

Living in the Intra-Urban Confines of Lima: A Precariousness of Geopolitical Origin

Recibido: 2020-01-05

Aceptado: 2020-11-25

Cómo citar este artículo:

Sierra, A. & Gheno, V. (2021). Living in the intra-urban confines of Lima: A precariousness of geopolitical origin. *Revista INVI*, 36(101), 149-172. <https://doi.org/10.4067/S0718-83582021000100149>

This study was led by Alexis Sierra based on multiple qualitative field research in 2012, 2013, 2015, 2016 contributed to the research work of the INVERSES collective on political informality in various urban contexts. Victor Gheno contributed to the research topic based on a three months field research in the year 2017 supervised by Alexis Sierra to obtain a Master diploma in geography at the Université Paris 1 Panthéon-Sorbonne.

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Living in the Intra-Urban Confines of Lima: A Precariousness of Geopolitical Origin

Abstract

Confines, defined as spaces of blurry boundaries and powers interpenetration, are most traditionally studied in geopolitics contexts at the national level. In this paper, we highlight the presence of such spaces at the urban scale, as a product of political fragmentation, drawing from empirical evidence in Lima, Peru. Through a geohistorical analysis, a morphological examination, and a qualitative fieldwork, we show how these confines produce urban uncertainty and precarity. In a local context of undetermined administrative boundaries justifying territorial disputes between municipalities, we turn to the analysis of the practices of political informality between municipal authorities and inhabitants as well as the inhabitants' strategies to adapt themselves to this context of urban geopolitics. This will show that these practices produce an original form of urbanity and citizenship. The dynamics of the urban fabric and territorial control reveal confines as geographical spaces that combine precariousness and informality, the latter being a constraint and a resource both for municipalities and inhabitants. The discussion of urban confines in relation to urban margins leads us to a reflection on precariousness, stressing the role of relationships of power and trust developed in these disputed and uncertain territories.

Keywords: confines; margins; geopolitics; precariousness; uncertainty; Lima



Resumen

Confines, definidos como espacios de fronteras borrosas y de interpenetración de poderes, se estudian más tradicionalmente en contextos geopolíticos a nivel nacional. En este artículo, destacamos la presencia de tales espacios a escala urbana como producto de la fragmentación política, a partir de un estudio de caso en Lima, Perú. A partir de un análisis geohistórico, de un estudio morfológico y de encuestas a la población, mostramos cómo esos confines producen incertidumbre urbana y precariedad. En un contexto local de límites administrativos indeterminados que justifican disputas territoriales entre municipios, analizamos las prácticas de informalidad política entre las autoridades municipales y los habitantes, así como las estrategias de los habitantes para adaptarse a este contexto geopolítico urbano, mostrando que estas prácticas producen una forma original de urbanidad y *citadinity*. Las dinámicas de producción urbana y de control territorial revelan los confines como espacios geográficos que combinan precariedad e informalidad, esta última a la vez como una limitación y un recurso, tanto para los municipios como para los habitantes. La discusión sobre los confines urbanos, en relación con la noción de margen urbano, nos conduce a una reflexión sobre la precariedad destacando el papel de las relaciones de poder y confianza que se desarrollan en estos territorios disputados e inciertos.

Vivir en los confines intra-urbanos de Lima: una precariedad de origen geopolítico

Palabras claves: confines; márgenes; geopolítica; precariedad; incertidumbre; Lima

Introduction

This article aims to analyse precariousness in Latin American cities through the notion of confines. This refers to peripheral territories with confusing boundaries, shared between distinct exterior force fields (Brunet *et al.*, 1993; Lacoste, 2003; Lévy, 2003), a territory neither clearly defined nor well monitored, as well as a contact zone (Lacoste, 2003), a stretch of space situated at the boundary of a larger space and made up of a grouping of “places of confrontation and conflict, with a connotation of precariousness and distance” (Brunet *et al.*, 1993). The precariousness thus mentioned is due to the distance from the center but also to the proximity of external influences attempting to take territorial control. Therefore, it has both a political and geographical dimension that we propose to explore.

The notion of confines, especially in a context of conflict, is generally a matter of geopolitics at the nation-state level, in territorial disputes linked to conquests or where sovereignty is only partially established such as in the marches of an empire, in disputed colonies or in buffer states, of which Latin American history offers several examples. This precariousness is thus due to a strong political and legal uncertainty, which is reflected by the difficulty to clarify a territorial belonging and therefore to gain access to the public services that flow from it. The distance from the decision-making center (and its administrations) may also appeal to the implementation of parallel powers (Scott, 2013). We apply it to urban spaces, to show that this precariousness linked to the tug-of-war between distinct force fields also exists in a dense and morphologically continuous environment, and marks a particular form of urbanity, requiring more or less formal diversions and negotiations. The case of the Lima-Callao conurbation reveals such a precarious territorial and political nature. In contrast to the strong geopolitical cuts visible in the urban landscape (Novosseloff, 2015) and the hard borders dividing cities -such as the peace lines of Belfast (Kaplan & Holloway, 1998) leading in some cases to the creation of no-man’s-lands (green line in Nicosia) or buffer zones such as around South African townships (Gervais-Lambony, 2011)- the fragmentation of the Peruvian metropolis is accompanied by a legal indeterminacy of the administrative boundaries, many of which are contested. The precariousness and urbanity we are analyzing here do not concern, as in Belfast, Jerusalem or Johannesburg, the difficulty of crossing hard borders and implementing strategies to circumvent them, or a painful relationship with the city produced by a perfectly limited horizon such as that of a wall and based on a legally established agreement. We are conversely interested in the practices developed by municipal powers and inhabitants to deal with the territorial indeterminacy and its blurred boundaries.

Hence, the study of the confines within the Lima-Callao conurbation leads to an analytical understanding of power exerted by municipal authorities competing for urban territories which make them uncertain living spaces. It focuses on the effects of an ongoing urban fragmentation upon the relationships of the inhabitants to the urban space.

Entire neighborhoods are both relegated and torn between different municipal influences to the point of being the subject of official claims, as in a war between powers. In this sense, we are faced with political power relations inscribed on the urban territory, this being at once the terrain, the point of conflict, and what is at stake, which makes this a question of urban geopolitics (Hulbert, 2006; Rosière, 2007).

