Private and Public Encounters

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BACKGROUND

During the last decades the rural to urban migration has been putting a lot of pressure in our cities, particularly in those of the less developed world where the current trend towards urban living is particularly salient. In 1950, less than 30 percent of the world population lived in urban areas, a percentage that increased to 50 percent by 2004 and is predicted to reach 57 percent in twenty years. This speedy growth of urban centres has generated formidable difficulties and challenges for most developing countries, where the demand for employment, housing and services tends to rise faster than the financial and administrative capacity of the government to supply them (Montgomery in Rodinelli, 1998). As a consequence of this exponential increase of urban population, the number of urban poor, along with housing shortages and environmental problems, have raised dramatically. In 1992, the world urban slum population reached up to six hundred million dwellers (WHO, 1992). If the problem is left unchecked, by 2050 it will get as far as an unfathomable three million inhabitants (UNCHS, 2003).

The universality of the problem can be easily recognized through the number of diverse names given to these slums and squatter settlements: "barriadas" in Perú; "favelas" in Brazil; "rancho" in Venezuela; "bidonvilles" in Nigeria; "geckondos" in Turkey; "callampas" in Chile; "colonias" in Mexico; and "tugurios" in Colombia. But even though these settlements are referred to by different names, most of them share similar characteristics. A great majority are constituted by dwellings, which do not provide the minimum required commodities and that commonly lack basic municipal services. At the same time, as they usually occupy the most dangerous and problematic areas, dwellers are often exposed to high levels of environmental risks. At present, governments of developing countries are making enormous efforts to ameliorate the situation, and poverty reduction plans are considered to be their main priorities. Additionally, many institutions, such as the World Bank and the United Nations, have been studying city development strategies to take full advantage of a city's own opportunities, as well as identifying the required tools to face a citywide and nationwide slum upgrading process to improve the quality of life of marginal settlements' residents (Cities Alliances, 1999).

However, this urban upgrading process raises broad management questions of grave concern since, after the project ends, there is still much to be accomplished. What happens when the responsible agency or governmental organization is not involved and the community is left alone to make decisions? What will occur to the improvements after they have been completed? Is the government going to be in charge of the urban upgrading project? Who is going to carry out and pay for the routine maintenance of the improvements? Does the community look after the upgraded project? Or subsequent to the completion of the project, do people forget about it and left it deteriorates? Because the investment made will be wasted if the improvements are not well maintained, it is clear that the sustainability of upgrading infrastructure is an extremely important task, but however, it is not easy to achieve.

According to Uphoff, "when they [beneficiaries] are involved in decision making and implementation, are more inclined to take responsibility for managing activities as well as contributing to their maintenance" (1988). Additionally, Uphoff, Golden and Goldsmith stated that "getting beneficiaries involved would lower costs, better target people's needs, incorporate local knowledge, ensure benefits were equitable distributed, to create grassroots with the capacity to undertake other development projects and to maintain benefits particularly of physical infrastructure" (1979). In contrast to these statements, Frances Cleaver, questioned the participatory approaches to development:

> Heroic claims are made for participatory approaches to development, these being justified in the terms of ensuring greater

efficiency and effectiveness and of con-
tributing to processes of democratization
and empowerment. The conundrum of
ensuring the sustainability of development
interventions is assumed to be solvable by
the proper involvement of beneficiaries in
the supply and management of resources,
services and facilities. However, despite sig-
nificant claims to the contrary there is little
evidence of the long-term effectiveness of
participation in materially improving the
conditions of the most vulnerable people or
as a strategy for social change (1999).

However, even though there is not certainty about
the impact community participation has on sustain-
ability of upgrading projects, there is a still a great
believe that the involvement and empowerment of
the community will smooth the progress of sus-
tainability. Therefore, taking as starting point the
fact that sustainability is an important and critical
issue in upgrading programs, and the uncertainty
about the impact community participation has
on it, the present report summaries the findings
of the study of the Obras con Saldo Pedagógico
(OSP[1]) programme in Bogotá, Colombia. In brief,
the OSP (1996–2000) was the first programme in
inviting communities from Bogotá to participate in
the decision-making process, design, management,
contract of workers and suppliers, as well as in the
supervision of the project during its different stages;
with the assumption that beneficiaries participa-
tion throughout all the phases of the project could
assure its sustainability. The project was designed
and implemented by Luis Fernando Ramirez, Direc-
tor of the Department of Community Action from
1995 to 1997.

