

# Chapter 22

## Intra-Urban Borders in Border Cities: The Nationally Interchangeable Dynamics of Urban Centrality



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**Abstract** *Methodological nationalism* denied the possibility of the existence of cities under the influence of different national States. Globalization has revealed this incoherence, because many capitals are home to several States, as well as several private global corporations. A case that illustrates this discordance is that of border cities, which configure *multinational urban regions*, thanks to the fact that *complementary asymmetry* made borders enter into a logic of integration. Hence, interstate limits behave as lines of integration of neighboring states and borders become regions of universal articulation. In this context, not only are border cities a unified multi-state territory, but they also operate as pivots of articulation of trans- and inter-border logics, as well as of *global border systems*.

**Keywords** Border cities · Urban regions · Urban centrality · Urban systems · Borders · Urbanization process.

Centrality is a form, in itself empty, but which requires a content: objects, natural or artificial beings, things, products, works, signs and symbols, persons, actions, situations.

Lefebvre Henri (2013)

### 22.1 Introduction

*Borders or Frontiers* can be defined through some of the following meanings: from anthropology, originating in the looks around the symbolic and belonging (otherness); from *sociology*, about the socio-economic differences and inequalities coming from racism, xenophobia and classism; from *urbanism*, through the logic of urban segregation that is expressed in the space of the city (fragmentation). Also from the etymology, since it is a compound word, originating in Latin, where *front* comes

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from *frontis*, frontier or front, and *era* (arius) from place or spot; however, it can also be interpreted as a phase or historical moment, that is, from a site in front of a barrier, a place or a historical moment. Additionally, there is the definition of the *Dictionary of the Real Academia Española (DRAE)*, which considers it as the *border, limit or in front of*. This set of meanings of the word border or frontier operates simultaneously within the borderline cities, because they are *complex urbs* where the intra-, trans- and inter-urban—at various levels—are present concurrently.

The condition of borders will be approached in this article through two structural themes of the contemporary city: centrality and its areas of influence located in differentiated but articulated spaces. What is relevant is that both demarcate their own limits or borders, under the dynamics of what is known as urban segregation, which is a traditional and classic theme in Latin American urban studies (Sabatini 2006). In the case of *border cities*, to the general processes of social division of space according to population and activities, the boundaries with other national States must be added.

In Latin America, *border cities* undergo acute transformation processes, superior and different from those occurring in other cities, which lead to changes in the way they were conceived within the national States. Nowadays, the previous logic of Latin American urbanization composed of *nuclear cities* is being overcome in order to move toward *urban regions* (Carrión 2017b). In the case of the urbs in border areas, an urban agglomeration is formed that originates from the confluence of several states simultaneously and not only from the influence of a single state, as it used to be.

Interpretations of the existence of several cities on the borders are falling away, leading to a new pattern of urbanization characterized as a *multinational urban region*. That is, there is a transition from a conception that assumes several nuclear cities inscribed in each adjoining national State, to what actually occurs at the present time: an integrated urban territory, regardless of whether its location is in several national States. In other words, the border condition erroneously led people to think that there were several cities, one on one side and another on the other side, just because the territory was flanked by the interstate limit. A conception of this type ignores that the essence of the city is heterogeneity, born of the interaction produced by the fragmentation of activities, populations and infrastructures (urban segregation); to which, in this particular case, national boundaries are added.

Undoubtedly, the determining element of this situation is based on an interpretation sustained on visions circumscribed in the domestic spheres of each country, which impedes the understanding of the new characteristics of Latin American urbanization, emerging since the end of the last century. It is an optic inscribed in power relations in the exclusive national sphere. For this reason, when analyzing urbanization processes, these cities are characterized as small or, at most, intermediate, defined within the urban rank-size hierarchy of each country.

The frontiers in border cities are based on an urban structure with important inequalities and asymmetries, stemming from at least two determinations. The first is the traditional socio-spatial inequalities originated in the dynamics of urban segregation (centralities-peripheries). Its most extreme expression nowadays are the cities of gated neighborhoods or of walls, according to Teresa Caldeira (2008). The second

comes from power asymmetric of interstate relations, which mark each of the national States (sovereignty), like Ipiales, Melilla and Juarez. Unfortunately, it is an entry that has been little worked on in academic terms, which has impeded comparisons with non-border cities and with those located, for example, within the European Union, where the border topic is not so gravitating. In any case, the two inputs producing intra-urban borders—local and international—are interrelated and inscribed in the same multinational urban-regional unit.

In this context of change, there is a significant growth of the economy and, consequently, of urbanization in the border zones (population), events that occur above the averages of each of their countries, with which these regions achieve an important national and international protagonism.

Nowadays, border societies are represented through the strengthening of local governments, thanks to the processes of decentralization, democratization and economic accumulation, which has allowed them to have an unprecedented local and international presence. As a result, these territories are claiming greater autonomy from state centralism, represented mainly by the capital cities.

In addition, these cities assume a new role, given the weight of the functional attributions they acquire in the national and global context. Therefore, border cities operate as *pivots* of integration of border regions, as well as of articulation with world economies, legal or illegal. This change leads to another not minor one: interstate relations in border zones begin to be constituted on the basis of trans- and inter-urban links; that is, of an integration that is projected from the local to the national and global. Not as it used to happen before, when they were confined exclusively to the local sphere and the national integration passed hegemonically through the multilateral entities (OEA, CELALC, CAN MERCOSUR).

A few facts that should be highlighted in this process. First, the interstate limit behaves as an urban centrality, since this line integrates the urban territories of one side with those of the other—not separates, as it was formerly conceived—through the complex dynamics of *complementary asymmetry* (Carrión 2013). This asymmetry is even more complex because the design of urban policies in border areas is marked by the logic of defending sovereignty, customs control and migratory restrictions, contrary to the reality of local integration. Unfortunately, public policies are not designed with an emphasis on transboundary issues, in accordance with the processes occurring in the zone, but rather with those that have a strong nationalist content, increasing the sense of the interstate border.

Secondly, COVID-19 illustrates the disruptive impact of national health policies in border zones, because they are homogeneous in heterogeneous realities, which leads to greater distancing from the borderline (Fig. 22.1). As well as the effects it produces on the border side where there is more population and more poverty (social vulnerability). The greatest contagion and lethality occurred on the borders with a larger population (due to social interaction), with greater insertion in globalization (due to importation of the virus) and with a higher index of poverty (pre-existing diseases) (Lara-Valencia and García-Pérez 2021).

But it should also be noted the impact produced by the multi-scale closure of territories, in the areas of housing (#Stayinhome), the neighborhood, the city and the



**Fig. 22.1** COVID-19 in a border zone in Latin America. *Source* Galería fotográfica PCM. Licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

country, through policies of physical distancing, restriction of mobility and border closure. Especially this last one showed—by absence—that the border is the real umbilical cord of the transformation of the urban region, generating a dangerous process of state recentralization that weakened the transboundary region at local and global levels. It was a very strong recessive process of the previous interaction obtained.

In order to develop this general thesis, which is inscribed in this text, there will be an expository logic with the following sections. It begins with the necessary historical vision of the borders, since they are regions with a high level of transformation, which allows to situate and understand the dynamics of urbanization and the cities contained therein. Then follows the central theme of the article: to show, on the one hand, how the border city operates under the form of an urban region (city of cities), and on the other hand, the way in which border cities construct intra-urban boundaries. It will conclude with a set of recommendations that seek to highlight some characteristics of these border cities, of the urban border region.