Finally, the territorial approach to precariousness through the notion of confines brings us closer to other notions that we have used as operational concepts such as margin (Sierra & Tadié, 2008), vulnerability and *space-at-risk* (Sierra, 2009) and citadinity (Lussault, 2013) which will serve to question this urban precariousness. Even if the confines we are examining may be margins, the latter notion expresses a center-periphery relationship more clearly than that of confines. As a space of relegation, the margin expresses a relationship of domination, while the notion of confines expresses a form of third space, that is certainly peripheral but also the object of rivalries due to its value. The margins can be precisely marked out whereas the confines cannot. What interests us here is to question precariousness not exclusively in a center-periphery relationship but also concerning an indetermination of limits and a tug-of-war between different powers. These two territorial forms reflect a form of vulnerability, i. e. “the propensity of a determined society to suffer damage in the event of a natural or man-made phenomenon” (D’Ercole *et al.*, 1994), which brings us back to the notion of precariousness in relation to shocks or threats. We will show that the nature of confines carries a form of vulnerability which, coupled with particular interest, constructs a space-at-risk that is fragile and threatening. The confines are vulnerable for their inhabitants, but also appear as a vulnerability for the rest of the city. Finally, the territoriality carried by the notion of confines only makes sense for us in relation to the notion of citadinity, i.e. the living condition of the inhabitants and the consequences it has on their relationship to the city.

Thus, the intra-urban borders of Lima constitute a means of reflecting on a precariousness of geopolitical essence and of understanding how the inhabitants of these territories are adapting to a very uncertain urban life. In the face of strategies deployed by municipalities to gain or keep control of these neighboring districts, in the face of constraints posed by the indeterminacy of municipal affiliations, how do the inhabitants act and what form of specific urbanity is built on these confines?

This geopolitical context feeds into a whole host of indeterminacies, anxieties, and lack of knowledge emanating from uncertainty (Chateauraynaud, 2008), an uncertainty which citizens must face. If the classic explanation proposed to understand citizens’ choices is the avoidance of uncertainty, some authors put emphasis instead on forms of adaptation (Bourdin *et al.*, 2006), or even on how uncertain urban contexts open up spaces of negotiation between actors (Simone, 2004). We make the hypothesis that Lima’s uncertain geopolitical context bears witness to political informality in the urban fabric: to face this, citizens call upon established and non-established powers. On one hand, they call upon non-scientific or officially unrecognized knowledge, and on the other, practices that go against or circumvent the rules without being necessarily illegal. In this way, we can see disputes over district boundary spaces as a test in the pragmatic sociological sense: a moment of indeterminacy which reveals the aims of different actors and the argumentative register that they use

(Boltanski & Thevenot, 1991). Living in these contested confines is thus a challenge since simple residential belonging subjects them to various pressures to the point that in some cases this affiliation is indeterminate and reversible. We then hypothesize that the city dwellers must adapt by making arrangements. These are not the prerogative of the ordinary urban dweller in the face of authorities that would be involved in formal action: public authorities deploy territorial control strategies that play with existing legal rules. Public authorities and citizens alike call upon a plurality of knowledge at different moments of a dispute to justify a territorial claim or a residential adherence. Both must find convincing arguments ranging from the use of official documents (title deeds, enrolment on a public register, etc.) in other ways than their intended purpose, so they can reference a story or an informal representation which could receive a fair hearing amongst the local community.

We will thus adopt “arrangement” as an operating concept and as a type of political informality (Collectif Inverses *et al.*, 2016). From our point of view, an arrangement is an intermediate situation between conflict and compromise, defined by its contingent, local and circumstantial nature, often transitory, without reference to a general interest, since they concern, above all, the convergence between particular interest groups (Boltanski & Thevenot, 1991; Nachi, 2006). Therefore, understanding local context is essential to explaining arrangement as we understand it and, in our case, how it is conceived and used as a tool to overcome an uncertain situation. This notion has a geographical dimension that leads back to the urban confines problematic: that of a local scale approach, leading to the analysis of moving and transitional spaces. The term “confine” designates a territory that is favorable to the emergence of forms of arrangements. In return, these arrangements contribute to the city’s fabric both in its forms and landscapes as well as in its various social dimensions. We have also shown that the production of confines is the result of a succession of arrangements that contribute to its definition (Sierra, 2016). The objective here is to ask whether these political informality practices are not a means of overcoming the precariousness that exists and for us to reveal it. Our ultimate hypothesis is then to consider the confines as a territory holding within it a specific form of citadinity, mixing singular precariousness (notably of geopolitical origin) and the informal practices aimed at resolving it.

To validate these hypotheses, the Lima-Callao agglomeration is an exemplary site on which we have carried out a research program in several stages. The first stage was to report on the production of confines. Using the laws on the creation of districts, we established a geohistory (Grataloup, 2015) of the political fragmentation of the Lima-Callao agglomeration into districts, which led to a geographical splitting of the urban territory and a questioning of the unity of the agglomeration through the emergence of autonomous territories (Chevalier, 2002; Navez-Bouchanine, 2002; Vasconcelos, 2013). The corollary of this fragmentation was the creation of 108 “dyads” (Foucher, 1991) on a metropolitan scale, i. e. zones of contact between two municipal territories and therefore between two local authorities, which corresponds to the creation of confines each time. This legal and geohistorical approach has made possible to highlight the indeterminacy of half of the municipal boundaries, a characteristic that reinforces the dimension of confines (Sierra, 2016). The second stage, which we are reporting on, corresponds to a morphological and social reading leading to the definition of several types of boundaries. Through observation, lexical analysis of the press and a survey of certain actors, followed by cartographic processing, we have highlighted the dynamics that cross these boundaries: greater or lesser

isolation from the municipal center, which may be accentuated by site conditions, the development of informal activities and parallel powers, vulnerability to certain threats, the reactivation of old fault lines, and lastly, the emergence of disputes over territorial control. The final step was to study the practices of urban dwellers in the confines where the level of the precariousness of geopolitical origin could be the greatest, i.e. those subject to open dispute between municipalities. This research was the subject of a Master's thesis and combined participant observation and semi-directive interviews with municipal agents, inhabitants and their leaders as well as sources (public officials, association leaders, etc.) from the area between the districts of Chorrillos, Surco and San Juan de Miraflores (Figure 1). These confines are self-built neighborhoods, locally known as *asentamientos humanos*. Inhabitants experience an economic and social precariousness due to the lack of access to services, accentuated by their geopolitical situation.

