

# Landscape Democracy of Everyday Spaces in Medellín's Popular Settlements



DI Dr. Eva Schwab

University of Natural Resources and Life Sciences Vienna, Institute of  
Landscape Architecture

Landscape Democracy eLecture Series, 12 January 2016

# Structure of presentation

- Theory context: spatial justice and upgrading of informal settlements
- Research Design
- Research Context: Medellín, PUI and Comuna 13
- Case Study: open spaces in Comuna 13

# Informality

Dichotomy formal / informal, planned / unplanned, legal / illegal - understanding of informality as deficient counterpart to the ordered world and devaluation of people in situations of informality by notions of a "culture of poverty" and "culture of informality" (Lewis 1963, 1966).

Informality as a special relationship between people and space, which is to be recognized as an accomplishment in its own rights, which speaks of skills of community organisation, physical effort and initiative (Hernandez/Kellet 2010 AlSayyad/Roy 2004, Beardsley/Werthmann 2008, Brillembourg, Feiress et al . 2005). Informality as a practice (Roy 2009a, 2009b) is present in the lives of the urban poor as much as in the those of the elite and brings with it specific physical manifestations.

# Open Spaces in Informal Settlements

Open spaces in informal settlements can be described rather as communal areas, in certain cases as Commons; they are not public in the classical sense (state ownership) but defined through neighbourhood relations and diverse legal arrangements; they are self - built or self - organized and self - managed. Therefore, they have strong social, cultural and symbolic significance (Hernández Garcia 2010, Rodriguez Basto 2010).

Sidewalks and streets are multifunctional, productive spaces and important social areas. "La Cancha" as a hybrid between square and soccer field is an important social area.

# Upgrading and Spatial Justice

"New Generation" ( Riley et al . 2001) of governmental upgrading programmes in Latin America since the 1990s, with focus on in - situ upgrading. Improvement of public space and transport infrastructure to establish public space as an engine for broader social changes. Good design and citizen participation are defined as further objectives.

Reviews suggest that the following aspects with regards to justice are central in formal interventions in informal settlements:

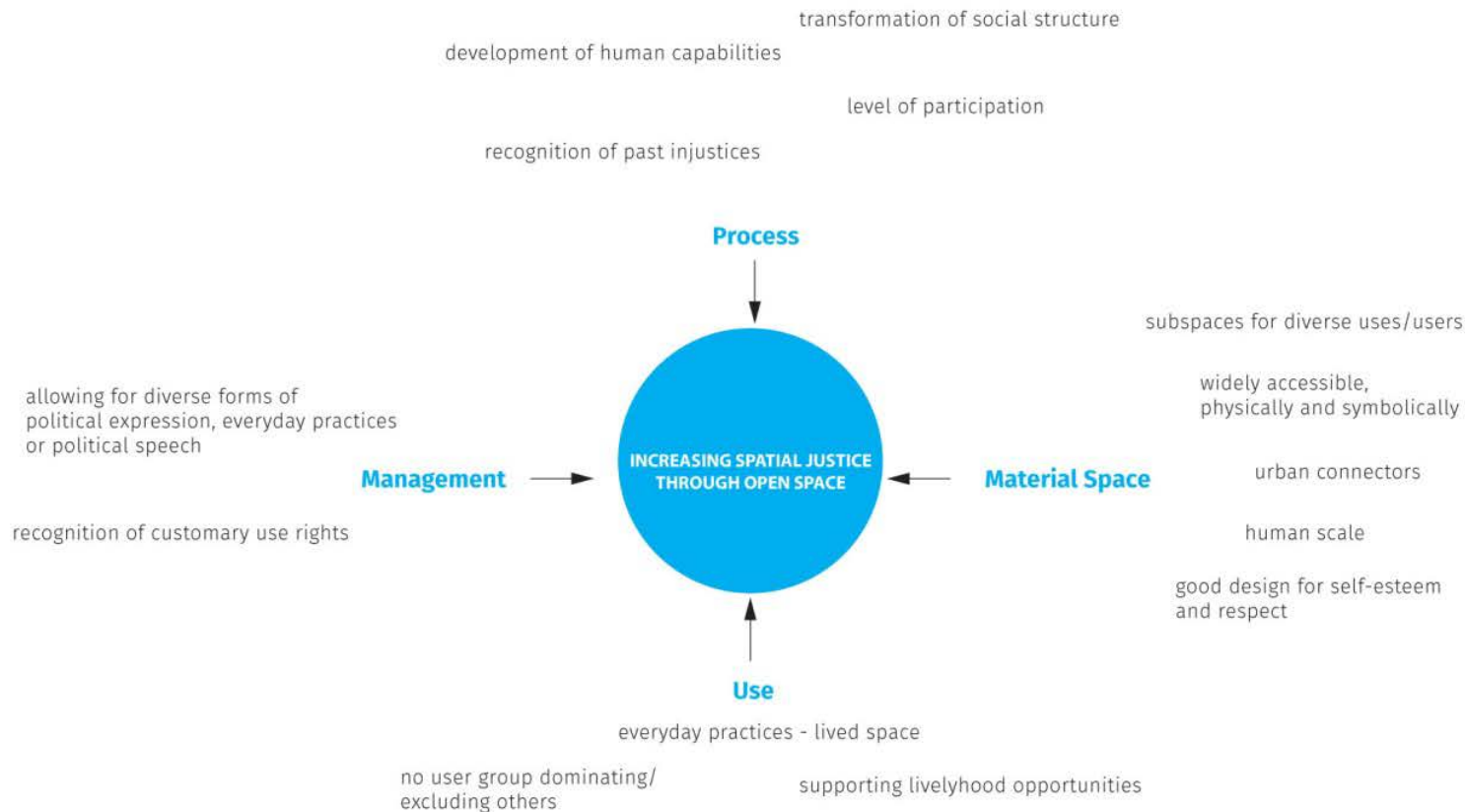
- Recognition of the residents as producers of their environment and their special connection to it.
- Empowerment of residents in planning, design and production processes as basis for sustainable poverty reduction
- Critical questioning of values and assumptions on which distributive justice is based.