## 22.2 Historical Borders, with Bordering Urban Regions

The fundamental starting point for the analysis of borders is their historical sense, due to their highly changing dynamics. In this perspective, Augé (1998) states that a typical characteristic of these zones is that: “*borders are never erased, but are redrawn.*” It is a reality of strong mutation—but not linear—because they are permanently reconfigured. The limit, the border and the transboundary act together, although with differential relative weights according to place and time.

The borders have undergone a profound metamorphosis since the end of the last century, when they acquired their own political and economic weight. Its territory gained autonomy thanks to its economic development and its important political role, with which it tended to reconfigure its sense of periphery and redefine its relationship with the center (State). But it also overcomes its local-national quality to become an interstate integration zone, since its structural relations are conformed by other borders, some contiguous and others discontinuous-distant.

The processes of globalization and decentralization, which occur simultaneously, have much to do with this mutation. The mundialization of the economy, culture, technology and society is taking place, with its counterpart, the concentration of its effects at the local level (Borja 1994). In other words, this global phenomenon needs strategic places, such as cities, to project itself ubiquitously throughout the planetary territory. This is what Robertson (2003) describes as *glocalization*, which is expressed clearly and with greater force in border cities. As a result, the structure of the border region reaches a *cosmopolitan* dynamic, because today *borders are universal*.

In the process of transformation of the borders, the State Reform had much to do with it, bringing some unprecedented consequences, among which the following should be mentioned: (i) *Decentralization*, which allowed the promotion of the autonomy and power of the territories, with representative local governments,<sup>1</sup> with more administrative competencies and greater economic capacity (budget); (ii) the sign of *international openness*, which closed the cycle of the import substitution model and placed the borders in a condition of regional and global pivot; and (iii) *Privatization*, which strengthened the market logic and weakened the State, increasing inequalities and reducing its regulatory capacity.

Undoubtedly, under these new conditions, the borders acquire unprecedented power, because they acquire greater political legitimacy thanks to the popular election of local authorities, to the significant improvement of management, administration and government mechanisms (management models). But also because of the increase in accumulation processes, thanks to the capture of substantial economic resources, both legal and illegal. With this new condition, more direct relations are established with the other side to form a unified multinational transboundary territory, which tends to question the centralism of the national States. As well as to look for new forms of linkage to more distant borders, where the logic of illegal trafficking contributes a lot.

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<sup>1</sup> While in 1985 only seven countries in the region elected local authorities, by 1997 all did so.

Perhaps this expression of illegality is one of its most complex factors. Because it undoubtedly represents a strong disregard for the national state regulatory order, which is initially expressed in smuggling and then in trafficking. Clearly, the national membership of public, private and formal community institutions is bypassed by the local illegal activities, remaining outside the control and regulation of the State. In this context, autonomy comes into play and debate, with a totally different stamp than in the rest of the national territories.

The accelerated and significant urbanization of the borders throughout the region is contributing to this process. First, because the borders are undergoing a major population growth process, which takes place in the cities as its nodal point; and second, because they are the starting point for multinational regional integration.

### 22.2.1 *From Limit to Border*

The historical process of borders in Latin America is related to three sequential moments, which show the transition: the *limit* is a line that separates (succession of points), the *border* is a region-plane that relates its parts (inter-border), and the *transboundary* is a space of global integration.

- The first one originates with the formation of national States, which are born from the processes of independence and decolonization, in general, in Latin America. In this context, the sense of *limit*<sup>2</sup> takes form, under the traditional definition of the *boundary*; that is, of the territorial demarcation of the States or, in other words, of how far they reach and from where they start. It is, in short, a real or imaginary line of encounter-separation with the other (alterity), through a strange tension between cleavage (fracture) and otherness (integration), between different adjoining national States.

The limit is a concept initially conceived as separation, which even led to military disputes for the defense of the so-called territorial integrity (sovereignty). But it also led to the splitting of the native communities located in these created regions, because the constitution of the new national States caused several of these ancestral populations to fragment, sometimes even ending up as enemies, regardless of the fact that their origin and kinship were exactly the same.

- The second one was established from the second post-world war, when the so-called *inward or import substitution model* began to develop (Rodríguez 1980; Fitzgerald 1993). This mutation allowed the transition from the limit-line to the border region, establishing the sense of *inter-border*, because there are several borders that interact with each other.

Each of the States began to think of its development inward, whereby the limit becomes a border, related to that of the other side under inter-border dynamics.

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<sup>2</sup> According to the DRAE, the word *limit* is: "Real or imaginary line that separates two lands, two countries, two territories".

That is, a relationship of two or more border regions, different and distinct, that share the same territorial demarcation line.

Borders are nothing other than the space where interstate relations are expressed, given that the State on the one side is different from that on the other. This situation involves a relationship that operates similarly to the condition of a magnet: it is an area that has a particular magnetism that makes opposite poles attract each other, that is, borders of distinct States that need each other because of their differences.<sup>3</sup>

- The third moment originates in the context of the globalization process, when *borders are redrawn* under the *transboundary*<sup>4</sup> dynamic. With this, the previous meanings of limit-line and border-plane are overcome, to give way to the unified transboundary-plurinational region. That is, an integrated territory based on a limit that demarcates several countries.

This process should be interpreted in terms of *multinational transboundary integration*, through two interrelated modalities of border regions: on the one hand, that end up establishing a single regional entity, forming a plurinational assembly; and, on the other hand, that articulate with other border regions located in distant places, to structure a *global border system*, where cities behave as strategic points or interconnection links, forming an urban complex.

Nowadays, the dynamics of borders operate as a hub or router, since this set of relationships leads to the confluence of multiple flows of products, capital, raw materials, services, symbols and people immersed in the processes of import and export (legal and illegal), with which transboundary regions, according to Castells (1999), experience “*the transit from the space of places to the space of flows.*”

Undoubtedly, this new reality of the borders shows us the character of a complex reality, where politically the actors and institutions of the region question the central power located in distant places (capitals), which becomes an additional incentive to act jointly in this pluri-state space.

### 22.2.2 *Urbanization Patterns*

In Latin American urbanization, there are two major moments: one originated in the second post-world war period, in which a nuclear or central city is configured, inscribed in a specific territory (whether countryside or metropolitan region), but within a single national State. In other words, it is a traditional and classic urbanization pattern with a *nuclear city, inscribed in a territory and within a national State*. This characteristic leads to the formation of the so-called *urban hierarchy*, constituted by

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<sup>3</sup> Perhaps smuggling is the clearest expression of this statement: What is not available or is more expensive here is obtained on the other side, but under informal or illegal modalities. This logic originates in the difference and is resolved in the same relationship of the existing market.

<sup>4</sup> According to the DRAE, the prefix *trans* (of Latin origin) means: “behind,” “on the other side of” or “through”.

attributes that arise from the rank size of the population, within the same nation-State (Carrión 2017a, 2017b).

Subsequently, a new one was foreshadowed from the 1980s of the last century, when the pattern of urbanization was modified: from the nuclear or central city to an *urban region*, where cities are not urbanized but rather urban regions, under the quality of a *city of cities*. This urban region is no longer inscribed in a surrounding territory (rural or metropolitan), but within the framework of other cities, in order to build the *global urban system*.

