The Right to the City as a conceptual framework to study the impact of North-South Migration

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Abstract

In this article, I explore the phenomenon of North-South migration from the point of view of receiving countries and the impacts of this kind of migration in city centers. I use Lefebvre’s concept of right to the city as the framework to understand the transformations of city centers, yet I argue that it does not adequately address all forms of unequal power, such as those based on inhabitants’ distinct nationalities. In the context of North-South migration, unequal power based on certain nationalities represents a fundamental characteristic of the social practices and of the process of production of urban space, and puts the foreign resident population in a privileged position to exercise the right to the city over (or vis--vis) local residents. More generally I pose the question: who has the right to the city? To begin to answer this question, I include results from a case study in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, which is a tourist destination, a designated UNESCO World Heritage city, and has a history of foreign settlement.

Keys Words: Lifestyle Migration, Production of space, San Miguel de Allende

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Introduction

Discussing the impacts of North-South migration in terms of the right to the city constitutes a proposal to position the debate within the agenda of urban social movements. Since the 1990s, the right to the city has been the base of numerous urban social movements in Latin America, as in other parts of the world, to demand a better social, economic, environmental and spatial justice. Additionally, it includes different international campaigns, conferences and seminars that have encouraged the materialization of the right in concrete urban policies (e.g. The City Statute in Brazil in 2001, the Montreal Letter of Rights and Responsibilities in 2006, or the present discussion about Mexico Citys Letter for the Right to the City) (Habitat International Coalition, 2005). Perhaps the most recognized proposal would be the World Letter for the Right to the City that comes from discussions at different World Social Forums since 2002. Although I want to clarify that the current conception of the right to the city does not necessarily correspond fully with the original idea of philosopher Henri Lefebvre I am presenting it as a framework to evaluate the impacts of North South migration.

North-South migration is a growing phenomenon with significant impacts on host societies. This article is a theoretical proposal to analyze them from an urban perspective, studying the host cities transformations in poor countries. My ultimate goal is to explain how this type of migration is connected with the current development of global capitalism, and how it affects local-native populations lives in terms of social inclusion and exclusion. City transformations, both physical and economic, allow me to explore how people experience this global phenomenon locally. According to Michael P. Smith (2002), cities are considered as local sites of cultural appropriation, accommodation, and resistance to global conditions as

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2 In 2005’s letter version, the right to the city is defined as “the equitable usufruct of cities within the principles of sustainability, democracy, equity, and social justice. It is the collective right of the inhabitants of cities, in particular of the vulnerable and marginalized groups, that confers upon them legitimacy of action and organization, based on their uses and customs, with the objective to achieve full exercise of the right to free self-determination and an adequate standard of living. The Right to the City is interdependent of all internationally recognized and integrally conceived human rights, and therefore includes all the civil, political, economic, social, cultural and environmental rights which are already regulated in the international human rights treaties” (UNESCO-SHS, 2005, World Charter on the Right to the City).
North-South migration is linked to the international capital market, since the settlement of immigrants attracts the arrival of foreign direct investment. The most visible investments are made in real estate and service (e.g. tourism, banking or commercial) sectors, and can be large or small in scale. I argue that small foreign investments made in previous decades in foreign settlement cities have served as an investment pole to large contemporary ones. Such is the case of San Miguel de Allende, Mexico as presented in this article. A historic foreign settlement since the 1940s, San Miguel de Allende is now an important tourist destination and a UNESCO World Cultural Heritage City. The arrival of foreigners to San Miguel began in the late 1940s with the GI Bill program, which offered scholarships for art studies to World War II and Korean War veterans at a newly founded art institute named the Institute Allende. During the 1950s and 1960s the schools summer courses attracted thousands of youth, mostly from the United States and Canada. Many of them stayed to live and work in town, turning the city into an international hub for creative activity. Since the 1980s, the number of tourists has increased. Retirees and U.S. businessmen were attracted to San Miguel by US media promotions that presented the city as an ideal place to visit, retire and invest (Yasui & Milln, 2005). These newcomers invested principally in restaurants, hotels, spas, real estate, furniture sales and handicrafts, according to the City Hall Economic Development Director (Personnel interview, June 4, 2008). For local historian Cesar Arias, during 1980s and 1990s investment and business initiatives were smaller and had a more local character than current ones (Personal interview, December 7, 2008). Currently, large real estate, tourism and commercial projects are being developed with investment from multinational firms such as Rosewood (hotels, resorts and real estate), Orient Express (luxury hotels), Wal-Mart (department stores) and BBVA (bank). There has been a growth in urban development since 1998, followed by a boom in malls and the service sector since 2004, according to City Hall Economic Development Director (Personnel interview, June 4, 2008).
The total number of foreign residents residing in San Miguel de Allende is difficult to establish. According to information provided by the City Hall Secretary, there are between 12,000 and 16,000 foreigners residing in the city, 70% of which come from the USA (Texas, New York, Illinois and some from California), 20% from Canada and the rest from Europe, Central and South America. Between 11,000 and 13,000 foreigners live in the municipal capital and the rest reside in the outskirts. The foreign community represents about 10% of the municipality’s total population, which was 134,880 inhabitants according to the 2000 census. But if one takes into account only the municipal capitals population, consisting of 59,691 inhabitants according to census, the foreign community represents between 18 and 21% (Personal interview, December 2, 2008). As of January 2010, City Hall has sent out a call to the foreign community, both temporary and permanent residents, to ask them to register with the census. 3