# Spatial Justice in Informal Settlements

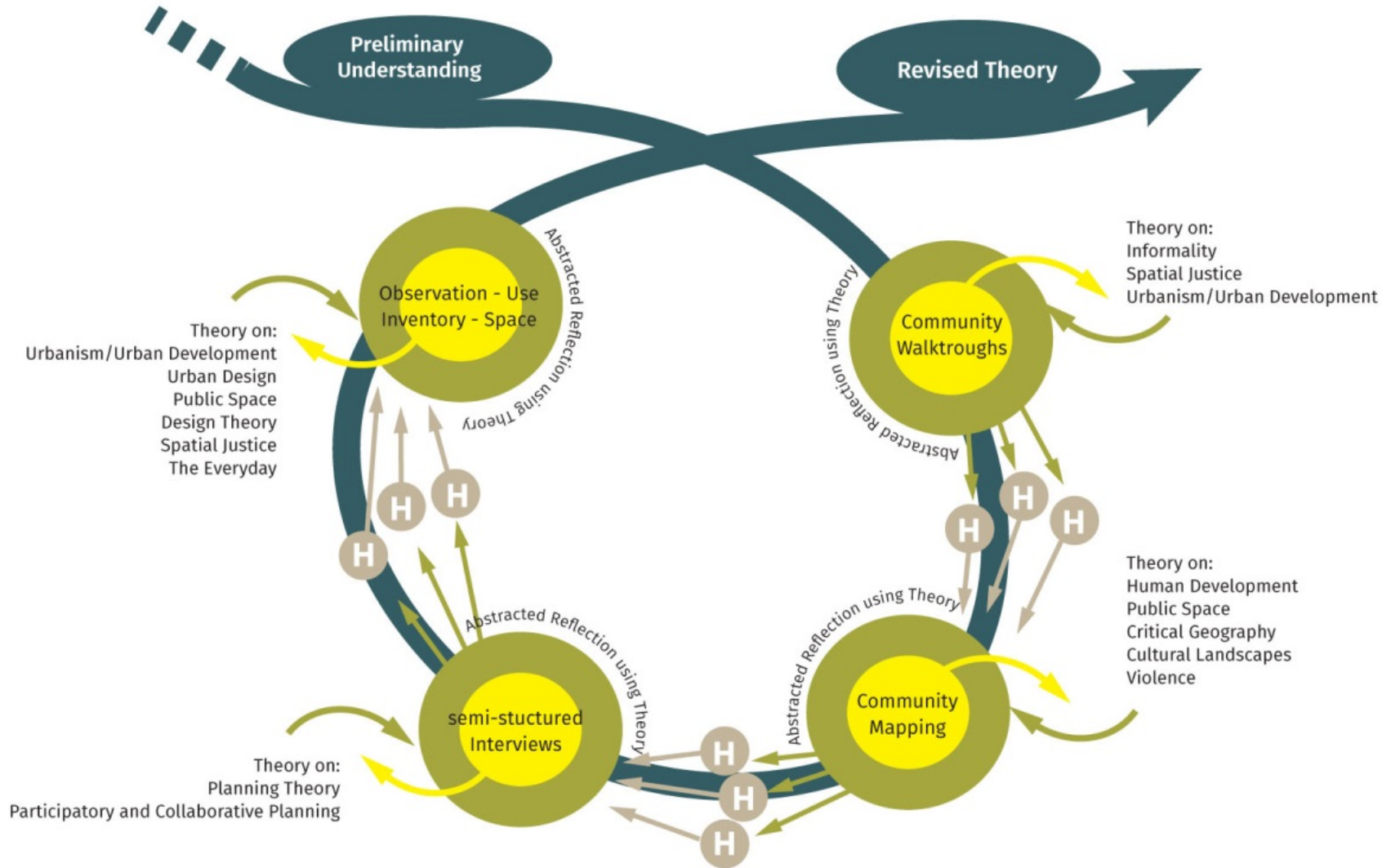
Adequate distribution of resources (distributive justice) and empowerment (procedural justice) are relevant in the context of upgrading informal settlements to end decades of governmental neglect and compensate its effects.

