical categories – descriptions of the landscape in the rural-urban interface

The cataloging resulting from the approach and the tools used, allowed recovering perceptions that the players themselves have and project in their landscapes. In this way, the residuals, fear, speculation and nomads emerge in the landscapes of the water. This is a set of landscapes that do not constitute isolated units but on the contrary, are juxtaposed and even overlap, as a result of the duality of processes from the diversity of modalities and expressions in the appropriation of resources, the reproduction of mobile territories connected to extractive and speculative logics, and to the nuances that these dynamics acquire depending on the social evaluations.

The first category of analysis is outlined regarding the new meanings that the landscapes of the Sali river acquire, mainly from the governmental players and inhabitants of the RUI. They are defined as the

“landscape of the water”, and are not just characterized on being a setting that is morphologically conditioned by the water’s course, but also by those other elements which denote the historic permanence of the relationships between the society and the water, which refer to the local culture (Muñoz et al., 2006).

These representations are expressed in the references to the social uses of the Aguadita dyke and the river itself.

The river is an important strategic resource which has not been incorporated, it is like we are in kind of a feud ... a hidden feud with the river (Council official, interview, 2014). There are companies that contaminate the environment. The quarries, which there are too many of, are really damaging the soil. They extract the sand, then the brickworks take the clay. I was handling the feasibilities, which the industrial areas and quarries have near the river (Council expert, interview, 2012) It’s a beach that we’ll never see, because we can’t afford it. But it is beautiful, especially upstream of the salt mine, where there’s more water (Member of the brickwork community alluding to the Aguadita dyke, interview, 2014).

However, the players report the absence of management, control and access to these landscapes, considered as common property. It is worth clarifying that the management of the river system faced many challenges which must be coordinated. The orientation led by the neoliberal model produces a great weakening of the role of the State, while in globalization, the “hierarchies become multiple scalars” (Ciccolella, 2014), which results in a juxtaposition of responsibilities. This situation compromises the ability of local administrations to provide concrete answers to the demands of different social players. Meanwhile, the management of the water landscapes is attenuated by the lack of application of normative instruments. An example of this is the definition of the bank, that establishes a marking out of public and private ownership that is not regulated in the Tucuman territory.

A second category refers to the “residual landscapes” (Nogué, 2011), as a result of outsourcing land use and the abandonment of excavation sites, which are characterized as shapes made based on absence (Montaner Martorell, 2008). These landscapes appear from the intensive use of common property, their later use for the final disposal of solid urban waste which lead to abandonment or which configure, euphemistically, passive environments that are difficult to heal. Complementarily, it can be highlighted that these shapes produce enclosures that constitute physical barriers that not only block access for the population alongside the river, but expose them to risks. Likewise, they generate other types of limitations related to socio-cultural factors like insecurity and fear.

The quarries no longer let you in [...] (Neighbor of La Aguadita, interview, 2012).

(...) the river is a dumping ground, it's so unsafe (Council specialist, Alderetes, interview, 2014).

A brick worker generally lives in a camp. When the lease ends, they move on. We end up being like gypsies.

There's land, the land ends, you rent elsewhere, and you look for another cutting (Neighbor from the brickworks community, interview, 2014).

Well... the cuttings, for example, take water from the channels for their production (Neighbor from the brickworks community, interview, 2014).

This process of abandonment and generation of residual landscapes in the RUI is accompanied by the emerging generation of new "nomadic landscapes" with identical reproduction logics. According to Asensi Perez (2008), this condition is characterized by the reproduction of informal processes and work insecurity, a condition of neoliberalism. Haesbaert (2013) also presents the conditions where these landscapes are reproduced, linked to the precariousness of the underlying groups, as well as their resistance and fight for a minimum daily land. But it is also important to highlight that this activity is distinguished by the incorporation of family labor which often sees boys, girls and teenagers working.

There are cuttings which a family works, the father, son and others where two brothers work with five kids (Neighbor from the brickworks community, interview, 2014).

We've been in the brick business for over 30 years. We go from here to there. We didn't have a house (Neighbor from the brickworks community, interview, 2014).

The impact of the property development market introduces the "landscapes of speculation" in the RUI, the result of multiple enclosed urbanistic developments. These are characterized, as Berque (2009) presents, as highlighting isolation and the individual believes they are alone with nature. They also hail the idea of "verdolatry" (Roger, 2008) as an ideology which values green as a space and trivializes the rural. The propagandistic speeches of these developments in the RUI refer to these questions.

Escaping from the city (...) They live a calmer, safer and happier life, they say. There was green, a lot of green. Not a single building in the landscape. The silence, the tranquility. Breathing that air was so pleasurable (Report in a local newspaper, 2015).