It is impossible to know the actual number of foreign residents, since an official registry does not exist in Mexico which accounts for the entrance flows of migrants from developed areas. This contrasts with labor migration (South-North) for which there is continually a greater

3 http://sanmiguelallende.gob.mx/ong/ongeng.html
number of improved systems of registry and control. On the contrary, North-South migration represents an undercounted phenomenon in receiving countries. The population census, for example, is not accurate and under-registers the number of foreign residents that live in these areas. Furthermore, the migration authorities are not obligated to supervise this type of international movement. In Mexico and Central America, US, Canadian and European immigrants do not need a visa to enter the country if they stay for less than six months. These residents are permitted to reside all year as tourists on the condition that they make only one trip (every six months) to renew their tourist card.4

There are several ways to study the impact of North-South migration on the city, such as through real estate market expansion or growing residential segregation. The service sector represents another more subtle way to study segregation (social, economic, and spatial). North-South migration involves foreigners’ residence in host cities and therefore implies shared use of the town services, both public and private, among local and foreign communities (oriented to consumption, to work, to leisure, to culture, etc.). Moreover, it should be noted that recent foreign investments were triggered by expats in order to provide themselves several services. Hence the service sector offers the opportunity of studying the relationship between foreign and local communities, especially in the town center since it has historically been the central place for socialization, consumption and leisure. Relations between the foreign and local communities occur not only on the material level (relative to investment, consumption, employment or income, for example), but also on the symbolic level since they are shaped by particular social representations and imaginaries. Social imaginary is constructed from the treatment each person gives to subjective perceptions. In each individual imaginary construction several factors are involved, e.g. prior knowledge acquired from interaction with different persons in a given social context, and especially the media inasmuch as it encourages collective feelings. Categories like race, class, ethnicity and gender are essential to take into account since they

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4 In my research, I distinguish between migrants and tourists. According to O'Reilly (2000: 52-53) migrants can be residents or visitors. The criteria for differentiating is based on a combination of 1) their own feelings of commitment and inclination towards one country or another (feelings of belonging) and 2) the amount of time that they spend in one place of residence or another. The author establishes four types of migrants: full residents (spend all year in the destination country); returned residents (spend 7-10 months in their destination country, and 2-5 months in their country of origin); seasonal visitors (2-6 months in their destination country, and 6-10 months in their country of origin); and peripatetic visitors (they have no pattern or routine, they come and go constantly between countries).
raise the question of power relations between foreign and local communities. In short, studying the service sector allows us to analyze downtown transformation, asking for example: What physical and economic changes occur in downtown? How do the foreign and local communities use the city center spaces?, How is this space governed?, What is the participation of each community in decision making regarding downtown changes? All of these questions can be included in the more general question: who has the right to the city?

This paper offers a theoretical framework to understand downtown transformations in North-South migrations receiving cities and advances some preliminary results from my fieldwork research in San Miguel de Allende. It should be noted that this paper is a small component of a larger study, so the results presented here do not provide a complete picture of the phenomenon. The structure of the paper is as follows: First, I discuss the lifestyle migration concept and its pertinence for North-South migration. I move on to explore current research on North-South migration and argue that it lacks detailed information about the impacts on receiving countries. Then I explore Lefebvre’s main contributions related to his conceptualization of space: the three dimensional process of the production of space; the social power intervening in the conformation of a specific space known as abstract space; and his notion of the right to the city. Next, I briefly explain my methodology for this case study including the results of this research in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico, followed by concluding comments.

**Lifestyle or North-South Migration?**

North-South migration involves people from developed countries moving either temporarily or permanently to poorer countries. This type of migration is not new, as it dates back to colonial times. However, in its contemporary form, it constitutes a phenomenon in growth since the last few decades of the 20th century (MPI, 2006; BBVA, 2007).

This type of migration, according to Michaela Benson and Karen O Reilly (2009), takes on a form of *lifestyle migration*, a term the authors coined for the displacement of relatively affluent individuals of all ages that move, either part-time or full-time, to places that for various reasons represent an improved quality of life. These displacements include, for example, north European citizens moving to the Mediterranean coasts (Spain, Malta, Italy, Greece, and Turkey), European and North American owners of second homes in Eastern Europe, and
European migrants to Morocco. But it also includes the movements I call North-South migration, like Americans who move to Mexico and Central America, Japanese migrants to Malaysia, and 'westerners' to Thailand.

