

Bogotá:

Social housing versus Actors

Recibido para evaluación: 06 de Abril de 2009
Aceptación: 27 de Abril de 2009
Recibido versión final: 04 de Mayo de 2009

Rodrigo Andres Barrios¹
Stefan Lazarevski¹

RESUMEN

El área metropolitana de Bogotá tiene alrededor de 7.035.000 habitantes, de los cuales el 22% vive en asentamientos suburbanos desarrollados ilegalmente. Uno de los más recientes e importantes es, sin lugar a dudas, Ciudad Bolívar. Este concentra el 10% del total de la población bogotana y desde las últimas décadas, es la localidad con mayor crecimiento del país. Su población se acrecentó entre los años 1993 y 2002 en cerca de un 50%, duplicando así el crecimiento de toda la ciudad. De acuerdo a Echanove (2004), la población crecería de 35.000 residentes en 1973 a 713.000 en 2005. En verdad, creció hasta alcanzar 563.223 residentes de acuerdo a la Alcaldía mayor de Bogotá. En relación a este producto social de tamaño colosal, la sociedad colombiana se ha convertido en protagonista, al imponer sus condiciones en la producción social- espacial a través del tiempo. Ciudad Bolívar, el producto social más extremo del sistema de acciones colombiano, es el objeto de análisis de este documento; el cual se desarrollará apoyado en los conceptos de construcción social del espacio urbano de Milton Santos.

PALABRAS CLAVE: Producción espacial, Actores y relaciones, Migraciones, Metrovivienda.

ABSTRACT

The Metropolitan area of Bogota, has nearly 7.035.000 inhabitants, out of which 22% live in illegally generated suburban settlements. One of the most recent settlements is Ciudad Bolivar. It represents a total of 10% of Bogota's population and, during the last decades, is the fastest growing locality in Colombia. Between 1993 and 2002 its population grew by 50%, which is more than twice as much as the city as a whole. According to Echanove (2004), the population was expected to grow from 35.000 residents in 1973 to 713,000 in 2005. According to the City Hall of Bogota, the population has indeed grown to 563.223 inhabitants. Faced with a social product of such an immense scale the main actors of the Colombian society have become the key factors in defining, examining and evaluating the relationships they impose on the social-space production through time. The case of Bogota's Ciudad Bolivar, as the most extreme social product of Colombian system, is the subject of this paper and focus of analyses based on concepts of social construction of the urban space by Milton Santos.

KEYWORDS: Spatial production, Social space, Actors and Relations, Migrations, Pirate developers, MetroVivienda.

*1. Bauhaus-Universität Weimar
Institute for European Urban
Studies (IEU)
Seminar: The Latin American
Cities through "Space-Time"*

*Rodrigo-andres.Barrios@archi.uni-
weimar.de*

*stefan.lazarevski@archi.uni-
weimar.de*



1. INTRODUCTION

The macroeconomic policies in Colombia over the early XX century along with the unstable political and military milieu of the country produced disparity between urban and rural conditions, encouraging many people to leave the countryside and to migrate to the "industrial" cities, creating wide areas of squatter settlements. As a result, "during the 1960s, more than three-quarters of the population of Bogotá aged over 15 years were migrants" (Gilbert, 1990). The arrival of young migrants changed the social, demographic and economic structure of Colombian main cities, as it has been argued by Valderrama "(...) around 40 percent of Colombian cities have resulted from "illegal settlements" (Valderrama, 1999) and by Gilbert "(...) in a typical Latin American city between 30 and 60 percent of the population lives in the so called "barrios piratas" (Gilbert, 1990).

The interplay of such socio-economic forces, coincidentally present amongst diverse Latin American cities, created an enormous housing demand in urban centers that Colombian cities were unable to provide. "(...) If there was housing available, which was rarely the case, it would have been unaffordable for the majority of the recent in-migrants" (Griffin and Ford, 1980). Therefore, newcomers took over unoccupied land or, in a few cases, purchased undeveloped lots and built their own dwellings. Consequently, squatter settlements rapidly developed throughout Colombia, providing inadequate housing solutions to poor urban dwellers.

In such complex system of actions, which was not framed by a strong planning and land management control held by the central nor the local government; the immediate response from strata of economically, politically and culturally deprived population backed the appearance of slums was inevitable.



