An Inside Look at Bogota's Urban Renewal. From Broad Urban Stories to Every Day Tales

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Abstract

The Colombian capital has become recently a model of urban development thanks to a successful process of urban renewal that fostered the insertion of the city in the international scene. In order to understand the complexity of Bogotá's transformation, it is essential to examine the objective causes that have determined the changes and the discourses that have shaped it. An analysis of the most important facts of Bogotá's transformation, of the image of the city promoted by the discourses of the experts and of the narratives created by the residents, permits to better understand the process globally. In addition, confronted with the observation of new emerging dynamics in renovated areas, this body of knowledge permits to recognize situated controversies and bring out certain lessons about urban project management that can be learned from the case of Bogotá.

Keywords: Bogotá, Urban development, Public space, Urban narratives.

Introduction

The city of Bogotá has been recently honored with important awards, including the "Golden Lion Award for cities" at the 2006 Venice Biennale, based on its recovery of public space, its network of cultural facilities, and its advanced public transportation system. In addition, Bogotá has shown progress in other fields that include civil culture and social cohesion. Although the city still faces serious challenges, these changes had a significant impact on the city's social dynamic. The city's urban renewal has gained media attention, and the Colombian capital has been considered a model in the circles of urban planning and an example of good governance and development.

Although the city authorities have presented their policies through discourses on public space and social cohesion, behind those discourses underlies a political agenda which, according to the recommendations of neoliberal discourse, emphasizes competitiveness and the insertion of Bogotá into the global market. According to that main goal of urban development, an important component of the urban plans developed was the renovation of the city center. The project was based on the expectation that the center should become the most important historical, cultural, touristic, residential, administrative, and commercial space in the city and in the country. The plan also anticipated that the center would become the region's most competitive economic space, becoming a strategic leader and a cultural reference point for the continent. This case is also relevant because it summarizes very well the planning decisions adopted for the entire city. The plan was considered the starting point for the future development of master plans for the rest of the territory, so that what was proposed for the central districts foreshadowed the goals for the entire metropolitan area.

This strategy has been rather successful. In addition to important transformations of the public space and the advances made in areas such as poverty reduction, security, education, service provision, and social inclusion, the goal of achieving higher levels of competitiveness has been one of the main

outcomes of the transformation of the city. According to the review *América Economía*, the city in 2009 was considered the sixth-best city in Latin America to do business. Yet the process has not been free of contradictions. The case of the urban renovation of Bogotá, particularly of its central district, is an interesting example to observe in the context of the 6th conference of the International Forum on Urbanism, since the success of the Bogotá model goes hand in hand with an important number of controversies that merit to be analyzed. The process of urban renewal has had a rather positive impact in terms of the physical configuration of public spaces, mobility, the revaluation of social and built heritage and the change of mental representations regarding this vital space of the city (for the foreign visitors as well as for the local residents). Furthermore, this urban project has certainly contributed to increase tourism and investment, two of the supposed benefits of the entrance of the city in the international scene. Nevertheless, the projects developed in the city center have been at the same time the source of new forms of social exclusion that affect the most vulnerable population. Therefore, the question concerning "what might be the necessary safeguards to ensure a proper balance between transformation and local development?" addresses perfectly well the problematic in question in our site of study. The issue to explore is if Bogotá's experience can contribute to answer this question.

The entire process of urban renewal of Bogota raises questions about the discourses that have directed the development plans, the policies proposed by the city authorities and their consequences. Finally, how do these transformations perform for the local residents? In order to answer these questions we conducted an investigation with a group of researchers of the Cresson Laboratory. We analyzed the most important sociopolitical issues behind the transformation process, and, turning to the local, we observed the impact of urban interventions in particular zones that were the subject of important physical transformations.

In the coming pages will be presented a brief analysis of the most important sociopolitical issues behind the transformation process of Bogotá. This background is essential to understand globally the complex articulations among urban, political, and experiential projects. This allowed us to build from the general context a useful cognitive tool to understand the main causes of the changes of Bogotá, identifying the discourses, hypotheses, and principles that have directed the city's development, recognizing the development strategies (political, economic, urbanistic) carried out by successive administrations, and analyzing both the city's planning strategies and the discourses applied to them by urban experts.