Lifestyle migration would encompass, Benson and O'Reilly (2009) propose, other concepts that are currently used to try to encapsulate these migratory phenomenon (e.g. retirement, elderly or later life migration, second home ownership, intra-European migration, north-south migration, seasonal migration, temporary migration), inasmuch as the interest in searching for a better quality of life would be the fundamental feature that defines lifestyle migration. For O'Reilly (2007), this is a new migration, different from traditional colonial migrations because of the motivations and the objective conditions that enable it. She suggests that, even in the case of young migrants of working age, their move is not motivated by the search of work - work is the means to an end (3).

However, the appropriateness of applying the term lifestyle migration to the context of North-South migration should be examined. According to O'Reilly, the quality of "new migration" is determined only from the point of view of sending countries. But it is necessary to include the viewpoint of recipient countries, and for this reason I propose that the impacts on receiving societies must be considered as the key feature in the evaluation of lifestyle migration. This will call into question how such migration is distinct (specifically when the destination is a poorer country) from colonial era migrations.

North-South migration impacts on receiving countries

North-South migration has been under-documented until recently, although it constitutes a growing phenomenon supported by empirical evidence such as the large volume of websites, forums and publicity on the Internet designed to encourage living in countries such as Panama, Mexico, Guatemala, the Dominican Republic, Costa Rica, Belize, Malaysia or Thailand. In contrast, existing research is still scarce and very recent, as one can appreciate in the following table which contains examples of studies that investigate the flows of migration from North to South:
Table 1: North-South migration studies according to region

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Region</th>
<th>Authors</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Latin America</td>
<td>Mexico: Young (1997); Palma (1999, 2004); Truly (2002); Banks (2004); Migration Policy Institute (2006); Sunil, Rojas &amp; Bradley (2007); Croucher (2007); Lizárraga (2008a, 2008b, 2008c); Hiernaux (2009); González &amp; Santana (2009); Clausen y Velázquez (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Panama: Migration Policy Institute (2006); McWatters (2008); Myers (2009); Jackiewicz (2010); Benson (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Costa Rica</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Belize: Jackiewicz (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asia</td>
<td>Turkey: Nudrali &amp; Tamer (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>India: Korpela (2010)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Malaysia: Ono (2010)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Africa</td>
<td>Morocco: Gil de Arriba (2011)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>South Africa: Wishitemi, Masila &amp; Odiara (2009)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

Much more empirical research is required in destination countries to understand the kinds of impacts that North-South migration has for them. The majority of research until now has focused on describing the phenomenon (sociodemographic and socioeconomic profile, motivation, daily practices, relationship with tourism, etc.) and studying its implications for these migrants and their countries of origin (as in the case of authors mentioned in Table 1). However, studies that address the issue of impacts are few, and those that do explore them are not very rigorous, merely listing the possible effects, at least in economic terms (e.g. Koch-
Schulte 2008, in the case of westerners that migrate to Thailand; Puga 2008, in reference to retired persons in Costa Rica; or Lizrraga 2008a, and Young 1997, for the case of North Americans in Mexico); some even take the migrants own perceptions about the impact of their arrival as a source of information (e.g. Migration Policy Institute, 2006).

North-South migration can have very different impacts on host countries, affecting their economic, social, cultural and political structures. In economic terms, the arrival of foreign residents can affect the volume of income transfers, flow of investment and job creation, real-estate market and consumer prices, trade and service sectors (leisure, health and personal care, education); all of which in turn alter the competition between cities to attract this type of migration (Koch-Schulte, 2011; Janoschka, 2011; Gil de Arriba, 2011). At the social level, these effects can modify conditions of social inclusion and exclusion for the local population, change ethnic composition of neighborhoods and affect the process of spatial and economic segregation (Clausen & Velzquez, 2011; Janoschka, 2011). North-South migration can also increase the number of local social service organizations and promotes the establishment of transnational social networks. Culturally, it can introduce new practices of social life, new religions, new services and recreation activities, the adoption of foreign language in everyday life both in public and private spheres, or a differentiated media for each community of residents (Truly, 2002; Hiernaux, 2009; Nudrali & Tamer, 2011). Finally, the political realm can be affected both in its governmental power structures as well as in the configuration of private interests (Clausen & Velzquez, 2011; Harwood & Zapata, 2006).

The context of reception in host cities is fundamental to assess the impacts of North-South migration. This implies a consideration of the particularity of different physical and economic structures, their historical development and their social problems. For example, management of foreign settlements on the part of the Mexican government would need to be different from the Panamanian one, due to the formers larger territory. The reception context also includes the relationship, both historical and present, between receiving and sending countries.