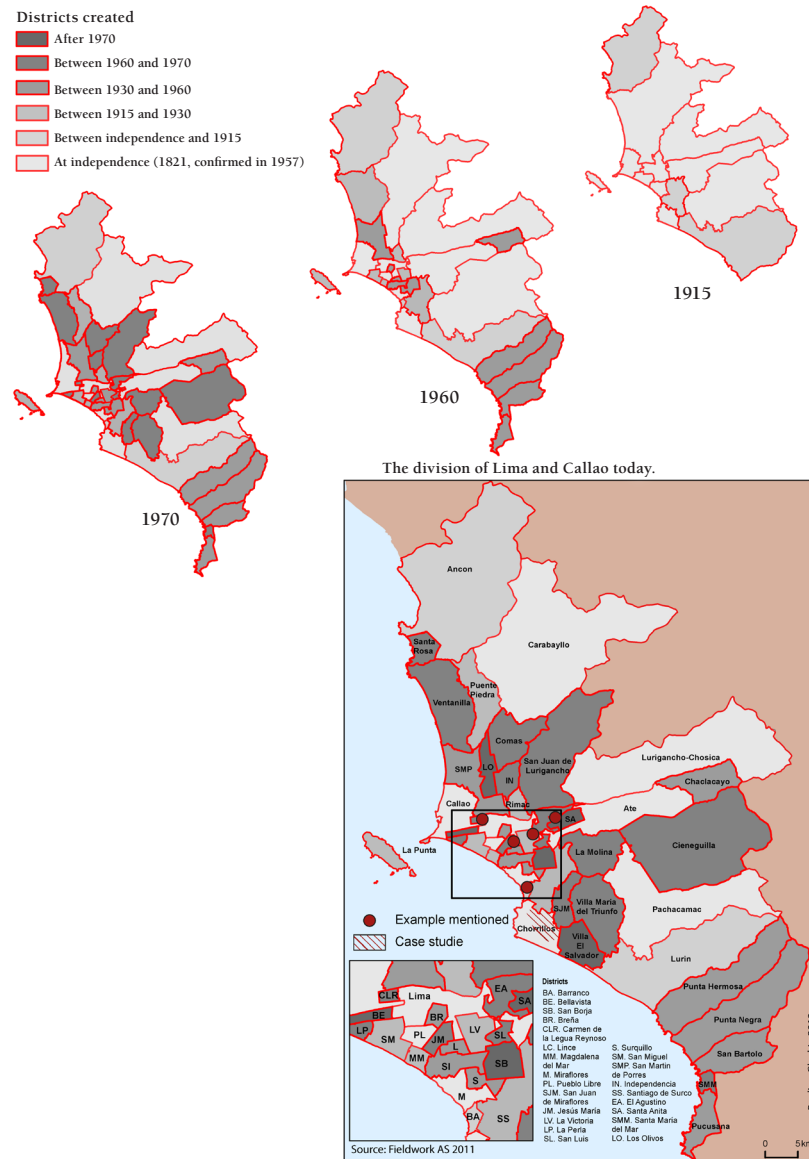
First, we will show how the creation of districts and urbanization, by fragmenting the territory, has produced many precarious, marginal, vulnerable or, “at-risk” confines. We will then see how the indeterminacy of administrative boundaries has reinforced the precariousness of the confines for their inhabitants. Finally, we will explain how inhabitants, unwillingly involved in these conflicts, develop arrangements showing their adaptation to an indeterminate situation that they, in turn, contribute to maintain.

Living in intra-urban confines between relegation and vulnerability

The question of precariousness in the Limenian municipal confines interrogates the links between citadinity and urbanity. Citadinity refers to the relationship of inhabitants to urban space through practices and representations. Urbanity is defined as the characteristics of urban space, and consequently as the urban space potential for sharing and socialization (Gervais-Lambony, 2001). First, the question is then to understand which urban precariousness is formed with which urbanity in these intra-urban confines, and to identify the development conditions of these uncertain territories. Second, we will articulate this urbanity with the relegation processes and the notion of risk and vulnerability in crisis situations. We will thus analyze the precariousness of the confines according to the notions of margin and risk space.

Lima is a conurbation uniting Lima and its port, Callao, each being the capital of their respective province but participating in the same morphological entity, over a total territory of 900 km². The province of Callao is made up of 7 districts (full-fledged local municipalities) and the *Municipalidad Metropolitana de Lima* of 43 (Metzger *et al.*, 2014). The territorial unit made up of these two provinces was originally divided into 10 districts, recognized by the Decree-Law of 1857. Gradually, the State, under the pressure dwellers and their representative organizations, created new districts by subdividing the original ones. Thus, Lima and Callao had 13 districts in 1915, 30 in 1960, 45 in 1970, and a total of 50 in 2020, with the last district created (*Mi Perú*) in 2015 (Figure 1).

Figure 1.
History of municipal urban fragmentation.



Source: Fieldwork Alexis Sierra 2011.

The urban space is thus divided into 108 dyads around which confines are drawn. The nature of these municipal and peripheral border territories has changed over time. When the districts were created, the urban space was reduced to certain nuclei of settlement. The current territory was not as urbanized. The district capitals were separated from large unbuilt areas, fields, pastures, and desert wastelands. These confines, which were relatively far from the urban center, were morphologically, economically, and socially separated from rural areas, agricultural production areas, or traffic areas. These areas were neglected and on the fringes, because they were marshy (between Lima and Callao, for example) or arid. Peripheral areas were even more confined as they were less occupied. Hacienda-type land ownership gave a morphological continuity of rural appearance and one moved from one municipality's area of jurisdiction to another gradually, without the need to affirm this shift. Landmarks used in the Municipality Acts to delineate these districts were haciendas, side roads, small streams, and localities.

FROM CONFINES TO MARGINS: A PATH TOWARDS PRECARIOUSNESS

Gradually, these rural confines became urban. Through the subdivision of agricultural areas or public lands, the landscape was transformed. With the promoters on one side and the inhabitants on the other, a morphological continuity has been created and thus economic activities and social practices became urban. As a result, different types of confines appeared, more or less distant from their center, more or less socially marginalized, and more or less bearers of informality. These three characteristics are generally present to varying degrees and are all situated at the crossroads of multiple political influences. Thus, several confines represent the last stage in the relegation of populations in search of housing, producing *barriadas*, *barrios marginales*, *pueblos jóvenes*, and *asentamientos humanos*, the successive names of Peruvian self-built neighborhoods (Caria, 2008; Matos Mar, 2012). Likewise, the confines accommodate activities considered undesirable in the densest part of the city: wholesale markets, warehouses, industrial activities, logistic facilities. Hence, some of these confines become margins in the sense of a “situation of marginalization resulting from official and majority representation”, a situation that also results in “overlapping competencies and the exercise of power” (Sierra & Tadié, 2008). Indeed, relegation leads to urbanization on both sides of the borders, which in turn produces interactions between actors and inhabitants of two neighboring districts. In this sense, the influence of the powers on one side is exerted on the other participating at the beginning of a “tug-of-war” between these neighboring territories.