Figure 1. Slums in Bogotá: The Ciudad Bolívar locality.
Source: www.urbanology.org/Bogota/

However, «(...) considering that these processes are dynamic, it must be taken into account that the physical and social conditions that classify one settlement as a slum are present only during the first years. An urban area is considered to be a 'slum freeze', if the situation of a settlement evolves every day, in a specific moment. Furthermore, the occupation and development that take place in the illegal urbanization process generate a territory in which individual processes of construction of habitat combine in diverse stages of development, which is reflected in the social conditions of the inhabitants»- underlined fragments by authors- (Rueda-Garcia, 2003). Thus, we can only refer to settlements such as Ciudad Bolívar, Bosa, Usme etc. as localities rather than referring to those as slums. Accordingly, the question shifts from a merely spatial consideration on these settlements into a complex social-spatial dimension when regarding the continuous demand of social housing and the actions of actors within the space-time synchronically, turning those into inseparable variables.

However, these mentioned variables should be regarded independently according to their "function" or role and their "form" or special feature in space-time, setting a map or "structure" which displays a net of actions or "processes" through space-time. Such approach reveals not only synchronic actions and performers, but changes experienced of those through time and inherent characteristics as well, thus deconstructing the complexity of social space.

1.2. Spatial Organization of Colombia

The Spatial Organization of Colombia over the past 50-60 years was moulded by two main social processes: the migrations from rural to urban areas and consequently, the intensive urbanization.

Both of the processes, according to Cuervo and González (1997), have their origin on the Latin-American «Intermediate Industrialization» phase, based mainly on import substitution. Such an approach of development aid was adopted by the Colombian government and sponsored by the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC, known in Spanish as CEPAL) after WWII. The reform anticipated a strong industrialization of the cities over the mechanization of the agrarian economy. The epilogue was the increase of mobility of agrarian labour force remnants to the main cities of Colombia.

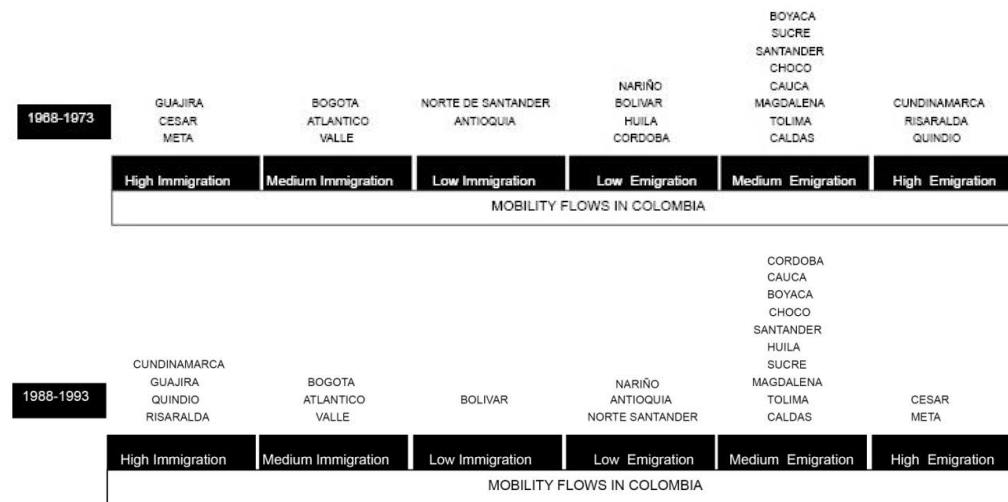


Figure 2. Countryside Migrations in Colombia.
Source: Graphic made by authors, according to «Las Migraciones Internas En Colombia» by Ciro Martínez Gómez

During the following years (Fig.2) urbanization and migration phenomena experienced sustained growth. The latter were predominantly rural to urban, developing four major urban centers: Bogotá, Medellín, Cali and Barranquilla. As a result, the urbanization rate of the Colombian cities changed dramatically. Bogotá, the main destination for the migrants, experienced a sustained rate growth from 58% in 1964 to 85% in 1985 and more than 90% during the late 1990s. Whilst Bogotá, Medellín and Cali hosted the majority of the country's industry, Barranquilla emerged into the main centre for maritime and fluvial transportation connecting the inlands of the country to the sea and beyond. Furthermore, the city became the main gate for the entrance not only of importing goods and technology, but newcomers from Europe and Eurasia, mainly World Wars' refugees.

