Social Urbanism – Integrated and participatory urban upgrading in Medellin, Colombia
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Abstract
This chapter focuses on the use of participatory approaches in the context of urban upgrading of deprived neighbourhoods and specifically in relation to the development of new public spaces. The chapter is built around an integrated and participatory urban upgrading strategy called “Social Urbanism”, focusing on the first project implementing such strategy: the “PUI-Nororiental”. By illustrating and discussing the PUI-Nororiental project, the chapter shows how participatory processes can become an important part of integrated approaches, contributing to the development of urban environments and social programs that are closely related to the needs and demands of the local communities, as well as achieving significant social and institutional outcomes during the different stages of the process. The chapter focuses on the benefits that were achieved with and during the participatory process of the PUI-Nororiental, as well as discusses some challenges and weaknesses of the process. Nonetheless, even with its shortcomings, the PUI-Nororiental serves as an example of how the strategic combination of participatory and integrated approaches, embedded within the development of new public spaces can create outcomes that go beyond the physical improvement of deprived neighbourhoods. Urban upgrading calls for practical solutions informed by innovative thinking that comes from participatory and integrated approaches.

Introduction
In the course of the last decades, participatory or collaborative approaches have become an important factor of change in planning processes and projects. Rapid changes in the economic, political and social orders of cities have increased tensions between different actors and interests which call for new approaches to urban planning and urban design practices. In addition, processes of democratization, accompanied by the increasing strength of civil society and the access to information, has forced city governments to become more accountable and more responsive to citizen demands (Devas et al., 2004). Given the complexity of today’s urban context, participatory planning approaches have emerged as a response to these new situations, challenging the technocratic practices of the past through the promotion of more inclusive and democratic decision-making processes (Healy, 1996; Forester, 1999; Innes and Booher, 2003).

The effects of the rapid changes that cities have gone through are highly visible in Latin America, mainly because of the high urbanization processes that the region has experienced over the last decades. By the end of the 20th century Latin America was the most urbanized region in the developing world with over 70% of the population living in urban areas (Cerruti and Bertoncello, 2003). The pressure caused by the rapid growth of the urban population, plus the low capacity of local governments to provide sufficient housing and services have resulted in the social, economic and spatial polarization of the region’s largest cities. This is visible throughout most cities of the region, where informal self-help principles of urban development have been, and are, in front of the formal urban planning processes (Hays-Mitchell and Godfrey, 2006). A great amount of neighbourhoods are characterized by “informal” or “spontaneous” settlements with highly deprived living conditions, low quality of public services, infrastructure and public spaces, as well as high levels of poverty and segregation. These conditions create an environment of social, economic and spatial complexity (Hernandez B., 2008) that the traditional technocratic planning practices have proved to be unable to cope with (UN Habitat, 2003).

Nowadays, international agencies and governments recognize that the future of cities, which accommodate high percentages of informal and deprived neighbourhoods, will be significantly determined by the effectiveness of social inclusion and upgrading policies (BMZ, 2006). Hence, there is an increasing awareness that the scale and complexity of the problems present in informal neighbourhoods is a major development issue which requires coordinated efforts of multidisciplinary strategies and integrated actions at different scales (Lall and Lall, 2007). In this order of ideas, participatory urban upgrading projects have become increasingly promoted as today’s best practice (Imparato and Ruster, 2003; UN Millenium Project, 2005).
Although there is an escalating attempt to introduce participatory principles and methods in urban upgrading projects, it is recognized that these projects are mostly adopted on a limited scale or are demonstration projects (UN Millennium Project, 2005, p.21). This is reinforced by Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger (1998, p. 1987) who state that “collaborative - or participatory - planning as a theory has caused a sea change in the parameters of how theorists are considering planning, but the assertion that a shift is occurring in planning practice seems to be an exaggeration”. As it is argued by Innes and Booher (2004, pp. 426-428), such situation is increasingly changing and significant efforts have been done in order to implement theories and principles of participation in planning practice. Such efforts can also be seen in the urban upgrading context as shown by Imparato and Ruster (2003) and Landeta (2004) in their studies of participatory urban upgrading projects in Latin America. Nonetheless, there is still the need for careful analysis of these new practices of participation, without immediately suggesting that they all represent successful examples of deliberative democracy (Hajer and Wagenaar, 2003). Thus, it is highly important to study, learn and share the experiences of urban upgrading projects that have given great importance to the involvement of local communities in decision making processes. It is in this line of thought that this chapter is framed.