North-South migration has repercussions on different levels, including supranational, state and local. Migration policy changes are made at the state level; for instance, various Central American and Caribbean countries have adopted special policies to attract a particular type of immigrant (especially retirees or investors). Some Central American countries already
had policies to attract these immigrants some decades ago, like Nicaragua (Decreto N 628 de 1974), Panam (Ley N 7293 de 1987) and Costa Rica (Ley N 4812 de 1971). However, in recent years more countries have issued new laws or renewed them to encourage the immigration of foreign retirees. For example, in 2004 the Honduran government updated the Decree Law 93-91 of 1991 and the Dominican Republic issued the Law 171-07 in 2007. By contrast, in 1992, Costa Rica abolished all incentives. All these laws have three incentives in common: 1) import tax exemption for household goods, 2) tax exemption to import or purchase a vehicle (every five years, with the exception of Panama, which lets you import a new vehicle every two years), and 3) exemption from income tax for amounts reported as income.

At the local level, the impacts of migration are reflected in the transformation of cities. The city constitutes an appropriate scale for evaluating impacts of North-South migration since it provides an opportunity to analyze the connections between global processes and local practices experienced on a daily basis. For this reason, my conceptual framework is based on Lefebvre’s theory of production of space.

Social space

The transformation of the city occurs not only in the material or the constructed domain, but also in symbolic and cultural ones. All of them involve individual social relations defined by power relations. As Lefebvre argues (1991), the city is not only a physical, but a social space as well that is produced by social practices. The city is inevitably shaped by social relations, while at the same time it constitutes the stage where they are performed:

Social space contains and assigns 1) the social relations of reproduction, i.e. the bio-physiological relations between the sexes and between age groups, along with the specific organization of the family; and 2) the relations of production, i.e. the division of labour and its organization in the form of hierarchical social functions (32) (italics in the original).

Additionally, according to Lefebvre, the city is not only shaped by social relations but by representations of interactions. They are symbolic representations that serve to maintain these social relations in a state of coexistence and cohesion (1991: 32). Therefore, to understand transformations of a city due to North-South migration, all material, social, and symbolical dimensions must be taken into account.
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On the other hand, the city has to be understood as a set of different activity fields, intersecting and superimposed on each other in the material physical realm, in the same way as economic, social, political, cultural or environmental realms. For instance, a new housing development (physical realm) entails certain investment decisions (economic realm) as well as land use policies (political realm) which have social, cultural and environmental implications. Each one of these activity fields constitutes a social space. As maintained by Lefebvre:

We are confronted not by one social space but by many indeed, by unlimited multiplicity or uncountable set of social spaces which we refer to generically as *social space* (1991: 86) (italics in the original).

All spaces of the city are transformed in the North South migration context. Regular spaces of consumption, work, leisure or investment change due to the arrival of foreign residents, to cite some examples. In order to understand the transformation of these spaces it is necessary to address the way they have been produced. That is another reason why Lefebvre's concept of the production of space becomes useful.

Production of space

According to Lefebvre (1991), the social practices of individuals produce space by three dialectically related dimensions:

1. *(Material) spatial practices:* refer to the association of perceived space between daily reality (daily routines) and urban reality (the routes and networks that connect places for work, private life, and leisure. They are the physical and material flows, transfers, and interactions that assure social production and reproduction.

2. *Representation of space:* is the way scientists, planners, urbanists, technocrats, and social engineers, and certain types of artists conceive space. They are permitted to understand the material practices and identify that which is real and perceived with that which is conceived. These representations work in different ways from signs, codes, knowledge or meanings that can be verbal or material.

3. *Spaces of Representation:* is lived directly through their associated symbols and images (codes, spatial discourses, utopian projects, but also include material constructions such as symbolic spaces, specifically built environments, pictures, museums, etc.). It is the space of inhabitants and users, but also of some artists, such as writers and
philosophers that describe spatial practices, but also imagine new meanings and possibilities for them.

Social space includes, therefore, not only the concrete materiality, but also the thought that conceives it and the experience that lives it. San Miguel de Allende’s food service sector, for example, could be defined as a case in point of Lefebvre’s social space. It includes the entirety of food establishments in downtown (restaurants, fast food shops and informal food stalls), and involves spatial practices corresponding to each matrix dimension, such as:

- Material spatial practices: Flows of money due to consumption, investment to set up restaurants, flows of labor, daily leisure routines, restaurant appearance, and ownership of the buildings.
- Representation of space: Number and location of each facility type, use and restricted access, land use plans and permits, advertising and tourist promotion strategies, signposting.
- Spaces of representation: ways of presenting through media, press articles, language use as symbolic access barrier, historical and urban interpretations in books and works of art.

Social space, in addition to being produced, is a means of control, domination and power. Those who can influence the spatial distribution of investments (e.g., transports, communications, physical and social infrastructure) or the territorial distribution of administrative, political and economic powers, often obtain material benefits from it (Harvey, 1998: 259). Accordingly, it is essential to consider the mediators and power brokers involved in the production process of space, to which Lefebvre introduced the concept of abstract space.