The intensification of the inner conflict during 1990s influenced the social processes immensely by stimulating the migration dynamics, changing not only its frequency but its geographical pattern (Fig.3). Hence, metropolitan areas became once again a final destination of an increasingly diverse population. However, the characteristic social dynamics of industrialization which impacted the inner country since the post-WWII period were replaced at this time by expulsion of peasants and farmers, led by war and crime related actors.

1.2.1. The Actors and the system of actions - Structure and Process

The space, according to Santos (1997) is a social product in permanent process of transformation. In order to make an accurate description of the aforementioned space it is in our interest to explore the concepts *form*, *function*, *structure* and *process*. Considering these previous concepts, the actions and social actors within the Colombian social space will be conceived as dynamic structures, subjects of a complex net of interactions (Santos, 1997), in the best tradition of Weberian methodological individualism.

At first, according to the last chapter, it has to be stated that Colombia, after the Spanish colonization and independence periods, has been exposed to the effects of global events such as World War II; including the development of strong social assistance through dwelling plans' implementation - mirroring the ones that were deployed over diverse locations in the world at the time- , the severity of the cold war, the partial rise and fall of a welfare state due bankruptcy and administrative corruption under the privatization recipe administered by the International Monetary Fund, amongst others. Hence, could be assumed that much of the actions set reproduced over the Colombian social space since the last 70 years is just mirroring the effect of global dynamics developed after 1940's. Therefore, periodization will be used to place a set of actions and actors, linked to supranational trends such as welfare state and market liberalization in order to perform a credible criterion. However, it has to be considered as well that the complexity of such periodization is sounded on extreme poverty, administrative corruption, cocaine processing, paramilitary and military forces deployment, contraband and guerrilla warfare in the inlands of the country resulting in unsustainable immigration over Colombian urban areas.

It is hard to make distinctions of urbanization periods in Colombia due to the complex interplay of continuous internal conflicts, industrialization and migration. However, the foundation of several governmental housing assistance departments on the national and local scale in the 1940s as one of the first responses to the overwhelming urbanization process, together with the evidence of informal subdivision of land in the 1960s and the shift from social housing assistance to market driven housing policies in the 1990s, are the criteria of the following periodization. (Fig.4).

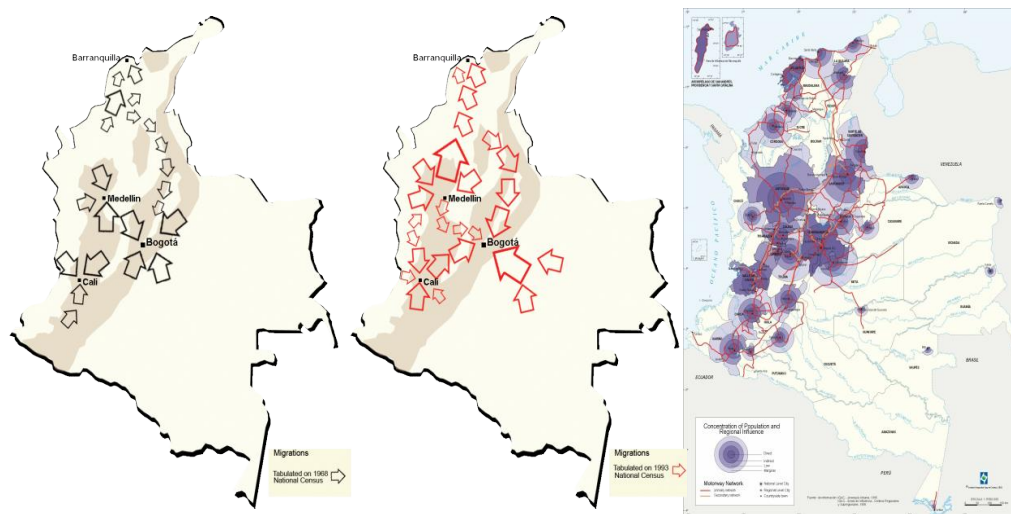


Figure 3. Migrations: a.1968 b.1993 c. Major Urban Centers, Source: a, b. developed by the authors according to «Las Migraciones Internas En Colombia» by Ciro Martínez Gomez c. Major Urban Centers; <http://www.igac.gov.co>

1.2.2. The Actors and the system of actions - Structure and Process

The space, according to Santos (1997) is a social product in permanent process of transformation. In order to make an accurate description of the aforementioned space it is in our interest to explore the concepts *form*, *function*, *structure* and *process*. Considering these previous concepts, the actions and social actors within the Colombian social space will be conceived as dynamic structures, subjects of a complex net of interactions (Santos, 1997), in the best tradition of Weberian methodological individualism.