THE CASE OF THE OSP PROGRAMME IN BOGOTÁ D.C., COLOMBIA

CONTEXT: BOGOTÁ D.C.

In less than seven decades, Bogotá has grown from
a small city of 350,000 inhabitants to a metropolis
of almost 7 million people, in an extension of ap-
proximately 1,587 square kilometres (DANE, 04).
This city's rapid urbanization started to increase
considerably after the 1950s, when a large percent-
age of the population had been moving to the urban
centres, not only encouraged by the work-search

opportunities, but also by escaping from the rural
violence and guerrilla activity (Gilbert, 2002). The
intensive demographic growth of Bogotá, calculated
at an average of four percent per year (World Bank,
2003), has undoubtedly been placing a lot of pres-
sure on the city, which, without success, has been
struggling to cope with the new requirements of its
growing urban population. As a result of the failure
of national and international efforts, Bogotá has
been mainly formed by marginal illegal spontaneous
settlements that have been legally recognized after
their establishment. By 2002, Bogotá had reached
1,374 settlements of illegitimate origin, housing 21
percent of city's population, and occupying almost
20 percent of its developed area[2] (DAPD, 2002).

THE OSP PROGRAMME

Regarding the governmental arrangements for the
appearance of the OSP Programme it is important to
note that during the last decade, Bogotá has been
facing many political and institutional adjustments,
which have provided the city with a framework that
allows the design and implementation of develop-
ment, plans (Gilbert, 2002 and Araujo, 2003).
The most important change was during Antanas
Mockus first administration (1995/97) when was
laid the ground for the emergence of participatory
programmes, where community involvement was
not only permitted, but also highly encouraged.
Additionally, it is important to note the Distrital
institutions that played the most relevant role was
the Department of Community Action – DAACD[3].

The DAACD is a governmental institution that has
been operating in the capital city since 1968, with
the aim of supporting, training and supervising the
city's community organizations - JAC[4]. However,
previous to 1995, the DAACD had all its economic
and human resources focused on supervising the
juntas' performance, as well as on the construction
of public civil works, but without allowing direct
participation of the communities. But in fact, fol-
lowing the ongoing Bogotá's planning culture, the
DAACD was the first district institution in creating
and implementing participatory processes, allow-
ing the community involvement throughout all the
phases of the projects (Gilbert, 2002).

Within the referred context and governmental ob-
jective, the DAACD launched the OSP programme

as a way of investing public resources in commu-nity-based projects. The main objectives of the OSP programme was to increase levels of community participation; to encourage the establishment of local community organizations; to build and enforce social networks; to promote a culture of planning in the Capital City; to develop a consciousness for the public space; to foment channels for citizens con-trol over the allocation and management of public resources; and to develop a sense of ownership for public spaces, what in return was expected to assure the maintenance and sustainability of the under-taken projects (Araujo, 2003, Escallón, 2002).

During the OSP programme, there were built 725 infrastructure and community projects, with a total investment of approximately US $17 million (an average of US $23,448 per project), from which, US $900.000 were contributions from the beneficiaries' communities (in kind, cash or labour). Additionally, communities were able to propose different projects which had to correspond to one of the following categories: parks, green zones, playgrounds or rec-reational zones; pedestrian roads or access stairs; community hall including construction, enlargement or improvement; environmental improvement such as painting facades, small green zones and side-walks. Illustration 1.1 presents the selection made by the communities, where 55 percent of the chosen projects were parks and recreational zones, and 24 percent pedestrian roads and stairs. Initially, the level of response from the communities to the pro-gram invitation was very low, however, the answer was increasing until getting the highest levels in the last two years, with the registration of 1,217 community organizations in 2000 (See Illustration 1.2). This was a great achievement for the program as communities began to believe in participation as a means for development, and started getting organized to participate in this type of processes (Araujo, 2003, DAACD, 2003 and Escallón, 2002).
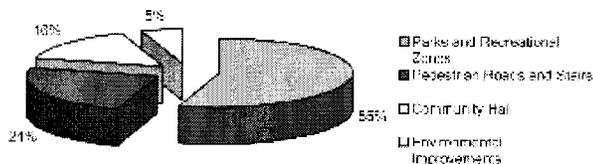