A place to enjoy living (Property developer's propaganda, 2016)⁴. Let nature spoil you and balance your life (Property developer's propaganda, 2019)⁵.

The diffuse residential expansion also finds its origins in public publicity for housing developments. The social division of the residential space, according to Duhau (2013), is not just the product of the residential property development market, but public policies also contribute to this, both looking to build

on cheap land and bring down production costs. As Mitchell (2007:90) confirms "all landscape is speculative, it is a deposit of the capital stock with hopes of increasing". These landscapes are under a great pressure for their occupation by "those who do it by choice" and "those who do not have one" (Pinheiro Cordeiro Dos Santos Lima & Boucinhas, 2016).

The inhabitants and political players of the RUI suggest that this territory is characterized by predominantly residential roles that lack centrality, commercial equipment and quality public space. These are what Lindon (2007) describes as "landscapes of fear", characterized by the vulnerability, insecurity, reclusion in private spaces and the rejection of the public space. He also says that "not all people are located in the same positions, some exacerbate their fragility and vulnerability, while others find strategies to control the space and even the meaningful areas"

We are expanding and adding neighborhoods, but we are not shaping the city at all (Council worker, Las Talitas, round-table meeting, 2014).

And the issue of drinking water is the main problem.

There are no sewers in Alderetes. The road to get here is dark and the thing is that the roads are ugly and to get on a bus we have to walk 15 or 20 blocks" (Neighbor from the Brickworks community, personal interview, 2014).

We call it "dormitory town", it's like people go out and come back to sleep, they don't do anything fun here. (...)

(Council specialist, Las Talitas, personal interview, 2012).

Thus, the landscapes of the RUI are strained by an uncertainty in the definition of responsibilities and roles regarding their management, often resulting from the reconfiguration that the State adopts in the neoliberal model. According to Pirez (2008:91) the "territorial expansion generates an urban unit by continuity and/or functionality which does not fit the political-territorial unit, leading to an absence of government". In this sense, we could add "the metropolitan orientation" related to the problems of the RUI and to their common property as is the case of the Sali River.

The set of landscapes identified in the RUI reveals the complexity of the land and the constant struggle between different players regarding their power to act. The overlapping between one another, the perceptions and valuations by different social players, make up the non-exclusive but telling mosaic of the production logics of the fluvial shore landscape on the interface of the metropolis (Figure 2).

V. CONCLUSIONS

The landscapes identified in the RUI, although they fall within the denomination of water landscapes of the Sali River, are the result of complex processes which reproduce in their image, the context of growing socio-territorial inequality. The intensive use of river-related natural resources is revealed in a

⁴ <http://www.candelariacountry.com.ar/>

⁵ <https://www.facebook.com/lareservacountry/>

set of diverse landscapes, spread throughout the RUI. Likewise, these conditions express social segregation processes (brick working groups, inhabitants of the La Aguadita dyke, among others); spatial fragmentation (sand and gravel extraction sites, brickworks, public promotion dwellings, enclosed urbanizations); and speculation (property market, state and industries), characteristics which impregnate the production options of the RUI's landscapes and feed its narrative in the ways they acquire through speculation and fear. This set of vertebrate landscapes along the Sali river, manifests a simultaneity and a juxtaposition of forms. Some, product of fixed dynamics associated to the means of residential production and others that are mobile, linked to extraction activities and their intrinsic nomadism. All of this reaffirms once more, that the landscape can also be understood and analyzed from the conception of the hybrid, the disperse, and yet juxtaposed in the diverse forms of appropriation and control of the territory.

The dynamics that take place in the RUI also demonstrate that the landscape, as a catalyzer of the territorial processes, is an effective tool to understand the forms the territory acquires and its possible cataloging as material for decision-making. In fact, the methodological approach used in the case study, as well as the territory cutting (rural-urban interface) have been useful to understand the phenomena of the landscape around metropolitan territories, particularly in the relations between different social groups and natural property, in this case, the river.

From there, the RUI as a place where rural-urban tensions are put into play regarding natural property, has allowed understanding and demonstrating the means of belonging and the inequal appropriation of land by the different social groups. On the other hand, recovering the voices of the players, who produce their landscapes with their daily practices and who reproduce their perceptions of the RUI, was useful not only to identify new emerging landscapes, but to also recover part of the pre-existing territorial story about what the river meant, about the culture of the river or said in another way, about one of the singular aspects of nature.

Although the progress made does not exhaust the entire complexity of landscapes in Latin American metropolis, the results obtained in the research show some features which cross over to the construction of landscapes in the 21st century as they question the possibility of defining landscape units from homogeneity and singularity criteria. A comprehensive planning of a RUI could therefore be based on catalogs which present results that are not fixed but rather changing and flexible. In other words, that collect and show the clear spatial juxtapositions of the different categories, as well as the overlapping between social representations.