

City marketing in Medellin - Colombia: awards and good urban practices as a global reference

Marcela Giraldo

PhD student in Urban Planning at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro - UFRJ, Brazil (2014-current); Master in Urban and

Regional Studies at the National University of Colombia - Medellin (2007) and Architect of La Salle University - Bogotá (2005)

marcelagiraldoromero@gmail.com

“Cities can’t be totally global”. It is the statement of Doreen Massey, (1993 cited in Fortune and Silva, 2002, p. 443), who examines that before the social and cultural conditions that make up the city, a globalization of a few projects in the others localization. By this way, globalization generates its own opposition, allowing actions, groups or movements to break what otherwise would be an universal continuity of logic global institutional messages (Fortuna; Silva, 2002, p. 451).

In Colombia, globalization and international policies has also affected the development of cities. In line with Peck and Theodore (2010, p. 171) "there is a pre-made market for Barcelona or Vancouver classes, in locations that are in line with current policies and ready to insert the cities in a global market to ensure possibility of making the local an overall practice". That is how the city of Medellin established in the global planning debates as a successful example and as a good practice, which has allowed to host some of the most important international events in the country, like a headquarter of the seventh World Urban Forum organized by UN-HABITAT in march 2014.

But such recognition has been the result of several political processes where city marketing is the key element for the dissemination of urban practices and as advertising platform abroad. For Boneti (2007) “agents that define urban policies are not just national, and the programs and projects are not unique or different, as they are according to the global economy”. By this, the present article aims to analyze

city marketing strategies that Medellín has implemented in recent years; and it will provide as main results the analyses of:

- The awards and mentions and that the city has received due to international advertising.
- Entities that have disseminated as an example the urban transformation of Medellín.
- The good urban practices that are referenced worldwide of the city¹.

The urban transformation in the last 20 years in Medellín, went through take positively problems of violence and vulnerability by improvement the slums, with electric stairs, mobility and libraries², conforming what Jacques (2004, p. 26) establishes "a sale of the city as brand image that uses culture as a front for real estate speculation and for political propaganda".

In Medellín, the urban transformation built many facilities that are now the city image as the *Edificio Inteligente* (1997), the *Parque de los Pies Descalzos* (1999), the *Plaza Botero* (2000) and the *Parque de los Deseos* (2003) policies which emphasizes in create quality public spaces of inclusion throughout the city. Each project demonstrates what Vaz (2004: 2, 3) proposes: "spatial transformations are not considered only in its physical dimension, because involve considerations of symbolic order. The place, the image and the identity, are elements deeply grounded in the local culture that have become fundamental".

By this way, the library parks, cultural centers and quality schools were a political decision to "recover in all areas of society the legal presence of the state" recognizing the rights of communities to these facilities (words of Sergio Fajardo's

¹ For the article will be searched information in plans, projects, videos, national and international press reporting, in entities as the Ministry of Housing, the Department of National Planning, the Government of Antioquia, the Mayor's office and Medellín, and development company Medellín Urban in Colombia, as well in the agendas of international organizations that have established Medellín as reference for good urban practices.

² *Centre for liveable cities destaca transformación urbana de medellín*. Publication date: 03 de junho de 2014. Available in: <http://diarioadn.co/medell%C3%ADn/mi-ciudad/reconocimiento-por-transformaci%C3%B3n-urbana-de-medell%C3%ADn-1.110746>.> Access: 25 de november de 2014.

major (2004-2007); with high quality projects that recovered precariousness areas, densely and poor occupied with high rates of violence³.

Thus the awards and recognition around the world for this city, it made to continue on the competence and market. Among the awards stand out “The most innovative city in the world” in 2013, granted by the Wall Street Journal in the United States; and the “Lee Kuan Yew award in developing cities” in 2014 at the World Cities Meeting in Singapore.

It probably results what Fortune and Silva (2002, p436.) analyzed about the cultural processes of globalization: “the urge homogenization in the offer is opposed by a boost of heterogenization in demand”. The city of Medellín is now a product of marketing strategy, public relations and transnational policies that sold the city as a "brand" by the major's office in a bid to foreign investors but still with high levels of social inequality, violence and drugs⁴.

Finally, it is clear that Medellín has now developed significantly since the late '80s, but in short the set of interventions, awards and good urban practices, it realizes what Canclini (2005: 186.) claims: “this city seems to be thinking like merchandise that would be available for compete with other cities, all administered as companies, as business”.

Basic bibliography

BONETI, Lindomar. (2007) *Políticas públicas por dentro*. 2da edição. Ijuí: Ed. Unijuí, v. 2.

³ *Modelo de transformación urbana - Proyecto Urbano Integral PUI zona nororiental*. Empresa de Desarrollo Urbano EDU. 2014. Available in: <<http://pt.slideshare.net/EDUMedellin/modelo-de-transformacin-urbana-proyecto-urbano-integral-pui-zona-nororiental>> Access: 27 de november de 2014.

⁴ *El foro urbano mundial no es mi foro*. Available in <<http://forosocialurbanoalternativoypopular.blogspot.com.br/2014/03/el-foro-urbano-mundial-no-es-mi-foro.html>> Access: 27 de november de 2014.

CANCLINI Nestor Garcia. *O papel da cultura em cidades pouco sustentáveis*. Em. SERRA Monica Allende (org.) *Diversidade cultural e desenvolvimento urbano*. Editora Iluminuras. São Paulo, Brasil. Pp. 185-198. 2005.

JACQUES, Paola Berenstein. *Espetacularização urbana contemporânea*. Em. Cadernos PPG-AU/FAUFBA. Universidade Federal da Bahia, Faculdade de Arquitetura e Urbanismo – Ano 2, numero especial. Salvador, pp. 23 – 30. 2004.

FORTUNA, Carlos; SILVA Augusto Santos. *A cidade do lado da cultura: espacialidades sociais e modalidades de intermediação cultural*. Em. SANTOS, Boaventura de Sousa (org.) *A globalização e as Ciências Sociais*. São Paulo, Brasil. 2da edição. Páginas 419-473. 2002.

PECK, J. and THEODORE, N. 2010. “*Mobilizing policy: Models, methods, and mutations*”. *Geoforum*, Vol. 41, pp. 169-174.

VAZ, Lilian. *Planos e projetos de regeneração cultural: notas sobre uma tendência urbanística recente*. Em. VIII Seminário de história da cidade e do urbanismo. Universidade Federal Fluminense UFF, Niterói. Brasil. 2004.