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Διαπραγματεύσεις της μετατόπισης στην Μποκοτά της Κολομβίας: Δρώντας και αντιδρώντας στον αστικό διαχωρισμό

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Negotiating displacement: Acting and reacting against urban segregation in Bogotá,
Colombia

ABSTRACT

Can public space in a global South city such as Bogotá be regenerated so as to become classless or neutral? To what extent and through which means can forcibly displaced people become claimants of their right to remain in Bogotá? Based on fieldwork carried out in Bogotá between April and December 2012, and drawing upon the experience of internally displaced people (IDPs), this article examines the achievements of the city's regeneration. The displaced persons' narratives bring to the fore the persistence of spatial scales organized along the lines of race, ethnicity and class, and show how the overlapping of these scales with the model of centralities that the city strives to implement, shapes IDPs' subjectivities and participates in constructing their socio-spatial segregation. Therefore, I explore some practices through which this population circumvents cultural homogenization and mechanisms of segregation. Furthermore, drawing on the concept of acts of citizenship, I analyze some IDPs' public demonstrations, and their networking with social movements. I argue that IDPs have achieved to disrupt a spatial order that worked to hide the plight of their displacement. In doing so, they have taken back the center of the city as the locus of political struggle and have positioned their right to remain in Bogotá at the center of the public debate.

Keywords: *Socio-spatial segregation, urban regeneration, internal displacement, intersectionality, acts of citizenship*

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Διαπραγματεύσεις της μετατόπισης στην Μποκοτά της Κολομβίας: Δρώντας και αντιδρώντας στον αστικό διαχωρισμό

ΠΕΡΙΛΗΨΗ

Μπορεί ο δημόσιος χώρος σε μια πόλη του Παγκόσμιου Νότου όπως η Μποκοτά να υποστεί ανάπλαση ώστε να γίνει αταξικός ή ουδέτερος; Σε ποιο βαθμό και με ποια μέσα μπορούν οι αναγκαστικά μετακινούμενοι πληθυσμοί να γίνουν φορείς αιτήματος για το δικαίωμά τους να παραμείνουν στην Μποκοτά; Το παρόν άρθρο βασίζεται σε επιτόπια έρευνα στην πόλη της Μποκοτά που έγινε από τον Απρίλιο μέχρι το Δεκέμβριο του 2012 και αντλεί από τις εμπειρίες των εσωτερικά μετατοπισμένων πληθυσμών (ΕΜΠ), εξετάζοντας τα επιτεύγματα της αστικής ανάπλασης. Οι αφηγήσεις των μετατοπισμένων αποκαλύπτουν την εμμονή της χωρικής τάξης να λειτουργεί στη γραμμή της φυλής, της εθνότητας και της τάξης. Λόγω της συμμετοχής στην κατασκευή του κοινωνικο-χωρικού διαχωρισμού οι αφηγήσεις των ΕΜΠ παρουσιάζουν αλληλοεπικαλύψεις με τα μοντέλα κεντρικών σχεδιασμών εκ μέρους της πόλης, διαμορφώνοντας έτσι τις υποκειμενικότητές τους. Πιο συγκεκριμένα εξετάζονται πρακτικές μέσα από τις οποίες οι πληθυσμοί αυτοί καταστρατηγούν την πολιτισμική ομοιογενοποίηση και τους μηχανισμούς διαχωρισμού. Επιπρόσθετα, αντλώντας από την έννοια των πράξεων πολιτειότητας, αναλύονται ορισμένες δημόσιες διαδηλώσεις των ΕΜΠ καθώς και οι δικτυώσεις τους με τα κοινωνικά κινήματα. Παρατηρείται ότι οι ΕΜΠ καταλήγουν να διακόψουν τη χωρική τάξη που σκόπευε να κρύψει τα δεινά της μετατόπισής τους. Με τον τρόπο αυτόν επιστρέφουν πίσω στο κέντρο της πόλης, τον τόπο των πολιτικών αγώνων, και εκδηλώνουν το δικαίωμά τους να παραμείνουν στην Μποκοτά και στο κέντρο της δημόσιας συζήτησης.