At first, according to the last chapter, it has to be stated that Colombia, after the Spanish colonization and independence periods, has been exposed to the effects of global events such as World War II; including the development of strong social assistance through dwelling plans' implementation - mirroring the ones that were deployed over diverse locations in the world at the time- , the severity of the cold war, the partial rise and fall of a welfare state due bankruptcy and administrative corruption under the privatization recipe administered by the International Monetary Fund, amongst others. Hence, could be assumed that much of the actions set reproduced over the Colombian social space since the last 70 years is just mirroring the effect of global dynamics developed after 1940's. Therefore, periodization will be used to place a set of actions and actors, linked to supranational trends such as welfare state and market liberalization in order to perform a credible criterion. However, it has to be considered as well that the complexity of such periodization is sounded on extreme poverty, administrative corruption, cocaine processing, paramilitary and military forces deployment, contraband and guerrilla warfare in the inlands of the country resulting in unsustainable immigration over Colombian urban areas.

It is hard to make distinctions of urbanization periods in Colombia due to the complex interplay of continuous internal conflicts, industrialization and migration. However, the foundation of several governmental housing assistance departments on the national and local scale in the 1940s as one of the first responses to the overwhelming urbanization process, together with the evidence of informal subdivision of land in the 1960s and the shift from social housing assistance to market driven housing policies in the 1990s, are the criteria of the following periodization. (Fig.4).

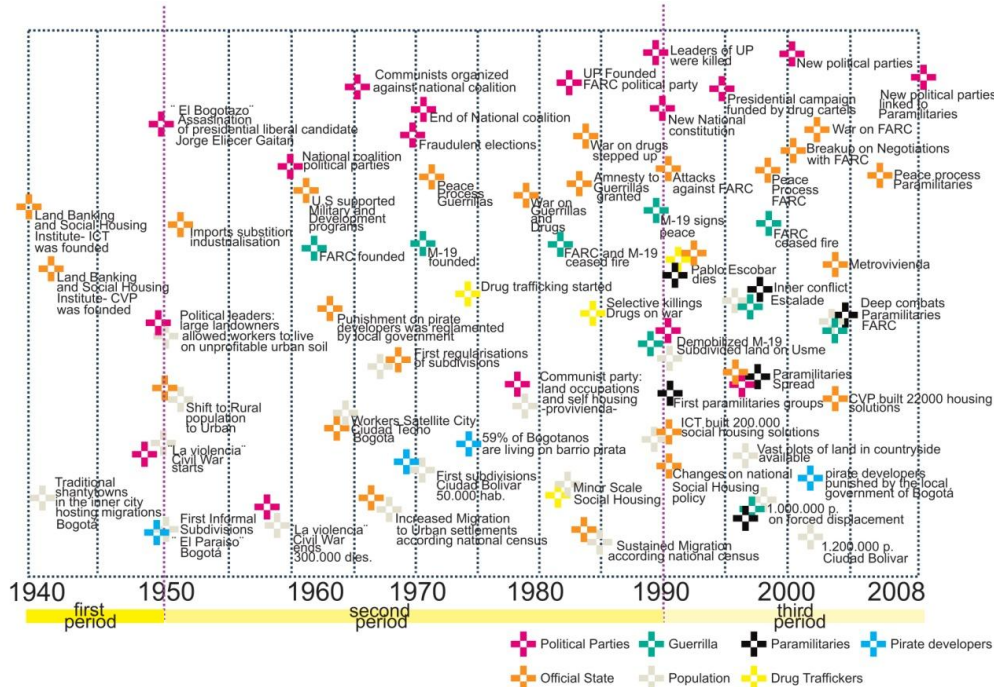


Figure 4. Actors mapping through Periodization: Actors in Social Space-time.
Source: Made by authors



As it has been shown on figure 4, actors and actions are evolving throughout time from unilateral decisions that eased small associations stepping into complex processes; those involving a multiple series of actors and actions, multiplying the effect of such dynamics and adding even more complexity over social space.