Illustration 1.1
Total OSP Projects 1996–2000 according to their type
Source: DAACD, 2003

The community had to follow a serie of steps and accomplished several requirements in order to be financed by the DAACD. Furthermore, the DAACD made a great effort in enforcing the local commu-nity organizations, looking for making them capable to formulate, manage and implement projects by their own, through their training during the whole process. Also, additional to the continuous work done by the community throughout the process; they still have much to do after the conclusion of the project, as they are the responsible for the routine maintenance tasks. Since the developed projects are public spaces, which serve to the entire community, but belong to nobody, the community face the necessity of organizing themselves to be capable of taking responsibility over the gained space (DAACD, 2000)

One of the main assumptions regarding the OSP program was that through the generation of a sense of ownership over the created public spaces, the sustainability of the projects over the time would be assured. And it was also assumed that in order to develop the said sense of ownership, it was nec-essary to include the community throughout the process. However, monitoring activities has not been carried out yet (Araujo, 2003 and DAACD, 2000).

That is why, in order to examine the impact com-munity participation had in the sustainability of urban upgrading projects, I carried out a survey in four of the projects developed under the OSP programme. The main criteria for the selection were: income level and type of project developed, as well as, availability of background information and willingness from the community to participate and collaborate during the process. The selected projects are located in three of the poorest districts in the city, which allows the study of the way main-tenance tasks are performance in community with very limited economical possibilities. Following, I present a brief description of the Districts where projects are located (See Illustration 1.3):

Ciudad Bolivar District: It is located at the south west of Bogotá. By 2002, Ciudad Bolivar had a population of 606,038, and the average income strata is a low 1.86 (being 1 the lowest strata and 6 the highest, following Colombian's standards) (DAPD[5], 2002).

Bosa District: It is located at the west part of Bo-gotá. By 2002, this District had a population of

	Community Organizations Registered	No. of Communities in Consensus Phase	Percentage Communities that Got to Consensus Phase	No. of Projects Built	Percentage year projects built/total projects	Investment in pesos
1996	317	247	51.8%	82	12.7%	2,783,000,000
1997	368	213	57.7%	109	15.0%	2,780,000,000
1998	582	288	48.0%	103	14.2%	3,138,000,000
1999	868	301	34.7%	265	38.6%	14,021,000,000
2000	1,277	401	40.3%	166	21.6%	8,854,000,000
Total	3,338	1,320	48%	725		31,801,300,000

Illustration 1.2
Summary of Participation of Communities during the Program
Source: DAACD, 2003

427,483, and the average income strata is 2.10 (DAPD, 2002).

Santa Fé District: It is located at the southeast area of the city. The District's average income strata is 2.37, and by 2002, its population was a little bit more than 100.000 (DAPD, 2002).
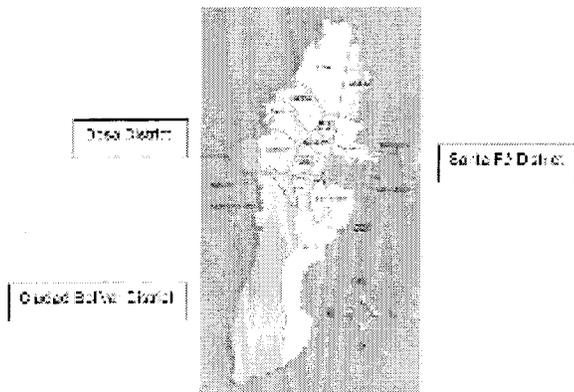

Illustration 1.3
Location of the three districts where the selected neighbourhoods are located: Santa Fé, Ciudad Bolivar and Bosa.
Source: DAPD, 2002