This chapter focuses on the use of participatory planning approaches in the context of urban upgrading of deprived neighbourhoods, specifically in relation to the development of new public spaces. It is built around a case study in the city of Medellin, Colombia where there has been a strong political will to upgrade the most deprived neighbourhoods of the city. This initiative emerged as a need to tackle deep rooted problems present in the oldest informal neighbourhoods of the municipality that together with other issues placed Medellin as the most dangerous city of the world during the 1990s. For tackling such problems, the local administration (2003-2007) created an integrated and participatory urban upgrading model called “PUI-Proyecto Urbano Integral” (Integrated Urban Project). It was based on a new urban development strategy of the local administration called “Social Urbanism” which intended to integrate new public spaces and public facilities together with social programs of the municipality and the active involvement of local communities. This chapter uses as a case the first project based on the principles of the Social Urbanism and the methodology of the PUI-Model, the “PUI-Nororiental”.

By illustrating and discussing the project, the chapter shows how participatory processes can become an important part of integrated approaches, contributing significantly to the physical and social improvement of deprived neighbourhoods. For doing so, the chapter starts with an insight to collaborative planning approaches, followed by a discussion of the benefits and challenges of implementing them in urban upgrading projects. After, the case is introduced by giving a short background of the problems and challenges that were present in Medellin’s deprived neighbourhoods. The chapter continues with a description of the principles, methods and results of the Social Urbanism strategy and the PUI-Nororiental project, followed by a discussion of the strengths and weaknesses of the case. Here it will be argued that even if the project did not follow the ideal principles of participatory planning theories, the strategic combination of participatory and integrated solutions, embedded within the production of new public spaces has produced significant benefits to the people living in the areas where the project took place. Such benefits were achieved during the different stages of the process, especially in terms of community building, social capital and institutional capacity. This shows the close link between some of the fundamental principles of participatory/collaborative planning approaches and the very nature of urban upgrading processes and projects.

The research was conducted using a case study methodology in which different methods were combined to understand and analyse the case from different angles. Data collection was done through triangulating methods such as interviews, analysis of documents and field visits and observations. Interviews were conducted with members of the local community, community leaders, municipal authorities and professionals that were part of the project. The questions of the interviews were explorative in nature and related to the project’s process and results, such as participants’ roles, activities and opinions about the process and outcomes of the project. Document analysis was used to complement the interviews, focusing on how the process was developed, identifying the issues that were discussed and the outcomes that were achieved. Document analysis was done to the official documentation of the project but also complementary information coming from local newspapers, information bulletins and internal documentation of the agency in charge of the project. Field visits have been conducted in order to confirm the impact and sustainability of the project’s physical improvements as well as its social programs and activities.
Participatory Planning in Urban Upgrading Projects
Short insight into theories of participatory planning

Participatory planning, also known as communicative, deliberative or collaborative planning, emerged as a response to the failure that planning institutions had when coping with the rapid changes occurring in western cities during the second half of the 20th century. Its theories and practices aimed at replacing the technical rationality behind hierarchical and bureaucratic planning processes towards more inclusive and democratic decision making practices. This was done by promoting the involvement of a full range of stakeholders into planning processes that had dialogue, deliberation and collaboration at its core (Healy, 1996; Forester, 1999; Innes and Booher, 2003). Participatory or collaborative planning theories state that the use of undistorted communication and the encouragement of interactive, inclusive and equal discussion scenarios should be at the base of any planning process. In these scenarios, participants (inhabitants, stakeholders, planners, politicians, etc.) should find ways to understand and learn from the opinions and interest of those that are part of the process, and they should commonly identify, evaluate, propose and mediate about problems and solutions of a planning project. As a result, decisions are based on an agreed consensus over the argument or solution that is best suitable for “all” actors involved (Healy, 1996).

Critiques to participatory planning theories have argued that these are optimistic, idealistic and that its principles are hard to implement in real life. Critiques refer mainly to the lack of understanding of the power structures present in society and in the planning/political culture (Tewdwr-Jones and Allmendinger, 1998; Flyvbjerg, 2002). They also refer to the denial of differences among worldviews and value-systems and the conflicting rationalities that this produces in a planning process (Mouffe, 2000; Watson, 2003; Pløger, 2004). There are also those that argue the unfeasibility to involve “all” views and interests (Connelly and Richardson, 2004) and those that question the possibility of an unbiased/neutral local knowledge (Landaeta, 2004). These critiques are a direct challenge to the truthfulness of the consensus building principle and thus to the legitimacy of the participatory process.

In spite of the critiques, it can be said that both supporters and opponents agree on the need for more inclusive and democratic planning processes. Differences are based on the level of attention that is given to the topics mentioned before and how these should be treated within the planning process. Yet, there is no denial of the fact that involving different actors within the planning process has the potential of achieving more just and sustainable results than the technocratic approaches of the past. Furthermore, there are several cases and studies that have shown significant results that were achieved during the participatory process and which were not depended on reaching consensus (Innes, 2004, Innes and Booher, 2004).