**Abstract space**

Abstract space is the space represented by the social elites as a homogeneous, instrumental, and ahistorical space, whose purpose is to facilitate the exercise of state power and the free flow of capital (McCann, 1999). It is opposed to the social space, because it refers to the hierarchical space of political rulers, economic interests and planners who wish to control social organization by the intersection of knowledge and power. In contrast, social space arises from the practice of everyday lived experience by all members of society, even the rulers (Gottdiener, 1993: 131). That is why Lefebvre differentiates between producing and using space: The producers of space have always acted in accordance with a representation,
The media plays an important role in shaping a particular kind of abstract space, since it controls the social imagination (representational spaces), transmits the ideology of power and builds consensus (Lefebvre, 1991).

The conceptual framework presented above must be completed with another of Lefebvre's concepts to more accurately assess the implications of North-South migrations. This is the right to the city. It emphasizes power relations between inhabitants that determine the possibilities for different groups to shape spaces in the city.

**The Right to the city**

According to Lefebvre, the right to the city is earned by living in the city, regardless of the person's place of origin or their nationality. The practices of daily life are central to the right to the city; those who go about their daily routines in the city, both living in and creating urban space, are those who possess a legitimate right to the city (Purcell, 2003: 577). This gives inhabitants two fundamental rights: the right to appropriation and the right to participation (Purcell, 2003).

The **right to appropriation** refers to the right of inhabitants to full and complete use of the urban space in the course of their daily lives. It assumes the right to live, work, represent, characterize, and occupy the city. For Lefebvre, the city should be thought of as a work of art, that means the city and the urban space are conceived of as a creative product and the context for the everyday life of its inhabitants.

The **right to participation** gives inhabitants the right to play a central role in the process of making decisions that surround the production of urban space. It implies participation at any scale of decision-making, whether the state (national, regional or local), capital, or any other entity which takes part in the production of urban space.

Lefebvre's conception of the right to the city is essentially based on class relations. It reflects his concerns about the lack of working class power in Paris in the late 1960s, when this group was being expelled from the city center. The right to the city was a response that sought
to "restructure the power relations underlying the production of urban space, mainly by transferring control from the capital and the state towards the inhabitants" (Purcell, 2002: 101-102). However, it does not challenge other relations of power (e.g. ethnicity, nationality, culture, or gender) that also affect the possibility of realizing the right to use and the right to participate in the city (Fenster, 2005; Miraftab, 2011). This is of paramount importance in the context of North-South migration where unequal power relations based on nationality represent a fundamental characteristic of the social practices and relations that are established in receiving cities. I am not considering the importance of nationality in an abstracted manner, but rather as the place that different social groups’ nationalities have in the global ranking of countries.

I hypothesize that power relations based on nationality put the foreign resident population in a privileged position to exercise the right to the city over local residents. More generally, I propose the question of who has the right to the city? Raising this question in terms of the social space of food establishments in downtown can help achieve an answer. In this regard some specific questions must be resolved, e.g. what types of establishments are the most numerous and since when, who controls them, and to whom are they targeted? Which type of urban planning are they based upon? What image of the city is created by the entirety of these establishments?

Methodological approach

The object of my investigation is the transformation of the town center in San Miguel de Allende between 1990 and 2010. The downtown was selected because its architectural wealth is central to the tourism industry as it represents the symbolical center of religious, political and economic realms, and has historically been the central place for consumption, leisure and socialization. Downtown is a geographic area, bounded by the area delineated for World Heritage designation. The period of analysis coincides with the time period of major growth in the number of foreign residents that arrived in the town, according to information provided by a City Hall employee and local resident. My unit of analysis is the entirety of food establishments in downtown, including: a) restaurants; b) fast food shops (pizza, sandwich, roasted chicken, etc.); and c) informal food stalls (tacos, gorditas, etc.). The sample includes every one of the establishments in these areas. I chose this unit of analysis inasmuch as San Miguel de Allende is a tourist city, the food service sector, especially restaurants, constitutes a fundamental pillar

5 Information provided during personnel interview by the City Hall Economic Development Director on June 4, 2008; by a local historian on December 7, 2008; and by a foreign resident on June 21, 2008)
of the local tourism economy. In the other hand, food service is a social activity exercised by all social groups in the city and caters to local-native and foreign residents, as well as tourists. Thus, the food service sector allows studying the relationship between foreign and local communities. Thereby, the whole set of downtown food establishments could be defined as a case in point of Lefebvre’s social space, on which I can analyze its three dimensions of the production of space. Ultimately, it is used as a lens to view the changing nature of the city in the face of changes to migrant patterns.