Recognition in this context is to be understood as value system on which government interventions should be based. Only positive recognition provides a chance that upgrading leads to social transformation through which the residents are exempt from the necessity to catch up to norm(ality) (Freire 1996, Fabricius 2008, Gouverneur/Grauer 2008, Purcell 2008, Robinson 2006).

# Production and Use of Open Spaces in the Context of Spatial Justice









# Medellín's public space in the context of social inequality





# First Steps towards a Redefinition of the City





# Medellín's recent urban transformation: exemplary laboratory of urban upgrading



# Upgrading through Proyecto Urbano Integral (PUI)

"Instrument of urban intervention which combines spatial, social and institutional aspects with the aim of solving specific problems of a given territory by the simultaneous application of all instruments for the development of this area" (Alcaldía de Medellín/EDU 2007).

- Spatial upgrading is seen as a prerequisite for social transformation.
- Contains teams of architects, sociologists and technical and environmental engineers
- PUIs subject to Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano (EDU ) - EDU reports to Mayor
- Financing outside the regular budget by Empresas Públicas de Medellín ( EPM )

## PUI defines five axes of local intervention:

### 1. The construction

**(recuperation, improvement, transformation and creation) of public spaces** integrated into a system of streets, pathways, or parks and squares with the aim to establish important meeting points for the inhabitants.

### 2. The amendment of mobility

by improving connectivity, pedestrian and vehicular traffic and the environmental conditions related to transport options with the aim of offering the inhabitants easy access to important nodes of public transport.

### 3. The establishment of environmental corridors

in order to strengthen the environmental and landscape aspects of an area through recuperation or design interventions.

### 4. The definition of "spaces of opportunity"

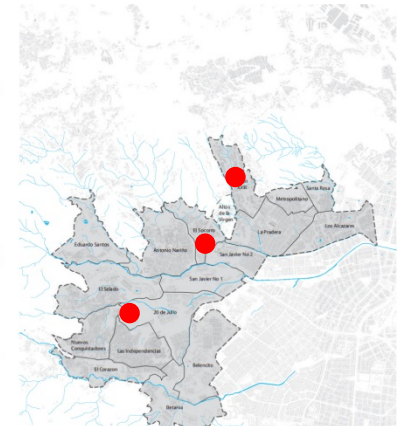
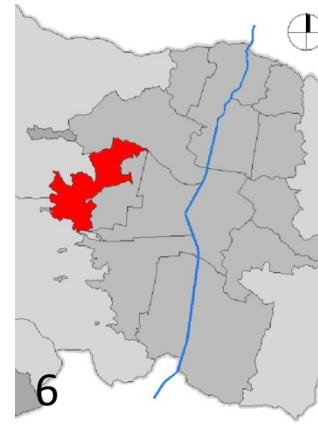
for the development of both housing projects and commercial activity.