Turning to the impact on the urban space, we will present the outcomes of the two major urban interventions in the city center and the results of our observations in these areas. These urban projects have generated significant transformations in the zone. Although usually considered positive by the public opinion, some of the projects' outcomes are source of controversy. The interpretation of concepts such as public order and public interest has created conditions that legitimize urban actions regardless of their potential negative impact on different social sectors. An *in situ* analysis of these two sites reveals the complex interplay between the experts' discourses on the city, the narratives created by the users and the new emerging social dynamics.

The facts of change

Just a few years ago, studies of Bogotá presented it as representative of the contemporary urban problematic. It was described as the setting for "the expression of the most acute conflicts in the economic, social, political, and spatial order, and even of the ideological and cultural order" (Torres, 2000). Yet the city was recently praised as a model of conviviality and urban renewal in the circles of urban planning. What makes the case of Bogotá remarkable is that, in a rather short period of time, the city managed to find solutions for some of its most challenging problems—even as other critical issues, such as the provision of shelter and the reduction of poverty and inequality, remain unsolved. Recent advances in security, public transportation, mobility, education, service provision, and public infrastructure have had a tremendous impact on the city's dynamics and its most visible projects have gained considerable media attention. All in all, when we talk about Bogotá today, we no longer describe a city in crisis but, instead, an example of good governance and development.

In order to understand the complexity of this transformation, it is essential to examine the objective causes that have determined these changes and the discourses that have shaped it. In our work we juxtaposed the most important facts of Bogotá's transformation, based on documentary sources and interviews, with the image of the city created by the mystified discourses of the media, political speeches, urban marketing and the professional community of urban planners.

Most publications and exhibitions that describe Bogotá's urban transformation focus on the most visible results of the city's policies and projects. Certainly there are some original and successful initiatives that merit debate and media coverage, but generally, Bogotá's urban planning policies and projects—although frequently of high quality—are not particularly innovative. The city's urban planning is highly influenced by the Barcelona model, the discourses about the city emanating from urban sociology, and in a general way the universal objectives of the urbanized world, as represented in documents such as the Istanbul declaration. Thus what is really remarkable is the fact that Bogotá is one of the few middle-income cities that according to Gilbert (2008) has shown exceptional advances in governance and development. Governance has notably improved, and the city has clearly shifted to better political practices, including increased transparency, accountability, and responsiveness. Nevertheless, the analysis of the influence of good governance on the city's transformation must be cautious. Neoliberal discourse assumes that good governance is a necessary product of democratization and decentralization. However, in Latin America, where democracy has emerged as the most common political system in recent years and governments have stimulated decentralization, very few cities have experienced significant improvements (Gilbert, 2008). Indeed, according to some Latin American researchers, this model has produced rather negative results including increased unemployment, terciarization of the economy, relaxation of labor regulations, and the emergence of new forms of social exclusion. In Bogotá we observe advances that cannot be explained simply by democratization or neoliberal reforms, but at the same time it can't be argued that under the neoliberal model the situation has worsened; rather, the city's case represents a more complex panorama.

In order to get beyond the simplifications of political discourse, it is necessary to recognize that there was not a single turning point in the city's transformation. We observe, for example, that the formulation of new urban plans was itself the product of a series of political and cultural changes that include deep transformations in the city's urbanistic culture and a series of engaged local administrations. None of these factors independently could have sparked the conditions for critical change. The case of Bogotá's transformation must be understood as an ongoing historical process that began in the late 1980s and was not merely the product of a few inspired politicians, a singular vision of the city, or the recommendations of multilateral credit organizations.