1.2.3. Establishment of State Social Housing Policies

During the 40s of the XX century, the main actions regarding social housing were taken by the official State. This actor created institutions like the Territorial Credit Institute (ICT) in 1939 and the Popular Housing Bank of Bogotá (Caja de Vivienda Popular) in 1941, responsible of crediting and building dwellings for the working class. Other actions were land banking, legalization and land titling. The legalization process promoted by these institutions aimed at future public investments in these areas primarily by building infrastructure. Most of the social housing projects built by these institutions were funded by the Government, forced investments from the financial sector, mortgage income and low-interest credits from multilateral organizations.

1.2.4. Rural to Urban migrations (1948-1991)

The fragile political system, inner conflicts, pirate developers and population were shaping the Colombian urbanization scenario assisted by further industrialization, rise of guerrillas on rural areas, their confrontations with the military forces and the late rise of urban violence supported by drug lords; facts which impacted space-time through synchronic occupation and illegal subdivision of urban land.

The assassination of Jorge Eliecer Gaitán in 1948 marked the beginning of the civil war: the period named «La violencia» brought partisan violence with an outcome of 300.000 deaths. This deviation of the ongoing social processes at the time promoted strong migrations from the inner country to the Colombian main cities. The inflow of population in the urban centers led to illegal land subdivision in Bogotá. One of the first products of this phenomenon in Bogotá was the «birth» of the barrio «El Paraíso». According to Everett (2001) «*The patrones*» (owners) of these estates allowed the workers to stay in the hills because developers considered the area worthless due to its inaccessibility and the difficulty of bringing services to the higher elevations. Most of these *patrones* were political party bosses.

The state's housing policy, during a truce period named «The National Front» (in Spanish *El Frente Nacional*), was influenced by the global political climate of the 1960s. The U.S. Government created an assistance program targeting the developing countries in Latin America and Asia as a response to the communist menace during the «Cold War» period. Within the «Alliance for the progress» program, numbers of low cost credits were issued to support the housing programs of these nations. The Colombian government invested in one of the biggest housing projects of the whole country's history: a satellite city for the working class in Bogotá, named «Ciudad Techo». In response, the communist party founded the association «Provivienda». The purpose of this association was the «right» distribution of land to the people in urban and rural areas. In order to achieve this goal, the association promoted squatting actions and self-housing projects which in time would result in one of the biggest illegal subdivisions of the country: Ciudad Bolívar.

Between 1970s and 1990s rural poverty reached its climax due to the war conflicts in the inner country. According to Gilbert, the Colombian rural inhabitant has been characterized during this period for playing the role of «an average country dweller that earned a low income, had little access to public services and benefited little from education» (Gilbert, 1990). Hence, the never-ending conflict and inopportunity resulted on intense migrations to the main Colombian cities, adding approximately 13 million people to the urban areas whilst the rising demand of social housing was satisfied mainly by the pirate developers, distinguished as cheap land providers in urban – metropolitan areas without any legal formality. Ever since then, pirate urbanization has

become the principal way of acquisition of land by the poor. Almost «59% of Bogota's population lives in such areas (Bogota, DAPD, 1973) and between 1972 and 1974 as much as 52% of urban expansion was through this illegal process (Bogota, DAPD, 1978)» (Gilbert, 1981).

1.2.5. Neo-liberal society (1991-currently)

The third period is defined by the transition from state-funded institutions- including social housing banking- to the "marketization" of the overall society. Hence, the official state turned to market-oriented policies replacing the social housing institution ICT and bounding social housing policy to economic fluctuations and market efficiency launching INURBE, institution focused on subsidizing the demand of social housing through private workers associations and providing technical assistance. As it has been proven by Chiappe (1999), this governmental action led to market oriented policies on the local levels as well. Subsequently, varieties of initiatives were taken into private sectors to improve the social conditions of internally displaced people.