Participation in the urban upgrading context

Public participation is highly supported and recommended by the international donor agencies as a key factor in the upgrading of informal and deprived neighbourhoods (World Bank, 2001; UN Millenium Project, 2005). Participation in the context of urban upgrading is ideally understood as “a process in which people, and specially disadvantaged people, influence resource allocation and the planning and implementation of policies and programs, and are involved at different levels and degrees of intensity in the identification, timing, planning, design, implementation, evaluation, and post-implementation stage of development projects” (Imparato and Ruster, 2003, p. 4). Because of the lack of reliable information and data that illustrates the high complexity present in this kind of neighbourhoods, it is argued that “outsiders” need the community as their main source of information more than anywhere else. Furthermore, it is argued that dwellers of informal and deprived neighbourhoods should be seen not only as source of information but also as genuine development partners and agents. Consequently participatory processes should also aim at recognizing and reinforcing the resources and opportunities present in these neighbourhoods and involve these in actions that contribute to the improvement of the areas (Hamdi, 2004; UN Millenium Project, 2005). An example of such resources can be the work of community based organizations or NGOs, informal or everyday community activities or the availability of labour force. Hence, participatory processes should identify both problems and opportunities that are present in the area, establish priorities on what needs to be addressed by the process, create the groundwork for the sustainability of the project by responding to effectively to the demands of the community, securing stakeholder ownership and defining clearly the roles and responsibilities of the different stakeholders (Imparato and Ruster, 2003).
Unlike what many might think, implementing a participatory process does not depend only on the degree of organization and the characteristics of the community (Imparato and Ruster, 2003). In fact Hamdi and Goethert (1997) argue that people living in deprived neighbourhoods are more eager to participate than others which can influence political and planning decision through other means. What is needed is the support of external actors (public or private agencies) in terms of funding, organization and provision of technical assistance required during the participation process. Such kind of support is needed in order to get greater involvement and achieve a better synergy within the participation process (Imparato and Ruster, 2003). This goes in line with Debas et al.'s (2004, p. 67) statement that “under conditions of poverty and stress, without some sort of security in place, it is difficult for the dwellers of these areas to engage in participatory processes that are considered to be time consuming”. Thus there is the risk that public engagement will happen only under conditions of extreme provocation. However, it is also important to be aware of the risks that such externally enabling or support framework can have. Unconsciously, the participants and the process can be manipulated or guided towards certain topics or outcomes that are within the interests of the outsiders. Therefore, when designing a participatory process there is the need to reflect critically on these issues, so that the process’ legitimacy is not undermined. It is important to reflect on what will the level of participation be and what will it be used for (Hamdi and Goethert, 1997). This will guide the appropriate allocation of funds, technical assistance, time frame and procedures. All of these actions are highly dependent on the level of will and commitment, as well as the reflective capacity of the outsiders, specially the political institutions that fund and control the process.

**Informal and deprived neighbourhoods in Medellin**

Informal and deprived neighbourhoods are not uncommon in Colombian cities. These have resulted, among other things, because of the low capacity of government institutions to face the pressures caused by rapid urbanization processes. This failure can be said to be due to the lack of resources, but also because of corruption, lack of professional skills, dysfunctional land markets, and above all lack of political will (Betancur, 2007). Added to this, in Colombia urbanization processes have been very high due to the socio-political violence that the country has struggled with during the last four decades. This has produced a forced internal displacement of around 3 million Colombians in the last two decades (IDMC, 2007). In the year 2003, of 32.319.000 urban dwellers in Colombia, 7.057.000 lived in highly deprived neighbourhoods; 21.8% of the total urban population (UN-Habitat, 2003).

Medellin is the second largest city of Colombia with approximately 2.5 million inhabitants. Being once a prosperous industrial city, Medellin touched the bottom of a declining process during the 1990’s when it was considered to be the most violent city in the world (El Colombiano, 2002). Fast rural migration caused by violence throughout the country, unequal distribution of resources and social injustice created a negative impact on the city’s spatial, economic and social structure. The city became the centre of criminal activities and a warzone between different illegal groups. This was especially seen in low-income neighbourhoods, where high levels of unemployment and deprivation created the most suitable conditions for hiding, recruiting and operating illegal business.

Most of these neighbourhoods have been the result of a long process of informal development that began in the 1950’s (BID, 2009). Today a certain level of consolidation can be seen in these neighborhoods based on the availability of public services (such as water and energy) and the self-improvement of housing quality standards. Nevertheless, at the neighbourhood level there is still overcrowding conditions and lack of appropriate, if any, public spaces, community services, and legal tenure of the dwellings (Calderon, 2008). By the end of the 20th century it was estimated that approximately 30% of the city’s neighbourhoods were built based on informal principles; and a great part of these were highly deprived (Arango E., 1991). Informal and deprived neighbourhoods were localized mainly in the north part of the city, in to what is called today “Comuna Nororiental” and “Comuna Noroccidental” (Norwest District and Northeast District). All these situations summed up into a great social, economic and political problematic for the city, reinforced by an extreme social-spatial exclusion and stigmatization of these neighbourhoods and the people living in them. As the former Mayor of Medellin (2004-2007) stated, “over the last two decades there had been a complete absence of the state institutions and programs in these neighbourhoods creating an accumulated social debt not only to its residents but to the “Medellinenses” in general” (Fajardo V., 2007).
“Social Urbanism” a new urban development strategy in Medellin