Sometimes this confined nature is due to obstacles linked to the relief or road infrastructure that separate neighborhoods from the center and the rest of the district but places them in continuity with a neighboring district. We call them topographical confines. For example, Nocheto, a popular district to the east of the El Agustino district on the side of the hill of the same name, adjoins Santa Anita. This district represents a margin for the municipal authorities, who see it not only as a poor area but also a hotbed of delinquency. The

abandonment of the municipal police stations thus testifies the weak presence of the public authorities (figure 2). Similarly, an imposing sand dune, *Lomo de Corvina*, separates a group of coastal urban settlements from the rest of the Villa El Salvador district. In this process of urbanization, roads and highways also contribute to create or reinforce these topographical confines. Some of them cut through the district's territory, which strengthens the isolation of these municipal peripheries from the center. For example, the coastal populations of Villa-El-Salvador must cross the Pan-American Highway to reach the rest of the district before crossing or bypassing *Lomo de Corvina*. This double caesura strongly marks the representations of space as shown by the mental maps made during the surveys.

Figure 2.

Nocheto: margin area and topographic confines of El Agustino district. On the right, the abandoned municipal police station.

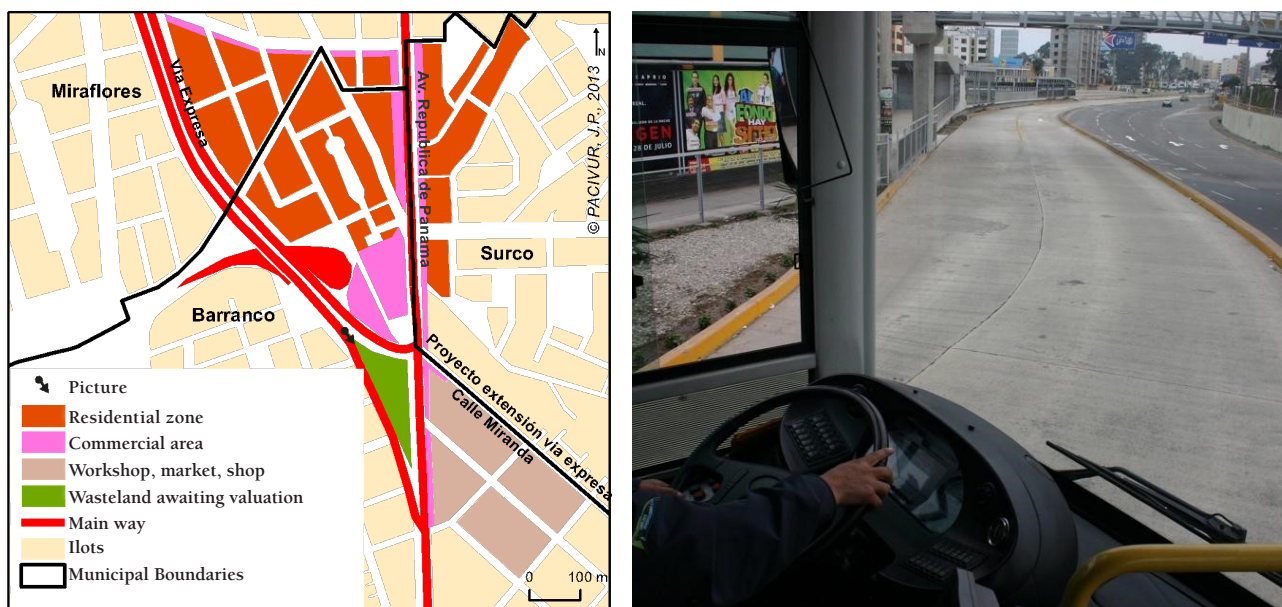


Source: Alexis Sierra, 17/04/2011

All these topographical confines are not necessarily marginalized in the conurbation. This is the case of the Barranco sector located on the edge of Miraflores and Surco, the other side of the caesura that is the *Via Expresa* (Figure 3) and which belongs to a group of middle-class neighborhoods. However, this area remains isolated from its district and the draw of the boundary with a motorway gap produces an interstitial margin made up of a series of informal places. This situation is largely due to the transitory situation of a group of plots of land located in the planned extension of the *Via Expresa*, a perspective that blocks development along Miranda Street. This situation is conducive to the installation of workshops and *huariques* (or *escondites*, *escondrijos*), a slang words that refers to non-legal bars evoking an underground and interloping dimension.

Figure 3.

Topographical confines between Barranco, Miraflores and Surco and the view of Via Expresa.



Source: Fieldwork Alexis Sierra, 2016; ©Pascale Metzger, 2013

The oldest part of the city has confines that are the legacy of margins dating back to the Colonial Era and the 19th Century. At that time, activities were thrown outside the walls in locations such as cemeteries and military activities (barracks and gunpowder production) in the East, and, much later, slaughterhouses in the West. The boundaries of the districts created in the 20th century partly follow the layout of these fortifications and the urban fabric produced confines that remain as areas of relegation. To the west, beyond Alfonso Ugarte Avenue, towards Callao, areas successively belonged to the Cercado de Lima, to the district of Breña (when it was created in 1949) and then again were attached to the Cercado. These alternative appearances show that the populations had difficulty in assigning these areas to a municipal authority, which reinforced their marginal position. Crossed by the railroad and the first industrial axis, these wide confines, remained spaces-at-wait, occupied by wastelands and *asentamientos humanos* (figure 4). The population lives in a multifaceted precariousness, marked by poverty, health treats, eviction threats and social and structural (housing) vulnerability, making it one of the first space-at-risk considered as such by the municipality of Lima (Robert & Sierra, 2009).

Figure 4.
Industrial zone and precarious housing in the MIRR (Cercado de Lima).



