

*Articulo, Journal of Urban Research*

Call for Papers

**Urban kinships.**

**Everyday Kinship and the Making of the City**

Special Issue 2018

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Social sciences were long dominated by the notion that cities are places where kinship ties are weakened (Durkheim 2002; Parsons 1955), but this view is widely challenged today. A number of studies have criticized drawing an immediate connection between modernization, urbanization, and family nuclearization, as early as the 1950s with urban ethnographies of family closeness (Willmott and Young 1957, Firth et al., 1969), followed by large-scale studies of family solidarity in the 1970s-1990s (Roussel, 1976; Rogerson et alii, 1993) and more recent work on housing (Bonvalet, 2003), ageing (Attias-Donfut and Renaut 1994; Tomassini, Wolf, and Rosina 2003), and blended families (Gall 2005). Such research has shown that households in contemporary urban societies are part of wider kinship configurations of changeable forms (Widner and Jallinoja, 2008), unrelated to simple holdovers from traditional societies, which are mobilized according to particular circumstances.

Nonetheless, these studies have not probed the explicitly urban dimension in any depth. Moreover, despite efforts to get past the “modernization-nuclearization” approach, they continue to use concepts from its legacy, starting with “family,” which has become quite polysemic and remains implicitly tied to the model of the nuclear family. In addressing “urban kinships,” this special issue suggests a critical review of analytical categories, aiming to surpass the “great divide” (Weber and Dufy 2007) that still separates the study of kinship (reserved for anthropologists and traditional societies) from the study of the city (the favored field site for sociologists and research on the family). At a time when cities are dissolving into “the urban” and blended families are re-defining kinship, this issue suggests studying the co-production of kinship and the city, through an approach focusing on everyday practices. It is in continuity with constructivist approaches that have recently renewed conceptions of kinship and space. Anthropological work on “practical kinship” (Carsten, 2004; Weber 2005) comes especially to mind, as do performative approaches to space from anthropology (Ingold 2000, Tilley 2006) and geography (Lussault 2007).

Contributions may be from any social science discipline interested in the relationship between space

and kinship (anthropology, demography, sociology, geography, contemporary history). They will address a variety of geographical areas, while trying to avoid the classic opposition between Southern cities with strong kinship and Northern cities with weak kinship (Reher, 1998).

Four main questions will guide this thematic issue:

**1) What concepts to use for rethinking the spatial configuration of kinship in contemporary cities?**

In studies of the family in urban societies, the terms “city,” “space,” “family,” or “household” are rarely deconstructed. When it is not used metaphorically, the notion of space is often reduced to its proximity-distance dimension, while its symbolic dimension and systemic character are less frequently mentioned. Likewise, the term “family” is rarely addressed critically, despite the fact that it has become highly polysemic and seems increasingly unsuitable for understanding contemporary kinship in all its diversity. Contributions will thus be attentive to emergent kinship terminologies in contemporary cities. They will offer a critical regard on recently proposed concepts to think about the spatial arrangements of kin within and outside the confines of the home and beyond the limits of the “city,” such as “entourage” (local family circle, Bonvalet, 2003), “*système résidentiel familial*” (family residential system; Le Bris et al., 1987), “*considerações de casas*” (configurations of houses; Marcelin, 1999), “*maisonnée*” (extended household; Gollac, 2003), “*territoire familial*” (family territory; Pfirsch, 2008), “*vicinalidade*” (vicinality; Pina Cabral, 2014), and “global kin networks” (Olwig, 2007).

**2) Urban space in the everyday production of kinship**

“The sharing of everyday life creates a kinship not rooted in filiation or alliance, but in help with no expectations in return, pursuing a common cause, and sharing resources” (Weber 2013: 8). Urban space plays a decisive role in the production of this “practical” kinship, because the heterogeneity of the city allows flexibility in the norms governing kinship. Cities are spaces of constant re-invention of kinship ties. Contributions to this issue will analyze how everyday arrangements and “work on the space” make it possible to both maintain cohesion in existent kinship groups (residential configurations, travel together, reunion and vacation destinations, places of symbolic meaning to the family) and create new kinship relationships (homosexual parenthood, step-parenthood, elective kinship emerging from co-habitation, caregiving, resource-sharing, mutual help in migrating, and so on). They will be attentive to the role urban space plays in these everyday spaces and the invention of kinship, as seen, for example, through neighborhood location and image, the housing market, or transportation and communication systems.

### 3) The role of kinship in making the city

Although the space of contemporary cities allows the production of kinship, inversely, families' spatial arrangements contribute to shaping urban spaces. Articles may analyze how kinship spaces orient mobility systems (at the intra-and inter-urban scales, including transnational), dwelling morphologies (interior arrangements, extensions, semi-cohabitation in and between housing that is usually conceived and built for heterosexual nuclear families in contemporary cities), and even the social geography of the city (the role of family aggregation dynamics in residential choices and the emergence of "ethnic" neighborhoods or social segregation in the city). The relationships between the everyday production of kinship and local and national law and public policy may also be probed.

### 4) What methods for identifying and representing the spatial configurations of urban kinship?

The articles will offer critical reflection on the methods for studying everyday familial practices that are difficult to assess, including ethnographic approaches (often favored), quantitative kinship surveys, and mixed methods. Particular attention will be given to graphic and cartographic tools for representing forms of urban kinship.

**Article proposals up to 450 words in length (in English only)** should be sent by **15 september 2017** to Consuelo Araos ([consuelo.araos@gmail.com](mailto:consuelo.araos@gmail.com)) and Thomas Pfirsch ([thopfirsch@hotmail.com](mailto:thopfirsch@hotmail.com)). Once selected, authors will then submit their articles for peer review by **15 January 2018**.

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