Nowadays, in cities facing similar problems to the ones of Medellin, there is an increasing promotion of strategies aiming towards poverty alleviation, social inclusion and spatial integration. Moving away from the negligence of the past, Colombian cities figure among the ones with an increased focus on urban transformations that are based on integrated, participatory, pro-poor and inclusive urban development strategies (UN-Habitat, 2003). In recent years, Bogota has been recognized as a best-practice case of egalitarian urban transformation (Burdett and Kanai, 2006). Like Bogota, Medellin focused its development strategies based on integrated and inclusionary upgrading policies. An “equal city for all and where all citizens can construct relations stimulated by neighbourhoods rich in services, culture and public space” became the main goal of the 3 year development plan of Medellin 2004-2007 (Municipio de Medellin, 2004). The negative externalities caused by the problems present in the deprived neighbourhoods of the city were seen as a prime limitation to improve the international competitiveness and economic development of Medellin. Poverty, inequality, violence and the lack of participatory arenas that would guarantee good governance were identified by the development plan as obstacles for achieving the goals of the city as a whole. Hence, integrated and participatory upgrading projects were given the highest priority in the political agenda. The local administration considered this as strategic, believing that that the improvement of the social, economic and spatial problems of these neighbourhoods would contribute to the development of the city as a whole (Municipio de Medellin, 2004)

At the policy level the ideals mentioned before where gathered by the local administration into a strategy of urban development called “Social Urbanism”. Social Urbanism became the main framework for all urban projects, especially those located in the deprived neighbourhoods of the city (BID, 2009). It was conceived as an urban strategy that combined simultaneously physical transformations, social/institutional programs and participatory processes. “In simple terms, its objective was that whenever there was an urban intervention, in parallel to the physical transformation, there were new social/institutional programs and activities that complemented the physical change” (Echeverri, 2006). Social and institutional programs and activities aiming at education, culture, sports and recreation and employment should reinforce and make active use of the new public spaces and public facilities. This was done through coordinated and integrated actions of the different agencies of the municipality and the involvement of the community during the different stages of the projects.

For taking the Social Urbanism principles into practice an integrated and participatory urban upgrading model called “Proyecto Urbano Integral – PUI” (Urban Integrated Plan) was developed. The PUI's approach was to concentrate in a delimited area an integrated intervention that converged resources, projects and programs of the administration. Such strategy of intervention was thought to create higher, faster and more visible results in the area. Three main components were part of the model:

- a physical component, based on new public spaces and facilities;
- a social component, based on the participation of the community in the different stages of the projects, and the appropriation of these by the community;
- an institutional component, that coordinated the implementation of existing social programs of the administration and created arena for collaboration among agencies (Alcaldia de Medellin, 2007a).

The PUI-Model established a specific methodology and an operative framework for managing each project. The latter consisted on a decentralized agency of the municipality called the “PUI-Team” that dealt exclusively with urban upgrading projects. The team consisted on an interdisciplinary group of professionals (planners, architects, social workers and environmental engineers), that manage, coordinate and support all the different actors, institutions and projects within each PUI plan. This was done with the intention of guaranteeing efficiency and direct responsibility of the process and the outcomes. Some of the members of the PUI-Team were located directly in the area of intervention. This allowed a closer contact with the community in case of doubts, suggestions or difficulties during the process (Echeverri, 2006).

The first plan to implement the ideas of Social Urbanism and the PUI-Model was the “PUI-Nororiental”. It was done in the area called “Comuna Nororiental” (Northeast District). In the year 2004, the Comuna Nororiental presented the highest levels of informality of the city, as well as the lowest score in the Human Development Index – HDI (Municipio de Medellin, 2004); reason why the administration decided to implement the first PUI there. The area of intervention was 158 hectares containing 11 neighbourhoods and a total of 170 thousand inhabitants (EDU, 2005b).
The PUI-Noriental and its process
The PUI-Model determined five stages of the plan: diagnosis, planning, design, construction and activation/maintenance. The participatory process was designed so that the community would be involved in different ways during the different stages of the process. The participatory process and its activities were also designed to enhance community building and social capital (Alcaldia de Medellin, 2007a).