During the fieldwork, I visit each of the developed projects in company with members of the *junta* of the neighbourhood, so that they could show me the developed OSP project, as well as explain me in detail their process during the programme and during the maintenance stage (including the what, the how, and who develops the maintenance tasks). Additionally, I visited the entire neighbourhood in order to get a better idea of the people who lives

there, and the level of maintenance of the rest of the area. Moreover, I carried out informal interviews and talked with the rest of the community who were not active members of the *junta*. In the process of collecting primary resources I spent three days with each community, plus four days with the DAACD staff, particularly with those of them who were directly involved in the project or that have been working with the communities under study. Additionally, with the aim of completing the information of each neighbourhood and district, I committed three weeks for the collection of secondary resources such as maps, plans, and neighbourhood and project's background.

The type of project selected for the research were pedestrian roads and access stairs, as they were the most common projects in these three Districts, and offered a clear opportunity for looking to the public and private realm. In the Ciudad Bolivar District, one of the biggest districts in the city, there were selected two neighbourhoods: Altos de Jalisco and Casa de Teja. Because of the steep terrain and the already existence of a main stair, the Altos de Jalisco community developed a serie of terraces to access each of the dwellings complemented with public furniture such as benches, garbage bins and public lights (See Illustrations 1.4 and 1.5). Besides, Casa the Teja chose to build a beautiful stair at the edge of the neighbourhood, serving in a direct way a total of 10 families, also furnished with benches, public lights and garbage bins (See Illustrations 1.6 and 1.7). In the Bosa District, a very dynamic district that grows at a very rapid rate, the selected project was the construction of pedestrian roads around the Triángulo de las Materas neighbourhood and public

furniture (See Illustrations 1.8 and 1.9). And finally, in the Santa Fé District, located in a very difficult area with terrain stability risks, it was selected project of a serie of terraces, pedestrian paths and stairs, also furnished with benches, garbage bins and a children playground (See Illustrations 1.10 and 1.11). All the projects were developed in 2000, under the identifiable participatory approach of the OSP programme, except for the Rocio parte Baja project, which was built in 1999.

Illustration 1.5

Illustration 1.4
Views of Altos de Jalisco's project. Notice entrance terraces
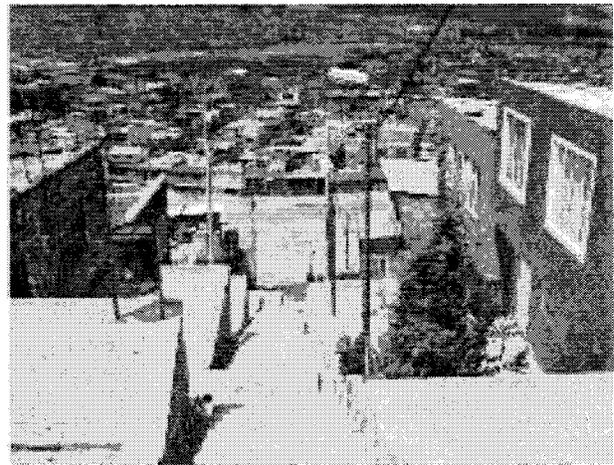*Source: picture by the author. June 2004*

Illustration 1.6
A view of Casa de Teja stairs
Picture by the author, 2004

Illustration 1.7
Another view of the OSP project in Casa de Teja. Notice the neighbourhood at the back.
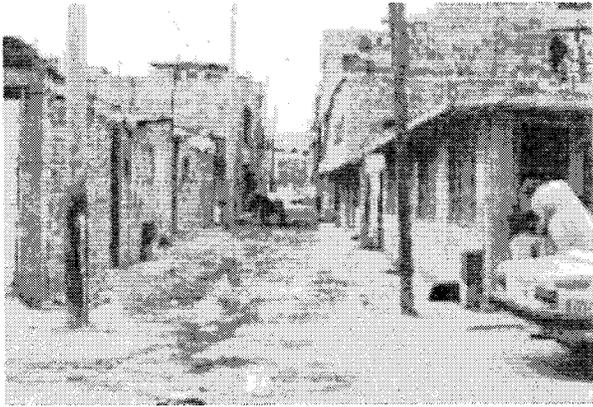*Source: picture by the author. June 2004*

