

**The struggle to belong**  
***Dealing with diversity in 21st century urban settings.***

Amsterdam, 7-9 July 2011

**Negotiating downtown renewal in Colombia: is the right to the city a public discourse or a grounded citizenship practice?**

**Catalina Ortiz**

Ph.D. candidate - Urban Planning and Policy - University of Illinois at Chicago  
Associate Professor - National University of Colombia  
Carrera 45 No 26-85 - Edificio Uriel Gutiérrez -Bogotá D.C. - Colombia  
cortiz9@uic.edu - cortiz@unal.edu.co

Paper presented at the International RC21 conference 2011  
Session: 18. SOCIAL JUSTICE AND THE RIGHT TO THE CITY

## **Abstract**

*How do agents involved in large-scale projects mobilize their interests to shape space? In Latin America the socio-legal movement of urban land reform have been framed as a set of tools that guarantee the right to the city as a legal right and political notion inspired in Lefebvre's work. Along with Brazil, Colombia's experience is considered a remarkable achievement in conceiving and implementing urban land reform. However, localized expressions of the city making under land reform principles still needs further examination based on the processes of negotiation. In 2000, over 4,000 hectares on the downtown fringes of the main Colombian cities were designated as areas of 'renewal' to be redeveloped using a novel land management tool called 'Partial Plan'. Partial plans embody the new spatial planning system by re-assembling the rights and responsibilities of the public and the private regarding participation and funding of these space interventions. PP constitutes a participatory mechanism of urban design, land assembly and self-funding strategies for large-scale urban projects. I attempt to unravel whether the products of partial plan negotiations lead to agreements that contributes to foster spatial justice even in presence of unbalanced power. The study examines the case of community and publicly led partial plans for enabling large-scale redevelopment projects in the context of downtown areas in Colombian cities. By studying the urban design schemes and the bargaining strategies, it is possible to examine the nature of the political leverage of public officials, landowners, and non-landowners to intervene the built environment in the Latin American context. I argue that the negotiation of renewal projects needs to be understood as state strategy to unlock land values through the formalization of informal practices. Agents' attitude towards informality, community organization capabilities, and mayoral involvement on the project largely influence the negotiation.*

## **Introduction**

How do agents involved in large-scale projects mobilize their interests to shape space? Large-scale projects as a new model of urban planning were launched in Colombian cities in late 1990s. The 1990s in Colombia were a time of institutional

advances in the areas of land management and urban rights following the signing of the new constitution in 1991. This political constitution incorporated the principles of social and ecological function of property, the equitable distribution of cost and benefits of urbanization, and the direct participation of citizens in urban policy decision-making. These propositions are the pillars of the urban land reform agenda that, since the pass of territorial development law in 1997 gives birth to a new spatial planning system. In Latin America the socio-legal movement of urban land reform have been framed as a set of tools that guarantee the right to the city (RTTC) as a legal right and political notion inspired in Lefebvre's work.

All municipalities attempted to implement these propositions through new participatory master plans and the definition of strategic large-scale projects to be developed through partial plans. Partial Plan (PP) is a land management tool that enables urban design, parcel assembly and self-funding mechanisms for large urban projects. In 2000, over 4,000 hectares of downtown fringes in the main Colombian cities have been designated as urban renewal areas to be redeveloped using this novel land management tool. Downtown areas are settings of intricate ownership fragmentation, low-income renters, and intertwined informal/formal activities taking place in public spaces. In this context, PP of renewal attempt to guide the intervention of downtown urban form by changing lot configurations, bringing higher densities, and creating new public spaces. This article examines the limitations and opportunities involved in implementing this agenda on the basis of the large-scale projects, focusing the analysis on the process of negotiation in downtown fringes. Thus, the negotiations of partial plans emerge as the embodiment of urban land reform challenges.

Since negotiation is a necessary condition to address the differential agents' access to power, it is crucial to understand how agents mobilize their interest to shape space. In order to explore these processes, this article compares the process of negotiation of two partial plans of renewal. The cases are located in two Colombian cities that are active real estate investment sites and a fast growing building industry: Pereira and Medellin. Despite sharing the same legal framework the process as well as the outcomes vary a lot. First, in Pereira the publicly led Ciudad Victoria partial plan achieved a national recognition for being the best project of land use planning awarded by the national association of architects in 2004. Second, in Medellin the community initiative of Corazon de Jesus is the first community initiative in the country taking seven years to come to an agreement in 2007.

Why have these partial plan initiatives generated different processes and outcomes? I argue that the negotiation of renewal projects needs to be understood as state strategy to unlock land values through the formalization of informal practices. In the negotiation, as the arena of power bargaining, agents' attitude towards informality, community organization capabilities, and mayoral involvement on the project largely influence the process. As a result, the article contributes to planning literature by demonstrating that informality operates as

urbanization logic as well as a discursive practice of state to legitimize and protect investors and landowners' interest transferring the burden onto the less privileged. It reveals how community coalitions (or their lack thereof) at the district level can inhibit (or facilitate) the renewal projects. The study employs varied qualitative research methods, including comparative historical analysis, case studies, and process tracing. I conducted 35 in-depth interviews with key informants from local and national governments, the private sector, and community organizations in 2010. To a lesser extent, I relied on archival research and content analysis techniques for gathering secondary data.

### **Large scale projects and right to the city**

The rise of strategic large-scale projects does not constitute an isolated episode of the plan making process in the global south. Instead, the physical design of urban projects act as a constitutive mechanism of how neoliberalization processes takes place in different regions revealing patterns of resemblance. In this regard, the adaptation of localities' built environment reveal how these processes are shaped in specific territories in a highly differentiated and uneven fashion (Martin, 2005). Large-scale urban projects are considered "emblematic examples of neoliberal forms of urban governance" (Swyngedouw, Moulaert, & Rodriguez, 2002: 543). Hence, the spatial critiques to neoliberalism offer a explanatory frame for studying the spatial logics of the reassemble of agents' power in the dispute for political control over real-estate capital.