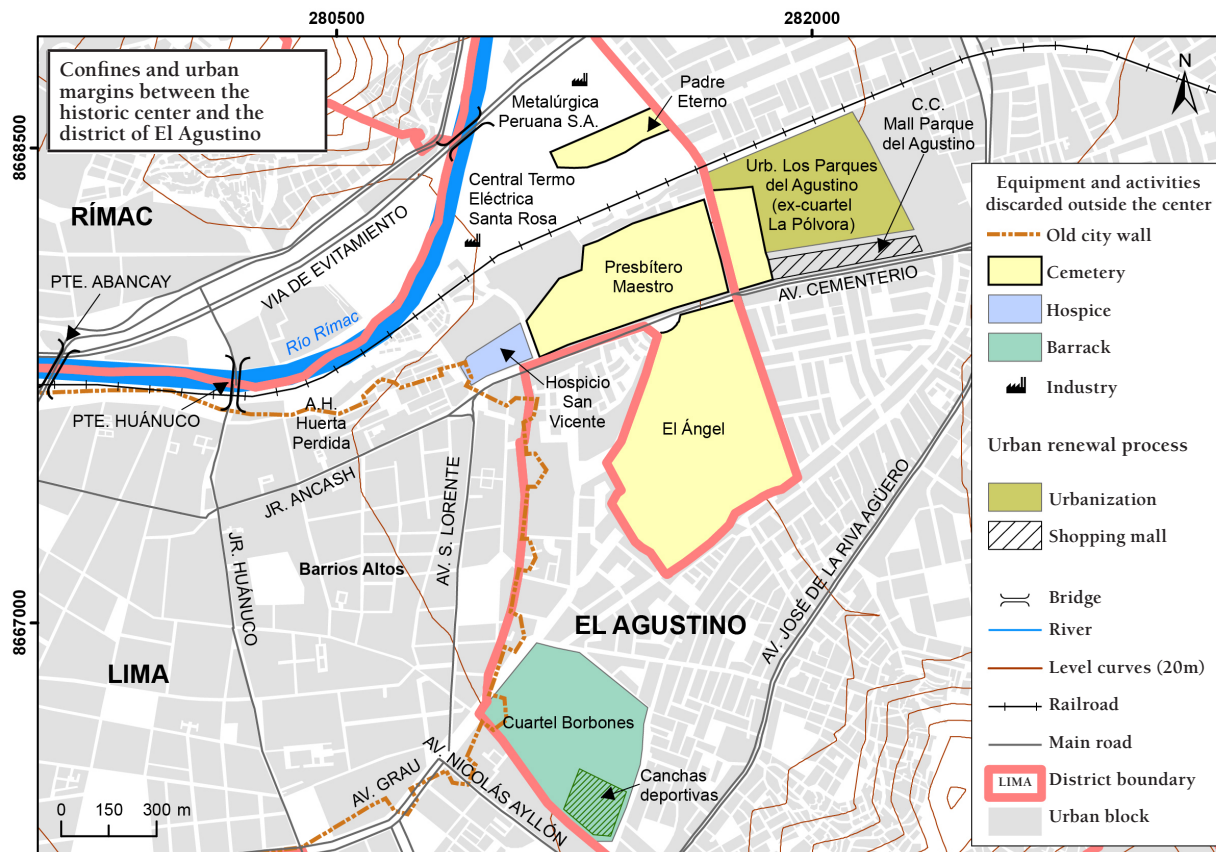
Source: Alexis Sierra, 12/05/2012

To the east, the activities and populations relegated outside the walled city have been shared between the Cercado and El Agustino or partly enclaved in the latter (figure 5), resulting in an interpenetration of influences. Crossed by the railway line, the highway and high-voltage power lines, these confines have remained spaces of urban relegation to the still ill-defined urbanity. Along the banks of the Rimac, there are only wastelands,

partly hydromorphic, sometimes occupied by houses made of wooden planks, as far as the Huerta Perdida [the lost or abandoned garden] sector, a revealing toponym with a new topicality, since it has become a refuge for drug users. They obtain their supplies within these borders, in the *callejones*¹ that make it up, especially between Huanuco and Lorente streets, this time on the central district side.

Figure 5.

Confines and urban margins between the historic center and the district of El Agustino.



Source: INEI 2007, Google Maps, SIRAD 2010, Alexis Sierra 2008, 2009, 2012.

¹ A set of crosswalks, usually open, serving as a semi-enclosed public space for the neighborhood.

A little further south-east, the territory bordering the three districts of the Cercado de Lima, La Victoria, and El Agustino forms a real space of relegation for each one and an infamous urban fringe. It shows the quirks of administrative divisions and the isolation they cause. Manzanilla is a marginal confine within the great El Agustino-Lima-La Victoria bounds, which, as we have heard, is considered globally as a margin (Figure 6). This area belongs politically and administratively to the Cercado de Lima, although it is located beyond Grau Avenue, a major thoroughfare reproducing the layout of the old walls. This administrative affiliation is in tension with the economic practices of the inhabitants who depend on the market activities of the neighboring district of La Victoria, in morphological continuity. Manzanilla is one of the poorest neighborhoods in the city, with one of the highest rates of tuberculosis in Peru. According to health center officials, the strains of tuberculosis of this area are known to be particularly resistant to treatment. The Tacora flea market, a veritable center for the resale of stolen goods, bordered the area to the north until it disappeared during the construction of the subway system.