Alan Gilbert (2008) proposes five concrete causes of Bogotá's transformation: good mayors, the end of clientelism, the advent of technocracy, programmatic continuity, and increased economic resources. Based on his reading of the city, Gilbert argues that the quality of a city's administration can be improved rapidly, but that the recommendations of development banks can be promising only if they go hand in hand with a number of other policies, and that the changes imply both increased taxes and increased spending. His conclusions correspond to a certain extent to four factors (closely related among them) that are identified as the most significant for the city's change: the 1991 constitutional reform; the combination of democratization, decentralization, and privatization; a new legislation of territorial planning; and the successive city administrations in office between 1993 and 2004. The scope of this article makes it impossible to give details, even briefly, of all the aspects involved by these four mayor facts. However, it is important to note that the process of urban transformation of Bogotá is the result of complex sociopolitical processes that include the neoliberal reform of the state, significant changes in the urbanistic culture and the particular local development plans of three mayors, Antanas Mockus, Enrique Peñalosa and Luis E. Garzón. These three mayors gave particular emphasis to policies related to issues of civil culture, public space and social cohesion respectively. Under their mandate were set in motion important campaigns of education, significant rehabilitations of public spaces, and progressive social policies. In general terms, due to these different approaches,

that included pedagogic programs, a discourse on social inclusion based on spatial integration, and an emphasis on reducing inequality and exclusion, the city became more inclusive.

A comparative analysis of the national development policies and of the local development plans of the city shows that behind the political discourses of the last city administrations there was almost veiled a discourse on productivity and competitiveness that has directed the urban development of Colombian cities since the decade of 1990 (Brand, 2003). One of the particularities of the case of Bogotá is that the prominence of neoliberal discourse in the development plans of the city coexisted with the emphasis made by the city administrators on issues that focused on social and cultural aspects. The importance assigned to both increased taxes and increased spending assured that the social emphasis wasn't just rhetoric. Indeed, it is possibly thanks to the initiatives of the three former mayors that the influence of the neoliberal model of urban planning has had a different impact in Bogotá than in other Latin American cities. Yet, the case of Bogotá has not been free of ambiguities, injustices, and contradictions.

The combination of demagogic and neoliberal discourse is not only revealing of the models of urban planning that have shaped the city. Such combination is also revealing about the discourses that shape the image of the city. The role of narratives in the city's development is definitely not negligible since such narratives have helped to obscure many complex situations that have emerged.

The expert's discourses

Georges Benko (2000) writes that the geopolitical classification of cities is a logical consequence of the need to compete in a globalized world. In the effort to make itself competitive, a city's capacity to attract investors, tourists, and new residents is determined by different factors, including those that are physical (infrastructure and public services), economic (local taxes, labor conditions, land prices), and demographic (qualified work force). Yet in addition to these aspects, Benko argues that "the image, the identity or the representations of the urban space play a determinant role," and that "in that sense, local cultural, urbanistic or social policies can participate in the economic development of the city or the region" (Benko, 2000). Consequently, regional communication campaigns become ubiquitous as cities become products for consumption that can be advertised, and "the fact that a region or a commune creates an image for the public, and that they use instruments of communication such as slogans or logos is no longer strange." (Ibid)

Beyond the political discourses on civil culture, public space and social cohesion, then, Bogotá's recent transformations must be understood as part of a strategy, including a marketing campaign, to improve local competitiveness and productivity. In fact, Bogotá may appear to exemplify the claim made by U.S. anthropologists Ida Susser and Janet Schneider that "in cities torn apart by violence and war, globalized processes, far from being the principal or obvious source of devastation, may actually present themselves as a part of the solution, a path to the restoration of urban health" (Susser and Schneider, 2003). In Colombia, an inarguable truth has been accepted in national planning circles: foreign investment and economic opening are important instruments in promoting social and economic development. Marketing both Bogotá and Colombia as worthwhile places to visit and to invest in has accordingly become a priority in both the local and national economic agenda.

Since Bogotá might until very recently have been considered what Susser and Schneider (2003) call a "wounded city", the problem of image holds particular interest. Susser and Schneider explain that "[i]n order to attract tourists and new investments, these cities have to recreate themselves like merchandise, investing particularly in the representation of their image." (Susser and Schneider, 2003) Changing the perceptions of Bogotá as a violent and chaotic city, even among local residents, has been particularly challenging.