Examining large-scale projects exposes how planning practice is reframed to steer the marketable features of space as the focal point of productive economy. Spatial planning operationalize the objectives of urban policy that is "developing in parallel with the new neoliberal economic policy" (Brenner, 2004: 545). In this context, space is the privileged instrument for imposing state's rationalities in the re-articulation of agents (i.e. state, private sector, and civil society) in the production of space (Lefebvre in Brenner, Jessop, & Jones, 2003: 85). Likewise, the increasing relevance of large-scale projects expresses both a response and instrument to 'unlock' the profit making potential of mainly devalued property. Strategies to intervene the urban form aim at reducing uncertainties of securing the value of property through the coordination agents (Mandanipur, 2006). Therefore, state's definition of renewal areas represents a characteristic of capital's modus operandi at targeting strategic sites for value extraction. Urban projects become the political currency in the emergent spatial planning practice. At the same time citizen response to these projects activate sites of contestation enabling arenas for claiming spatial justice under the notion of right to the city. Lefebvre's socio- spatial theory of citizenship brings a space-based membership in a political community "to further the interests of the whole society and firstly of all those who inhabit" regardless of their legal status (Lefebvre, 1996, p. 158). The right to the city serves as a theoretical and political frame to understand citizenship as a by-product of the production of space (Lefebvre, 1996; Marcuse, 2009; Harvey, 2000; Purcell, 2003). Right to the city nowadays

offers a window to explore social responses to urban restructuring; especially, it could reveal accrue social impacts of market driven urban policy in Latin American cities where Keynesianism and welfare was never fully established. In consequence, the emergent socio-legal movement Latin America advocating for urban land reform urges to be problematized from 'counter hegemonic' potential that RTTC embraces.

Studies of large-scale urban projects in Latin America have focused primarily on the risks coming from the privatization of urban management (e.g. Lungo, 2005; Carmona, 2005), the role of legal frameworks in the implementation of urban land reform (e.g. Fernandes 2005; Maldonado, 2009), the financial strategies of land value capture (e.g. Smolka & Furtado, 2001), and the power relations involved (e.g. Zunino, 2006; Cuenya, 2009). Although these studies are relevant in the examination of this emergent planning practice, they overlook the role of the built environment and the complexities of dealing with the intertwined dynamics of formality and informality in the production of space in Latin American cities. Moreover, these studies fail to acknowledge the dynamics that take place among actors in negotiation processes, especially the role of non-landowners and the impacts of public and private interests on urban form.

This article fills the gap in existing literature by exploring the linkages of large-scale projects and negotiation as effective site of citizenship making processes. I conceive negotiation as an actor-centered set of socio spatial processes where space-based interests are in continual transactional moves across scales for achieving specific compromises rather than consensus. In addition, I highlight the notion of strategy as analytical tool and a line of inquiry to unravel how actors' interests are mobilized. 'Strategy' turns into a way to understand how politics of space operate in the negotiation of large-scale projects exposing the shifting boundaries of formal/informal. Thus, examining large-scale projects through the lenses of power dynamics allows a better understanding of the built environment as a by-product of the deal making processes.

### **Partial plans: Land management tool for downtown renewal in Colombia**

Large-scale projects as a new model of urban planning was launched in Colombian cities in the 1990s as a response to a lack of urban policy, increasing urbanization rates, and a crisis in the construction industry. Space intervention occurs within an evolving legal, political, and fiscal framework (Fernandes, 2007). Colombia adopted a new spatial planning system after 30 years of attempts to pass legal initiatives of urban land reform. This reform consists in a transformative project seeking also "the autonomy of municipal governments, the democratic management of cities, the social right to housing, the right to the regularization of consolidated informal settlements, ... and the need to combat

land and property speculation in urban areas” (Fernandes, 2007: 180). Decentralized governments acquired new tools to regulate spatial transformation while urban design quality became more dependent on the real estate investment market.

How does the spatial planning system frame the partial plans formulation process? Colombia has a two-tier spatial planning system. Thus, two levels of planning tools frame the decision-making process over space: the general territorial plan (POT) for the whole municipality and the partial plans for strategic urban districts. POT intends to coordinate under a ‘shared territorial vision’ three ambits of regulation: private (i.e. parcel- by-parcel), public-private (i.e. strategic urban districts), and public (i.e. public infrastructure). Moreover, POT indicates the purpose and location of strategic urban projects to be implemented through Partial plans<sup>1</sup> (PP). PP implements and complements the general plan’s goals and defines operational steps to achieve the long-term vision of the spatial transformation expected. The use of this tool enables parcel assembly in areas of highly fragmented land ownership, attempts to reduce financial pressures to the local government by funding public infrastructures, and facilitates equal sharing of the benefits and cost of the project among the agents involved. Therefore, PP offers a negotiated approach to coordinate planning, land management and urban design at district scale.

The initiative to lead large-scale urban projects in strategic locations is no longer exclusive of local governments and opens the window for private as well community agents to lead these processes. PPs constitute public – private partnerships for steering strategic urban projects. In all cases, the local planning authority deals with the bargaining process and the mayor who approves the PP. Moreover, they allow for the participation of investors, landowners, real estate agents, and developers in urban interventions where public resources are going to be involved (Maldonado, et. al. 2006). The introduction of PP gives local governments leverage to intervene private property and associate for providing public infrastructure. The aspects of PP that are open to negotiation include: a) Urban design strategies -- the divisions of public and private spaces, urban program, density, building types, etc. b) Land pooling -- land readjustment based on a new definition of property rights boundaries for parcel assembly. c) Self-funding strategy -- distribution of cost and benefits of the project based on the land value increment resulting from the project.

---

<sup>1</sup> The notion of partial plans comes from a tool conceived in Spain (i.e. Land Readjustment law of 1954 and Land law of 1956) and Japan (i.e. land readjustment techniques). Partial Plan is a land management tool that enables urban design, land readjustment and self-funding mechanisms for large urban projects. PPs have been used mainly to guide development in peripheral areas needing full infrastructure provision or ‘growth districts’. However, in Colombia PPs have tackled also redevelopment processes in central areas or ‘renewal districts’. In 2000, over 4,000 hectares of downtown fringes in the main Colombian cities have been designated as urban renewal areas to be redeveloped using this novel land management tool. At the national level are identified more than 253 partial plans covering more than 7.174 Ha, 95 of them for renewal areas (DNP, 2010).