Λέξεις κλειδιά: Κοινωνικο-χωρικός διαχωρισμός, αστική ανάπλαση, εσωτερική μετατόπιση, διαθεματικότητα, πράξεις πολιτειότητας

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1. INTRODUCTION

“The problems of the city are not a matter of left or right but of administration, management, and results on people’s quality of life” asserted a Colombian ex-Housing minister in an interview published in November 2014 (Semana, 2014a). Just at that very moment, a heated debate sparked in Bogotá as the city’s administration announced the building of social housing for internally displaced people (IDPs) in a northern area where upper classes are prevalent (Semana, 2014b).

The opening quotation exemplifies the kind of common-sense rationality that has governed and strived to confiscate the process of urban regeneration initiated in Bogotá since the end of the 1990s. By waving the flags of technocracy and anti-partisan politics, the defenders of such rationality have positioned the vision of the city that this process entails as uncontestable, and have portrayed the urban space that it creates as neutral and classless. But whereas the controversy generated around the announcement of social housing for IDPs casts doubts on the veracity of the claims made about the neutrality and classlessness of Bogotá’s rejuvenated spaces, it also unveils some of the challenges that the displaced population face to remain in Bogotá and to attain their legitimate right to inhabit this city.

In this paper, I draw on the perspectives of displaced people in order to evaluate the achievements of the city’s revitalization. Exploring the everyday practices of IDPs, their spatial tactics and networking with social movements, I show that the current model of the city’s organization participates in constructing IDPs’ spatial segregation and in transforming their subjectivities. Yet, by interpreting these practices through the concept of “acts of citizenship” (Isin, 2008), I argue that the renewed focus on public space and the engagement of the current administration in promoting urban re-densification and social mixing have

provided IDPs with certain leverage in terms of spatial and political mobility to subvert spatial modalities of exclusion or to cooperate in them for perceived benefits.

2. BUILDING THE *CITY THAT WE WANT*

As urban architect Carmeza Orjuela, an official at the District Planning Secretariat, points out, at the end of the 1990s when Bogotá's model of urban regeneration was conceived, Bogotá was a monocentric city, "a city with only one center where most people had to go at the same time everyday because everything was there."¹ Given the problems derived from such a structure (e.g., in terms of mobility, sustainability, and productivity), a polycentric model was therefore identified as the solution so that, as Orjuela puts it, "not everyone will have to go to the center to perform their daily activities."

Based on this diagnosis, the city identified other potential centers throughout the city. They were places that until then had been spontaneously generated and whose primary feature was the mixture of uses, such as housing, commercial activities and industry. In those centralities, the city undertook the construction of public spaces, most of them social amenities (e.g., health and cultural centers, Mega schools, monumental libraries), progressively connected through transport facilities such as a Bus Rapid Transport System—so-called TransMilenio—and a large bicycle path system.

The rationale behind this urban strategy mirrors the leitmotiv *if you build it they will come*. In other words, that enterprises and the market economy would come to those centers transforming them into development hubs, thereby creating employment opportunities, and in general fulfilling the needs of the local population. In parallel to these 22 centralities (González, 2014, p. 40), some of them located in the periphery, this model implied that the traditional center—which includes the so-called international center and the historical center—was meant to undergo a revitalization process whose implementation is aimed at

¹ Interview with Carmenza Orjuela, Bogotá, November 2012.

attracting and serving international flows. This dynamic fits into the perspective traced by politicians and urban planners, for whom Bogotá's ongoing regeneration constitutes the means to make Bogotá a competitive platform in the global South in the face of the challenges posed by neoliberalism.

Launched with the slogan *For the Bogotá We Want*, this model of city was originally prompted by the administrations of Enrique Peñalosa (1998-2000) and Antanas Mockus (1995-1997 and 2001-2003). At that time Peñalosa and Mockus, who defined themselves as anti-partisans, achieved the hegemonic acceptance of this city project by playing the card of technocracy in the face of urban problems (Gilbert, 2015). Such a strategic combination granted to their administrations the label of good governance and worked to position the current model of urban planning, known by the acronym POT (Plan de Ordenamiento Territorial – Territorial Development Plan), as uncontested and as the result of common sense.