As a first activity of the diagnosis stage of the PUI-Nororiental, the PUI-Team conducted several public hearings where the PUI's principles and methodology were introduced to the community. No master plan had been made at this moment. Additionally, the community was able to express all complaints and critiques of previous processes or administrations during these meetings. Although this was not an easy task, it was considered essential in order to have a fresh start based on some level of trust. The public hearings were also used to identify the main actors of the area such as community based organizations and representatives in order to involve them in the process and the outcomes (Alcaldia de Medellin, 2007a). In parallel a technical diagnosis was done by the PUI-Team. Since the area of intervention was so big (158 hectares), the plan was divided in 4 smaller areas. These were based on the level of consolidation and the social structure of the neighbourhoods of the Comuna Nororiental (EDU, 2005b). Additionally, “Community Committees (CC)” were created during these meetings. These were small groups conformed by members of the community that joined voluntarily. These served as a representative group of the community and worked as a direct contact/reference group in the area during the PUI's process. For being able to do so, the members of the committee were provided with detailed information about the projects, its process and also trained on leadership skills. There was a CC for each of the four areas of the plan.

During the diagnosis stage, the community and the CCs were used to corroborate and contribute to the initial technical analysis done by the PUI-Team. This was done through an activity called “Talleres de Imaginarios Urbanos” (Workshops of Urban Perceptions). These included meetings with the community and field visits with the CCs, in which the main problems and opportunities of the area were identified and located (Alcaldia de Medellin, 2007a). Figure 1 shows one of the visits done with a CC and a map drawn with the community during one of the sessions. At the same time, an inventory of the social programs belonging to the different agencies of the administration was done (programs related to education, employment, culture, sports, public health and recreation), in order to see which of these could be considered within the plan. This demanded the PUI-Team to create institutional agreements for cooperation, support and contributions to the project.

During the planning stage the PUI-Team made a master plan for the area, establishing different types of projects. These aimed mainly at the improvement and construction of new public spaces and public facilities, the recovery of natural areas and the upgrading and consolidation of housing units (EDU, 2005b). The latter was mainly due to the relocation of existing houses that were in the areas where the new public spaces and public facilities would be constructed. During this phase the PUI-Team established the priority and the order of implementation of the projects. The CCs role was to validate the proposals of the PUI-Team. Different means of communication such as local radio, TV programs, newspaper and billboards were used to communicate to the wider community the results of this stage.
During the design phase the PUI-Team carried on a set of workshops with the community named “Talleres de Imaginarios por proyecto” (Workshops of Dreams and Ideas for each project). The purpose of the workshops was to define the specific use of each of the public spaces determined by the master plan. Workshops were done for each of the new projects. All members of the community who live close to the location of the new project were invited. Special efforts were done to involve children and the elderly. Attendants were asked to draw or write on a piece of paper what they wanted the place to be, how it should look like and what activities would they like to happen there. Emphasis was made on trying to identify the possible attachments or perceptions that the community had to the specific area, especially in relation to how the community used the place and the everyday activities that occurred there. In most cases the workshop was done together with social activities, such as games for the kids and cultural or educational activities. These were possible thanks to the coordination made by the PUI-Team with other agencies of the municipality and the community based groups of the area (Alcaldia de Medellin, 2007a). Figure 2 shows images of a workshop in the design stage.

The ideas and dreams of the community were used by the PUI-Team as a base for their design. A first sketch was developed and was later presented to the CCs to confirm that the ideas of the community were in it. The designs were discussed and modified if required. The final decisions of the designs were made by the PUI-Team based on the feasibility of the proposal. Following the integrated principles of Social Urbanism, the workshops also determined what kind of social/institutional programs should be located or make use of the new public spaces. This was done in areas where there was enough space and resources. Once there was an agreement on the programs, use and design of the project, the final result was shown to all the community. This was done via brochures, billboards and public hearings (Alcaldia de Medellin, 2007a). An important principle of this stage was a commitment towards high quality design and materials of the public space and public facilities. There was a commitment to create high quality environments which people would value and feel more attracted to use (Echeverri, 2006). An example of this was the use of architecture competitions to determine the designs of some of the new public facilities.

The construction stage consisted mainly on coordinating and delegating to the different agencies of the municipality specific tasks and projects in order to finance and manage their construction. During this stage the community was involved in two different ways. Since the people who lived near the new projects knew how the designs of the project were, they helped control the construction’s quality. This contributed to the accountability of the projects. The PUI-Team visited the area regularly in order to solve any doubts, suggestions or claims. A second way of the involvement of the community was through the employment of local labour. This was determined by the PUI-Model, since there were high levels of unemployment in the neighbourhoods of the project. 92 % of the labour force used in the construction of the projects came from people living in the area. This meant approximately 3.400 new jobs (EDU, 2007a). In addition some of the tasks were given fully to the community. For example all tasks related to demolition of houses were given to previous members of gang/drug groups that had made peace agreements and belonged to social programs of the municipality (Alcaldia de Medellin, 2007a).
A special feature of the PUI projects is that they do not end immediately after the construction of the new public spaces and public facilities finishes. As part of the integrated principles of Social Urbanism, physical transformations were to go in hand with social and institutional programs such as education, sports and recreation, culture, and economic development. Hence, the **activation/maintenance stage** aimed at “activating” in the new public spaces the community activities and social programs that were identified in the earlier stages of the project. Activating meant more than just inaugurating the new spaces and starting the social/institutional programs. The main purpose of this last stage was to show to the whole community the new spaces and the activities and programs that were planned to happen there. By doing so it was intended that the community would see the new public spaces and public facilities as the new social and physical landmark of these neighbourhoods (Fajardo V., 2007). Furthermore the activation activities aimed at creating in the community a sense of ownership towards the new projects that would help guarantee the maintenance and sustainability of the new public spaces and the activities happening in them. This was done through inaugurating events where the whole community was invited. Great effort was put in to these events so they would mark the beginning of a new era of the neighbourhoods. During the event the new social program, activity or use of the project was launched and put into function (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2007a). Once more the collaboration between the agencies of the administration and community groups of the area was important for these activities; especially those dealing with social issues, such as education, culture, sports, etc. In most cases the community was fully involved in the preparation and execution of the “activation” activities. Local community groups, such as art, youth or dance groups were given a main part, performing in the inauguration events. The administration agencies supported these groups with the management and organization of the events as well advertising and promoting them at both the neighbourhood and city level.