This phenomenon introduces a new characteristic: the transboundary region is not inscribed within a single State, but within several, in addition to countless private corporations of a global order that have local effects and induce a public-private capitality of a global nature. This consolidates new forms of autonomy, especially in capital cities (capitality) and in border cities (nationalism), which are different from those of other cities as a whole.

New urban forms are taking shape in the border zones, in line with existing urbanization patterns in Latin America, among which we can mention the ones described in Table 22.1.


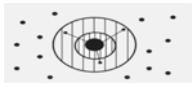





In the first moment of Latin American urbanization (Graphic No. 1), cities are configured in immediate and contiguous spaces (nuclear city), with administrations structured on the basis of local or municipal governments. In the second moment, the inter-urban logic, proper of urban systems, prevails, producing a complex problem to be solved: there is no harmony between the emerging territorial organization and the current institutional framework, producing a multilevel government that is exercised in a multi-scale territory with an institutionally juxtaposed autonomies.

It is even more complex, if we take into account that the urbanization pattern is not homogeneous but diversified and heterogeneous, and at least the following analytical typologies can be found:

- *Clusters*, which are the result of the sum of cities within the framework of a region that is a single producer of services or goods, as in the case of the Salmon Cluster in Chile, with 45 integrated municipalities, or the Bajío in Mexico, which produces vehicles of North American brands under advantageous conditions for the US market. The government concretizes with the implementation of free trade zones, exercised by various public administrations, but explicitly submitted to the market.
- *Urban regions*, which are heirs to metropolitan logic (Soja 2008), operate under the sense of *urban agglomeration*, which is nothing more than the concentration of population and activities in the same *multi-scale* territory. The most evident case is Mexico City, which has a population of less than 9 million inhabitants, but its metropolitan area can have more than 22 million inhabitants. And the most complex thing is that it has 60 municipalities and 3 states, which makes very complicated the management of different autonomies, coming from different levels of government (multilevel).
- *Imagined cities*, which are constituted thanks to international urban-urban migratory processes, after the closing of the rural-urban migration cycle. These are



**Table 22.1** Patterns of urbanization and institutional frameworks for city governance in Latin America

	Urban types	Spatial model	Relations	Government
Cities urbanization	Nuclear city		City—Countryside	Municipal isolated
	Metropolitan city		Polarized city	Metropolitan
Inter-urbanization	Urban system		Articulated city	Municipal horizontal
Transurbanization	Clusters		Factory city	Public/private multilevel
	Borders cities		Cities couples	Multistate
	Imagine cities		Multisited cities	Multistate
	Regional urbanization		Cities of cities	Multilevel

Source Own elaboration

cities articulated in distant and discontinuous spaces thanks to the development of communication technologies, which make it possible to diversify remittances (economic, cultural) and integrate spaces. They are known as multisite urban regions. This is the case of the second and third cities of our countries that are located outside the national territories. Examples: Cuba's second city is in Miami, El Salvador's in New York, Mexico's in San Antonio or Houston, Ecuador's in Murcia and Venezuela's in Bogota, among many other cases.

- *Border cities* historically originated in the boundary line that demarcates the confines of a State with respect to others. The interstate demarcation line defines the separation of cities by States, that is, the starting place of a State and of a city, with respect to those of the other State and of the other city, regardless of whether they are geographically contiguous. But this consideration is modified

when multinational borders are inscribed in global circuits. In this case, the border city reproduces the condition of a multisite city within several neighboring states. One of the most relevant cases is the urban area formed by Ciudad Juárez (Mexico) and El Paso (USA), where only a bordering river separates them. If in the previous phase, the existence of one city depended on the other, nowadays, due to the interstate dynamics occurring in this space, it ends up unifying them, to the point that they are beginning to be conceived as multinational metropolitan areas.

In this sense, border cities are traditional places of trade, exchange and services, which are positioned as nodes of integration through two dimensions: the one coming from the multinational transboundary dynamics (integrated region) and the other one of a global borders network or system. This is because border cities facilitate flows and movements of people and products, both illegal and informal (Vera da Silva 2015), even more nowadays, when there is a perceived shift from *offshore* to *nearshore* logics, which give rise to a stronger supranational integration with an urban base.

In general, the dynamics in transboundary zones are given by the sense of enclave economies arising from different States, where accumulation develops without integrating with the border environment in which it is located. This is the case of border cities, which operate as a strategic terrain where an economy, legal and illegal, is located under an import-export market. To make this work, there are routes and circuits, operating within a global urban system.

### 22.2.3 *Borders Are Urbanizing: Regional Urban Complex*

The border region in Latin America is experiencing an accelerated population growth. In the mid-twentieth century, the border population was very small because it was inhospitable, dangerous and lacked infrastructure (Reboratti 1992). At that time, the borders were the periphery of the periphery.

Subsequently, since 1950, with the acceleration of the urbanization process throughout the continent, as well as the need to control borders and reaffirm national sovereignty, States sought to redistribute population and resources for geopolitical purposes (Rodríguez 2002). The public policy proposal was based on the slogans of “*to govern is to populate*” or to build “*living borders*,” accentuating the protectionist function of border territories, inscribed in nationalist logics and, therefore, to promote separation.

From the 1980s of the last century onwards, the borders began to experience a significant population growth and economic diversification (legal and illegal), which resulted in increasing trade and industrial production (maquila) flows. In this perspective, national interstate integration programs were promoted (Rodríguez 2002), as well as those coming from multilateral organizations (CAF, WB, BID, OEA).<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> For example, one CAF program is the Border Development and Integration Support Program (PADIF) for regional integration purposes.

Borders become *universal spaces*, because they are no longer only the link between neighboring states, but also form part of the world economic system. From this moment on, new forms of integration of the local with the supranational urban region began, which became a central and gravitating element.

In these border regions, positive externalities, both legal and illegal, are beginning to be generated, operating as a gravitational mass of population attraction. The evident result is the significant demographic changes. For this reason, the traditional migratory flows that have historically operated in the continent are being modified: rural-urban migration, rural-urban migration or internal mobility within the national States show traits of being in their terminal cycle.

First, because the rural origin of emigration no longer has the population flow it used to have. In Latin America, according to UN-HABITAT, in 1950 the urban population was 41%, whereas now it is over 83%. This means, if the migratory process is finite, that only 17% of the population is potentially left to migrate from rural areas, which ends up being impossible. Moreover, when there are inverse processes, with two clear characteristics: the countryside cannot continue to expel population, no matter how much mechanization is introduced, because someone must sustain agricultural and livestock production. And second, because an inverse population movement is beginning to take place: urban-rural, although still embryonic, sustained by the search for a better quality of life and remote work, based on high technology in work and services.

This trend is strengthened by the presence of the COVID-19 epidemic. Thus, for example, in Peru, several cities experienced processes of population return (Zolezzi 2020), where Lima stands out, a place that produced an emigration of about 300 thousand people, because of the need to reduce contagion factors and to capture products of basic consumer goods. But several cities in the region have also seen a growth in nearby areas and cities, due to the closure of businesses and activities, especially in areas of urban centrality, which have relocated their activities (Buenos Aires, Quito, Mexico City).

And secondly, in terms of the migratory destination, because there is a redirection of the places to which the population used to go, as were generally the largest cities, capitals or metropolitan areas, to give way to a strong urban-urban migration with two final places: one, inscribed within the national territories in the border regions and cities, and the other, of international character, in cities located in other countries (Lattes 2001).