Partial plans provide a tool for obtaining redistributive gains from the private revenues generated by planned large-scale redevelopments in central areas<sup>2</sup>. This rationale delegates the responsibility of the urbanization process to landowners rather than developers. Moreover, land value increments derived from the project are expected to cover the total costs of the intervention. Thus, partial plans attempt to facilitate the cost sharing of project benefits and costs among local governments, developers, and landowners. In other words, partial plans try to link public good and private gain within urban districts through 'compulsory negotiation' or collective bargaining (Maldonado et. al., 2006; Todtmann, 2009). Furthermore, areas designated for partial plans cannot be transformed drastically (i.e. request building permits) unless the plan is approved. It is only through this approval that space can be transformed. That is why agents involved in the process need to spur and make more expedite the negotiation process to make the space more profitable and change uses and densities. As a result, partial plans (PP) in Colombia embody the new spatial planning system principles for the formulation of large-scale urban projects<sup>3</sup>.

Table1. Comparative Features of Case studies of PPR in Colombia

---

<sup>2</sup> According to the territorial development law urbanization obligations are crucial for areas designated as partial plans. Municipalities should impose to landowners' urbanization obligations, as a way to fulfill the principle of the public function of spatial planning and the equitable distribution of rights and responsibilities. On one hand, 'responsibilities' include provision of land and construction of public infrastructures. On the other hand, 'rights' are conceived as the economic benefits derived from land uses, densities, and floor area ratios defined in the project. In detail urbanization obligations consists on: a) land contribution for local systems of public streets, utilities, public space and amenities, b) construction of secondary level systems of utilities, streets, parks, and amenities, c) costs pertaining primary level public utilities and streets system. The objectives of an equitable distribution involve two aspects. First, to guarantee the execution of urbanization costs based on the increments on land prices produces by the project. Second, the financial strategy should be developed giving equitable treatment to the landowners involved; each one of them receives equivalent profit proportional to land area owned regardless the finale use of it (i.e. public systems or private space) (Maldonado, et. al., 2006; Todtmann, 2009).

<sup>3</sup> Renewal areas become spaces of exception. In these areas not only the control over space is taken by alternative sources of power, but also the legal system treat them through a special spatial regulation using partial plans. Partial Plans enable venues of flexible regulation where the agreements over space intervention are negotiated among public, private and community agents. Thus, "the characteristic of flexibility is the key to understanding the dynamics of urban politics in the global era... in contrast with the rigidity of modernist planning" (Shatkin, 2011: 83) In this context, local governments are increasingly relying on public – private deal making for large –scale redevelopment projects as a means for delivering what they want from the market. As a result, cities in Colombia have spanned the use of partial plans as a land management tool to enable the intervention of strategic urban locations. This land management tool determines the intervention of downtown urban form by changing the lot configuration, bringing higher densities, and creating new public spaces by the introduction of urban design.

	PPR CIUDAD VICTORIA	PPR CORAZON DE JESUS
<b>General facts</b>	<b>Location:</b> Pereira – Risaralda <b>Population:</b> 576,329 hab. <b>City area:</b> 628 km <sup>2</sup>	<b>Location:</b> Medellin – Antioquia <b>Population:</b> 2,223,078 hab. <b>City area:</b> 1,152 km <sup>2</sup>
<b>Planning Area</b>	<b>Extension:</b> 10 ha (13 blocks) <b>Lots:</b> 214 <b>Inhabitants:</b> 1.536 residents/workers (90% renters) + 700 street workers <b>Use:</b> Commercial and residential	<b>Extension:</b> 26.4 ha (33 blocks) <b>Lots:</b> 974 <b>Inhabitants:</b> 560 residents - 6.200 workers (79% renters) + 1.050 street workers <b>Use:</b> Commercial and services
<b>Partial plan of renewal</b>	<b>Initiative:</b> Public <b>Negotiation:</b> 3 months <b>Implementation:</b> 3 years <b>Management units:</b> 6 <b>Social costs financing:</b> 7,068 points (US \$0.47') – partial relocation of residents and workers <b>New public space:</b> 16.950 m <sup>2</sup> (Park and civic plaza) + 4.227 m <sup>2</sup> (Cultural center) <b>Private space:</b> 60.500 m <sup>2</sup> commercial, 60.000 m <sup>2</sup> residential, 15.000 m <sup>2</sup> institutional	<b>Initiative:</b> Community <b>Negotiation:</b> 7 years <b>Implementation:</b> Pending (15 years) <b>Management units:</b> 22 <b>Social costs financing:</b> 1% of sales (US \$7.5') – maintain 90% of workers <b>New public space:</b> 18.000 m <sup>2</sup> in situ (boulevards and 3 plazas) + 8.000 m <sup>2</sup> off site + (School) <b>Private space:</b> commercial 360.000m <sup>2</sup> , residential 117.000m <sup>2</sup> , and 166.000 offices.

This article compares the process of negotiation of two partial plans of renewal: public initiative of 'Ciudad Victoria' in Pereira and community initiative of 'Corazon de Jesus' in Medellin (See Table 1). The two experiences will draw a description of the strategies of negotiation.