In this period urbanization and inner conflict escalation phenomena added 5.0 million newcomers to the main urban centres. Almost 20% of this population was catalogued as «forcedly displaced» according to the organization Humans Right Watch (Perez, 1998; CODHES, 1998), and approximately 50% of them are living in Ciudad Bolivar currently, performing further transformations on the geographic space. Thus, the pace of globalization, combined with the effect of neo-liberal policies and the traditional dynamics of the inner conflict contributed to the country to reaching the fourth largest displaced population in the world after Sudan, Angola, and Afghanistan, according to the US Committee for Refugees.

2. THE ROLES OF THE ACTORS WITHIN THE CATEGORIES OF SOCIAL SPACE

According to Henri Lefebvre (1991) «*the command over space is fundamental and all-pervasive source of social power in and over everyday life*». The evolution of this control and the reflection it has over the context are inscribed in the established relations among the actors and the *social space*. Decoding these relations will provide clarification over the patterns that have been moulding the social space through time.

The Colombian social milieu over the past 60-70 years has been influenced by seven major actors; the Central and Local Government, which along with the political parties they compose the Colombian political elite, the armed forces wing: pro-communist FARC guerilla and Paramilitary armies, another influential actor: the Drug Lords, the Pirate developers and finally the population itself. They can be categorized in variety of ways: by ideology, by their influence on the political and economical processes, by organization and patterns of activity etc. However, one common thing for all of them is the spillover effect their actions have on the social space and spatial production.

Indeed, the previously mentioned actors and actions are performing a very complex interaction of overlapped and juxtaposed interests. On that scenario, Milton Santos' *social space* categorization has to be considered not only as a container of individual actors, actions and effects, but as a dynamic structure that represents the complexity of space; since the diversity of actions that are defining the *social space* is rising exponentially as the number of actors grow. (Fig.5).



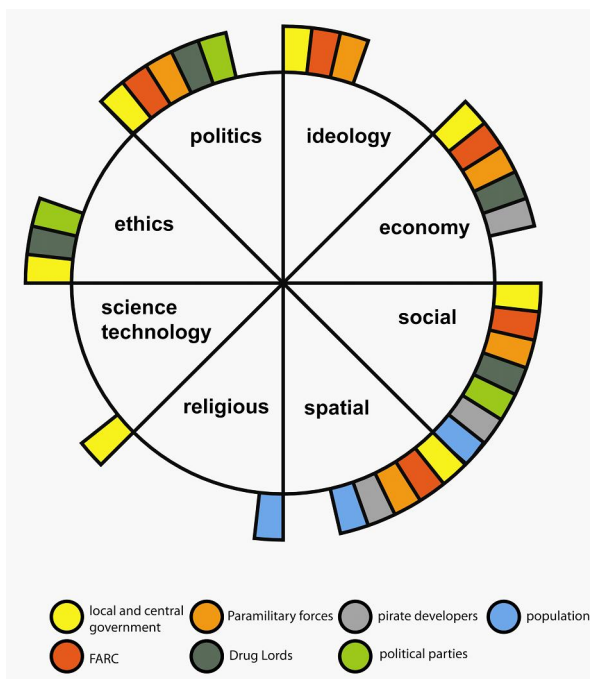


Figure 5. Geographical space and distribution of actors
 Source: Made by authors, taken from a conceptual scheme of Tomadoni based on Santos' method.

Thus, if in Colombian context the political system is defined by the democratic - capitalist ideology of the official political establishment, the guerrillas (FARC) are underpinning drug traffic and kidnapping whilst condensed over a discourse which fights for overthrowing the state and establishing a communist-agrarian system. The Para-militaries, organized around the institutional absence of the central government and leveraging their operations on the power of capital obtained from different sources by illegal means are freed from any system defining ideology, and have clearly corporate profile. Their claimed goal was to reconfigure the rural country abandoned by the central government through private administered law enforcement; leveraged on the assets and capital of Drug Cartels, landlords and large agro industrial operators. Consequently, could be considered that the Para-militaries and the Drug Lords act as any capital based enterprise. The conclusion can be simple: "money can be used to command time and space; conversely, command of time and space can be converted back into command of money" (Harvey, 1989).

When it comes to categories such as economic and spatial production, is exactly the pirate developers' approach. Speculation on property development, lack of strong regulation nor interest of the authorities to curb the uncontrolled growth of illegal social housing along with capital driven interests, have launched the pirate developers as the main players on the spatial production scene in Colombian metropolitan regions; producing social extremes such as Ciudad Bolivar. The ethical, scientific and technological or religious side of the social space of Colombia, especially the urbanized areas, had been restrained to formal existence without any significant role on the overall scene. The actors which define these three segments are detected only by their collateral products or actions.