In these new migratory processes, border cities have a strategic function: to be the natural filter assigned to them by national States for internal-external contact. Hence, they become highly conflictive spaces, because that is where the illegal organizations dedicated to these purposes operate, most of which are international.

In other words, a new cycle of population mobility based on urban-urban migration, but of a border and international nature. That is why the second and third cities of Latin American countries are located outside the national territories, as stated by García Canclini (1997), forming the urban pattern of *imagined or multi-situated cities* (Carrión 2017a, 2017b). For example, in the USA live about 40 million people of Mexican origin and the absolute majority of them in cities. More than 7 million

people have left Venezuela in this century, but also from Haiti, Colombia, Ecuador and Guatemala, among others. In general, this international migration has opened the new cycle, predominantly urban-urban.

What is evident is the accelerated population growth in border areas, a phenomenon that can be seen in Table 22.2. The average percentage of urbanization in the countries is quite high, but even higher in the border areas. Guatemala, which starts with the lowest percentage of urbanization, is the country with the highest growth, both at the national level and at its borders. In contrast, Brazil and Argentina, which have the highest national urbanization rates, are the countries with the highest percentages at their borders.

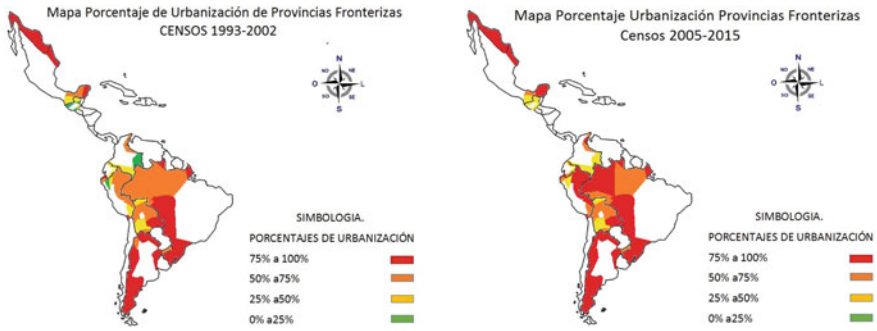
If the demographic behavior of the two intercensal periods is compared, it can be affirmed that the average population growth rate of the border areas in Latin America is faster than the average for the national States. The intercensal growth of the urbanization rate of the countries is 4.95%, while that of the border areas is 6.26%. These data comparatively mean that in this period, the average population rate of the border areas grew 26% more than that of the countries. And this is a relatively recent phenomenon, typical of the turn of this century.

It should be noted that the growth of the border population is sustained in border cities, which leads us to the conclusion that there is an accelerated process of urbanization of the borders in Latin America. For example, Ciudad Juarez in Mexico has a high population growth from 1980, when it had 544,000 inhabitants, to 2020, when it reached 1,501,000; that is, an increase of almost three times in the period. Cúcuta in Colombia, on the border with Venezuela, had 379,000 in 1985 and reached 777,000 in 2020, a two-fold increase. Between 1971 and 2001, the population of the Triple Border (Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay) grew by an average of 30% per year, reaching 664,000 inhabitants in 2012 (Bello 2013).

**Table 22.2** Urbanization of the borders in relation to that of countries

Country	% National Urbanization Previous Census	% Border Provinces Urbanization Census	% National Urbanization Last Census	% Border Provinces Urbanization Last Census	% National Intercensal Growth	% Intercensal Growth Border Provinces
Argentina	89.4	<b>83.03</b>	91.02	<b>85.16</b>	(+) <b>1.62</b>	(+) <b>2.13</b>
Ecuador	61.13	<b>43.48</b>	62.76	<b>48.01</b>	(+) <b>1.63</b>	(+) <b>4.52</b>
<i>Bolivia</i>	62.42	<i>56.11</i>	67.50	<i>61.01</i>	(+) <i>5.08</i>	(+) <i>4.90</i>
Colombia	70.90	<b>40.17</b>	76.00	<b>50.72</b>	(+) <b>5.10</b>	(+) <b>10.55</b>
Brazil	81.23	<b>76.56</b>	84.36	<b>80.15</b>	(+) <b>3.13</b>	(+) <b>3.59</b>
<i>Guatemala</i>	34.98	<i>20.43</i>	48.48	<i>31.78</i>	(+) <i>13.05</i>	(+) <i>11.35</i>
Peru	70.11	<b>58.62</b>	76.70	<b>68.89</b>	(+) <b>6.59</b>	(+) <b>10.27</b>
<i>Mexico</i>	74.60	<i>76.10</i>	78.00	<i>78.89</i>	(+) <i>3.40</i>	(+) <i>2.79</i>

Source National Census 2000 and 2010 and own elaboration



**Fig. 22.2** The urbanization of the borders modifies the pattern of urbanization in Latin America. *Source* Table 22.2 of this text and own elaboration

Another fundamental characteristic of demographic behavior in this period has to do with the substantial change in the profiles adopted by urbanization in Latin America. As the borders are located in the interior of the continent and there is population growth in cities or the birth of new ones located there, the logic of urbanization is redirected toward unprecedented zones.

In the past, cities were preferentially located on the coastal profiles, in strategic places for trade (seas, rivers) or in areas with a vocation for agricultural or livestock production. However, in general, there is a redirection that is expressed, for example, in the change from the capital of Brazil, located on the Atlantic coast (Rio de Janeiro), to the interior (Brasilia). But the most evident process has to do with what can be seen in Fig. 22.2, especially in South America where the phenomenon of mutation is evident: urbanization tends to move toward the interior of the continent. And this trend stems from the growth of the border economy and, as a consequence, the settlement of transboundary regions.

There is an additional demographic connotation to the border population (Picech 2017). The highest population concentration is on the “weaker” side of the multinational transboundary link. For example, in Mexico’s relationship with Guatemala, the highest proportional concentration of population is on the Guatemalan side, while the situation is reversed in Mexico’s relationship with the USA. Similar cases occur in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, where in the first one 4.7% of the total population lives on the border while in the second one it is 25.6%. In the border between Argentina and Bolivia, the population is 4.7 and 13.9%, respectively (Canales et al. 2010). The explanation for this inequity is in line with the need of the weaker borders to take advantage of the more developed ones, anchored according to the physical law of communicating vessels.

Hence, social and economic demands tend to be redirected to the places where there is more population. For this reason, important infrastructure and service works are promoted and built to satisfy the social demands and functions of the borders, in

many cases different depending on the side and the needs of integration to the multi-national territories. Roads, highways, airports, bridges, ports, as well as hotels, pharmacies, restaurants, schools, universities, industries and shopping centers are built to meet the needs of their population, their activities and multinational interaction.

#### 22.2.4 *The Initial Binary Logic of the Urban Border Region*

The creation of border cities has several origins, the first and painful one are the settlements of the native peoples, which were split when the national States were formed. The boundary lines drawn by the emerging States use geographic accidents as coordinates and do not take into account social criteria. In this process, the societies settled there are disregarded, so much so that they end up cutting them off for reasons of national sovereignty.<sup>6</sup> There are, for example, the cases of the trans-boundary indigenous peoples and nationalities of Colombia, Ecuador and Peru: Awá, Inga, Quillacinga, Pastos, A'í Kofán, Eperara Siapidaara, Kamentsá, Murui, Kichwa, Siona, Secoya, Coreguaje, Nasa, Embera Chamí, Shuar and Achuar.