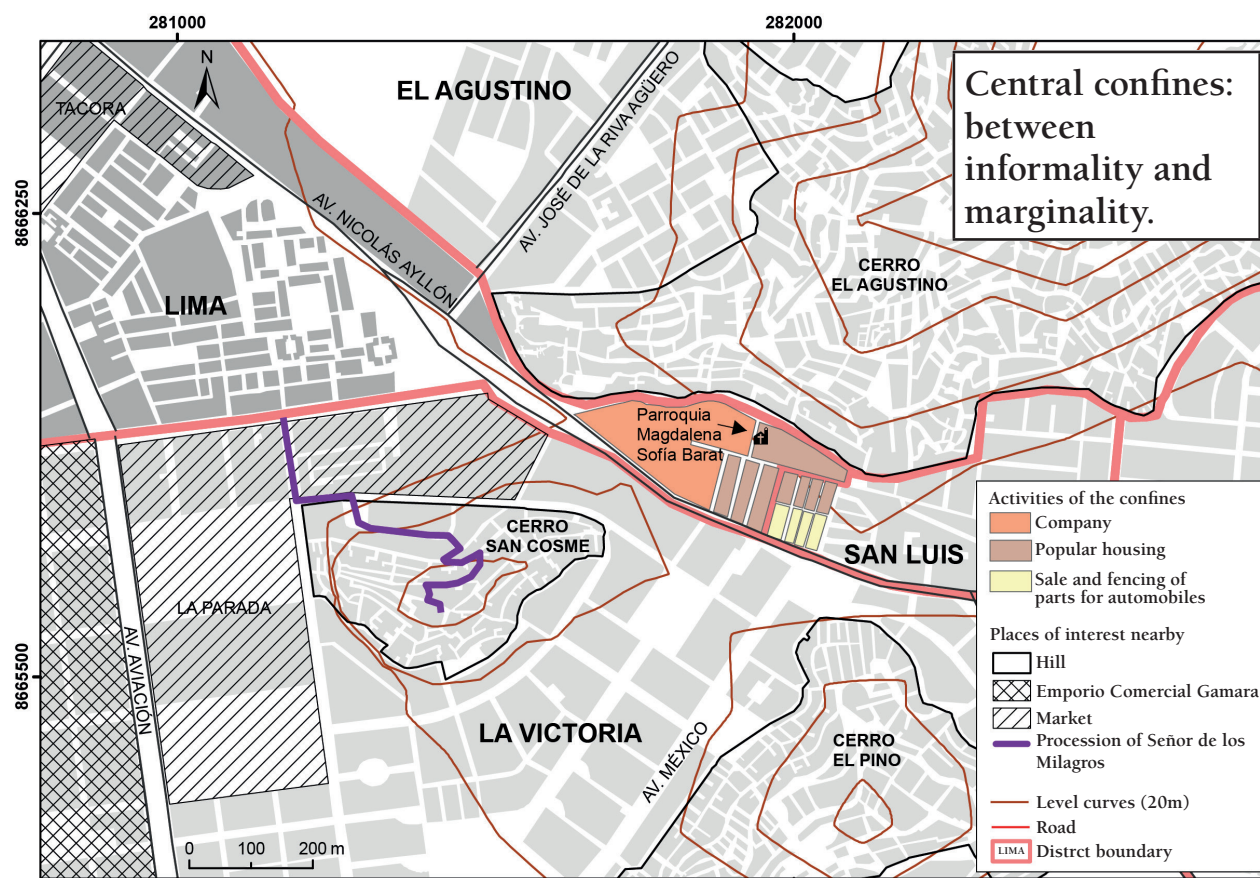
CONFINES UNDER THE POWER OF INFORMAL ACTORS

Beyond Manzanilla, at the crossroads of four districts and sandwiched between Avenida Nicolas Ayllon and the Cerro El Agustino, San Jacinto lives to the rhythm of the fencing of cars. The cars, often stolen or recovered from the junkyard, are boned there to be resold as spare parts.

This typology of confines shows how urban fragmentation, by producing bordering territories, is articulated with forms of marginality. Power relations are complex, with inhabitants undergoing various municipal influences and those of underworld actors.

These bordering sectors are privileged spaces for the development of more or less informal, more or less licit, and sometimes criminal activities. They represent shadowy areas of territorial control where parallel powers to the public authorities are developing. This competition for territorial control is blamed on urban fragmentation. For example, district boundaries are limits for the intervention of the municipal police, the *serenazgo*, which cannot legally cross them unless there is a prior agreement between districts. As a general rule, patrols do not linger much in the border areas because the places of major interest are generally located within the districts, whereas the borders tend to concentrate vacant lots and workshops. Then, inhabitants must face the development of parallel powers which is coupled with the fragmentation of public authorities.

Figure 6.
Central confines: between informality and marginality.



Source: INEI 2007, Jean-Louis Chaléard, SIRAD 2010, Alexis Sierra 2013

CONFINES AT RISK AND THE GEOPOLITICAL ORIGIN OF VULNERABILITY

Inhabiting these confines can, therefore, be a criterion of vulnerability during emergencies, especially since they are potential crisis hotbeds. In other words, if the risk is at the crossroads of fragility (vulnerability) and threats (hazards), the confines appear as territories that combine these two propensities and that are built (as much as they are built) as spaces at risk. Several approaches demonstrate this: the lexical and geographical analysis of the press shows that the term “risk” is associated in most cases with places located less than 200 meters from administrative boundaries. Similarly, several mental maps drawn up among local civil protection and risk management officials establish that areas qualified as “at-risk” are peripheral to the districts. This representation of “at-risk” confines can be justified by the urbanity of them. Roads and riverbanks where accidents occur also serve as support for district boundaries. Equally, activities considered to be sources of danger and hazards favor the boundaries. This is the case for industries or markets that benefit from the location of these roads and from less control.

In addition to this representational approach, the analysis of crisis management leads to the same conclusion. Accidents that occur in the confines can take on dramatic proportions, certainly due to a lack of public service but also due to excessive intervention or the uncoordinated presence of the various public authorities, particularly because a crisis is an opportunity for each municipality to assert its presence in these confines. In the event of an emergency or crisis, no one can say in advance whether these borders will suffer from a lack of or, on the contrary, an excess of assistance.

The fire at the Tekno chemical plant on August 25, 2007, is instructive. This factory is located on the outskirts of the El Agustino district, isolated from it by the *Evitamiento* ring road, on the edge of the Santa-Anita district. Which district should then intervene? Some rescue services, such as the fire brigade and ambulance services, do not depend on the districts, others do, such as the municipal police. In addition, according to the law concerning civil protection, the district mayor is responsible for organizing the rescue. During the August 25, 2007 fire, 200 firefighters along with 700 police officers and soldiers intervened to close an 800-meter perimeter and evacuate 200 families. However, there was apparently no coordination between the municipalities of El Agustino and Santa Anita. The fire brigade did centralize the first calls, but the medical and security forces were uncoordinated. The plant’s border position is an element of vulnerability that is reinforced by the imprecision and indeterminacy of the municipal boundaries, a strange feature of the Limenian metropolis that gives all the dimension of confines to these peripheral and often marginal territories.

Inhabiting contested confines: between precarity and informal practices

Paradoxically, the laws creating the districts produced an indeterminacy of boundaries by incorporating a first level of informality that we have described elsewhere (Sierra, 2016). This legal and geographical indeterminacy, due to the use of lay knowledge of the law, was not problematic as long as the municipal territory remained undeveloped. With urbanization, the confines were settled and equipped and became the site of industrial, commercial, and logistical activities. Municipalities began to see them as sources of tax revenue as they were solicited by city dwellers looking to obtain various services, authorizations, and permissions. The confines then exposed development issues that were potential sources of rivalry. This trend is enhanced by the autonomy of local authorities. The district is the basis of the organization of Peruvian territory. Local authorities have been recognized since the Spanish colonization. President Alberto Fujimori (1990-2001), in order to avoid the emergence of a political rival at the head of the greater metropolitan area, took powers away from the provinces (and thus from *Lima Metropolitana*) and transferred them either to the State or to the districts, thus fragmenting power that may be opposed to the national government (Jaramillo Jassir & Botero, 2010). Consequently, the districts enjoy a great deal of autonomy. Inequalities in fiscal resources (and therefore in the provision of equipment and services) are reinforced, as well as urban fragmentation. Municipal boundaries become symptomatic of these inequalities and fragmentation. This is where the difference between districts feeds tensions and where conflicts between municipalities are most strongly expressed because they are territories whose membership are contested.