In this context, urban marketing has become a useful tool for local authorities to improve the international image and competitiveness of the city. Administrations have also found political value in these communication strategies. The exercise of politics in the city has been mediated by

communication practices that tend to combine regional with other forms of marketing, including political, economic, and social. Therefore, the city's marketing has relied on three urban marketing practices: economic (the attraction of investors and tourists), political (urban actions replace or are tied to the political agenda), and social (the construction of a collective imaginary). This amalgamation is partly a product of the fact that political actors use urban marketing as a political tool. The use of the success story of Bogotá, legitimated at the 2006 Venice Biennale, is the best example.

Bogotá's success story has received a significant amount of media and professional attention. Clearly much of the publicity comes from those who benefit, including municipal government, local business groups, public-private partnerships, and multilateral credit organizations and development banks eager to promote the neoliberal model. Thus a large part of the information reproduced about Bogotá is ideological in nature: not surprisingly, it oversimplifies both the city's complex reality and the findings of research scholars. For example, internationally, Bogotá's image is shaped by discourses that describe the city as the stage for a "radical transformation process," the product of "innovative urban development policies,… spectacular physical interventions,…an excellent public administration," and "creative programs of civil culture." The city's urbanistic culture is defined as a set of practices that "transcend the traditional discourses of town planning" and have redefined "the process of building the city," not only as a physical space but also in "social and mental terms" (Escovar et al. 2007).

A revealing aspect of the construction of the discourses on the city is the role played by the marketing agency Invest in Bogotá, a public-private initiative exclusively conceived to promote tourism and to attract foreign investors. The city's marketing strategy, based on competitiveness, is the same discourse on international planning that is oriented toward international trade and the liberalization of markets led by the private sector. Competitiveness, however, is usually framed to the voting public as a concern for general welfare, that is, as a way to boost job creation, generate new productive activities, and improve the quality of life. While politicians and town planners spread a discourse on the city based on the importance of social inclusion and spatial integration as a condition to raising residents' quality of life, the urban marketing offers the city as cheap merchandise. In the web site of Invest in Bogotá we can read how the marketing agency of Bogotá invites the investors to benefit from one of the most flexible labor regulations in Latin America as well as competitive salaries (a euphemism for cheap work force), tax deductions and investor protection.

The simplifications and contradictions of the expert's discourses have serious implications on many aspects that have a negative effect in the quality of civic participation (promoted by the political discourse as a supposed necessity of good governance). And they also help to hide the contradictions and controversies resulting from some urban actions. On this subject, a few years ago, leading Colombian researcher Fernando Viviescas warned that Bogotá represented "the enlightened reinstallation of the old regime," that is, "the reestablishment of (messianic, educated, and omnipotent) administrators who resolve people's problems while the citizens are expected to simply obey" (Viviescas, 2001). He considered the inclusion of the greatest number of citizens in the projects of urban renewal as essential to protect the transformation process from traditional dominant interests. Yet regrettably, the empowerment of social sectors has had a lesser impact than that of private actors. While many urban projects and public services have undergone some degree of privatization, participation levels in social and civic movements remains very low. Meanwhile, local elites, including media owners, have found in their association with city authorities a sure path toward new business opportunities. Therefore private sector participation in the urban discourse on the city directs urban development toward particular interests, justifying profitable real estate operations, public-private partnerships, and privatizations by appeals to the general welfare. The case of the renovation of the center of Bogotá, despite a number of positive aspects that have to be acknowledged, does not always escape this logic.

