

Institutional mechanisms and policy frameworks for social infrastructure planning in Bogotá: the master plan as land policy tool

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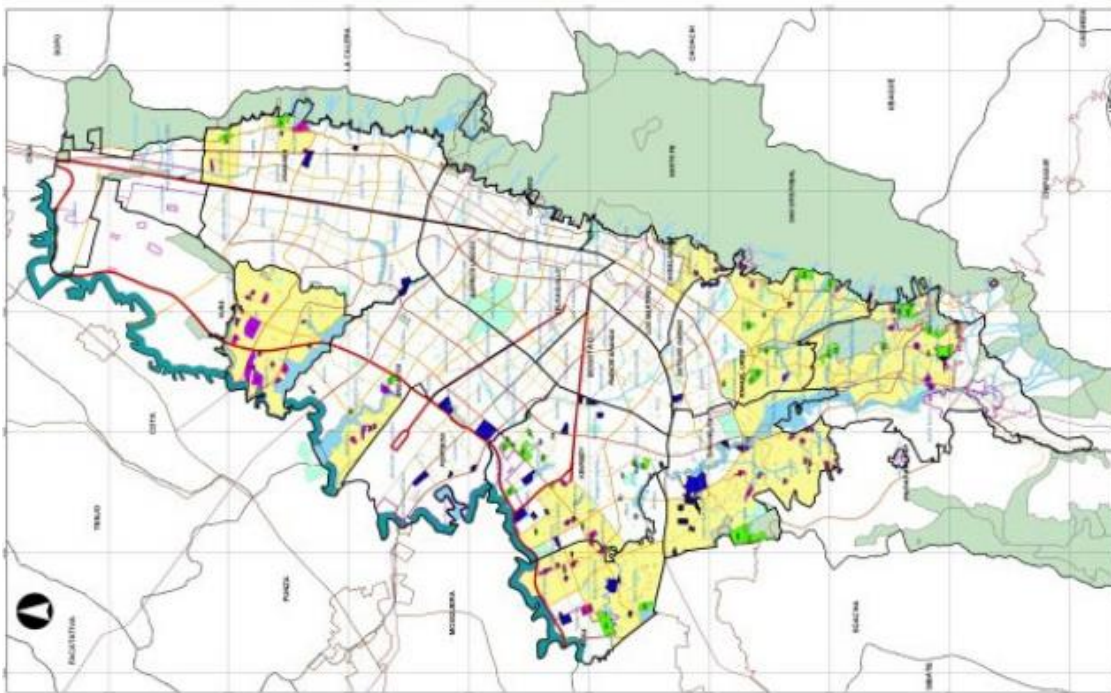


Figure 01: Masterplan of Educative Infrastructures - Land allocation in the short, medium and long run in Bogota.

Source: <http://es.slideshare.net/fparra123/decreto-449-06-plan-maestro-de-equipamientos-educativos>

Following the development tendency seen during the last 65 years in Latin America, the Colombian population has been concentrated in urban poles in a rapid “urbanization process”. While this exponential growth tendency has influenced several positive economic effects but also several negative environmental impacts, it has not been successful per se in reducing social and spatial inequalities, questioning the effectiveness of policy making institutions particularly in guarantee equivalent spatial distribution and access to social and human resources as education, health, justice, security and/or even trade for urban citizens. Only in Bogota, and according to the mayor Office in 2003 mostly 55,3% of the city’s population, almost 3.5 million inhabitant, where living in absolute poverty.

Thus, instead of “urbanized environments” these growth processes have stimulated highly dense and segregated “agglomerated fragments” with an unbalanced distribution of social services and discontinuous infrastructure networks which have contributed to positioning Latin American, and especially Colombian cities, as some of the most unequal places in the world. *”One thing is clear: Latin American nations continue to wrestle with many of the same problems they have wrestled with for decades- uneven growth with high levels of poverty and the world’s highest levels of inequality; ineffective state institutions that deliver limited benefits to often a highly restricted minority of the population”.*¹

Nevertheless, evidence from Colombian institutional efforts to update, redistribute and articulate infrastructure systems during the last 15 years in Bogota, show some innovative mechanisms and policy tools such as the Infrastructure Master Plans, intended to achieve socio-spatial inclusion and promoting more equitable built environments as well as to promote territorial cohesion and respect to the environmental structures of the territory.

Hence, this paper examines the institutional mechanisms and policy frameworks used for primary (public services) and social infrastructure planning in Bogota, and how “hybrid strategic - land use planning tools” as the 17 different Master Plans

¹ Kingstone, Peter. (2011). The Political Economy of Latin America. Reflections on neoliberalism and development. Routledge New York, NY

adopted in the city since 2006 and intended for the next 20 years, has been transformed into spatial policies used to guide and determine allocation, distribution, capacity, as well as some of the specific spatial features of the facilities and networks itself.

Although the report aims to understand and summarizes the whole picture of the policy framework regarding infrastructure planning in the city, it will focus on 5 social infrastructure systems and its master plans with regard to health, education, culture, sport and recreation as well as security, defense and justice.

Therefore, the main objective of this paper is to answer 3 main questions regarding these spatial policy instruments and its land use planning influences in Bogota's latest development process:

- How do the Master Plans articulate the final spatial and physical desirable scenarios of implementation at the neighborhood scales together with the urban and metropolitan goals established by the Bogota's Territorial Ordering Plan (P.O.T. Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial) which is in fact the main Land Use Act of the city?
- How do the city's institutional mechanisms work to assure implementation of the plans? What institutional actors are involved in these processes and which driving forces can be identified dragging or slowing it down?
- What impacts have been triggered in those districts and communities where new infrastructures were allocated? How does spatial inequality as well as other social indicators have behaved during the last years in the city?

Methodologically the research analyses primary and secondary sources to come to the conclusions, including original information received by the institutions in charge of the projects. It also recalls its own sources and experiences as long as the research author worked professionally in Bogota at some of the implemented projects between 2004 and 2005.

The relevance of the topic lies in the urgent actions Latin American agglomerations have to undertake during the following years to undermine the high

levels of spatial and social disparities and segregation which have placed the continent as the most unequal region in the world (UN Habitat 2012).²

Following Edward W. Soja concept of Spatial Justice, the paper aims to contribute in understand spatial policy tools implemented and effective in reducing the big social gap of development opportunities between different socio economical groups living in the same city, and in encourage territorial cohesion. *“Thinking spatially about justice not only enriches our theoretical understanding, it can uncover significant new insights that extend our practical knowledge into more effective actions to achieve greater justice and democracy.”*³

² ONU HABITAT (2012). Estado de las ciudades de America Latina y el caribe 2012 [online] Available at: <http://www.unhabitat.org/pmss/listItemDetails.aspx?publicationID=3380> . Accessed 12 07 2015.

³ Soja, W.E. (2008). The city and spatial justice. Paper presented at the conference Spatial Justice, Nanterre, Paris, March 12-14 2008. [online] Available at: <http://www.jssj.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/12/JSSJ1-1en4.pdf> . Accessed 20 10 2015