Hence, as public space increasingly constitutes the backbone for building the vision of the city that, supposedly, all Bogotanos want, the defense of these spaces and the production of new ones have become benchmarks for assessing the competence of the mayors and the city's quality of life. Even more significant, Bogotá's public space has been turned into a sort of equalizer of class difference (Berney, 2011). This vision is well illustrated in the words of Peñalosa for whom public space is a device for bringing about people's happiness:

“This is the least a democratic country should provide its citizens. It is not a frivolous need. Public spaces are as necessary as hospitals and schools, since man needs to walk to be happy” (Peñalosa, as cited in Khan, 2009).

Given this perspective, it is not surprising that the physical transformation of the city has run in tandem with programs aimed at increasing and transforming the way in which people use public space, among them a growing cultural agenda of public events, bike-friendly

initiatives, car-free days, as well as the banning of cars from central city streets. As a result, it is asserted that Bogotá's renewed public space has enhanced class mixing, and moreover that these changes have brought about the return of middle classes to public spaces (Berney, 2011, p. 18).

3. IDPS: THE KILLJOYS IN A SPACE MEANT TO MAKE PEOPLE HAPPY²

There is a great deal of technocratic knowledge invested in this vision of city, as well as of good intentions. However, when looking at the implementation of this model and its effects, it is worth considering that space is not a blank page ready to be written on. As Massey suggests in her reading of de Certeau, to overlook this aspect would mean to conceptualize space as an object absent of culture and deprived from the trajectories that shape it (2005, p. 123).

A closer look at Bogotá through the narratives of the displaced population reveals that this city of about 7.8 millions of inhabitants is a complex cultural product shaped by various spatial hierarchies. The project of city redevelopment might have taken into account an important segment of this multiform spectrum. However, it is nevertheless carved out in other spatial hierarchies that predate it, and through which private property and access to public space have become what Mark Kingwell calls "positional goods" (2008, pp. 198-200).

One of these scales is the so-called system of socio-economic stratification introduced in the mid-1990s, which classifies each residential property in a scale from 1 to 6 according to its physical features and the urban conditions that surround it (Uribe-Mallarino, 2008). Although officially conceived as a tool for subsidizing public utilities, as it was assumed to give a sense of the economic capacity of a household, this scale has become a signifier of the economic status of entire areas or an expression of class and cultural difference in the

² I am drawing upon Sara Ahmed's figure of the feminist killjoy (2010).

collective imaginary; to the point that even displaced people have adopted this term in the narratives of their urban experience.

For instance, Marina, an IDP woman, referred to this scale when I asked her whether there were other displaced people living nearby:

There are several people I know who have a house just a few blocks from where I live. But although it is close by, there is a huge difference because the TransMilenio road divides what is stratum 3 and 4, and what is stratum 1. So even if they live relatively nearby, the house in which I live might be worth twice or thrice the value of their house.³

In Marina's narrative, spatial distance loses its relevance in the face of the difference constructed along the lines of the socio-economic stratum. Moreover, the function of stratum as a marker of difference has been reinforced through the construction of new public spaces such as the TransMilenio road. While Marina makes clear that she has been luckier than most IDPs in finding a job, her use of the term socio-economic stratum shows that although they might share the condition of displacement, not all IDPs share the same economic status.

Claudia, another displaced woman, uses the notion of stratum as a marker of social class, but unlike Marina, she does not mean to differentiate herself from her neighbors, but to underline the diversity of the place she inhabits. When talking about her neighborhood, she asserts that "anyone can live here," whereas access to gated communities of the North depends on "your family name or your [economic] stratum."⁴ While de-spatializing the notion of stratum, Claudia instead identifies class diversity as one of the advantages of her neighborhood. In doing so, Claudia puts forward another spatial hierarchy upon which the system of centralities relies. In fact, this segmentation also mirrors the urban segregation

³ Interview with Marina, Bogotá, October 2012.