The urban renovation of the central district

The vision of the city center's renovation has been based on the prospect that the center has to consolidate as the most important historical, cultural, touristic, residential, administrative, and commercial space in Bogotá and in Colombia. Known as *Plan Centro*, the plan anticipates that in approximately thirty years the city center should contain 500,000 residents, or twice the number living there in 2005. It also anticipates that the center will become the region's most competitive economic space due to the internationalization of the economy, technological innovation, and the strengthening of economic, educational, and cultural institutions. In short, planners project that the center will achieve high levels of competitiveness, becoming a strategic leader and cultural reference point for the continent. This transformation should be the result of policies, programs, and projects that encourage economic competitiveness, social inclusion, and respect for the environment through an equitable and participatory process. Policies include integrating the center with the city and region, increasing the residential population, raising residents' quality of life, protecting and recuperating cultural heritage, increasing the competitiveness of the zone, restoring the area's positive image, and promoting urban renovation. In other words, the plan aims to consolidate the offer of goods and services in the city center, the interdependence of the center and its environment, and the promotion of its competitive and singular advantages. In the most concrete and immediate terms, it implies the development of multifunctional urban structures offering both attractive residential spaces and a broad range of activities and high-quality public spaces for visitors of the rest of the country and abroad.

We analyzed two mayor urban projects that make part of the renovation plan of the city center: the *Jiménez de Quesada* Avenue and the *Tercer Milenio* Park. The *Jiménez de Quesada* Avenue project is one of the major developments in the city center's urban renovation. Its goal was to rehabilitate the most important axis of the city center, and to adapt it to the new *Transmilenio* BRT system (Bus Rapid Transit system). The creation of the *Tercer Milenio* Park was an immense intervention that involved the demolition of an entire marginal neighborhood located in the heart of the city. These two projects share a number of significant elements: they correspond to important urban interventions that concern the rehabilitation or construction of public spaces and infrastructure, they are connected through the *Transmilenio* system, and they both have tremendous metropolitan significance. Furthermore, the two projects, along with the BRT system, were a central focus of the Peñalosa administration's development plan. Moreover, these two projects embody many of the principles of the plan of renovation of the city center as well as many of its most manifest contradictions.

The Jiménez de Quesada Avenue

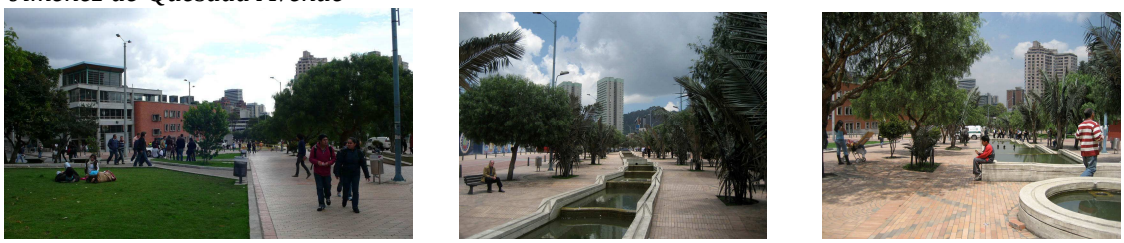

Figure 1. Rennovated public spaces in *Jiménez De Quesada* Avenue

The recent transformation of *Jiménez* Avenue (the most important axis of the city center where many cultural, educational, financial and administrative institutions are located) into an *alameda*, or tree-lined avenue is the result of an architectural project designed by the well-known Colombian architect Rogelio Salmona. The construction of a watercourse along the avenue, consisting of a continuous descending line of small basins or pools, makes reference to the San Francisco River (canalized by the early twentieth century) and aims to reinforce the area's cultural heritage. The Institute of Urban Development described the project as an architectonic development that would restore the historic memory of Bogotá's citizens through the recuperation of important landmarks of the city center. At the same time, the Institute predicted that the renovation would contribute to the construction of civic values, including a sense of belonging, the protection of the city and of its cultural heritage, and an interest in its development.

The transformation was radical: a highly congested street was transformed into a partially pedestrian way equipped with street furniture to serve the *Transmilenio* system. Vegetation was also introduced, creating with the new watercourse a pleasant contrast within a highly urbanized zone. This transformation, together with a significant increase in tourism and the consolidation of the center as the epicenter of cultural activity, has made the avenue one of the most visited places in the city center. The formerly chaotic avenue has been transformed in a pacified public space which is permanently under police surveillance.