Subsequently, the cities that existed prior to the delimitation of the national States began to strengthen their inter-urban relations and to develop along the boundary line. In this context, they maintain their specificities, but under a structural determination: the limit acts under the metaphor of the magnet: *different poles attract each other*. But this attraction is fickle, depending on the structural conditions of the poles and their interrelations. Hence, at one moment one border city may have a greater development over the other,<sup>7</sup> while at another it may be the other way around, structuring substantial momentary differences.

It is precisely the border logic that gives this dynamism to its cities, allowing a new form of integration, subject to asymmetrical relations. In this context, inter-urban links are established; city-city, regardless of their proximity or distance, because it is the complementary functionality that determines the formation of the urban region.

In the past they were conceived as different cities, because national limits divided them, being known under the names of: (i) *mirror cities*, as a metaphor to say that one urbe is reflected in the other, when in reality they are absolutely different in size and characteristics; (ii) *twin cities*, as an allegory that serves to affirm that they have the same origin, where the limit operates as a matrix, but which in no way leads to

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<sup>6</sup> According to Tohono O'odham on the border between Mexico and the United States since 1853 the people have moved freely over their ancestral lands, but the recent militarization of the border has not only made their travel difficult but has also divided the people. <https://news.un.org/es/story/2018/08/1439422>.

<sup>7</sup> For example, a devaluation of the Colombian peso causes the centrality of the city of Ipiales (Colombia) to attract the consumption of the population of Ecuador, depressing the Ecuadorian city of Tulcán. The price of Venezuelan oil derivatives in Cúcuta (Colombia) generates unthinkable accumulation processes.

their being similar; (iii) and the *peer cities*, simply it is a figure to reaffirm that they are two similar urbs, which does not occur at all.

In terms of the use of these notions, it can be affirmed that in Brazil the concept of the twin city prevails, while in Mexico it is the concept of the mirror city and in the world of academia that of the peer city. These three conceptual denominations refer to cities that have supposedly similar patterns, when they are very different, to the point that there is a relationship of determination of one over the other. In other words, in reality they are not two, neither are they equal cities.

The city on the one side is interconnected with the one on the other, thanks to the confluence of three processes: those of globalization (expansion of markets and technologies), national ones (economic regulation, integration agreements) and the local ones (trade, industry). This confluence imprints a key quality: cities structure transboundary regions, linked to other border regions and, in this context, operate as *hinges of integration* (Boisier 1987), in the manner of a broad-spectrum *zipper*.

The *zipper* behaves as a device that has a set of gears that serve to join the poles of the equation (border). It consists of two parallel ribbons (limits) that have a set of devices that interact with the purpose of integrating what is separated.

A good example of this process can be seen in Fig. 22.3, in which the *zipper* logic is formed with the cities of the US and Mexico border region, which operate as a gear. Undoubtedly, this is an emblematic case of the urbanization process in border zones. Along the demarcation line of these two countries, there are 11 urban gears that make up the urban complex within the transboundary region. It should be noted that this characteristic is reproduced in all the border zones of Latin America, although in some cases it is more explicit than in others.

The urbanization process of this border has been accelerated: if in 1960 it had 1,179,910 inhabitants, by 2010 it reached 7.2 million and now exceeds 17 million residents. The interesting thing about this population is that it is mostly urban, because of internal and international migration, attracted by the labor supply located in the

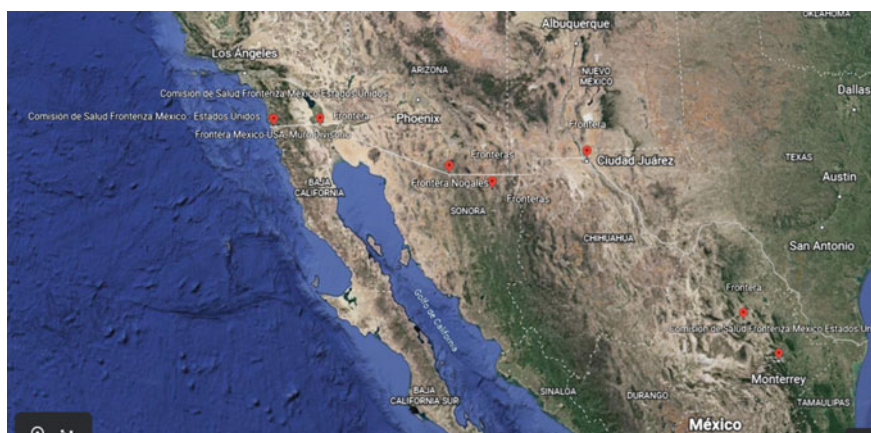


Fig. 22.3 The US/Mexico border urban complex operates as a zipper. Source Google Earth

cities, converted into the centers of gravity of the new global economy, sustained by digitalization and specialized services, among which there is the maquiladora industry (Fuentes and Peña 2018).

In Latin America's borders, two types of urban complexes operate, determined by the countries that conform them:

The first one, *Binational Urban*, is formed between border cities. Here we can point out the cases of Brazil, which has borders with all the countries of South America, with the exception of Ecuador and Chile. There are also those of Colombia (Ipiales) with Ecuador (Tulcán), where the Guáitara River separates and integrates them. Or, in the case of Rivera and Livramento, it is a street that fulfills this dual function to form a single city, as can be seen in Fig. 22.4.

Another significant example of a river that integrates-separates the cities on the one side with those on the other is the Río Grande, with the cities of Ciudad Juarez in Mexico and El Paso in the USA.

Interesting cases of binational border cities are those that have the same name on one side of the border as on the other. There are, for example, Nogales in the U.S. and Mexico; Paso Canoas in Costa Rica and Panama. But there is also the city of Mexicali, whose name is a fusion of Mexico and California, and its peer on the other side, Calexico, which comes from California and Mexico.

**Fig. 22.4** Rivera (Uruguay) and Livramento (Brazil).  
 Source Miguel Chaves.  
 Licensed under CC BY-SA 3.0





This is the case of the city of Desaguadero in Bolivia and Peru that share the same name, which comes from the toponymy of the Desaguadero River, which is the geographical boundary between the two countries (Fig. 22.5).

Another significant example where a river integrates-separates the cities of one side with the other is the Río Grande, with Ciudad Juárez in Mexico and El Paso in the USA (Fig. 22.6).