⁴ Interview with Claudia, Bogotá, September 2012.

between the richer population living in the North and the poor population living in the South; a spatial division now naturalized and whose roots are traceable to the colonial period when the city was divided between the “city of creoles” and the “city of indigenes.”⁵

Hence, as a result of the overlapping of spatial scales, Bogotá’s polycentric organization is intertwined with other spatial categories such as class, race, ethnicity, and even sexual orientation. So, drawing on Cerwonka (2010), it could be asserted that the consolidation of this spatial structure seems to depend on a certain stagnation of those categories. Indeed originally, according to Orjuela, one of the main concerns that the urban redevelopment strived to address was to “develop a homogenous city in terms of social services and good public space.” The material infrastructure and welfare services offered in the centralities, as well as in the institutional decentralization, demonstrate efforts to crystallize this goal. This last aspect is aimed at providing each area with spaces for citizens’ participation in local decision-making and in programs designed for the protection of parks or for citizen security. But it is precisely here where the other side of the coin becomes visible, since the decentralization-concentration process has gone in tandem with the growth of a desire for cultural homogeneity, which complicates the meshes of this spatial segmentation.

Most of the features upon which this homogeneity depends are increasingly seen as signs of urbanity and social mobility, as opposed to the lack of civility and to rural life. They include the gradual elimination of mixture of uses in middle- to upper-class neighborhoods, but also the small size of families, or the idea that Bogotá’s urban communities are essentially quiet and reserved. Such cultural homogenization is not unrelated to the project of civilization and the myth of the “mestiza nation” enacted from the post-independence period (Mosquera 2009, p. 14). Under the pretense of national homogenization, this ideology promoted racial

⁵ Interview with Carmenza Orjuela, Bogotá, November 2012.

mixture, while, at the same time, concealed the phenotypical and cultural suppression and exclusion of Indigenous and Afro-Colombian people.

The reification of such constructions in the context of urban modernization sets the tone for one of the first difficulties that IDP families experience when they try to find a place to live, and are faced with announcements that state: “for rent but without children.” Ironically, as Maritza, an IDP woman leader says, displaced women have turned such directive into a mockery, asserting that “it is fine if they rent the house without children, well, we will bring ours!”⁶

One of the worst scenarios faced by IDPs is pointed out by the human rights defender and researcher at the NGO ILSA, Maria Eugenia Ramirez,⁷ who asserts that such an identitarian trend has led to certain “cultural expressions such as talking loudly” being seen as a misdemeanor:

“This gradually creates very tense relations between newcomers and residents of the area, in some cases also being very aggressive and very stigmatizing.”

The constitution of such cultural homogeneity increasingly involves additional nuances, which imbricate class differences with racial and ethnic assumptions, affecting in particular minority groups of IDPs and triggering what Ramírez calls “itineraries of displacement.” The experience of Chela, an Afro-Colombian woman displaced from the pacific region who arrived in Bogotá in 2010, is symptomatic of this dynamic. “I have already experienced three displacements,” said Chela,⁸ asserting that one of them occurred after the funeral of a relative. Indeed, Chela and her family celebrated the funeral in a community center, following their own traditions, rather than in a funeral parlor. Right after the funeral, Chela

⁶ Interview with Maritza, Bogotá, October 2012.

⁷ Interview with Maria Eugenia Ramirez, ILSA – Latin American Institute for an Alternative Society and an Alternative Law, Bogotá, July 2012.

⁸ Interview with Chela and her daughter, Bogotá, November 2012.

and other 20 Afro-Colombian IDPs received a death threat stating “we don’t want black people in this neighborhood” and were therefore forced to leave. After having been displaced so many times, the words of Chela’s daughter “The only home you can be sure of is the cemetery” is not surprising.

