

International workshop

“Development Alternatives within Contested Territories”

29-30 January 2020

Event summary:

Recent political changes in Latin America point towards a return towards nationalist, (neo)colonial and neoliberal ideologies. Such trends are often accompanied by a deepening of intersectional inequalities, processes of democratic decline, and violations of human rights and rights to nature. Throughout the region, grassroots movements are actively involved in challenging such uneven patterns of development. This is evident in previous and current social uprisings and territorial struggles throughout the region which confront the exploitation of populations and nature, call for a reduction of inequalities, and advocate for development alternatives framed around, among others, the commons, degrowth, feminist and afro-descendent thought, as well as indigenous cosmovisions. Such alternatives possess the potential for sustainability and transferability across different contexts and provide innovative approaches to territory production and associated human-environment relations, values and knowledges. Yet, to date, such alternatives have been marginalised by policy makers and private sector representatives. Importantly, such approaches challenge dominant world-views and are orientated towards the Pluriverse – an understanding of reality that is constituted “not only by many worlds, but by many kinds of worlds, many ontologies, many ways of being in the world, many ways of knowing reality, and experimenting those many worlds” ([Querejazu 2016](#)).

The workshop focused on the construction of development alternatives in the context of *Contested Territories*, focusing not only on previous and recent social uprisings in Latin America but also on the institutionalisation of development alternatives – for example, within Bolivia’s and Ecuador’s constitutions – as well as on more subtle conscious and unconscious day-to-day practices which put into question conventional forms of development.

Sponsors:

This event forms part of the research network on “Contested Territories: Interdisciplinary Dialogues on Conflict, Resistance and Development Alternatives in Latin America” which is funded by the White Rose Collaboration Fund. The research network comprises academics from different disciplines in the Social Sciences and the Humanities from the Universities of Sheffield, Leeds and York. Follow the link for more details on the [research network](#).

The event also received further financial support from the DSA. DSA funding was used to provide travel bursaries to four early career academics, namely: Adolfo Mejia (University of Edinburgh), Alan Santos (Universidade de Brasilia), Leticia Baron (Universidade Federal de Pelotas), Valesca Lima (Maynooth University) and Francesca Ferlicca (University of Venice).

Chairs:

The workshop was organised by Melanie Lombard and Philipp Horn (Department of Urban Studies and Planning, University of Sheffield), Beatrice de Carli (School of Architecture, University of Sheffield), Victoria Habermehl (Urban Institute, University of Sheffield) and Andrea Jimenez (Information School, University of Sheffield).

Special guests:

The following speakers provided keynote interventions:

- 1) Miriam Lang (Universidad Andina Simon Bolivar, Ecuador) provided an overview of ongoing work on alternatives to development in Latin America.
- 2) Catalina Ortiz (UCL) delivered a talk on “Urban Storytelling: A decolonial turn for urban learning?”
- 3) Leandro Minuchin (University of Manchester) delivered a talk on “The age of infrastructural struggles: urban politics in South America”
- 4) Claire Wright (Queen's University Belfast) delivered a talk on “Strategic Adaptation or Neoliberal Acculturation? Dilemmas Faced by Indigenous Women in Urban Contexts in Mexico”

Further links:

A summary of the workshop as well as a video by keynote speaker Miriam Lang will be uploaded soon on the [website](#) of our research network.

Here, you can already find summary reports and blog contributions reflecting on previous workshops held at the Universities of Leeds and York.