### **Ciudad Victoria: mayoral platform and informality dispersion**

'Ciudad Victoria' became the most visited urban site in the coffee zone region. In Pereira, a middle size city in the center of the region, a vibrant new centrality is rising with generous open and green spaces that promote recreational and cultural activities and is surrounded by institutional and commercial facilities. The traditional city market area was the most prosperous and dynamic in the city. Four decades ago, the area of the old city market on the border of downtown entered a process of urban decline, as many other city market surrounding areas of several cities in Colombia. Along with agricultural production, the area became known for the illegal activities that took place there. Over time, vulnerable groups such as sexual workers, homeless individuals, street vendors, and orphans came to dominate the space. In 2001 a French – Colombian big box retailer chain wanted to locate in Pereira; at the same time a new female mayor was elected turning the renewal of the old city market as the basis of her political platform. The resurgence of Ciudad Victoria occurred in 2002 after the collapse of the old city market area. This project received the award for best practice in spatial planning practice in the country issued by the Colombian Society of Architects in



2004. The following are the main bargaining strategies involved in the process of negotiation:

### *Bargaining strategies*

#### a. Using Renewal as mayoral political platform

The mayor used the project as political platform and as an indicator of good governance. Even though, the intervention of the old city market was a strategic project in the municipal plan; the mayor was the first leader focusing municipality' resources to the project despite the long-standing attempts to intervene the area. The mayor justified the public investment as a matter of addressing a historical problem in the city and the exacerbation of decay derived from the 1999 earthquake aftermath. Thus, a moment of crisis was taken as an opportunity to install the logic of entrepreneurial spirit in the citizens. The project launched highlighting the need to attract investment as mechanism to achieve efficiency and competitiveness. The partial plan attempted to: "Boost an economic reactivation process habilitating the commercial potential of the area... and promote a real estate management that supports public –private partnership" (Alcaldia de Pereira, 2002: 36). After her mandate period she conquered positions at regional level and national level and was defeated in the last reelection campaign. The tactics used in the deal making process were:

#### -Trust seeking

The mayor's camping was based on the premise of developing a collaborative scheme of governance. She used the project to enlarge and keep the support of her constituency, as the plan states:

*"[it] is vital to strengthen governance, creating an atmosphere of confidence among the project stakeholders through planning and urban management. This will allow to continue building and consolidating other parts of the city through large-scale urban projects. Hence, the public credibility is strengthened by a shared vision of the city"* (Alcaldia de Pereira, 2002: 33).

Besides, trust was a common factor all interviewees involved in the case mentioned. They considered that trust was the enabling factor of the project success, as the technical coordinator states:

*"The politic is to transmit trust, and I believe that the mayor and the secretary of planning knew how to do it. They enabled trust among investors, landowners, and the technical group that were working with them"* (interviewed on 09.12.2010).

This tactic was deployed through internal institutional coordination for assuring funding sources, political support, and showing actions of cleaning and beatification of the area. The mayor turned this project into the axis of city governance and a personal obsession to become a heroic character that will save the town from decadence.

#### - Investors hunting

The pivotal role of the private sector in mayor's plan made necessary to go after investors that could sponsor the anchor facility required. The economic criterion of the plan defines:

*"The partial plan should facilitate the processes of public and private investment. The investment must seek equity in the negotiations that occur in the area, subject always to recognize market conditions in a deteriorated area, the fragmentation of ownership, and the need for investment incentives" (Alcaldía de Pereira, 2002: 33).*

Investors from EXITO and Grupo Urbe were already interested in the area. However, the data suggest that the mayor used her power network and went directly to talk to the leaders of the firms to set the compromise to invest in the area. As the technical coordinator defines:

*"The risk of investors in entering this type of project is very high; therefore, the rate of return that they must receive in a project of this magnitude has to be very good ranging from 22% to 24% ... when they saw that the project was a reality, investors came by themselves" (interviewed on 09.12.2010).*

Consequently, the product of public leadership translated into an expedited plan formulation, legal assistance for massive land buying, and political support for exceptional budget investments with the city council.

#### -Pioneer intervention

The municipality took the lead in transforming the area even before the plan was approved. The technical group leading the plan pushed the rationale of showing results as evidence of transparency and efficiency. In this regard, the pioneer intervention refers to the spatial actions to start changing the imagery of the citizens about the area. These actions concentrated on the beautification of facades, cleaning of scavengers' storages, greening vacant lots, and garbage collection. Additionally, the city market building and the most emblematic hotel, owned by a known businessman, were demolished as the technical coordinator describes:

*"To demolish this building with dynamite in front of the TV cameras was very strategic. That day people believed in the plan ... that was like taking out an icon in the area and say there is nothing else to do...this generated an impact on the whole society in Pereira..." (Interviewed on 09.12.2010).*

The demolition became a symbolic act signaling a point of no return in the project. In this move, local state acts as a landowner by pioneering the intervention in public land.

#### b. Framing informality as social deviance

The planners operated under the rationality to typify public space occupation as deprivation at urban scale for pedestrian traffic and concentration of social vulnerability. The mayor herself described the situation of the inhabitants as: *"people living like animals"* (interviewed on 02.12.2010). Furthermore, the government plan describes:

*"It is necessary to highlight the problematic of the vulnerability of the occupation of public space by street vendors. We estimate over 3000 informal traders located mainly in traditional downtown... Additionally, we found an increasing number of homeless reaching 2200, where 1200 of them live in the area of renewal..."*

*concentrating the higher social vulnerability of the city.” (Alcaldia de Pereira, 2001: 83).*

On the other hand, the targeted area was depicted as a place where control of space was taken by alternative sources of power, as several experts of the city mentioned: *“there was a large margin of illegality, the police did not enter in the area... form the 17 social groups identified, 50% were illegal”* (Interviewed on 06.12.2010). For other expert that situation was only possible because the existence of *“mafias who buy the state”* (Interviewed on 02.12.2010). Thus, the condition of informality is presented as the intersection of contravening city regulations, accomplice authorities, and operation of black markets. The tactics used in the deal making process were:

#### -Human dignity in poverty

Human dignity and right to the city were used as rhetorical bastions to dislocate informal practices. On one hand, the mayor's rationality introduced in the government plan the axis of human dignity defined as:

*“To dignify the inhabitants' life... involves committing to the ones living in poverty. Poverty is understood as an efficiency problem and finding possibilities to progress ... and participate in the decisions that affect their lives...” (Alcaldia de Pereira, 2001: 12).*

Here the administration commits to focus on population in poverty (i.e. 53.9 % of the population) addressing it as matter of efficiency and participation. On the other hand, the opening act of the partial plan quoted an excerpt of Lefebvre's right to the city to frame the project as a progressive democratic process: *“...The city is not only a language but a practice...”* (Alcaldia de Pereira, 2002:1). However, the final deal making process evolved as an expedited technocratic process of formulation in spite of the use of these rhetorical devices. Nonetheless, the proposal included the notion of social costs to incorporate the social programs funding for vulnerable population.