The story of Chela’s family might be placed within other narratives of despair; however, the kind of cultural practices that triggered this episode gives an account of what Claudia Mosquera, professor at the Department of Social Sciences at the National University of Colombia, describes as “multiculturalism from below.”⁹ By this term, Mosquera refers to “the ways in which the black [Colombian] culture begins to seek its own place in the urban neighborhood space,” which she distinguishes from other cultural practices whose introduction in the urban space might be mediated by institutional channels.¹⁰

Mosquera underlines that this form of multiculturalism can trigger conflicts with the neighbors, as well as forms of negotiation. In her view, it arises because:

Many Afro people who come to live in Bogotá as forcibly displaced are not willing to change something that they see as their own cultural being, their ways of being, of speaking, the way they relate to others, the tone of the voice. They enter in the neighborhoods with this clear in their minds.¹¹

The acts through which Afro-multiculturalism from below is displayed reveal that, despite the disciplinary power exerted by the urban order over people’s subjectivities, there are still ways in which people relate to the city (e.g., behaviours, imaginaries, languages) through which, consciously or unconsciously, they elude or circumvent processes of cultural homogenization. Some of these acts could be interpreted through the concept of tactics

⁹ Interview with Claudia Mosquera Rosero-Labbé, Bogotá, December 2012.

¹⁰ Most institutional channels that strive to spread the knowledge about Afro-Colombian culture have emerged as an outcome of the Colombian constitution issued in 1991, which states that Colombia is a multi-cultural and multi-ethnic state (Mosquera, 2009).

¹¹ Interview with Claudia Mosquera Rosero-Labbé, Bogotá, December 2012.

defined by Michel de Certeau. From this perspective, those acts attempt to subvert dominant or hegemonic ways of operating; however, as they do not have proper space and time, they do not allow subjects to accumulate victories (de Certeau, 1984, p. 29).

But beside these practices or tactics, there are others acts performed by IDPs, which accomplish the task of disrupting the socio-spatial order, and therefore allow this population to capitalize on them. Those acts could be read through the lens of what Isin Egin and Greg Nielsen call “acts of citizenship” which, in their words, are “collective or individual deeds that rupture social patterns” (2008, p. 2) and through which subjects enact themselves as “claimants of justice, rights and responsibilities” (Isin, 2008, p. 18). As these acts take place in public spaces re-conquered through the city’s modernization, they open up new scenes for IDPs’ political visibility. However, by undertaking those acts, IDPs also become like a fly in the wounds left open by the urban renewal, and by doing so, draw attention to the trajectories that this process has overlooked.

4. BRINGING DISSONANCE INTO THE HAPPY CITY

Until 2012, when the then Petro administration took office and put on the table the debate about the city’s redevelopment model, spatial segregation remained a marginal issue in the political scene. The same goes with academic voices that shed light on the ways in which the spatial order produced by this model of urban renewal has worked to hamper IDPs’ socio-spatial integration (e.g., Maldonado, 2010). From time to time, as with the controversy unleashed by the building of social housing for displaced people in rich areas of the North, the division south-poor-mestizo vs. north-rich-white has been brought to the fore, along with the spatial segregation it reinforces. However, there is no shortage of those who argue about the counter-productive effects of social mixing or dismiss Petro’s social housing projects by calling them populist (e.g., Morelo, 2014), or asserting that spatial segregation is ahistorical

and unavoidable (e.g., Gaviria, 2012). However, it has not impeded IDPs from standing up for their rights.

One of the most striking manifestations that brought IDPs' experience of urban segregation to the fore took place in March 2009, when about 1,000 IDP families carried out a long-term occupation of the Third Millennium Park. Located just a few blocks from the presidential palace and the mayor's office, the Third Millennium Park has become a landmark of the initiation of the gentrification process, as its construction initiated by Peñalosa in 1999 literally implied the bulldozing of the houses located in this area and the gentrification of about 10,000 dwellers (Berney, 2011). Almost 20 years after its renovation, and due to its proximity to the main political buildings, the Third Millennium Park was seen by IDPs as the perfect platform to make their claims heard by a reluctant government.

Claudia was one of the IDPs who took part in this occupation. As she asserts, since most IDPs inhabit peripheral areas, they met and walked together from the South towards the center until reaching the park. In Claudia's words, the protesters were divided in two groups, one of Afro-Colombian people and another of white people, but "we were all asking the same: humanitarian aid, access to housing and job opportunities."¹²

The unfolding of the park's occupation reveals that in most cases, when it came to responding to the rights and demands of the IDP population, the indifference of the authorities had become the norm, to the extent that, through the occupation, IDPs turned into a hot potato between the city and the national government.