Illustration 1.8
Views of Triángulo de las Materas before and after the
development of the OSP project.
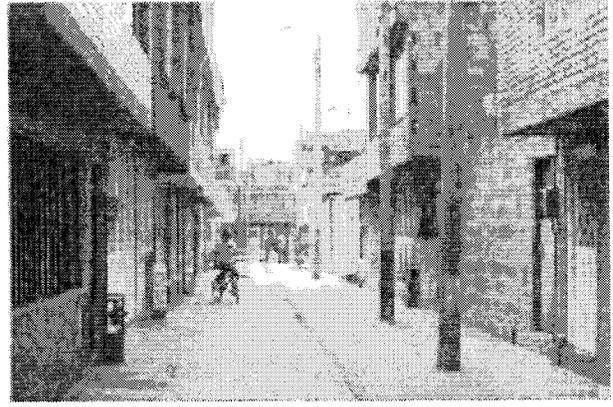Source: picture by the community, 1998

Illustration 1.9
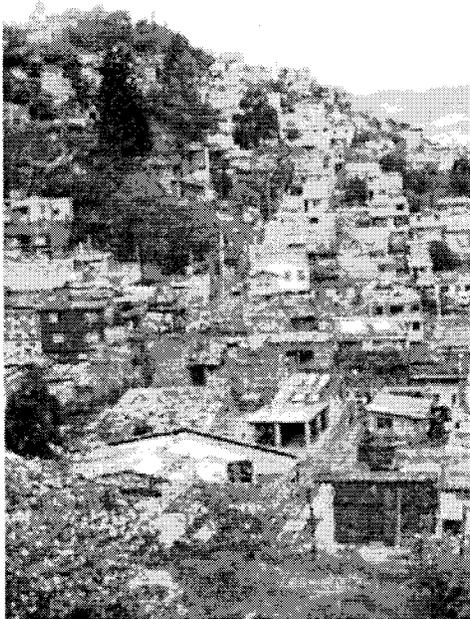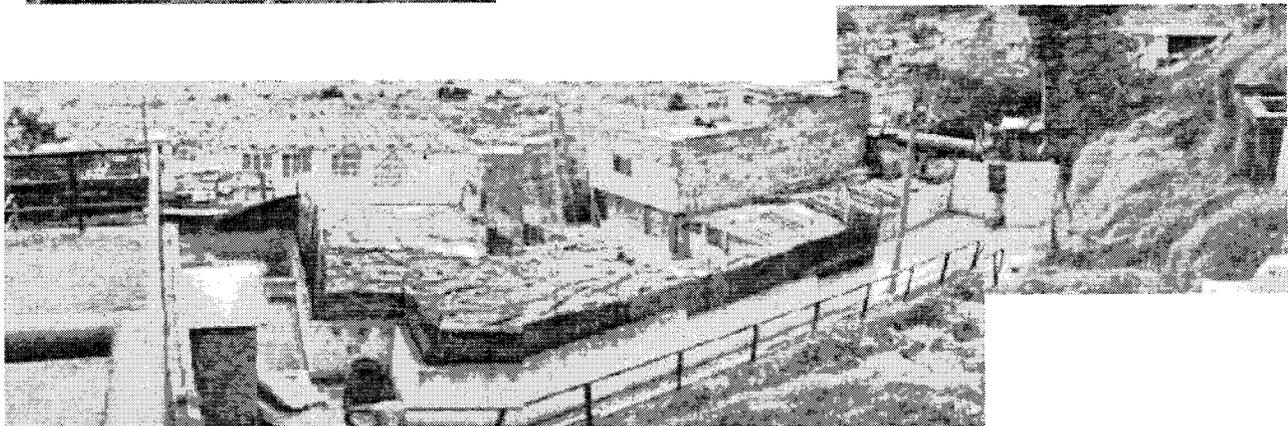Source: picture by the author, 2004