Finally, Ciudad Bolivar's social space has brought all the actors, as closely as possible, mirroring the space of Colombia. However, if the quality of space and time were measured by the level of "social struggle" remnant of such strong dynamics, then the population emerges as the key actor: "Frustrated power struggles (on the part of women, workers, colonized people, minorities, immigrants, etc) within given set of rules generate much of the social energy to change those rules" (Harvey, 1989). Unfortunately, in the case of Ciudad Bolivar, Bosa, Usme and other of Bogota's illegal settlements, the population lacks of social energy (Harvey, 1989) to intervene in social processes in terms of change or improvement of the social space specifically. On the contrary, is one of the moving powers on spatial mutations' stimulation by addressing an ever-



growing demand of social housing and bypassing the legal mechanisms to acquire "disposable" land. Ultimately, "the definition of time and place necessarily changes and constitutes a new framework for promoting new kinds of social relations" (Harvey, 1989). Today, the Colombian social space can be recognized as a sum of such mutations - direct result of the intentional actions coming from the different actors that have been involved in within (Fig.6).

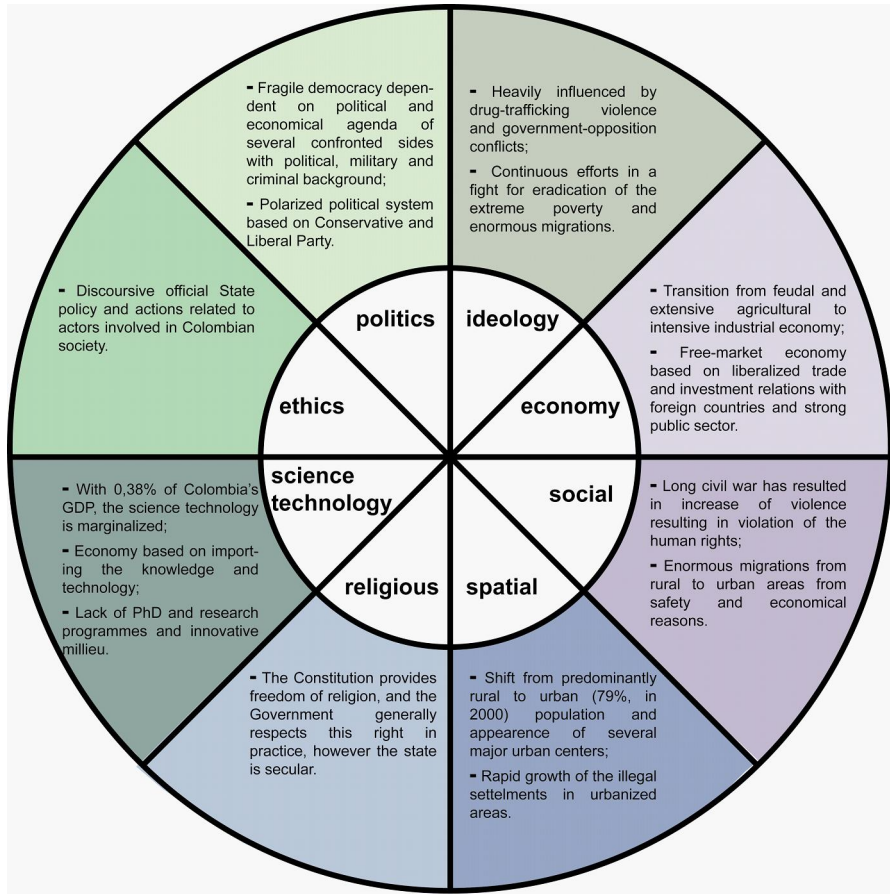


Figure 6. Geographical space of Colombia.
 Source: Made by authors, taken from a conceptual scheme of Tomadoni based on Santos' method.

2.1.1. Ciudad Bolívar: the system of objects – Form and Function

Based on a research done by The World Bank¹, Bogotá has over 1,400 informal settlements occupying 24% of its area or nearly 22% of Bogotá's total population. Geographically, the majority of these settlements are located in the periphery of the City of Bogotá and some of them have resulted directly from the influx of rural immigrants, as mentioned before (Fig.7). Some of the biggest settlements alike are Ciudad Bolívar, Bosa and Usme. However, as it has been discussed before, Ciudad Bolívar is an extreme case which justifies further research.