#### -Selective relocation

In Pereira the tactic to reconstitute the control of public space occurred mimicking the spatial practices of street vendors, using police force and fragmenting the population. As the mayor explains:

*“We had to act as informal. We invaded before they arrived, with the police we confiscate what they had... so I was relocating and cleaning those streets” (interviewed on 02.12.2010).*

Thus, the mayor relocated some street vendors in underutilized public buildings called 'popular bazaars' according to the type of products sold. Furthermore, the remaining inhabitants were evicted from the area after the demolition process using police force in conjunction with 'social cleanness'. A study on the matter suggests that:

*“Public agents, within institutional spaces, instigated the violence, particularly illegal violence against unwanted actors such homeless in Pereira downtown... this make invisible the growing power of illegal networks of drug trafficking and paramilitaries...” (Martinez, et. al., 2010: 52).*

In sum, local state attempted to dissolve informality by acting as informal, giving temporary social assistance, and pushing the limits of legality to eradicate illegal activities.

#### -Shift in NGO participation

[Figure 1. Ciudad Victoria partial plan social 'appraisal']

Non-governmental organizations' participation marked the direction of the process of negotiation. They performed the liaison between community and municipality at the begging of the project. In this process non-governmental organizations moved from gaining access in the community to provide census information to municipality for designing social programs in the first phase. They built a comprehensive diagnosis of the social conditions of inhabitants through cultural maps and informative workshops. After the mayor took the lead of the process the technical team shifted to a more real estate and urban design oriented professionals interrupting the social work done and suppressing the social component of the technical team. This group translated social programs into social costs to be distributed among private agents and the municipality. The EXITO assumed more of those tax-deductible costs by providing job training to some inhabitants.

#### c. Creating a civic plaza as iconic landscape of resurgence

The stigmatization of the area and the earthquake aftermath urged a radical spatial intervention in the area. In this process, urban design turned into a tool to generate new open public space for civic encounter. In that line of thought, the idea of creating a new civic plaza fitted the premise of creating a sign of a reborn of the city and clearance of unwanted users. The plaza is the nodal public space typology in Latin American cities for collective scenarios. The technical document of the plan defines the objective of the new space:

*"The expansion of the traditional downtown of Pereira must continue with the function of regional headquarter of public institutions, place of cultural representations, symbolic public space at municipal scale..." (Alcaldia de Pereira, 2002: 13).*

However, a single architect took care of the design with no disclosure of spatial information to discuss. Only the cultural center design was defined by public contest. The placement of the cultural center where the city market was located made it the icon of progress and change in city's priorities. As a result, the project was launched as epicenter for marketing the city and extending the activities of centrality. The tactics used in the deal making process were:

#### -Re founding city

Mayor's rhetorical axis consisted if framing the renewal project as an opportunity born out the crisis in order to regain public space control. The partial plan presents the project:

*"Ciudad Victoria is part of the process of re foundation of the city... it means to dignify the people lives. [This project] is a way to consolidate governance ... Thus,*

*Ciudad Victoria more than a government project is a city project” (Alcaldia de Pereira, 2002: 1).*

The idea of expanding the central area sought to open a prime real estate location inaccessible for decades. In order to do so the plan attempted to simplify the existent parcel structure and create super blocks to tailored street layout to the new functional program. Furthermore, the designer introduced the civic plaza and the iconic public building of the cultural center to create a new landscape and deactivate current spatial practices in the area. Hence, the rationale used to justify the project introduced the founding of symbolic space to reclaim the city as a new metropolis after the earthquake.

*[Figure 2 Ciudad Victoria’s parcel structure of the intervention area]*

#### -Accessibility/land value nexus

The land market value of a strategic location relies on the real estate interest of investment, nearness to potential users, and accessibility to several transportation modes. Because the levels of decay and social deprivation the old city market surroundings acted as a black whole in the city. With the project, the space arrangement pursued to change the patterns of land values according to levels of accessibility. Moreover, the big box facility was expected to be located on the parcels more deteriorated and occupied by most vulnerable population while the residential and institutional component in a zone less deteriorated and easier to access. As the technical coordinates explains: *“through an economic scheme we had to shift land prices pattern, the cheapest turn it into expensive and the most expensive turn it into a cheaper land”* (interviewed on 09.12.2010). Thus, while the areas where more profitable activities were going to be located where the areas with less value according to the land assessment; then, the challenge was to subvert the land price pattern to shape the financial strategy of the project and make feasible the urban design program and configuration.

#### -Entrepreneurial surrounding

The spatial frame of the new civic plaza presents a resemblance of new powers in contemporary city. While the traditional foundational areas integrated the civic plaza with buildings representing religious and administrative powers; the new civic plaza introduced a cultural center, big box retailers, shopping center, and privatized public services facilities. Thus, the rationality of the rebirth of the city brings to surround the public space activities of entertainment, consumption, and culture in new building typologies. In order to obtain block sizes for intended commercial purposes the design strategy was to generate a new street layout breaking the compact grid morphology. This process required converting previous public streets into sellable land to form new super blocks. The planning department had to request to the city council public an authorization to reconstitute the public space in a different area, in this case in the Egoya Park in the border of the intervention area. In addition, land assemblage was used to simplify the

parcel structure and produce autonomous real estate projects in each block. This tactic frames urban resurgence as a new competitive city.