Along with the physical transformations the most evident change has been to give a significant boost to commercial activity. In some areas, this has meant replacement of activities directed at lower-income consumers with commerce directed at students and young employees. Elsewhere, much of the new commerce is directed toward tourists and wealthy consumers. So far, although an emerging process of gentrification seems in course, the changes have remained moderate. But major real estate operations are now in process, including the transformation of abandoned buildings into luxury hotels and middle-income apartments. In addition, at least eight partial plans for the city center are in formulation, which will completely transform the morphology of entire districts. Of these, at least three are adjacent to *Jiménez* Avenue, and one affects an entire neighborhood located within our study area. Although radical changes to the zone's social dynamic have not yet occurred, current real estate operations will lead to the gentrification of its poorest sectors. Given that the *Plan Centro* aims to double the number of residents, a substantial displacement should logically not occur. However, the experience of the *Tercer Milenio* Park, as well as other international development experiences, suggest that the displacement of the poorest residents is very likely.

Tercer Milenio Park

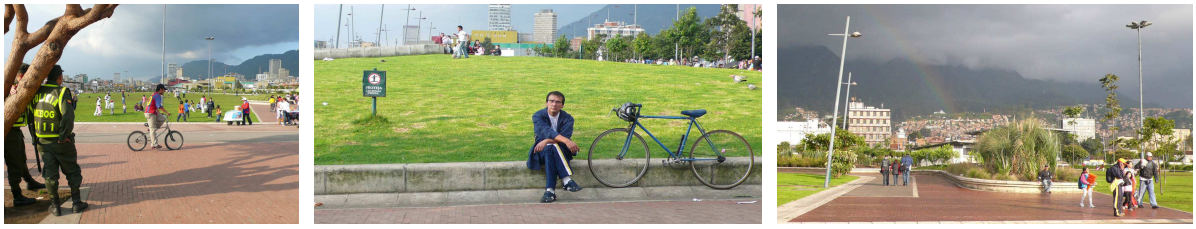

Figure 2. Rennovated public spaces in *Tercer Milenio* Park

Tercer Milenio Park is centrally located two blocks west of the presidential palace. Before its transformation under the Peñalosa administration, it had been a low-income district. Proposals to turn the area into a park had already been made in 1947 and 1960, as many considered state intervention necessary in a zone that had been identified as problematic as early as the 1940s, and that, despite being one of Bogotá's oldest districts, had never been recognized as a legitimate part of the city's heritage (Perilla, 2007). Until the nineteenth century, the district of Santa Inés, site of today's *Tercer Milenio* Park, was an area both rural and poor. As the city started to grow, mercantile activities expanded northward leaving Santa Inés neglected. The district of Santa Inés became more recently a center for illegal activities and experienced increased rates of violence, homelessness, and instability. Known as the *Cartucho,* the zone increasingly served to concentrate marginal sectors that included poor families, cooperatives of recyclers, and local mafias, and was marked by drug dealing, prostitution, and homelessness. Physically, the area became highly deteriorated. Located just blocks away from the presidential palace, the zone was beyond legal control. It presented a major obstacle to revitalization plans for the city center.

One of the main elements of the *Plan Centro* was the creation of a metropolitan park in the Santa Inés sector, involving the demolition of an entire central district of nearly twenty hectares, the displacement of 3,030 families and 1,620 commercial establishments, and the dislocation of a further 2,000 people considered part of the zone's floating population (Castro, 2003). Although very controversial, the project ultimately received the support of both the media and the public. Today, city authorities and citizens alike are proud of the disappearance of the *Cartucho,* and the project is widely recognized as an achievement of Peñalosa's administration. Authorities described the *Tercer Milenio* project as key to recuperating and the city center. Politicians presented it as an opportunity to increase Bogotá's

competitiveness and improve its quality of life, and these discourses were largely replicated in the media. At the same time, the city was considered to bear the responsibility for managing the project's negative impacts on residents, and to mitigate these, a social strategy was promised. Yet according to urban researcher Magali Castro (2003), there was a general consensus that conditions of marginality in Santa Inés could not become any worse, and this view probably impeded serious efforts to manage impacts. Today it is difficult even to measure the project's impacts on former residents because evaluation and monitoring programs were never implemented.