DWELLERS PRECARIETY AS A RESULT FROM THE MUNICIPAL CONFLICTS

Within the same agglomeration and nation-state, the municipalities that make up the Lima-Callao conurbation are in open conflict over neighboring territories. These conflicts are numerous, and some are more than half a century old. They affect neighborhoods of different economic and social levels; both residential and industrial and commercial. Local municipalities are involved in conflicts for territorialization and hence develop concurrent strategies to affirm their presence in disputed urban spaces. They act by creating markers in the landscape (toponyms in giant concrete letters, addressing in the name of the district, signs, and posters advertising the municipality's activities, etc.) or by providing services and facilities clearly identified as belonging to each district, in a logic of clientelism (Sierra, 2016), thus contributing to the production of a specific urbanity. Conversely, inhabitants and local leaders respond to these strategies developing their own practices of territorialization, which express their membership or rejection to municipalities. For example, in the park of Santa Isabel de Villa, there is a competitive struggle for the spatial appropriation of

this neighborhood. In addition to the signs and sports field equipped in this place by the municipalities of Surco and Chorrillos, local leaders, supporters of Surco, installed a sign highlighting their membership to this municipality (Figure 7). It refers to a legal argument to justify the spatial appropriation of Surco and thus, delegitimizing the territorial strategies of Chorrillos. These practices produce a feeling of territorial membership for inhabitants through the sense given to public space. In this mediation to space, parks are a key feature of the urban environment as they represent the local “community” as an identity attribute and thus become a place to conquest or to defend. These modalities of space appropriation in the cityscape contribute to the construction of specific forms of citizenship in the confines as they reveal the re-actualization of the urban territories fabric and enhance -through spatial mediations- collective memberships, social practices, and spatial representations constituents of the relationships with the city, despite political disputes and legal uncertainty.

From this point of view, the conflict does not seem to be a source of precariousness for the inhabitants but rather an opportunity to obtain means and resources. In other words, indeterminacy and conflict open up the possibility of accessing resources and benefits that they would not obtain in a clearly defined, stable, and peaceful geopolitical situation.

Municipal strategies also rely on coercion to force residents to take a side. To this end, they use their power to manage the public register and social programs. They register residents’ associations, issue various licenses (construction, commercial activities, etc.) and manage the aid provided by the State. The national social programs are managed locally and give the municipalities a power of control, in particular, because they register the beneficiaries and allocate the funds received from the State. As in other Latin American countries, Peruvian grassroots social organizations (*Organizaciones Sociales de Base*) become the instrument of a patron-client relationship without the inhabitants initially feeling trapped by it (Auyero, 2009) and a way of socializing the margins and relaying partisan propaganda (Mesclier & Sierra, 2012). In 1984, the Peruvian government introduced the national *vaso de leche* program, which relies on municipalities to distribute milk to needy families to fight malnutrition. As early as 1985, the municipality of Chorrillos took the initiative to cover the needs of neighborhoods located on the borders of the three districts of Chorrillos, Surco, and San Juan de Miraflores, with the latter clearly encroaching on its jurisdiction. This presence favors the practice of clientist assistance (Varley, 1998) and gives the mayor a weapon to mobilize or put pressure on the populations, affiliating them to the district. According to the interviews, as soon as some *asentamientos humanos* debated the possibility of being attached to Surco, the municipality of Chorrillos threatened to stop providing *vaso de leche* committees and prompted the creation of competing residents’ associations, aimed at delegitimizing the existing ones, as it exists in other local conflicts (Melé, 2013). This competition between resident associations resulted in verbal and physical violence between residents in a context of competition for the resource.

Figure 7.
*Signs installed by local leaders in the park
of Santa Isabel in the confines between
Chorrillos and Surco.*



Source: Victor Gheno, 2017

ARRANGEMENTS: A RESOURCE TO DEAL WITH PRECARIOUSNESS

Indeterminacy can also be used as an argument for not investing in these confines. Local leaders in the *Avelino Caceres* neighborhood, located on the southern border of the confines between Chorrillos, Surco, and San Juan de Miraflores, have approached SEDAPAL (Lima's public water supply company) and the Ministry of Housing to provide a sewage system. This project has been awaiting validation by the relevant public institutions for ten years due to political-administrative indeterminacy: official registration is not possible, which constitutes a stumbling block for the authorities, unable to implement the requested project (source: interview with a local leader, 03/22/2017). As long as the political conflict is not resolved and the urban space remains undefined, local leaders cannot act in collaboration with the public authorities. In this *asentamiento humano*, the political conflict for the appropriation of the border areas between Surco and Chorrillos blocks the initiatives of the inhabitants aimed at improving living conditions at the local level. This is not an isolated example. A local leader in the *Brisas de Villa* settlement explains the unequal development between her neighborhood and the rest of Surco (the district with which she identifies herself) by its location in a "zona de controversia" [zone of controversy] (source: interview with this local leader, 02/20/2017). She considers that the legal uncertainty discourages public investment in the inhabited confines. As a result, the residents' association manages different public works and deals with demands from different actors. For example, the association received a letter from an association of *mototaxis* conductors affiliated to Chorrillos about the construction of an access ramp at the km 16 of Panamericana south, situated downhill the neighborhood. After discussing the matter during a local leaders' reunion, they concluded that this issue was legitimate and could be beneficial to the local inhabitants, despite the actors' distinctive municipal membership. Therefore, the request addressed by the mototaxis' conductors was approved (source: direct observation at the local reunion, 02/20/2017). Through this arrangement, the municipality of Surco is eluded because its modalities of public space management are considered too constraining. The local leaders can make decisions on local public space and take advantage of the tolerance of the public authorities in the undetermined confines. The auto-organization at the local scale is a way to circumvent the public authorities' constraints and thus shows the practices of adaptation in the geopolitical context of territorial disputes. Beyond that, the indeterminacy complicates daily administrative procedures because the inhabitants themselves are unaware of their municipal affiliation, caught up in contradictory discourse or because their registration as city dwellers does not correspond to the registration of their district. For example, to obtain a bank loan, the registration of the inhabitant with a municipality, indicated on his or her identity card, must be consistent with the registration of their neighborhood in the public register. In the case of a self-built settlement, under-equipped, this registration is negotiated with the highest bidding municipality. However, the logic of the inhabitant, as an individual, may be different from the neighborhood membership, making records inconsistent. Legal transactions are then blocked. Thus, the condition of confines characterized by territorial indeterminacy, on one hand, and by the contradictory exercise of two local public authorities, on the other, would reinforce the economic and social precariousness specific to self-built settlements.