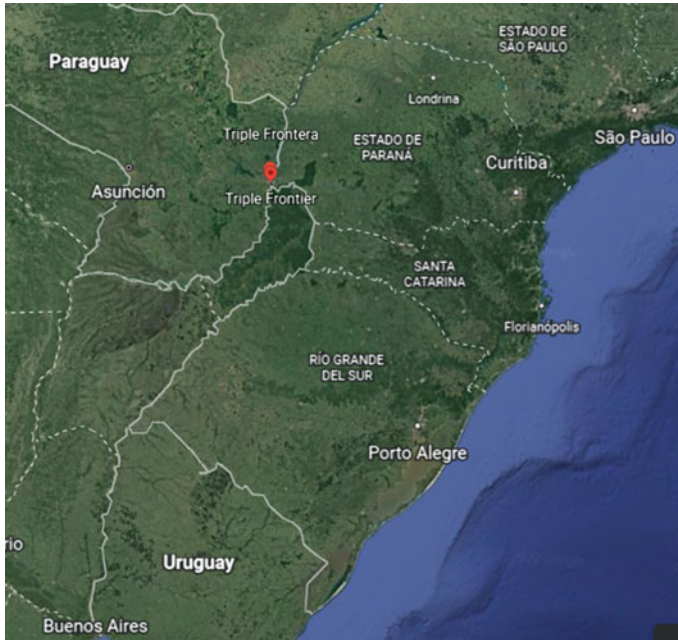
In the case of the triple border between Brazil, Argentina and Paraguay, there is an integrated urban region formed around the Paraná and Iguazú rivers. The paradox lies



**Fig. 22.5** Desaguadero (Bolivia) and Desaguadero (Peru). *Source* Google Earth



**Fig. 22.6** Ciudad Juárez (Mexico) and El Paso (USA). *Source* C. Sigi. Licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0



**Fig. 22.7** Triple border an urban region: Foz de Iguazú (Brazil), Ciudad del Este (Argentina) and Puerto de Iguazú (Paraguay). *Source* Google Earth

in the fact that the rivers operate as national boundaries that separate, but also—given their natural condition—as meeting points, as can be seen in Fig. 22.7.

Additionally, there are those cities where spatial discontinuity is present, but which have complementary logics: these are the cases of Tacna (Peru) and Arica (Chile) with 53 km of distance<sup>8</sup> and those of Cucuta (Colombia) and San Antonio del Táchira (Venezuela) with 11 km, among many other cases of unitary integration, where physical distance is not an obstacle.

A second, *Urban Multinational*, composed of some emblematic cases, such as the Triple Border, where Ciudad del Este has 308,983 inhabitants (INE, 2022, Argentina), Foz de Iguazú with 272,656 (DGEEC, 2022, Brazil) and Puerto de Iguazú with 82,849 (OMA, 2022, Paraguay). These nuclei form a tri-nucleus city around the Paraná and Iguazú rivers. The urban region has 664,488 inhabitants and its key economic sectors are tourism, electricity and commerce, with markets oriented to the transboundary region and the entire world, both legally and illegally (Rabossi 2013).

On the other hand, there is the Tetra Frontera, with four distant cities but articulated through twinning agreements, which work with specific functions in an integrated

<sup>8</sup> However, the greatest distance is not spatial but temporal, because Santiago-Chile determines its hour according to the conditions of its metropolitan area, which leads to the existence of an hour difference in the two cities and, therefore, the public administration does not temporally match the other side.

manner. There are four countries in this border region located in the Amazon basin that includes the cities of Manaus (Brazil), Iquitos (Peru), Leticia (Colombia) and Sucumbios (Ecuador). In general, they are developed along the Putumayo River (affluent of the Amazon), which has become the material basis for integration, with the intention that Brazil joins the Pacific Basin, through the articulation of the cities of Manaus (Brazil) and Manta (Ecuador), a port on the Pacific Ocean. Another interesting case is the Trifinio between: Honduras, El Salvador and Guatemala in Central America, where in a multinuclear or multifocal way 45 border municipalities are integrated.

In all cases of urban complexes, there is a *sui generis* conurbation dynamic, as an historical expression of an undeniable fact: the integration process in a double sense: urban-urban and urban-regional, in a context of high national diversity.

## 22.3 The Multinational Transurban Region

The current border city is framed within the general patterns of urbanization in Latin America, but with its own specificities. There, the modality of a *multinational urban region* is configured, because it is inscribed in several national States that build the sense of *continuum or conurbation*, to be configured as a *city of cities*, which has several types of intra-urban borders.

The transboundary logic, in times of globalization, introduces transurban dynamics that go beyond the sense of the urban stain, to form this new pattern of urbanization, arising from the territorial confluence of the old city units, one for each State, which acted in an independent manner.

Its logic is contextualized in a unified territory, where there is spatial segregation by location of activities, population, infrastructure, in addition to that coming from interstate limits. The particularity of this urbanization pattern has to do with the type of urban structure that is configured from the *urban centrality* and its various *areas of influence*, to which are added those coming from the weight of the interstate determination (limit).

### 22.3.1 *The Urban Structure of the Urban Border Region*

Border cities develop along the interstate boundary line, which leads to two divergent positions regarding urban patterns: on the one hand, that there would exist one city and, on the other, that there would be several. The majority thesis is the one that points out the presence of urban territories, one on each side of the interstate demarcation line. This type of interpretation demands a new explanatory paradigm, given the mutations that the globalization process introduces into the nationalist-based dynamics that sustain them.

The strongest argument for denying the existence of several cities in border zones is based on the principle of *methodological nationalism* (Faist 2019; Beck 2005). The interesting thing about this conception is that it operates not only in the borders but also in the general process of urbanization in Latin America. Its thesis is based on the existence of a nuclear city inscribed in a single national State.

It is about an erroneous interpretation that gains more strength at the borders, because supposedly on each side of the interstate limit there would be a different city. This is because national sovereignty is the element that builds this plurality of cities, denying, for example, the sense of the *global city*, as sustained by Saskia Sassen (1999); that is, of the real processes.

*Methodological nationalism* introduces distortions in institutional frameworks, in the design of public policies,<sup>9</sup> in social organization and in social imaginaries. It is a principle that overemphasizes the weight of the national, behaving as the essential unit of analysis and the organizing principle of institutional, social and territorial<sup>10</sup> structures. Moreover, it is the one that builds identity, belonging and representation systems within its territorial jurisdiction. All of this is related to the sense of cities.

However, this vision tends to be eroded historically by the process of globalization, as transnationalization liquefies the weight of the national.<sup>11</sup> This is the basis for the thesis that in transboundary regions there are not several cities, but only one, under the modality of a transboundary urban complex or *urban region*, deployed in a supranational territory, which must be thought and practiced as such.

The urban region behaves as a matrix of localization of urban activities, under the logic of *complementary asymmetry* (Carrión 2022), originated in national policies such as protectionism, monetary parity, production costs and employment offer, among others. The paradox: these asymmetries tend to become complementary thanks to smuggling and trafficking; because the product on the other side is not available here, due to the fact that the price of the good is lower or that it is of better quality than here; with this, the illegal markets complement them, when it should be the opposite. Its result is the construction of a strategic space that becomes a HUB, as a place of entry and exit of information, services, capital, products and people that come and go from the glocal.

In this case, the different parts that constitute the *urban region* conform an *urban structure* composed of multi-scalar borders (multi-scalar space), of different origin, which come from the social and economic division of space, expressed in the varied nature, where the demarcation line of the adjoining States is one of them.

The location of urban activities in the space forms what is known as zoning, which is nothing more than the land uses of the main activities of each city; in this

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<sup>9</sup> In 2008, a round table discussion was held on urban planning in the cities of Tulcán (Ecuador) and Ipiales (Colombia). The interesting and paradoxical thing: the planning secretaries of the two cities had never met and did not even know each other. Strange, because the determination of the development of one city depends on the other.

<sup>10</sup> Even as a basis for multilateral cooperation, which is of a national nature.

