

Informal economy and spatial configuration in Quilicura, Santiago

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Rodrigo Mora

Universidad Tecnica Federico Santa Maria, Chile

Abstract

This paper analyses how spatial changes have affected the land uses distribution in Quilicura, a peripheral low-income area of Santiago de Chile, which has been growing very rapidly during the last twenty years. In this context, the first part of the paper examines the land use assignation at a global scale, where changes in the accessibility of certain areas have created strategic locations on the grid for large scale commerce, which then has created a new form of communal centre.

The second part of the study examines the grid implications on land uses distribution at a local scale, that is, its consequences for the consolidation of commercial activity on local streets and neighbourhoods. This issue has been divided into two areas: the domestic or small scale commerce, associated to residential activity, and the informal economy, represented by street markets.

One of the main findings of this paper refers to a sort of implicit logic that commands the installation of street markets. In fact, they tend to work parallel to the formal economy, covering the district rather homogeneously, and creating well-defined zones of influence that do not tend to overlap between them. This logic operates somehow opposite to a random process, in the sense that each maximizes its area of influence and, at the same time, minimizes its overlapping, creating a sort of “informal syntactic logic” of great efficiency.

Moreover, the results suggest that street markets may have been playing a decisive role, not only in the definition of local economies but also in the definition of local identities.

Keywords

peripheral
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morarodrigo@yahoo.com