Additionally, during these events there was a symbolic agreement between the administration and the community called “Pactos Ciudadanos” (Citizen Agreements). It was an agreement of responsibilities towards the maintenance and sustainability of the project. In it the community committed to take good care and make proper use of the projects while the administration committed to maintain both the public spaces and public facilities and the programs or activities placed in them (Urbanismo Social, 2007). A final task of this stage was to show and promote the new projects to the rest of the city, trying to reduce the stigmatization that the area had. This has been done through several publications, participation in local, national and international conferences, television and radio shows, visits of significant guests to the area, such as the Spanish Royal Family and presidents of different countries, among others (Alcaldía de Medellín, 2007a).

A significant example of the integration of activities and social/institutional programs with the new public spaces is one that aims at creating income opportunities while at the same time bringing the community together. It is called the “Festival de Mingo” (Mingo Festival), which is a monthly street market that takes place in one of the main new public spaces of the area. This event is linked to an institutional program that gives training and support to people of the neighbourhood so that they can start their own business or develop skills that will help them to find a job. In the Festival de Mingo a large group of small family businesses and local entrepreneurs of the Comuna Noriental and other neighbouring districts have the opportunity to sell and promote their products. The street market is usually organized together with musical concerts or art and cultural events in order attract and bring together more people. Several agencies of the municipality participate in this event, contributing to its organization and promotion as well as providing the infrastructure needed for it. Other examples that integrate social/institutional programs with the new public spaces and public facilities are football schools, public playgrounds and sport facilities that are used by public day care centres and schools, health and sport activities for adults and elderly, cultural events such as film, music and dance festivals, art exhibitions, among others. Such activities take place at least once a week in the main new public spaces of the area. Figure 3 shows some pictures of the Mingo Festival and social/cultural events.
The "PUI Nororiental" built approximately 200,000 m² of public space as well as 16,000 m² of public facilities such as a metropolitan library, an institution for education on entrepreneurship, day-care centres, sports fields, and schools. In terms of public participation, the PUI organized around 400 activities (public hearings, meetings with Community Committees and workshops). In addition there have been around 80 activation events (EDU, 2007b).

Lessons learned - Outcomes beyond the physical improvements

Above all, the case confirms that it is essential that urban upgrading projects are supported by a strong political will that is committed to address in a significant way the complex problems present in deprived neighbourhoods. Not doing so can create an accumulation of social problems that may result in negative effects for the whole city. The case of Medellin is an example of the extreme consequences of not having policies or programs that addressed the problems present in the informal and deprived neighbourhoods of the city (Calderon, 2008).

Fighting against social exclusion and deprivation presupposes changes in the existing governance structures, such as rethinking mechanisms for delivery of services and providing institutional space to allow residents to act as subjects in decision making and change in their neighbourhoods (Cars et al., 2002, p.6). This was indeed the case of Medellin where integrated and participatory urban upgrading projects have created new forms of executing urban development strategies, provide public services and
harness new partnerships among the different agencies of the municipality and the local communities. The positive experience and results of the PUI-Nororiental created changes in the institutional arrangements of the administration contributing to its institutional capacity. This has been done at least in the context of projects dealing with deprived neighbourhoods. The new institutional arrangements can be seen in the collaboration between different agencies that allowed the creation of integrated and focalized actions, as well as the creation of a decentralized agency (the PUI-Team) with an operational framework that focused only on this type of projects. The latter facilitated the former. The collaboration of the different agencies of the municipality, the integration of different actions and services and the involvement of local communities in the different stages of the project allowed the administration to use in a more efficient and strategic way its institutional and economical resources (Alcaldia de Medellin, 2007a). As such, the Social Urbanism strategy and the PUI Model served as a way to challenge the traditional “sector” or “silo” organization of the municipality that focused on the delivery of specific and unrelated functions and services (public services and infrastructure, economic development, education, health, etc.). Because of the significant results of the PUI-Nororiental there has been a change in the discourse of politicians and technicians promoting the need of integrated and participatory approaches in other parts of the city. In addition communities of other deprived neighbourhoods of the city are now demanding similar processes and projects for their areas. In fact, the current local administration has kept in its policies the ideals of “Social Urbanism” and three other PUIs are being implemented in other deprived neighbourhoods of the city. The existence of the PUI-Team has facilitated the transfer of knowhow and experiences of the PUI-Nororiental to other areas of the city.