Illustration 1.10
A view of the Santa Fe District.
Source: picture by the author, 2004

Illustration 1.11
A view of one of the terraces built under the OSP
project in 1999
Source: picture by the author, 2004

FINDINGS

Even the four projects analyzed are different and located in diverse areas of the city, their communities are required to carry out similar basic tasks in order to reach a good maintenance level of the project. The variation in the duties between the four projects depends on the challenges imposed mainly by the topography and the size of the project. The most common tasks are: pruning and care of green areas, trees, shrubs and gardens; cleaning and maintenance of public furniture such as benches, garbage bins, public lights, children playgrounds and fences; replacement of lost items such as light bulbs, playgrounds and fences' pieces; general care and cleanness of walls, pedestrian roads, asphalted areas and water channels; and repayments to asphalted zones, children playground, public furniture, and so on. Additionally, it is important to note that in order to achieve a good maintenance of the project, communities have to guard for the security of the spaces, as vandalism is often common. Following I will present the most important features for each of the projects:

In Altos de Jalisco, the communal areas are well maintained. The community not only does general cleaning session every 2 months, but also they have worked teaching residents from the neighbourhood and the surroundings not to use the public garbage bin as garbage disposal. The environment created by the development of terraces to access each of the family dwellings is incredible friendly, particularly for children who can enjoy of a safe open space to play (without cars and under adults supervision).

In Casa de Teja, the stair neither communicates two important points of the neighbourhood nor serves the whole community members. However all the community look after it. In order to achieve it, the community organization has played an important role developing all kind of activities to involve residents in close proximity. As an illustration, every two weeks the junta organizes a public mass on the stairs, reason why the called it: "stairs to heaven".

In Triángulo de las Materas, the junta, mainly formed by women, played an important role during the construction of the project. However, afterwards it has not been too active. Right after the completion of the project, the community was very dynamic organizing general cleaning sessions every month,

but after a year the community did not continue with the activity as it was difficult to coordinate and it was generation problems between neighbours. But, despite this difficulty, the project is well maintained and community has figure out the way to replace and fix any damage.

In Rocio parte Baja, contrary to the other projects, it was observed severe maintenance problems. The community do not use the terraces and pedestrian paths constructed under the project, and there is any interest in taking care for the open public areas. Even the site looks much better than before the intervention, it was unable to fit community necessities and the junta was unable of guiding the community in how to make use of the spaces.

As a result of the fieldwork and particularly from the analysis of the schemes and the evaluation of community members' daily routines, it can be concluded that the most significant variable affecting the maintenance of the site was the project's design. When urban upgrading projects are expected to fit into a communal life, it is crucial to create a dialogue between the private and the public realm, generating a sense of ownership where families cares about the public space as it where theirs. This statement is very clear in the case of Triángulo de las Materas and Altos de Jalisco where the design of the project allows that each families appropriates of the space in front of their houses, in include the maintenance tasks in their daily routine. Additionally, the case of Rocio parte Baja is a good example were it is evident the negative effects of not allowing a direct dialogue between the private and the private realms. Moreover, in the case of Casa de Teja, the community have been required to look for original and creative ways for including the rest of the community in the regular use of the project, however the design was well target as community feels a connection with the developed project. Certainly, urban upgrading projects need to answer to community requirements and desires. However, it is important that these projects generate spaces for private and public encounters.

FOOTNOTES

1 OSP in English would be Construction with a Pedagogical Value".

2 In 2002, Bogotá's population reached 5,635,960 inhabitants, of which 1,372,436 lived in settlements of illegal

origin, occupying 6,397 has of its developed area - 34,112 Has (DAPD, 2002). Additionally, it is important to note that in Bogotá by 2001, 1,228 illegal settlements have already been legalized (DAPD, 2001)

3 DAACD in Spanish: Departamento Administrativo de Acción Comunal Distrital

4 JAC in Spanish: Junta de Acción Comunal

5 DAPD is the Distrital Department of Planning

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Note: Illustration 1.8 was provided by the member of the junta of Triángulo de las Materas.