I use a combination of qualitative and quantitative tools that grasp the transformation of the town center, applying several research techniques to cover these three dimensions (perceived, conceived and lived):

1. **Related to material spatial practices:** I examine changes in the location of each type of establishment, the targeted customer, the type of investment, the profile of the business owner as well as changes in the owner of the premises.
   - **Mapping and census:** census was taken and food establishments mapped
   - **Extensive Questionnaire:** applied to restaurant owners (with both closed and open questions). It seeks information on five topics: type of investment, type of customers, income generation to local economy, relation with local agents, and building history. Type of investment includes the following three dimensions: scale of investment (according to amount, geographical origin of capital, and sources of finance); investor profile (based on socio-demographic data, migration pattern, motivations for establishing business, and foreign skills); and business characterization (size, profitability, impact of the economic crisis, average number of customers, success factors and type of food). Type of customers comprises variables relating to customer profile (depending on geographical origin, age, companionship, and income level); customer type changes; and high seasons periods. Income generation to local economy comprises two dimensions: food supplies and job creation. Relation with local agents uses information on

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6 In 2004, the contribution of restaurants and bars to the Mexican Tourist GDP was 23.5% (only surpassed by transportation activities with 34.1%) and it was the tourist activity that provided the highest volume of employment (40% of the total) (INEGI, 2006: 189)
membership of entrepreneurial and civic associations; obstacles during restaurant opening; and desirable government support. Building history includes information about current and previous owners of the premises, zoning changes, and ending of residential use in premises and buildings.

- **Bibliographic review**: of business directories, since 1990, for historical evolution of volume and type of establishments.
- **Compilation of transfer of ownership**: of all properties where restaurant and fast food shops are located, through information provided by municipal land title office.

2. **Related to the representation of space**:
   - **Bibliographic review**: of documents produced by city council (land use plans, maps, regulations of services and land uses).
   - **Interviews**: with city council officials, business representatives and business owners.

3. **Related to spaces of representation**:
   - **Library material review**: newspaper articles and advertisements

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**Research Results from San Miguel de Allende**

Here I present some results from the research, which is ongoing. As such, I refer only to data corresponding to material spatial practices and concerning the evolution of restaurants. Nevertheless, the research also includes three other more issues of analysis: public policies addressing migration, foreign investment and urban planning, that correspond to institutional level; the ways the host community is imagined and represented by foreigners in local media and advertising, in relation to the symbolic level; and the daily relationship between communities through certain practices in public space, including some forms of resistance developed by the local community.

The analysis of the food service sector was elaborated using census data, mapping of the locations of different types of eating establishments, and the application of an extensive questionnaire to restaurant owners. In this early presentation of results I refer first to the types of establishments, then comment on the spatial distribution of each and close with a brief analysis of the restaurants and their evolution from 1990-2010.
Type of establishments

The local authorities and institutions in San Miguel de Allende (City Hall, Tourist Office, and National Chamber of the Restaurant Industry CANIRAC, in Spanish) do not count certain data nor update the number of food service establishments in the center of the city. As a consequence, during July of 2009 I assembled a census of each type of establishment to later be able to situate them on a map. There were a total of 221 food service establishments in the area declared as the World Heritage site. According to establishment type, there were 96 restaurants, 91 fast food establishments, and 34 informal food stalls. The membership of each type of establishment depends on the criteria detailed in table 2:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Restaurant</th>
<th>Has a permanent location and is not inside a market.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type of food: a la carte, breakfast, dinner, daily menu specials, or buffet.</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Fast food shop</th>
<th>Has a permanent location inside or outside a market.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type of food: sandwich, rotisserie chicken, pizza, daily menu specials (only when inside a market), tacos, burritos, or any other type of Mexican specialties.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Food stall</th>
<th>Does not have a permanent location (carts, or any other type of provisional stall)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Type of food: tacos, gorditas, or any other type of Mexican specialties.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author

The food service sector in San Miguel is very dynamic, a trait that translates into great variability in the number of establishments that can change from one month to the next. As an example, I returned in November and December 2009 to complete follow-up interviews and found that five restaurants had closed, three new ones had opened, two had changed owners and one had moved to a different location. I also found that one new fast food establishment had opened and
three had closed. In my most recent follow-up in January 2010, I found three new fast food establishments and another restaurant that had changed location.

**Spatial Distribution**

The area declared a Historical Monument zone and additionally, a surrounding buffer zone, comprise the World Heritage site in San Miguel. The National Institute of Anthropology and History (INAH) catalogued the Historical Monuments zone through a declaration of the Historic Center as far back as 1982, so it has been traditionally protected until it was extended by the UNESCO declaration in 2008. Such a zone has three perimeters: Core Zone (A), Buffer 1 (B1) and Buffer 2 (B2). Inside the Core Zone is where the majority of historic monuments are situated and distributed around two plazas. First, the Jardin Principal, unites the ecclesiastical (Parroquia), civil (County Seat), and commercial venues (Portal de Guadalupe and Portal Juarez), representing the heart of the city. This continues as an important meeting place for the resident population and also for tourists. The other plaza, called the Plaza Civica, was constructed in 1555 and formerly was the principal center of activity for inhabitants, including commerce. Currently, it constitutes one of the main meeting places for the local population, with fewer foreign residents and tourists, unlike the Jardin Principal. The B1 perimeter was previously a buffer zone for the Core Zone and contains two important markets for the city: the Ignacio Ramirez market and the San Juan de Dios market. The first represents a traditional San Miguel market, whose surroundings are concentrated traditionally on commerce. The second was constructed in the 1980s after the traditional market suffered from a fire. The B2 perimeter was the other buffer zone for the Core zone and is currently a residential zone.
Map 1: Map of San Miguel de Allende, indicating the location of restaurants, fast food and informal stalls