In addition, there is tax legislation that enshrines indeterminacy since a specific tax regime affects the disputed areas. Indeed, the Municipalities Act stipulates that in the disputed neighboring territories, the inhabitants pay their local taxes where they themselves have registered their residence. In the absence of an entry in the municipal register, they choose the district where they reside for tax purposes. Thus, direct neighbors are fiscally attached to separate municipalities, causing a real interweaving of affiliations in these areas, and perfectly reflecting the idea of interpenetration that constitutes the confines. Just as the law has enshrined lay and uncertain geographical knowledge, instead of replacing it with standardized knowledge, the law enshrines, perpetuates, and complicates the indeterminacy of a disputed territory. The law gives freedom to the inhabitants but in return increases the pressure on them: municipalities are encouraged to play both the carrot (granting services) and the stick (withdrawing aid and delegitimizing the inhabitants' organizations) to attract tax havens. This freedom adds to the confusion and economic precariousness. As revenues are divided or random, there is a greater risk for a municipality to invest in them and these confines remain marginal as long as indeterminacy remains.

The case of the Surco-Chorrillos conflict is also indicative of the perverse game that the Municipalities Act leads to. For the population to have this latitude, districts must formalize the conflict, which the Santiago de Surco municipal council did in May 2013 by voting a municipal agreement against Chorrillos. However, this definition of a disputed territory, which should serve as a basis for its resolution, is in fact hijacked from its principle to fuel successive claims. Surco had carried out a first formalization of the conflict in 2011 on a whole set of *asentamientos humanos* to claim by a second vote high-end residential neighborhoods on the coast in 2013. In doing so, the self-built neighborhoods are more a means of reaching tax-richer sectors and maintaining marginal areas in their new district.

In this situation, the inhabitants attempt different arrangement strategies, both individually and collectively. Local citizens' organizations play upon the districts' rivalries to obtain facilities and services, and this situation works particularly well when residents in an area are registered with different authorities. However, the advantages of belonging to one district are counterbalanced by the advantages of the competing district. Overall, belonging to a wealthy district ensures more benefits and symbolically an enviable social position. Territorial membership is directly correlated in social representations with social status. However, this belonging generally results in higher taxes and sometimes more restrictive urban planning rules. While collectively, a neighborhood is supposed to belong to a territory and not remain ambivalent, individually the inhabitants can play two kinds of membership. Thus, many have two identity cards, each with a different municipal residence. An anecdote shows the usefulness of this double belonging. A local leader in the Santa Isabel district needed a loan from the bank. When he went to the bank with a Chorrillos municipality identity card, the bank employees refused him the loan because this *asentamiento humano* is registered in the legal register of Surco and not of Chorrillos. For the bank, it was necessary to present an identification document consistent with the public register. The person, after contesting, decided to obtain an identity card from the Surco district. When he returned to the bank, the loan was granted (source: interview with this local leader, 03/23/2017).

Conclusion

The production of confines and the indeterminacy of boundaries that form part of the urban fabric at the metropolitan level takes on another dimension at the inhabitant scale. On one hand, dwellers torn between different affiliations and district municipalities are exhausted in vain conflicts; and on the other hand, spaces of dispute are spaces of negotiation par excellence in which city dwellers experience the situation of confines as a risk or an opportunity. Although a source of precariousness, local actors maintain indeterminacy by trying to take advantage of it. The durability of indeterminacy shows that the inhabitants prefer to adapt to it through a succession of unexpressed arrangements all the more so as they do not believe in its resolution. Inhabitants play with indetermination to reduce their (tax) expenditure, to escape (regulatory) constraints, to enhance their assets, and to enhance their social standing. Pressure from local authorities must, therefore, be contained within certain limits beyond which these actors will seek resolution and arbitration from higher authorities. The districts do not always seem to seek a resolution of the indeterminacy, fueling the conflict as well, and they too turn uncertainty into opportunity by ultimately tolerating the practices of bypassing city dwellers, as shown by the negotiation between the motorcycle taxi association and the representatives of the *Brisas de Villa* settlement without going through the municipality. By developing territorial reassertion strategies, districts provide services in exchange for new tax resources and develop new customer relationships. The arrangements made become a city norm while maintaining the test of strength. Indeed, living on the confines remains a test that requires mobilizing arguments to obtain or retain services. Uncertainty about ownership (on the inhabitant's side) and control (on the municipality's side) requires the mobilization of different registers of knowledge and is part of this test of strength.

This test of strength, by placing the inhabitants in one of the in-betweens and complicating their daily lives, reinforces forms of vulnerability and marginality that are characteristic of both municipal boundaries and self-built settlements. Inhabiting the confines thus translates into the permanent development of arrangements that are resources for coping with the precariousness that marks them. Paradoxically, the arrangement seems to provide greater certainty than the law, to the point of founding it. The specific legislation for the disputed municipal areas gives the fiscal arrangement the force of law, leaving city dwellers free to pay their taxes in the district of their choice, or not to pay them at all. Far from resolving the showdown, the law maintains it. All the local actors seem to have confidence in the arrangements made to circumvent the rule (to obtain building permits, for example), to tolerate each other (constructions are finally accepted) and to encourage municipal clientelism. It is as if the inhabitants know that the elected officials are seeking to develop their clientele and are turning this practice to their advantage. There is a belief in the durability of the relationships thus established that is superior to the belief in the resolution of indeterminacy. Since the law on the creation of districts cannot offer a clearly defined territory to the inhabitants through the use of knowledge of usage,

and since both the metropolitan municipality and the central State seem powerless to impose a definitive compromise on the districts, the inhabitants seem to be struck by institutional pessimism and cynicism in the relations between the administrators and the administered. While seeking a feeling of territorial membership, they develop practices of spatial appropriation that reflect their relationships to the city. Even though the urban space remains undefined due to the non-resolution of the political conflict between municipalities, inhabitants contribute to the production of the urban territory in their everyday lives. Dealing with this precarity, specific forms of citizenship are characterized by the informal practices they develop. Indeed, in the face of the precarious geopolitical essence of the confines, the belief in the effectiveness of the arrangements is the real certainty and contributes to an original form of citizenship.

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