<sup>11</sup> The nation state ceases to be the starting point for the organization of society, because the principle of identity between nation state and society, considered as a unit of analysis closed in itself, is broken (Smith 1979).

case coming from the complementary asymmetry. Thus, for example, on the US-Mexico border, there is a set of armories all along the border, because in the USA the commercialization is legal while in Mexico it is prohibited. In contrast, on the Mexican side, there are pharmacies on a recurrent basis because in the USA the purchase of a medicine has to be made with a prescription, which makes the product more expensive. On the Brazil/Uruguay border, Uruguay has legalized the consumption of marijuana and abortion while Brazil does not, which generates population flows from Brazil for these purposes.

On the other hand, the location of the population in the cities follows the same conditions of residential segregation, to which are added those of nationality. In this way, to the paradigm of intra-urban segregation, the multinational perspective is added, shaping the sense of foreignness, which also exists in Latin American cities,<sup>12</sup> but with more evidence in this case, due to nationality and estrangement.

Additionally, infrastructures, considered the material basis of cities, are in tune with the demands of the transboundary urban region.<sup>13</sup> In this case depends on the meaning and content of the different levels of government (multilevel): at the multinational level, mobility and accessibility (bridges, roads, transportation); at the national level, the state apparatuses with their policies (customs, migration, sovereignty, Armed Forces); and at the local level, with the weight of the furniture sector and services (commerce, banks).

### ***22.3.2 Urban Centrality: Nodal Point of Integration and Projection***

Walter Christaller (1966), in his book on central places, argues that the centrality of a place comes from the hierarchical supply of services and from the attraction of the population, located in its areas of influence or in its market zone (demand), under the costs of distance and transportation. Although Christaller was referring to the city as a whole, there has always been an interpolation to intra-urban central places.

Beyond the criticisms of this definition, it is important to highlight the weight of the relationships that define it. Thus, urban centrality cannot be understood within itself or only under certain attributes, but from the relationships that configure it, in this case, from the offer (centrality) and toward the demand (peripheries). In sum, it is a construction of a relationship of plural content, which comes from the concentration of powers and capitals in the territory that produce a gravitational attraction.

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<sup>12</sup> <http://www.arquitecturatropical.org/EDITORIAL/documents/CARRION%20ESPACIO%20PUBLICO.pdf>.

<sup>13</sup> Thus, for example, if it is a tourist city, it must have hotel infrastructures, restaurants, cultural centers and beaches. If it is a capital city, it must be dominated by those linked to the condition of headquarters of the state apparatus. If it is an industrial city, it must have a density of general production conditions. And so on.

Urban centrality is the expression of urban segregation, that is, of inequality expressed territorially, in the following sense: it is the hierarchical and polarized concentration of central functions in a particular part of the city (center).

In this perspective, it is important to distinguish between the *center*, as a specific space or central place (site), with that of *urban centrality*, which has the property of attraction born of the unequal concentration of functions in the territory. Thus, urban centrality generates an attraction of users and consumers to the center, since it is the place from which this attraction is exerted (gravitational mass).<sup>14</sup> This supposes an articulation of the center (nodes) with its edges (peripheries) through an accessibility (mobility) that ends up shaping all the roads that lead to the center. A key element that constructs and processes inequality in the city space is the price of land. It is the one that segregates and expels activities and people.

In order to understand urban centralities in border cities, it must be recognized that the limit that separates the states behaves as a gravitational center of attraction of the parties, which is possible because its central function is the multinational complementarity of the diverse.

But it is also essential to understand centrality under a dynamic that has a historical trajectory, in which at least it can manifest itself in the following three sequential moments:

- Initially, the cities created their *foundational centrality* when their border condition was not yet foreshadowed as a determining factor, since this interstate functionality did not exist. Their areas of influence were the intra-urban borders and the surrounding rural region.
- Subsequently, with the formation of national States and the delimitation of their territorial boundaries, this centrality added the components of *business centrality* (financial and commercial capital). In this context, a second type of centrality was born, that of a longitudinal nature, located along the border cordon.
- Nowadays, with the globalization process, a third moment is being experienced, in which the centralities incorporate the function of the *upper tertiary*, adopting the sense of *longitudinal centralities of global articulation* (Carrión and Cepeda 2021), in this case, along the boundary zone.

In the border city these three centralities (foundational, business and global) are expressed simultaneously, but under two explicit logics: the *longitudinal* centrality, originated in the border limit, acquires the functional quality of a *flow centrality*, allowing the integration of multinational, adjacent and distant territories. While the second, of *zonal* character (foundational and/or business), is structured on the basis of the privileged location of capital to valorize it and of power to exercise it, inscribed within the national State, forming a *centrality of place*. That is, inscribed in the relationship of flows and places that define urban centralities, according to Borja and Castells (1997). And the two centralities can be cataloged as *historical foundational*

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<sup>14</sup> COVID-19 helps to understand this gravitational condition of urban centrality, since the accounting of cases of infected people according to territorial units, those with a significant expression are their areas of influence.

*centralities*, because they embody a double birth: that of the city cloistered in the national sphere and that of the multinational urban region.

In the two centralities, power and business are concentrated, prioritizing exchange relations promoted by multinational economic agents, both legal and illegal. And, in addition, they combine the central functions of the national and multinational order, which locally manifest transnational inequalities. There are the customs, migratory, territorial sovereignty and symbolic expressions of identity, belonging and nationality functions. These functions are so strong that they generate a level of attraction that promotes very high accessibility, with highways, roads, ports and bridges for multipurpose vehicles (trucks, ships, automobiles), as well as state-of-the-art technology.

The central functions are linked to trade (wholesale, retail), to administration (public, private), to certain services (health, education) and to some productive activities, among which is the *maquiladora industry*. This industry benefits from the complementary asymmetry, since foreign capital is attracted to the other side of the border because from there it can import inputs and export products with tariff benefits, in addition to taking advantage of low salaries and benefiting from the scarce social benefits.

This plural condition of the centralities in the border cities leads to the formation of a *system of centralities*, where one and others are articulated under the modality of a multicentric pattern. In this perspective, an important infrastructure has been developed, especially in transportation, which allows important accessibility with its peripheries and integration of the different centralities.

However, the complexity of this reality has led certain key actors to turn their backs on them, to the extreme of denying their existence.<sup>15</sup> Historically, societies ignore the origin of cities—that is, their history—which could be defined as *urban patricide* (Carrión 2010), which can lead to a decentralization or relative loss of centrality (Carrión 2010).

The longitudinal centrality—that of flows—is not recognized as such, because it is conceived as a space of separation and not of integration. And the centrality of places is undergoing a process of abandonment and stigmatization by the elites, due to the concentration of low standard commerce, the residential location of popular sectors and the promotion of informality in every sense. In both centralities, mobility is a key issue, which has turned these centralities into zones of high migration with global contact; as well as a plurinational form of integration of the urban region.

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<sup>15</sup> Just as the existence of a multinational urban region was denied, because of the emphasis on the sense of the national, in this case the historical origin is denied, because capital is interested in the speed of its rotation and the elites in its comfort.