Source: Author, based on a map provided by San Miguel de Allende City Hall, pertaining to the Partial Plan for the Historic Center (PPCH) 2008
The three types of establishments that offer food services (restaurants, fast food shops and food stalls) are distributed over the entire area declared as the World Heritage site, as indicated in the Map 1. 75% of restaurants are situated in the Core Zone (A) of the Historic Monument zone. The remaining 25% are distributed throughout the principal transportation routes (Insurgentes Street, Canal Street, and Zacateros Street). The fast food shops are concentrated in Buffer B1, around the Ignacio Ramirez market (37%), San Juan de Dios market (37%), and the Plaza Civica (20%). As shown in the map, both markets are situated on the margin of the Historical Monument Zone that is reserved for restaurants. The informal food stalls can be found dispersed throughout the entire town center, although there are three points of concentration: 1) along major transportation routes (Insurgentes Street has 21% and Canal has 9% of all stalls); 2) in the Jardin Principal (12%); and 3) near bus stops (in front of the Oratorio Temple has 9% and the end of Zacateros has 12%).

Analysis of the restaurants

I applied an extensive questionnaire to the owners of restaurants during July 2009. I obtained 88 interviews out of a total of 96 restaurants (91.6%). Interviews lasted between 20 and 30 minutes and were carried out in Spanish (80) and English (8), according to the preference of the interviewee. The questionnaire focused on five topics developed through a series of questions covering a wide range of variables. These topics were type of investment, type of customers, income generation to local economy, relationship with local agents, and building history. Here I advance some findings considering only the following variables: number of openings in each sub-period, the nationality of the owner, type of clients, and profile of the owners of the premise. These results, although partial, allow me to outline the evolution of restaurants during the given period.

The number of restaurant openings accelerated considerably in the last few years. Between 2005 and 2009, 34 restaurants opened, which represents 40% of the current total, while during each of the previous sub-periods (prior to 1990, 1990-1999, and 2000-2004) only 18 restaurants opened, respectively.

Currently 70% of the owners are Mexican, however, just one third of the owners are originally from San Miguel; 20% of the restaurants are owned by foreigners from the US (9%)
and several European countries (9%) (from Germany, Spain, France, Great Britain and Italy); and 9% of restaurant owners have dual nationality, most commonly US/Mexican.

There has been a significant increase in the presence of foreigners in the restaurant sector, particularly since 2005. Of the restaurants opened before 1990, only 6% had foreign owners, a percentage that had a growth trend in the following periods until it reached 30% of restaurants opened after 2005. Among these foreigners that have invested since 2005, the most numerous are US citizens. On the other hand, the data highlights the entrance of Mexican investors from other states. The participation of investors from Mexico City was most important during the 1990s and the 2000-2004 period (39% and 33% of the total of open restaurants, respectively), but radically diminishes since 2005 to represent only 9%. However, during this last period, capital came with great force from other Mexican states, which opened 30% of the total restaurants, equaling the importance of foreign capital investment. In contrast, there has been a great drop in the presence of owners originating from San Miguel, who went from owning 61% of the restaurants opened prior to 1990, to only 29% of restaurants opened since 2005. There has also been a profound decrease in the opening of restaurants on the part of owners with dual-nationality, as the number was 17% before 1990 and only 3% after 2005.

The types of customers are described in terms of their geographic origin, age, types of companionship (singles, couples, groups, and families), income level, average check amount, and their behavior over the specified sub-periods. According to responses provided by restaurant owners regarding the geographic origin of their primary clientele, foreign residents are the main clients served (with 39% of total responses), followed by the category 'all types' (32%), which includes Mexican residents, expatriate residents, Mexican tourists, and foreign tourists. Only 15% of answers pointed to Mexican residents as their primary clientele. 48% of the responses indicate that the restaurants cater to all age groups (youth, adults and seniors) followed by the 42% who said they serve primarily adults. For companion type, 49% of the responses stated that the restaurants cater to all types (single women, single men, couples, groups, and families) and 27% of them affirm that they attend primarily to couples. The restaurants aim to attract middle-income clientele (according to 51% of responses), medium-

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7 The answers to questions about type of clientele are multiple. Therefore, the sum of responses percentages in each case is greater than 100%.
high income (37%) and high income (16%). Only 8% of responses pointed to low-income people as their primary clientele.