The intervention completely transformed the Zone. Of the entire district only one building remains, and along with the physical disappearance of the neighborhood, the social capital represented by the communal networks constructed by residents through the years has also disappeared. What was widely recognized as the most dangerous zone of the city is today a metropolitan park that has visitors from diverse parts of the city, is the setting for cultural and recreational activities, and has even become a stage for social protest. As in the case of the *Jimenez* Avenue, the new pacified space is under permanent surveillance.

The park is the heart of a zone of the city center that has undergone significant transformations, including the renovation of adjacent public spaces and the adaptation of the main avenues around it to the *Transmilenio* system. These operations, along with the construction of the park, have fundamentally reshaped the sector's physical and social dynamics and, as with *Jiménez* Avenue, have prepared adjacent zones for similarly far-reaching transformations. A large mall is currently under construction on the north side of the park, and the adjacent districts will be object of renovation plans that will reconstruct entirely the zones's urban fabric. Although this projects include new mixed-income housing projects for area residents, it is unlikely that the poorest residents will be able to afford them, leading to new displacements. Once these interventions have concluded, an area of more than fifty hectares will have been radically modified.

The government's efforts to mitigate the project's impacts were not entirely successful, but they did represent an advance over previous development projects in Bogotá. A neighborhood census was organized and information campaigns created to help shape social policies, which were formulated in discussions with neighborhood delegates. An office was created to direct the implementation of the resulting programs. These included social mentoring for at-risk residents, strategies for information and economic support, creation of an industrial park for 190 graphic arts companies relocated from the area, establishment of an association to relocate 1,140 recyclers, payment of economic compensations, and a program of fixed rents for displaced families. Despite those efforts, the process was miscalculated and that the entities responsible developed an organizational culture that was ineffective in coordinating the process. In addition, the state's responsibilities were not clearly outlined; slowness and lack of coordination impeded the development process; and the administration underestimated the emotional and economic costs of displacement, disregarded the need to reestablish social and family networks, and failed to devise alternative development plans to reduce income losses (Castro, 2003). Although some sectors received sufficient compensation, failed assessment procedures cost many residents their right to reparations, and lack of information about residents made it impossible to locate many of them for inclusion in social programs. All in all, Castro estimates that many former residents are worse off today than before the project. If so, a project intended to create a more cohesive and inclusive city had the opposite result for at least some residents.

Urban development or the unfair distribution of gains and losses

Many of Bogotá's urban projects have generated significant social, economic, and regional transformations. There is near consensus that their impact has been positive. However, their magnitude, as well as the different economic, social, and political interests behind them, are continued sources of controversy. At the same time, the interpretation of concepts such as public order and public interest, inherent to the public space discourse developed by successive city administrations, has created conditions that legitimize urban actions regardless of their potential impact on different social sectors.

Though the construction and rehabilitation of urban infrastructure repeatedly produces significant social impacts, these are usually considered collateral damage and, as such, external to the projects themselves. These impacts include not only gentrification and displacement but also changes of use and redirection of investment and growth. Typically it is the poorest sectors that are most negatively affected, through loss of homes, community networks, jobs, property, and access to social services (Castro, 2003). Bogotá's urban projects, including our case study sites, have produced these patterns to varying degrees, yet public opinion has tended to justify every intervention as being in the public interest regardless of its potential social impacts. The two case study sites present observable patterns that imply transformations both positive and negative, of the socioeconomic dynamics of each site. It is important to understand these new dynamics and to identify the benefits and disadvantages of each. This is too infrequently done within the urban planning discourse, which considers development projects necessary to the public interest and, to justify them, discounts negative consequences as collateral. Yet as Cernea (1997) argues, administrations should recognize that the unfair distribution of gains and losses is not an inevitable consequence of urban development. Possibly, one of the paths to avoid the unfair distribution of gains and losses is to turn to the local, to the narratives of ordinary people, to consult the daily and lived experiences of residents.