### 22.3.3 *Areas of Influence: The Plurinational Sense*

Centrality and its areas of influence are part of the urban structure and should be understood as two unequal forms of specialization of activities and people in space. Between one and the other there is a close relationship, where centrality creates a network of interaction, under a gravitational logic. This relationship has changed throughout history, giving rise to the presence of old and new centralities and peripheries, at least in the following three periods:

- The first, in the context of a small city with low mobility demands, the areas of influence of its centralities are located, on the one hand, within the city itself, in what could be defined as its urban edges or peripheries (suburbs). And, on the other hand, the surrounding rural structure or hinterland (countryside-city).
- The second, when national States are formed, the area of influence of centrality expands and changes, extending to the other side of the border, to build an inter-urban logic based on a multicentric condition. In other words, to the intra-urban peripheries and those inscribed in the rural sphere, this inter-border periphery is added, with which the logic of expansion and the urban stain are questioned.
- And third, when the multi-scale and multilevel transboundary logic penetrates, the centralities and their peripheries are configured within the global/local and flows/places referents (Borja and Castells 1977). This makes the peripheries, in a way, ex-central, because they acquire a relative autonomy from the centralities. The dormitory city is one of its evident expressions, because it is defined by a meaninglessness: there are no monofunctional cities. In this perspective, a centrality located on the other side can become the periphery of the other and vice versa.

Centrality for labor, services, administrative activities or commercial reasons can be developed within one or several states, depending on their gravitational mass. In general, the attraction of the centrality of the other side has to do with issues related to complementary asymmetries, while the one that develops in the national space is related to daily and less specialized issues. In other words, the inhabitant chooses the centrality to which to go, while its location has a more nationalistic sense and more typical of residential segregation.

What does happen, following Wacquant (2007), is that territorial stigmas are built, where one of the key elements is xenophobia, which leads to the dilution of the sense of citizenship within cities and strengthens the sense of foreignness.



## 22.4 Conclusions

Nowadays, the borders are part of a global border system, where their cities are the core poles of multinational articulation, because they have been able to generate a solid economy (legal and illegal), an important urbanization process, a strengthening of local powers and close transboundary links.

For this reason and in this context, mirror cities, pairs or twins, as cities deduced from methodological nationalism, fall into disuse to give way to the creation of *multinational urban regions*. This new territorial order questions the institutional frameworks and traditional government policies, in order to begin to rethink them from an integrated local-border-global perspective.

The urban region becomes the center of gravity of the global border system, because it acts as the pole or pivot of the equation, becoming the articulating element of the economy and life on the border, as well as the fundamental link that articulates national economies with international ones. In this perspective, the transurban is the definitive element, thanks to the fact that the centralities and their areas of influence acquire a multinational condition, behaving, one and the other, alternately.

In this way, the linkages between cities occur over and above the relations between nations, sustained by new migratory flows, communication technologies and legal and illegal markets. Thus, cities located in distant territories are integrated by economy, culture, society and technology.

These structural mutations result in the unprecedented protagonism achieved by the border regions with respect to the national States, thanks to the greater political autonomy deduced from decentralization, economic growth, population increase and the new form of national integration, originating from the pluri-state urban regions.

In terms of the innovation of the governments of these territories, some iconic and instructive examples should be highlighted. There are the cases of Ciudad Juarez (Mexico) and El Paso (USA) that think of a dual management metropolitan area. There are also the agreements for the formation of commonwealths between Tulcán (Ecuador) and Ipiales (Colombia) for solid waste management.<sup>16</sup> Something more ambitious are the cases of the Trifinio (Honduras, El Salvador, Guatemala), in which international cooperation, national governments and 45 municipalities of the three countries are involved. Likewise, on the border between Peru and Ecuador, there is a group of municipalities working in the same direction, especially after the signing of the Peace Accords in 1998, thanks to international and national cooperation.

Internally, these urban regions have borders deduced from the unequal location of activities, inhabitants and services, as well as from the demarcation line of the states (multinational). This is how intra-urban borders have historically been constructed in border cities, a conceptual statement that makes reference to the title of this article.

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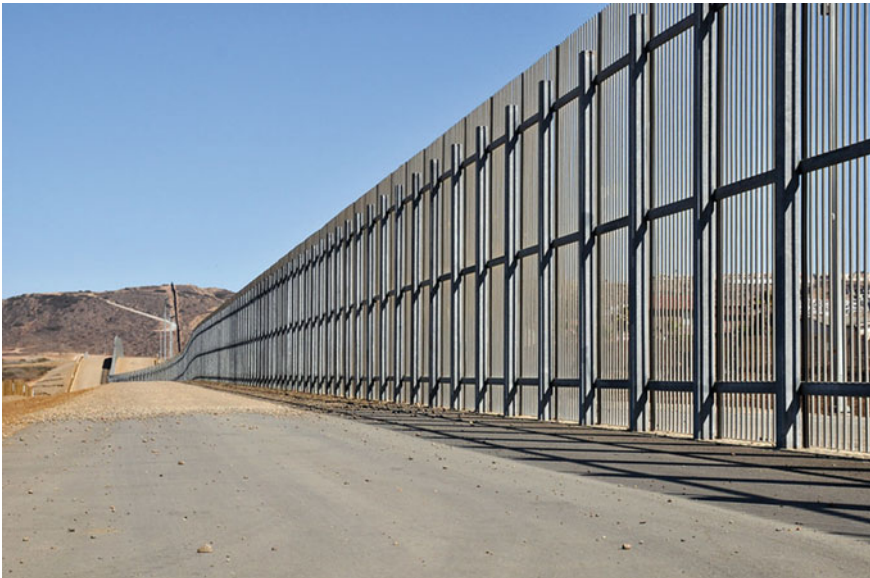
<sup>16</sup> Something complex because the United Nations prohibits the final deposit of solid waste produced in a different State. In this case, it has been surpassed by the proposal to capture a larger scale of garbage for recycling.

Something that should be emphasized: the centralities and their areas of influence have a unique dynamic, which makes them behave nationally interchangeable, because in some cases they can behave as an area of influence and in others as a center, which makes the borders of border cities to be itinerant, therefore, as well as their intra-urban limits.

Something that should also be emphasized in a particular way: the centralities and their areas of influence have a unique dynamic, which makes them behave in a nationally interchangeable way, because at some moments they can behave as an area of influence and at others as a centrality, which makes the centralities of border cities itinerant, just like their intra-urban limits.

However, these links do not develop without conflicts, because they represent new relationships of power, even more if the borders begin to have a greater political weight. But also of violence and illegalities (smuggling, trafficking), because of the characteristics of the asymmetry they provoke, which leads these regions to have homicide rates significantly higher than national averages (Carrión and Gotsbacher 2021).

These negative processes increased with COVID-19 and the policies promoted to counteract it. Borders were closed which increased inequalities due to the strong emphasis placed on national government. As a result, local functions were redefined to the benefit of national power or, in other words, generation shifted to the center, which ended up by increasing illegality and violence, as well as harming the health of border inhabitants, especially the most vulnerable (pre-existing diseases).



**Fig. 22.8** The Wall U.S. and Mexico. *Source* Jonathan McIntosh. Licensed under CC BY-NC-SA 2.0

In structural terms, COVID-19 introduced a process of re-frontierization, at a time when there had been much progress toward inter-border integration. But it also accelerated, with the return of criticism of globalization and the repositioning of nationalist visions, which once again positioned the concept of the border as a protective shield against external threats (Lara-Valencia and García-Pérez 2021).

And the paradox: with it, it seeks to go against the historical processes of integration, building not only ideological walls, but also physical ones, both within cities and between neighboring countries (Fig. 22.8). Undoubtedly, methodological nationalism is a real danger and a bet against history.

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