Whereas the (then president) Alvaro Uribe denied the armed conflict and saw internal displacement as related to social and economic migration (Idler and Paladini-Adell, 2015), for the city's government, this demonstration reflected the social problem brought about by the internal armed conflict. However, fearing that this occupation would be replicated in

¹² Interview with Claudia, Bogotá, September 2012.

other public spaces, the mayor's office strived to negotiate the end of the occupation with the leaders of the movement and disqualified the act by calling it a "de-facto procedure" (Maya, 2009).

The use of the descriptor 'de-facto procedure' by the mayor is crucial, as it seeks to undermine the legitimacy of the demonstration. It emphasizes the refusal or failure of the protesters to resort to institutional channels and legal procedures in their attempts to claim the fulfillment of their rights. And, to a certain extent it is so because, through this dissonant act, IDPs challenged and interrupted two consensual and legal orders. One of them is the urban model being implemented in the city according to which IDPs, as the rest of the city's residents, should supposedly find response to their entitlements and rights through the institutional channels and social services set up in the centralities. Hence, by irrupting in the heart of Bogotá's political center, IDPs brought to the fore the fact that the peripheral areas were far from achieving the socio-spatial homogeneity that this model promised to bring about. Instead, they demonstrated that Bogotá's traditional center continues to be the locus of political power, and therefore the place where the voices of those located in subaltern positions can be echoed and their claims be heard.

The second order that this occupation disrupted refers to the humanitarian and legal assistance set up by the governing authorities for displaced people. Despite the struggle of various actors of the civil society, and even various rulings handed down by the constitutional court, in practice this system had made into a habit the long delay or denial of social services that should be allocated to IDPs, including access to humanitarian aid.

Thus, although the occupation of the Third Millennium Park can be considered as a de-facto procedure, and as standing outside the law, it also constitutes an act of citizenship (Isin, 2008, p. 35). And it is so because through this act, IDPs turn themselves into beings who react or respond in the face of their experience of socio-spatial segregation. In doing so, they

re-constitute central public spaces into sites of political struggle, and moreover, they disrupt a system in which the dismissal of their rights and the delay of social services that are due to them had become the norm.

Claudia remained about eight months in the occupation, most of these months in the park itself and others in a temporary shelter, where the city's authorities managed to allocate the occupants. Looking back over this experience, Claudia asserts that she will not take part in any other public space's occupation. Some of her reasons are reflected in her almost heartbreaking description of this experience of resistance:

“It is like if you hang up a mop and you wait for the cold to dry it, for the wind to dry it and then for the sun too. Because we were there, exposed to the sun and to rain”

Claudia concludes her narrative by asserting that, as the city's authorities negotiated with the leaders of the mobilization, “they [the leaders] obtained better benefits than the rest of us.”

Claudia's story gives a sense of the weak articulation and improvised structure that characterized the organizations that participated in this act. In fact, public acts that involve the long occupation of public spaces are mostly carried out by non-well-established IDPs' organizations. In this line, when asking Osana Medina,¹³ a member of the feminist NGO Casa de la Mujer [Women's House], about the support to IDPs and these demonstrations, she asserts that her organization does not participate in de-facto procedures. Actually, most activists and NGOs prefer to stick to the law and although many of them participate and organize public space demonstrations, these events are limited in time and space.

For organizations with a larger network support, such as the Women's House, The Pacific Route of Women and the Movement of Victims of State Crime—MOVICE, acting within the law has neither prevented them from being active actors nor implied a lack of creativity. Most

¹³ Interview with Osana Medina, Bogotá, October 2012.

of these organizations have their headquarters in the center and network with IDPs' grassroots organizations. Public demonstrations organized by them have been able to disrupt cultural imaginaries as they have involved performances full of symbolism, for instance, acts performed by body-painted women or so-called *cantaoras de alabaos*—Afro-Colombian women from the Pacific rainforest who perform songs mostly used for funeral rituals. While the first symbol meant to signify the impacts of the war on women's bodies, the second strived to shed light on the disproportionate number of Afro-Colombian women victims of forced displacement.