### 5. The improvement of security and conviviality

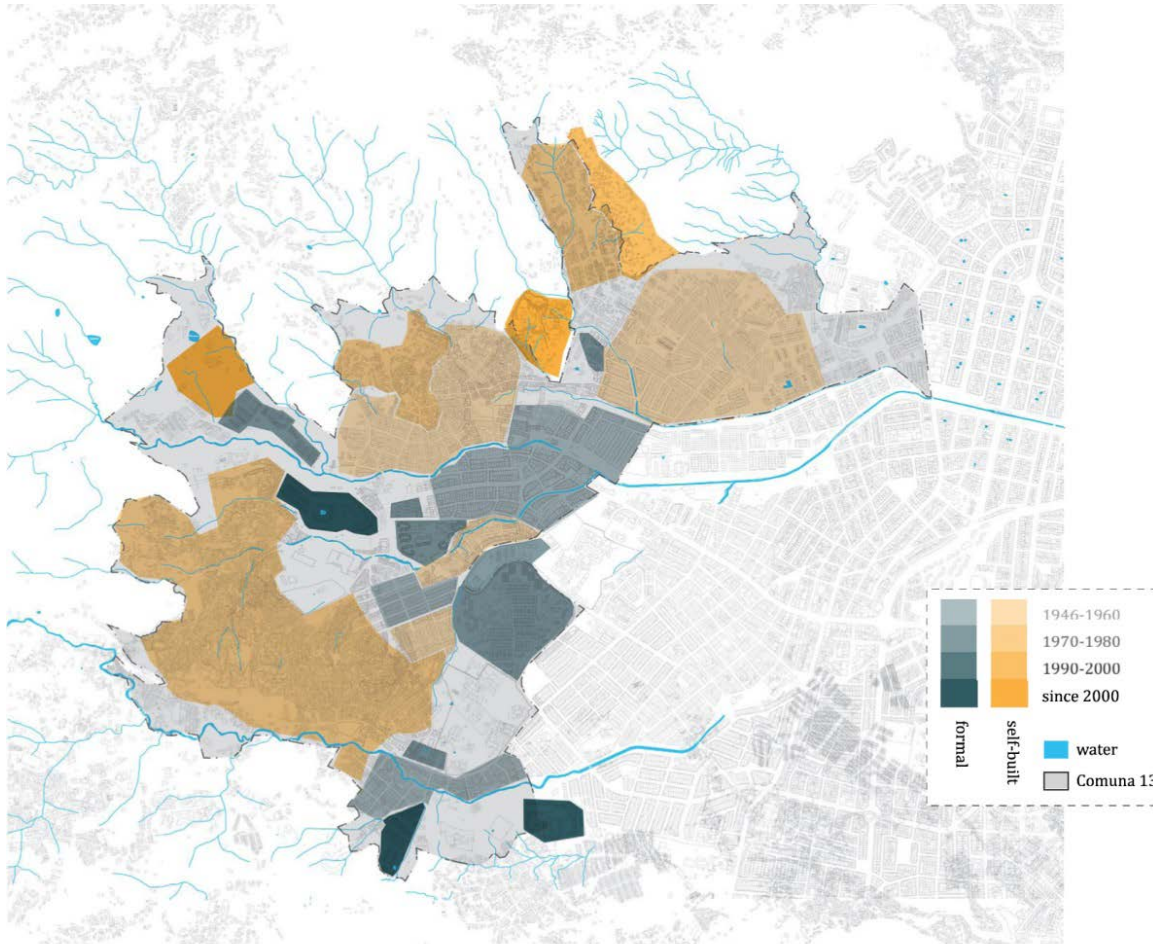
based on the construction of new public spaces that help to break invisible social and territorial barriers and borders.



# Medellín's Comuna 13



# Diversity of Urban Fabric and Settlement Origins







- self-built
- formal
- formalised/upgraded from self built
- public use
- private use
- restricted public use







Parque Ambiental and  
Paseo Urbano Juan XXIII



Unidad Deportiva El Socorro





Parque 20 de Julio





# Introduction of new types of open spaces and new use regulations



Walkthroughs	x	Mental Maps	x Adults	x Children
open landscapes	3	open landscapes	10	4
left over landscapes	5	left over landscapes	3	2
frontgardens	3	frontgardens	0	0
landmarks/views	2	landmarks/views	7	1
streets, paths and stairs	7	streets, paths and stairs	19	12
sportsfield	6	sportsfield	6	3
playground	1	playground	3	3
square	1	square	1	0
park	5	park	5	0
community facilities	4	community facilities	16	6
shops	4	shops	10	4
homes	4	homes	11	7
public transport	0	public transport	4	0
Metro	0	Metro	8	1


 landscapes

 streets, paths and stairs

 active recreation

 passive recreation and socialising

 community infrastructure

 homes

 public transport

x number of mentions in the data gathering activities

# Everyday Use of Open Spaces

Great diversity of uses (at all times of the day and the week) demonstrates the success of the governmental intervention in increasing distributive justice.

Low correspondence between the new formal spaces and the everyday spaces which are part of the livelihood of the residents, shows the lack of recognition of existing everyday spaces and the non-urban use practices as well as of alternative legal forms and justice approaches.