At the neighbourhood level, the project also had significant outcomes that were beyond the physical improvements. The results of the PUI-Nororiental show how integrated efforts and actions combined with participatory processes can achieve greater impacts than the isolated ones of the past. This can be seen in 2007 Quality of Life Index, where the results show the districts of the Comuna Nororiental as the ones with higher increase in the quality of life of its inhabitants; a 13 point increase between 1997 and 2007 compared to an average of 8 points in other districts of the city (Alcaldia de Medellin, 2007b). The participation process allowed the provision of services and programs that were closer to the demands and needs of the people as well as the involvement and contribution of the local community in the development of the area. It also created a deep change in the negative attitude that the communities of these neighbourhoods had towards the administration. Activities such as the ones done at the beginning of the process in which the community could criticize and complain about previous unsuccessful interventions in the area, allowed the process to have a fresh start. The change in attitude was also achieved thanks to the constant efforts to communicate the progress of the process, as well as to report how resources where managed, enhancing the transparency and accountability of the administration. Apathy and distrust were replaced by new relations of partnership and collaboration. The new partnerships can be seen in the Citizen Agreements that were done between the community and the administration in order to maintain and sustain the new public spaces as well as the activities/programs that were placed in them. By the end of 2010, four years after the PUI-Nororiental project ended, the public spaces and public facilities are still well maintained and most social and institutional programs are still running. The citizen agreements have contributed significantly to the sustainability of the projects. Other partnerships can be seen in the delegation of duties to people living close to the projects and to the involvement of community groups during the construction and maintaining phases. New partnerships were not only between the administration and the community but also among community members and community groups. The Community Committees created the arena for some community leaders to collaborate and become more visible and active in their neighbourhoods. As well, people that previously were involved in activities or in the development of the community, where capable of developing leadership skills and learn more about political and governmental procedures thanks to the training sessions given to the CCs. This allowed the formation of new leaders that became more active in the development of the area and the maintenance of the new projects as well as key contacts with the municipality.

Furthermore significant outcomes in terms of community building and social capital were achieved thanks to the way in which the participatory process was designed beforehand. The PUI-Nororiental used the participatory activities not only as a place where to discuss the future of the area, but also as an arena where the community could get together and where trust and relations between its inhabitants could be strengthened. This was thanks to the social, educational and cultural activities that were done in parallel to the participatory activities. The active use of local community groups during the participatory activities, the
inauguration events and some of the activities related to the construction of the projects, were central for community building. Local community groups, such as art, youth or cultural ones as well as small family business found in these activities and in the inauguration events the space where there could be more visible and active for the community. Strengthening the community and its local groups can become significant in the long run since they can engage in their own development activities. This chapter has not made emphasis on the physical outcomes of the PUI-Noriental. In spite of this, it is important to mention that the changes of the built environment in the areas where the projects were constructed have created a significant new image for the neighbourhoods and has encouraged people living nearby to improve their houses and in some cases open small stores and business. It has also contributed to the better functioning of the neighbourhood and the provision of public spaces and public facilities that are highly used by children and adults. This has created in the inhabitants of the “Comuna Nororiental” a sense of pride and belonging that did not exist before. In addition to this, the rest of “Medellinenses” have started to see these neighbourhoods as an important part of the city, moving away from the stigmatization and segregation of the past. The area has also become a tourist attraction of the city. Because of the results of the PUI-Noriental, Medellin and its administration have been awarded a wide range of prizes and recognitions both nationally and internationally (EDU, 2009). The local administration has also used the outcomes of the PUI-Noriental project as a flagship of the transformation of Medellin. This is reflected in the city’s main slogan: “Medellin from fear to hope”, which tries to change the image and reputation that the city had during the 1990’s.