[Figure 8. Ciudad Victoria partial plan – urban design and management unities]

### **Corazon de Jesus: community coalition and informality encroachment**

Sagrado Corazon de Jesus is the largest area in Medellin specialized on auto parts trade and vehicle repair services. Its proximity to the main public administrative buildings of the city, the adjacency to the metro line, and the river front border makes the area an irresistible target to transform. In 1989 the business owners of the area created a civic committee called CORAJE [Courage Foundation] to advocate its interests and improve the conditions of the area. The approval of a zoning ordinance in 1991 designated the neighborhood as residential zone neglecting of the intense commercial activity that over three decades were established with no alternative location defined. The Municipality's eviction threat sparked a strong civil opposition that ended up in riots and civil strikes opposing displacement in 1995. After three years of negotiation the zoning ordinance changed recognizing the area as a Mixed-use zone and giving a time frame to mitigate negative impacts of their economic activity. Local workers and renters proposed several initiatives for formulating the Partial Plan. Despite them, the planning department locked the possibilities for actual users of space to remain in the area alleging 'illegal' use of public space and environmental degradation. Only until an independent candidate became mayor, planners had to conciliate and open the door for a community-led PP formulation. The negotiation lasted seven years. The following are the main bargaining strategies involved in the process of negotiation:

#### *Bargaining strategies*

##### a. Forming community coalition as political resistance

Political resistance is intrinsic to power (Thompson, 2003). The 'Sad Neighborhood' community united only under the state threat of eviction. The police eviction sparked an unprecedented social mobilization and civic strike starting a history of search for unity and solidarity to maintain inhabitants in the area. The civic committee turned into a coalition of leaders where representatives from auto parts traders, street workers, garment industry, and wood industry had a seat in the CORAJE Foundation board. As the CORAJE leader frame it:

*"It was a fight of two against one, the municipality and possible investors against the community... the prime interest was to remain and our enemy the investors and government " (interviewed on 27.11.2010).*

The foundation took the lead in the formulation of the partial plan to assure the protection of inhabitants in the renewal project. The rationality of the municipal plan advocate for generating more efficient use of highly demanded space by creating a network of public spaces as the solution for non conforming occupation of public space. The tactics used in the deal making process were:

#### - Changing meanings

The female leaders of the foundation learnt the new constitution of 1991 granted the right to participate in planning decisions. That became the starting point of the process of negotiation. They defined the meaning of participation: *"We understand that participation consists in being able to modify of what affects you, if you do not achieve to modified it, then you do not participate"* (interviewed on 27.11.2010). They were able to modify the zoning change. However, the formulation of the new POT designated the neighborhood as renewal. They disagreed with this proposal, as the community leader explains:

*"...We did not want to be a renewal area because it meant to tear down the zone and rebuild it, we achieved to modify the concept of renewal in the general plan by adding a line that says 'involves the improvement of what is already there'. We fight two years for this"* (El Colombiano newspaper, August 11th, 2007).

The foundation representatives advocated for the notion of "prudential renewal" to insert the guiding principles of the project: permanence, conciliation, flexibility and profitability (Guinguer, 2006: 115). The tactic used under this strategy reveals the relevance of language as a site of power struggle and the effects of hegemonic knowledge in the planning practice.

#### - Self-management

The planning department rationale to target the area responded to the presence of delinquency, occupation of public space, and underutilization of building stock. Thus, community leaders acknowledged the negative impacts derived from the economic activities of inhabitants and the need to overcome the stigmatization of the area. CORAJE leader explains how:

*"Associates to the foundation contribute economically every month for running the programs and cover staff expenses... by ourselves we fixed the pedestrian lines, we assisted orphans that live in the street... we gave support to the police to improve the security by giving them motorcycles, cameras, and so on... we developed an environmental program to treat the liquid waste and recycle the oil used in the mechanic service..."* (Interviewed on 27.11.2010).

CORAJE framed their initiatives like self-management of the neighborhood based on solidarity among inhabitants: *"nowadays we know the term of co-responsibility, by then we called it 'all give', you give, we give..."* (Interviewed on 27.11.2010). The results of the initiatives changed over time the imagery of the area, this move influenced the strength of the organization to promoting social programs and tested the cohesion of the area to face the renewal project.

#### -Vote banking

The mobilization process made visible the magnitude of the neighborhood population. In the process, CORAJE and its leader gained visibility and decided to engage in electoral politics. The leader gained a seat in the local action board (JAC) with more votes than a member of the city council. Therefore, the election of the leader became a turning point in the area positioning the neighborhood as a vote bastion, as the leader explains: *"since then, the people said: there are a lot of votes in the zone"* (interviewed on 27.11.2010). In 2000, the foundation started to promote the partial plan initiative and make progress in preliminary technical studies. However, the lack of funds and technical expertise showed the

need for higher-level political support and communication channels with the planning department. CORAJE saw the opportunity to present the plan to an independent mayor candidate that was looking for non-partisan civic support. Then, CORAJE decided to campaign in favor of him, as a board member explains: *“we politicized ourselves”* (interviewed on 17.11.2010). The purpose was to boost the project and assure mayoral support to finish the plan and get public approval. In sum, the rationale of participating in the campaign was to push forward an agreement to introduce their terms in a negotiation largely neglected by planning authorities.

#### b. Framing informality as productive symbiosis

According to the leader the central planning decisions were product of ignorance: *“planners didn’t even bother in knowing the neighborhood, they hadn’t done a single study, they didn’t know anything”* (Interviewed on 27.11.2010). CORAJE pursued to reveal the capriciousness or lack of technical rationality of the planning intentions. For them, knowledge of the area was the weapon to fight the planning department rationality and perception in terms of informal activities and public space occupation. The community leaders attempted to abolish the myths about the competing nature of formal and informal activities. Instead, the coalition framed the nexus formality-informality as productive chains and clusters of solidarity. The tactics used in the deal making process were:

##### - Legitimize spatial practice knowledge

The foundation made a strategic partnership with universities of the city to tackle the economic, social and spatial aspects of the plan. The process of the partnership had two-folded goal: *“the studies demonstrated who we were, first to ourselves, and second to show it to the city at large”* (Interviewed on 27.11.2010). The main findings of the censuses revealed the ‘informal sector’ as constitutive productive force and the economic relevance of the area in terms of public budget and labor force employment. They discovered:

*“A direct relation of dependency exists between formal and informal sector, this dependency is marked by the harmony and socio economic connivance that qualifies the inner dynamic of the neighborhood”* (Guinquer, 2006: 11).

Therefore, the census became the technical mechanisms to justify why current inhabitants should remain in the area. University support was the mechanism to legitimize coalition interests and knowledge about the area arguing the social capital of the area as an urban scale asset.