From broad urban stories to everyday tales

In Bogotá, urban, cultural, social, and economical transformations have fostered the narratives of politicians and city professionals. For example, a unifying narrative, of rapid and efficient urban transformation was formally presented, accepted, and internationally celebrated at the Venice Biennale in 2006. This narrative has served to give a global logic to the whole process and its very explanatory power has helped to obscure the more complex and nuanced stories that have evolved. To say this is not necessarily a critic either of the projects or the larger initiatives behind them. Yet we also want to bring out certain other lessons about urban project management that can be learned from the urban renewal of Bogotá. Our research shows that the stories about the city are shared by three types of people. First, prominent city actors (both politicians and other professions) continue to focus on the cultural, social, and public values of urban transformations, even as decisions are mainly driven by neoliberal discourse. Second, planners around the world, as well as the international media, have taken up the story of rapid and spectacular transformation, usually rather uncritically. Third, residents know and have made these stories their own, as part of a shared culture of urban actions and projects. Remembering Bogotá before the interventions, their urban narratives largely corroborate the official discourse, especially that of the recuperation of public space for the public. Our interviews show that a large number of people have "recognized" and in a way "adopted" these urban transformations, without denying the existence of what we might call situated controversies: that is, emerging disagreements about appropriate activities, mobility, the onset of gentrification, and so forth.

These global urban stories, perpetuating themselves and becoming increasingly disconnected from reality, motivated our sense that a closer look was needed: that it was necessary to return to the narratives of ordinary people, to consult the daily and lived experiences of residents, and to carry out field observations at the sites themselves in order to anchor urban narratives in observed reality. Our goal was to show that the way toward a proper balance between transformation and local development must take us through the social reality and the involvement of all concerned actors. Our *in situ* observations provide insight into Bogotá's situated controversies and a context in which to understand them.

Situated controversies

We observe, for example, how the world of "before" resurfaces again and again in the narratives of the residents. This is significant because, in giving rise to the new global narrative, the projects have also obliterated the very conditions of their implementation: the destruction of neighborhoods, displacement of populations, removal of markets and peddling permits, and so forth. In fact the physical projects themselves did not eliminate poverty: it merely moved to the next neighborhood, the

drug dealers have gone a little farther, and expelled street vendors have not entered the formal economy. Yet citizens remember. They know or wonder, for example, where the ghosts have gone. But if they are concerned about what people have become, they also show fear of their returning in uncomfortable numbers. The citizen's narratives point to the persistence of social segregation in public space, and they reveal, tacitly, a gap with the public story of social integration through public space. The excessive surveillance of public spaces reveals a contradiction within the discourse itself.

Here and elsewhere, renovation activity too often proceeds through removal or displacement of the former uses, and through imposition of a new social order that includes reinforced surveillance and more rigorously codified activities. People discuss these changes, but they do not necessarily criticize them deeply, because in general they appreciate the projects. Nevertheless, they worry about the neighborhood's evolution, talk about future projects that will not be meant for them, and express concerns about increasing gentrification and the danger of a more thoroughgoing elimination of social diversity. Here again, we believe that the sharing of narrations, with the consequent reactivation of situated controversies, would help participants to know how to pursue these urban transformations today and for the benefit of all.

We remain convinced that living together in the city is possible only if there is a dialogue between different stories, a dialogue that does not negate controversies but instead admits them into the debate. We cannot continue indefinitely imposing a story built only from outside and increasingly unconnected to the reality of current residents. Instead, we need to breed a new collective reality by updating the story, drawing on residents' knowledge and experience of places, and sharing this information. A shared story is one that builds on what exists and what everyone is willing to bear. But it is something that must be continuously built, or there is the risk that it will be lost. As Siegfried Kracauer suggested in a different context, the sharing of stories, finally, is not about making Bogotá change but about letting everyone change Bogotá.

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