**Issues that need to be taken into consideration**

Critiques of the PUI-Noriental are related to the way in which decisions about the plan were done (Calderon, 2008, pp. 97-101). These can be associated to the main critiques done to participatory or collaborative planning theories that were mentioned in the beginning of this chapter. It is true that the PUI-Noriental provided active participatory arenas such as public hearings, workshops and meetings with the local communities and the Community Committees; and that these allowed technicians to understand better the complexity of the area, as well as to create solutions that where closer to the needs, demands and wishes of the people. However, since the PUI-Model gave priority to the construction of public spaces and facilities, during the participatory activities discussions or solutions to other problems or demands that were highly prioritized by the community were not taken into consideration. In the stage where the community was fully involved and allowed to influence the decision making (in the design stage), a plan determining the type of projects was already established. From the beginning of the process there was a set agenda giving higher priority to interventions on the physical environment, giving no room for other topics to be fully discussed. Of course people of these neighbourhoods will agree on the need of new public spaces, but other issues which could be considered more problematic and critical were not given space in the discussion. An example of this was the problems that many inhabitants had in terms of the security of tenure was among the highest priorities and needs of the community (Calderon, 2008). In this sense there can be what Connelly and Richardson (2004, pp. 12-13) call: “exclusion of issues, focusing attention on selected issues and areas where agreement is most likely” and “exclusion of outcomes, where processes are led towards solutions that are agreed by all”. At the operational level the participatory processes of the PUI-Noriental can also be questioned (Calderon, 2008, pp. 98-102). Given the large size of the area of intervention (158 hectares) it is difficult to determine if all actors and interests were heard. The PUI-Noriental was divided on 4 smaller areas based on social and spatial differences between some neighbourhoods. However, within these “smaller” areas there are significant differences as well. This is important, because if a community is big or dispersed over a large area, social cohesion tends to become weak and specific interests or needs tend to fade (Imparato and Ruster, 2003). If large groups are involved in a session there is the risk that people will feel nervous of expressing their ideas. This leads to the possibility that the interests of the more powerful can be imposed over the interests of the less powerful within the groups (Landaeta, 2004). Such situation can also result on biased information, which can question the relevance and validity of the “local knowledge”. Therefore, it is better to create groups and areas based on similar aspects or problems. When people feel that they are among others that are in their same situation they will feel more represented by the group and the process. A similar observation can be done to the Community Committees. It is a good strategy to combine general assemblies with smaller representative groups in other to make the process more effective. However, since the involvement in the CC was voluntarily, there was no guarantee that all groups were represented. The PUI-Model and its participatory process should try to guarantee that the
Community Committee represents the variety of vested interests of the community. Especially the most vulnerable groups (women, the elderly, children, ethnic minorities, etc.) which are the ones affected more severely by the conditions present in informal and deprived neighbourhoods (Hamdi and Goethert, 1997; Tannerfeldt and Ljung, 2006).

Conclusions
Both the physical and social results of the PUI-Nororiental proved how significant it can be to have a strategic combination of participatory processes and integrated solutions. The case shows how in the context of urban upgrading projects, the improvement of the built environment and the creation of new public spaces and public facilities can be complemented and reinforced by the strategic use of integrated and participatory approaches. The PUI-Nororiental shows that participatory process and the active involvement of local communities can be used as something more than just having a more democratic decision making process. In participatory planning processes intangible outcomes can be equally or more important than the plans or the tangible products (Innes and Booher, 1999). This certainly applies in the context of informal or deprived areas where there is a demand for outcomes and services that go beyond physical improvements. An example of this can be seen in the educational and cultural activities that were done during the participatory process which aimed at bringing the community together and involve them in the development of the area.

The combination of tangible, high visible, high quality upgraded built environment, plus intangible, social/institutional activities and programs can also be seen as a strategic approach for creating higher and more significant results in areas such as the Comuna Nororiental. An example of this can be the Festival de Mingo, where new public spaces, institutional programs and social activities integrate and complement each other, increasing the use of the new spaces and making the programs and activities more visible and accessible to a greater part of the population. This calls for a revision of how the upgrading of informal or deprived areas is done. Social Urbanism can serve as a model showing how through integrated and participatory approaches physical and social improvements can be achieved both at the end and during the different stages of the participatory process. Yet, this model could be improved by not limiting the topics that were to be discussed within the process; especially during the planning stage, where broader discussions could prevent the exclusion of issues or of outcomes as it was shown in the discussion. This is probably a central point to review.

Notes
1 Outsider is used as a metaphor referring to the city via its representatives, the practitioner or professionals. This may include the technical staff of the municipality, hired consultants or NGO representatives.
2 Community building is a field of practices directed toward the creation or enhancement of community between individuals within a regional area (such as a neighbourhood) or with a common interest. A wide variety of practices can be utilized for community building, ranging from simple events like potlucks and small book clubs, to larger—scale efforts such as mass festivals and building construction projects that involve local participants rather than outside contractors.
3 Social capital is the product of social interactions with the potential to contribute to the social, civic or economic well-being of a community-of-common-purpose. The interactions draw on knowledge and identity resources and simultaneously use and build stores of social capital. The nature of the social capital depends on various qualitative dimensions of the interactions in which it is produced, such as the quality of the internal-external interactions, the historicity, futuricity, reciprocity, trust and the shared values and norms. (Falk and Kilpatrick, 2000, pp. 103-104)

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