[Figure 4. Corazon de Jesus partial plan – public space use social appraisal]

##### -Inhabitants’ protection

This move appeals to previous legal granted rights. The former legal framework of urban land reform (law 9/ 1989) introduced the right to protect inhabitants in renewal processes. The technical coordinator brought back the concept and used it as legal ground for their claim of right to remain in the intervention area. Moreover, they used the legal framework to protect interests of right to work and right to stay in the neighborhood. The technical document frames the right as:



*“The protection of inhabitants, more than a concept, is a social construct that originates in a specific territory and particular circumstance. Local government will of political acceptance enables to grant inhabitants’ rights. Thus, to grant these rights is the acknowledgment of the collective construction of an habitat that represent the materialization of an economic and symbolic heritage” (Guinguer, 2006: 116).*

The terms of the protection also accepts bringing new users and activities protecting existing economic circuits, modernizing productive activities, and qualifying public space conditions. In this proposal CORAJE expected to maintain at least 80% of current inhabitants as a product of their interest rooted in spatial practices.

#### -Street workers partnering

Since street workers organized a cooperative to articulate and voice their needs in the negotiation process. The leader explains: *“unfortunately we, as street workers, do not have support form the municipality, they tolerate that we work in the street but they do not support us for a project”* (interviewed 26.11.2010). In addition, he contends: *“the interests of CORAJE were not the same as our interests...”* (Interviewed on 26.11.2010) while the CORAJE leader, acknowledges: *“The informal workers were a weak line within the process, for some they are convenient and for others are disturbing”* (Interviewed on 27.11.2010). Street workers hold the belief of becoming landowners as requisite for getting benefits in the process. According to the leader: *“we have to fight for our wellness, for a parking lot, a parcel where we can access to build the head office of the cooperative and a space for a store to sell new and second hand auto parts ...”* (interviewed 26.11.2010). This conviction and the attempts to acquire the status of owners were congruent with ideas of protection to property and formalization as mechanism to being granted rights in large-scale projects. In that regard, the plan advisors proposed having a percentage of profit derived from the project to fund social programs.

#### c. Generating an open blocks network as a bastion for integration

The university leading the collaborative project proposed a participatory urban design approach. The encounters with the community had an iterative reflection upon the spatial dimension to address their needs and expectations. As the CORAJE leader puts it: *“when you dream you compromise”* (Interviewed on 17.11.2010). These encounters grouped the inhabitants by economic activity, zone, block, and tenure on a weekly basis. One of the challenges in the participatory process entailed to understand the implications of generate more public space at expense of current private land. The CORAJE leader explains: *“the conflict was and it will be to define where public space is going to be located that needs to be generated with the partial plan, that has been always the fight”* (Interviewed on 17.11.2010). As a result, the main proposal promotes a layout to keep the open space activities inside the blocks as hubs of public/private areas forming a system of open blocks network. In addition, the proposal kept the emphasis on existing economic activities in three zones (i.e. auto parts trade, wood/commerce, and garment district). The tactics used in the deal making process were:

[Figure 5. Corazon de Jesus partial plan parcel structure]

#### -Participatory design manifesto

Urban design becomes a catalyst of actors' interests in the process of negotiation of large-scale projects. CORAJE and the School of Architecture of the National University developed a set of participatory design workshops for three years. This process focused on providing tridimensional models for guiding the spatial intervention according to inhabitants' desires and needs. The main proposal prompted to maintain existing zoning (i.e. housing - textiles - wood - vehicles) and to keep the symbiosis of formal - informal activities to fortify present economic circuits. Therefore, the spatial pattern promoted several strips of flexible building typologies with open cores in each block and urban connection to transit and public space corridors. The process resulted also in a Decalogue<sup>4</sup> to negotiate the plan. This example suggests reclaiming urban design as political encounter of place based interests to shape city landscape.

#### -Past argument for future

Memory became a key tool to justify the permanence of the inhabitants and activities in the area. The leader asserts:

*"We did a research on cultural... that study revealed the church as the main architectonic landmark... but the main heritage that the area has is the knowledge of all the crafts operating in the area...we discovered that the neighborhood was inherited from the great grand fathers..." (Interviewed on 27.11.2010).*

Thus, a collective study on heritage of the practices and landmarks helped to build identity and sense of community and solidarity. The technical coordinator of the plan traced the historic pattern of occupation and legal dispositions on the area:

*"The spatial configuration of Corazon de Jesus originated in the first decades of the XX century, as an expansion of the old city market area in Guayaquil. The area were the neighborhood is located was occupied by commercial and services activities... The ordinance 92/1959 defined the land use and authorized the settlement of commercial activities in the area of Corazon de Jesus..." (Guinguer, 2006: 43).*

In this way, community showed the historic trajectory of the area as a long-standing tradition of commercial activities and services. The study about Memory portrayed the roots of the spatial practices and attachments to define motivations and interests in a process of renewal.

#### -Reversal in public space occupation

The public space 'invasion' by street workers and renters was one of the most controversial issues when discussing the problems of the zone. Despite the

---

<sup>4</sup> "a) The area has several comparative advantages in the city; b) The people that work here want to stay; c) In the sector exist networks that mutually support the jobs; d) The area needs to be changed because surrounding interventions, planning requirements and own economic benefits for inhabitants; e) Jobs need to be protected and increase the productivity; f) In order to be more productive and profitable, the area must attract more clients and offer more services; g) In search of higher profitability, the area needs to transform in function of the market; h) The benefit from the built environment qualification must be oriented to the same workers of the area; i) Every body fits: formal and informal; and j) There are no messiahs; the process belongs to the community" (Guinguer, 2006: 102).

generous dimensions of the street layout and blocks sizes, the cores were under utilized and streets and pedestrian lines saturated. Then, the proposal focused on functionality and formalization; the plan advisor explains:

*“The partial plan in essence sought to give space to the formalization of informal activities and give spaces to relocate activities in the same areas for renters...sharing economic clusters to enhance productivity by concentrating activities and bringing more users” (interviewed on 23.11.2010).*

The rationality to fulfill the challenge in renewal projects is balancing the introduction of higher densities with public space generation. Consequently, the spatial arrangement privileged was: having central backyards per block, permeable-commercial ground floor with towers, a set of inner passages, a network of boulevards, and a circuit of three plazas. As a result, the notion of public space is not only seen in terms of scene of spatial practices of inhabitants; rather, public space is articulated in terms of formalization.