Open space is not the most relevant spatial category in the lives of residents: New open spaces become everyday spaces only if they are close to the house and support already established practices (pedestrian connection, meeting place). Importance of community facilities.

# Conclusions

Distributive justice was increased through upgrading programme and the resulting open spaces. The government-led initiative has been very effective in this regard, showing the benefits of an institutional approach of distributive justice through which significant changes can be made in a relatively short time. This approach has, however, failed to strengthen other forms of justice, which also have effects on the empowerment of people.

Increasing procedural justice was far less effective. Conflicts existed between the methods and procedures for more distributive justice and empowerment. Negative impact because of political dynamics and objectives.

Recognition of residents' need to be part of mainstream society was acknowledged. Recognition of the social and cultural contributions of settlers to the life and the culture of the city has not been reached. Dichotomy between formal / informal persists, informality is not recognized as a way of space production in its own right. This implies that there is little change in social structures, from which a new concept of city arises that appreciates both parts as essential.



## List of References:

- Alcaldía de Medellín/EDU Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano (2007): Proyecto Urbano Integral Comuna 13 y Área de Influencia Metrocable.
- Beardsley, J., Werthmann, C. (2008) "Dirty Work" in *Growing Cities*. *Topos*, 64, pp. 37-43
- Brillembourg, A., K. Feireiss, et al. (2005): *Informal City: Caracas Case*. Munich, Prestel.
- Fabricius, D. (2008): *Resisting Representation*. In: *Harvard Design Magazine*, 28, 4-17.
- Freire, P. (1996): *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. New York: Continuum
- Gouverneur, D. and Grauer, O. (2008): *Urban Connectors*. *Harvard Design Magazine*, 28, 24-30
- Hernández García, J. (2010): *El Parque de mi Barrio. Production and Consumption of Open spaces in Popular Settlements in Bogotá*. PhD Thesis University of Newcastle
- Hernández, F. and Kellett P. (2010) *Re-Imagining the Informal Settlements in Latin America*, in Hernández, F., Kellett, P. and Allen, L (eds.) *Rethinking the Informal City: Critical Perspectives from Latin America*. Oxford: Berghahn Books
- Lewis, O. (1963): *The Children of Sanchez: Autobiography of a Mexican Family*. New York, Vintage Books.
- Lewis, O. (1966): *The Culture of Poverty*. In: *Scientific American* 215(4): 19 - 25.
- Purcell, M. (2008): *Recapturing Democracy: Neoliberalization and the Struggle for Alternative Urban Futures*. Routledge Chapman & Hall
- Riley, E., Ramirez, R. et al. (2001): *Favela Bairro and a New Generation of Housing Programmes for the Urban Poor*. In: *Geoforum* 32: 521 - 531.
- Robinson, J. (2006): *Ordinary Cities, Between Modernity and Development*. London, Routledge.
- Rodríguez Basto, G. E. (2010): *El Espacio Publico en Barrios Incompletos de Vivienda Popular. Estudio de caso: Funza, Mosquera y Madrid*. Departamento de comunicaciones, mercadeo y publicaciones de la Universidad La Gran Colombia
- Roy, A. (2009a): *The 21st-Century Metropolis: New Geographies of Theory*. In: *Regional Studies* 43(6): 819 - 830.
- Roy, A. (2009b): *Why India cannot plan its Cities: Informality, Insurgence and the Idiom of Urbanization*. *Planning Theory*, 8(1), pp. 76–87
- Roy, A. and AlSayyad, N. (Eds.) (2004): *Urban Informality: Transnational Perspectives from the Middle East, Latin America and South Asia*. Lanham, Lexington Books

## **List of Figures:**

1 Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano EDU

2 [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metro\\_de\\_Medell%C3%ADn](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Metro_de_Medell%C3%ADn)

3 [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parques\\_y\\_plazas\\_de\\_Medell%C3%ADn](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parques_y_plazas_de_Medell%C3%ADn)

4 [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plaza\\_de\\_Cisneros#/media/File:Btca\\_epm.JPG](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Plaza_de_Cisneros#/media/File:Btca_epm.JPG)

5 [https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parque\\_Explora#/media/File:Parque\\_Explora\\_-\\_Medell%C3%ADn.JPG](https://es.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parque_Explora#/media/File:Parque_Explora_-_Medell%C3%ADn.JPG)

6 source of left map: wikipedia, overlay by the author. Right map: own elaboration based on Angarita Cañas et al. 2008

7 Alcaldía de Medellín 201: 'Vivir Bueno en Medellín'

All other material by the author.