The clientele profile has changed, especially since 2000. Tourists, especially Mexican, were the main customers of the restaurants opened before 1990, while in the following decades, mostly after 2000, they were foreign residents. Tourists, both Mexican and foreign, still remain as the second most important customer base. Although adults are still the principal age group served by restaurants, there was a notable increase in the number of senior citizens since 2005 and a limited presence of young people since the 1990’s. Before 2000 the restaurant clientele was mostly families and groups, but since then couples have emerged as the main type of customer. Before 1990 the restaurant clientele was mostly middle-income, but during the 1990s these customers were replaced by medium-high and high income. Since the period 2000-2004 the middle-income clientele regained importance and after 2005 clients with medium-high and high incomes once again became common.

The average amount of the checks (or bills) in a restaurant can indicate the type of clients it attracts. The average check amount is understood as the price per person for a 3-course meal that includes an appetizer, main course, and dessert (excluding drinks). Combining an analysis of the date of the restaurant opening with the average check amount, it was determined that there has been an increase in the number of expensive restaurants opening, especially since 2000. Currently, half of all restaurants have an average check of more than USD $16. This represents a relatively high price when compared with fast food establishments and informal food stalls, where an average plate costs USD $2.50. Approximately 35% of restaurants are situated in the USD $16-24 price range, 9% of the restaurants cost between USD $24-32, 2.5% are located between USD $32-40 and the remaining 2.5% have prices above USD $40 per person. The other half of restaurants has an average check lower than USD $16 USD, distributed the following way: 28% of the restaurants range from USD $8-16 and the remaining 23% have prices lower than USD $8.

With respect to the owners of the restaurant, only 28 of the 88 interviewees owned the property in which it is located. Of these, 70% are Mexican from San Miguel. As a consequence, it can be said that a great number of restaurants (68%) have to pay monthly rent to the property owner. And the property owners are almost exclusively Mexican, originally from San Miguel (75%) and other states (15%). As such, unlike the control of the restaurants is currently going
into foreign hands, the buildings ownership stays in the hands of Mexicans, most of them from San Miguel.

**Conclusion**

In this paper I suggest a theoretical model for studying transformations of host cities associated with the arrival of foreign residents from developed countries. Moreover, I advance a set of results describing changes experienced by the food service sector in the center of San Miguel between 1990 and 2010. As the study shows, it is essential to consider not only restaurants, but also fast food establishments and informal food stalls if we want to understand the impact such migration has for the native residents of receiving cities. In this regard, a preliminary research finding is that while the city center has been monopolized by restaurants, fast food establishments and informal stalls have been relegated to the periphery.

Related to the restaurants evolution, I can draw the following changes based on specific issues analyzed (pace of restaurant openings, nationality of the owner, type of clients and profile of property owners). From the supply point of view, the presence of foreigners as restaurant owners has increased, especially since 2005, despite the entrance of new Mexican investors from other states. In contrast, there has been a great drop in the presence of San Miguel owners. Nevertheless, the buildings ownership has stayed in the hands of San Miguel natives. From the demand side and especially since 2000, customers are increasingly foreign residents, usually couples; moreover there has been a notable rise in the number of senior citizen clients and medium-high and high income customers since 2005, which have replaced Mexican tourists and local residents as the main customers of restaurants. The change in customer profile can be explained by an increase in foreign immigration, especially retirees from North America. Regarding fast food establishments and informal stalls, I can only outline one key feature based on personal observation: their owners are mostly from San Miguel and their main customers are native. It is not difficult to imagine that visiting food establishments, whether restaurant, fast food or informal, represents an opportunity to walk around the city, usually in the area close to where it is located, and also to socialize with other people who frequent the same spaces. The historic city center, therefore, seems to be progressively becoming a public space reserved for foreigners while native residents invest, consume and socialize in the periphery.
Proving this conclusion is beyond the scope of this paper, which highlights only some features of food service sector evolution, and would require an in-depth analysis of all five topics regarding food service sector evolution (type of investment, type of customers, income generation to local economy, relationship with local agents, and building history), corresponding to material spatial practices. Additionally, two more necessary issues of analysis would include: institutional-level public policies addressing migration, foreign investment and urban planning; and the ways host community is symbolically represented in local media and advertising. Considering this triple dimensionality will permit an explanation of the transformations that are produced in San Miguel de Allende and can additionally resolve the question of who has the right to the city. Without a doubt, nationality appears to be a determining factor that can explain such transformations as results offered here suggested.

In conclusion, I would like to re-affirm that incorporating the power relations based on nationality into Lefebvre’s concept of right to the city represents an interesting and effective field for discussion and social action. I also propose a deeper discussion of the impact of North-South migration in Latin America and in other receiving countries within the sphere of the right to the city. If, as Lefebvre indicates, space is not exclusively produced by the state and capital, but at the same time is transformed and produced by those who inhabit it, then all city dwellers should be able to participate in the planning and the management of this type of immigration. Such a conclusion does not necessarily imply about the prohibition or attribution of negative connotations to this kind of immigration, but rather the promotion of public debates on possible impacts, the adoption of public policies and the creation of alternatives in order to secure more equal benefits for native-born inhabitants.

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