[Figure 6. Corazon de Jesus partial plan – urban design and management]

## **Conclusion**

This article demonstrates the relevance of strategies and tactics to mobilize interests and claim rights in the negotiation for large-scale urban projects. In order to address the question: How do agents involved in large-scale projects mobilize their interests to shape space? I have presented how politics of space are embedded in the emergent land management practices that seek to implement the urban land reform by changing relations of land value, use, urban form and ownership. The cases presented show why large-scale projects encapsulate the changing dynamics of real estate capital, state practices, and civil society responses. Furthermore, the article reveals the convergence of several features of contemporary urbanism: the collective bargaining to obtain public benefit packages through the market, deregulate the regulatory mechanisms to capture surplus values of urbanization, informality as urbanization mode and governance strategy, among others. Though, as I have argued, the negotiation of renewal projects needs to be understood as state strategy to unlock land values through the formalization of informal practices.

Pereira and Medellin showed different processes and outcomes. In the former, a highly beneficial frame given to investors and local inhabitants was dispersed or partially assisted by state or private programs; then, the governmental initiative seems less innovative to find strategies to protect dwellers and also maintain them in the area. While in the latter, the planning department approval erased the main achievements of the community in the long-term participatory process despite community coalition and grassroots efforts to lead the project; thus, the grassroots initiative not only found a strategy to protect most of the vulnerable population but also to equalize power by increasing reciprocity of commitments among agents. The outcomes of the two process of negotiation cannot be fully attributed to the type of initiative and level of informality. A variety of factors, such

as the level of community vulnerability, inner power struggles, external forces coming from the municipal order also affected the renewal projects. Nonetheless, the attitude towards informality, community organization capabilities, and mayoral involvement on the project largely influenced the outcome.

While in Corazon de Jesus the notion of RTTC was not coined, the experience embodied an attempt of self-management of the territory; on the contrary Ciudad Victoria employed RTTC as rhetoric tool to position mayoral interests. As Mayer (2009) contends the discursive practices of state institutions that use RTTC erode the radical character of Lefebvre's ideas. Nonetheless, the last two decades of urban land reform implementation have produced relevant advances in overcoming planning practices that conceives land ownership as a privilege and lacking of citizens involvement. Colombian spatial planning system is moving forward in defining responsibilities attached to land ownership and framing territorial development strategies. However, the system has been less effective in equalizing citizens' rights access to opportunities pertaining downtown renewal. In sum, the legal focus of partial plans on land ownership curtails the bargaining leverage of non-landowners to influence social costs and the open space design. Likewise, it reveals a state retrenchment in supporting public services. Consequently, the uncertainty of non-landowners in the distribution of rights and responsibilities epitomizes the limitations of the implementation of land reform.

## **Bibliography**

**ALCALDIA DE MEDELLIN**, Decreto 1316 de 2007, Plan Paricial de Renovacion Urbana Corazon de Jesus. Area Metropolitana del Valle de Aburra. 2007

**ALCALDÍA DE PEREIRA**, Acuerdo 25 de 2001, Plan de Desarrollo 2001-2003. Pereira Mision de Todos. 2001

**BRENNER, Neil**, *New state spaces: urban governance and the rescaling of statehood*: Oxford University Press, USA. 2004.

**BRENNER, Neil, et. al.** *State/space: a reader*: Wiley-Blackwell. 2003.

**BRENNER, Neil, MARCUSE, Peter, & MAYER, Margaret.** "Cities for people, not for profit: introduction". *CITY*, 13, 176-184. 2009.

**CARMONA, Marisa**, *Globalizacion y Grandes Proyectos Urbanos. La respuesta de 25 ciudades*. Ediciones Infinito. Buenos Aires. 2005

**FERNANDES, Edesio**, "Implementing the urban reform agenda in Brazil", *Environment and Urbanization*, 19 (1), 177. 2007

**HARVEY, David**, The right to the city. *International Journal of Urban and*

*Regional Research*, 27(4), 939-941. 2003.

**LEFEBVRE, Henry**, Writings on cities: Blackwell Pub. 1996.

**LUNGO, Mario**, *Grandes Proyectos Urbanos*. UCA Editores/Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, San Salvador. 2004

**MADANIPOUR, Ali**, "Roles and challenges of urban design", *Journal of Urban Design*, 11(2), 173-193. 2006

**MALDONADO, Maria Mercedes**, Planes parciales, gestion asociada y mecanismos de distribucion equitativa de cargas y beneficios. Lincoln Institute of Land Policy. 2006.

**MALDONADO, Maria Mercedes & FERNANDES, Edesio**, "Shifting Paradigms and Possibilities for Action". *Land Lines*, July 2009.

**MARCUSE, Peter**, "From critical urban theory to the right to the city". *City*. 13, 2(3), 185-197. 2009.

**MARTIN, Patricia**, "Comparative topographies of neoliberalism in Mexico". *Environment and Planning A*. Vol. 37. 2009.

**PURCELL, Mark**, "Citizenship and the right to the global city: reimagining the capitalist world order". *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research*, 27(3), 564-590. 2003.

**RIOS, Michael**, "Envisioning Citizenship: Toward a Polity Approach in Urban Design". *Journal of Urban Design*, 13(2), 213-229. 2008

**SMOLKA, Martin & FURTADO, Fernanda**, "The value capture debate in Latin America. *Land Lines*, July 2003, vol. 15, no. *Lincoln Institute of Land Policy, Cambridge*. 2003

**SWYNGEDOUW, Erik, et. al.** Neoliberal urbanization in Europe: large-scale urban development projects and the new urban policy. *Spaces of Neoliberalism: Urban Restructuring in North America and Western Europe*, 195-229. 2002.

**TODTMANN, Daniel**, Operaciones Urbanas en Sao Paulo: la negociacion financiera del reparto equitativo de costos y beneficios. Tesis maestria en Arquitectura y Urbanismo Universidad de Sao Paulo. 2009