

ABSTRACT

Title: The cities and ports of the Argentine Patagonia: the creation of an urban system around an infrastructure system.

Author: Eduard Alvarez Palau

Tutor: Francesc Magrinyà Torner, Adrián Nossetti.

The dissertation analyses how the construction of transport and mining exploitation infrastructures have permitted the colonisation of the Argentine Patagonia. For that reason it starts with a historic, geographical and town-planning reconstruction of a list of places which have been affected by two phenomenons: a railway passage and the existence of oil fields.

According to the data reconstruction obtained by the author after a three month's stay in Patagonia, a theory that explains the distribution of territorial occupation and the logic structure of the urban area in the above-mentioned places, is developed.

The Patagonian area occupation is carried out in two stages. The first one is dated in the second half of the XIX century, and it is based on the creation of isolated nodes. The second stage is dated at the beginning of the XX century, and it is based on the union of nodes by means of railways, including the creation of polarised settlements around the stations. This model entails a less dense territory occupation in the form of agricultural and livestock holdings, in other words, by means of small compact settlements. The area of influence covers large extensions.

Subsequently, the petroleum discovery in different Patagonian regions causes the attraction of lots of immigrants towards the preexisting localities, generating the constitution of oil fields. These fields are divided in different stages depending on the date of discovery and the transport mode of the oil: railway, motor vehicle or gas pipelines. The railway entails the constitution of fragmented settlements, with some camps located in extraction areas and near the railway station. With the arrival of the lorry, a larger territorial dispersion of the settlements has been created. At the same time, it creates a larger compactness due to the costs of urbanisation in deserted and poorly-communicated areas. Finally, the gas pipelines offer companies the possibility of working with temporary autonomous camps, which are isolated from the communication network but are connected with the tubular infrastructure.

The studied localities are created around the railway infrastructure, shaping its urban area according to the plot division imposed by the Laws of the Indies. The new routes follow a reticular model with octagonal streets which are orientated depending on the railway route direction. Nonetheless, the cities were unable to start their expansion until the petroleum discovery. The companies know their role as colonists, satisfying their workers with all their possible needs inside the camp, including housing.

The urban oil conformation is based on two processes. On the one hand, the creation of fiscal reserves by the state and the organisational logic of camps. The reserves order forces private enterprises to settle out of the boundaries. This fact causes the creation of polarised nodes around the railway. These nodes create a metropolitan dispersion of the localities. On the other hand, the urban organisation of the camps force us to locate the settlements depending on job sources, in order to minimize the journey time. Furthermore, the enterprises create different districts inside each camp in order to divide their workers depending on their social position, their job, and their personal circumstances.