According to Medina, the work of feminist organizations has allowed to make visible particular needs of IDP women, which are frequently overlooked in local organizations. For Mosquera, working around collective identities “is strategic insofar as it works to denaturalize and demystify those existing alliances between poor quality of life and culture. They can be used as a vehicle to deconstruct power distribution.”¹⁴ Hence, both Medina's and Mosquera's perspectives resonate to the dimensions of social justice identified by Nancy Fraser as recognition-redistribution-participation (2000). Nevertheless, the experience of Blanca Nubia,¹⁵ an Indigenous IDP woman whom I met at the headquarters of various organizations, gives an additional account. It can be argued that IDPs' subjectivities are constructed through the intersection of various subject positions (Mouffe, 1993), and it is the articulation of their links with various movements, which have allowed IDPs to voice their experiences in terms of identitarian standpoints (e.g., women, indigenous, victims of a state crime), so that they can be heard by urban folks and politicians.

But importantly, the point of looking at those IDPs' demonstrations as acts of citizenship is to bring into light their creative potential. They are ways through which IDPs achieve to

¹⁴ Interview with Claudia Mosquera Rosero-Labbé, Bogotá, December 2012.

¹⁵ Interview with Blanca Nubia, Bogotá, July 2012.

constitute themselves as political subjects claimants of rights and simultaneously assert their right to remain in Bogotá in dignified conditions.

In Colombia, since 1985 almost six million people have been forcibly displaced (International Amnesty, 2014, p. 11), and 400,000 of them inhabit Bogotá. However, the plight of IDPs was not usually a concern of Bogotá's traditional inhabitants and its governing authorities, as for them "the war just arrives by hearsay" (Duzan, 2015). Nevertheless, soon after assuming office in 2011, President Juan Manuel Santos made a political shift and issued the so-called *Victims' and Land Restitution Law*:

"I wish this day will mark a before and an after (...) that the victims, tired of claiming into the emptiness, feel at last recognized, protected and rewarded" (as cited in Morris, 2015)

Taking advantage of the enactment of this law, Bogotá's then mayor Petro set up in 2012 specific offices intended to serve this population. For most IDPs, this shift has just streamlined access to humanitarian assistance, information on entrepreneurial programs and legal support. But certainly, Petro's administration seized also this opportunity in order to position IDPs as the main beneficiaries of the city's social housing programs. Hence, although the land restitution's process has not reached the expectations placed on it (International Amnesty, 2014), seen from a political perspective, this law is the reflection of significant achievements: on the one hand, the recognition of IDPs as victims of the armed conflict, and on the other, a step toward legitimizing their right to inhabit Bogotá. Those political gains are the crystallization of the long struggle on the part of IDPs and a broad range of civil society actors (e.g., grassroots organizations, NGOs). For most of them, the achievement of peace is a common political struggle, and the center of Bogotá has never ceased to be the locus of political power and the platform to constitute themselves as claimants of justice and rights.

5. CONCLUSION

Resisting the advancement of the city's urban renewal, for many IDPs who have walked from the periphery towards the center and for others who have marched with them throughout the downtown, public space has turned into a scene where to become political actors and write their own script (Isin, 2008). In fact, IDPs' itineraries of displacement, confined within the peripheries, have neither brought them social nor economic inclusion. Rather, they have worked to hide the plight of their displacement. Despite the focus on spatial decentralization, the center of the city continues to be the site of power and political struggle, and for IDPs, it is therefore the place to achieve visibility and full citizenship. Perhaps, the engagement of Petro's administration to foster class-mixing and cultural diversity and to counteract gentrification can only make a dent in the order of socio-spatial segregation (De la Torre, 2013). Perhaps, then, these goals too may slightly enhance IDPs' right to enjoy an urban life. But certainly, in fuelling this debate, these stances unveil the struggles and uncertainties that lie behind this urban renewal, as well as the gear made up of this vision of the city and the ideal of neoliberal development.

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