¹ Israel Fainboim, World Bank Report, Colombia Urban Services Projects, Washington DC, February 2004, p.3

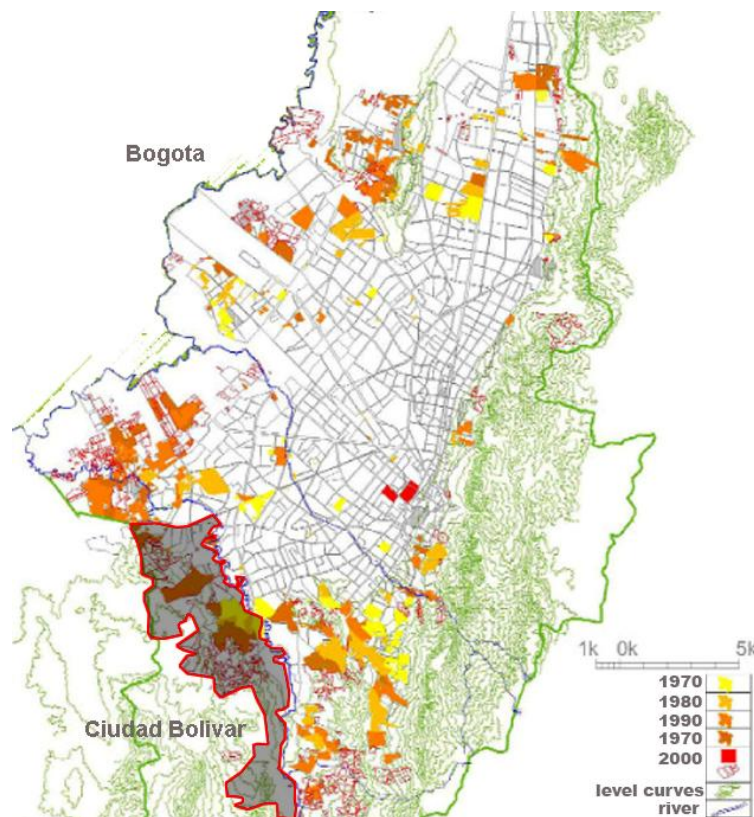


Figure 7. Localization of illegal settlements in Bogotá.
 Source: Rueda-García, Nicolas (2003), *Urban slums report :the case of Bogotá, Colombia.* http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu-projects/Global_Report/pdfs/Bogota.pdf

Ciudad Bolívar is one of the most recent settlements in the district, whose neighborhoods were built on lands of old «haciendas», established in early 1950s and extended towards the hills. During the second phase of urbanization in 1980s, the locality was extended towards the higher parts of the hill. Finally, the process of urbanization was acknowledged and conveyed within the Bogotá's urban development in 1983, by the Council of Bogotá.

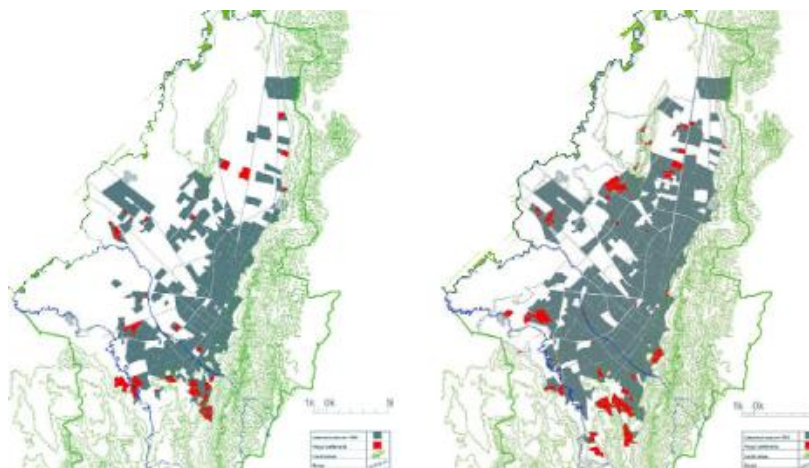
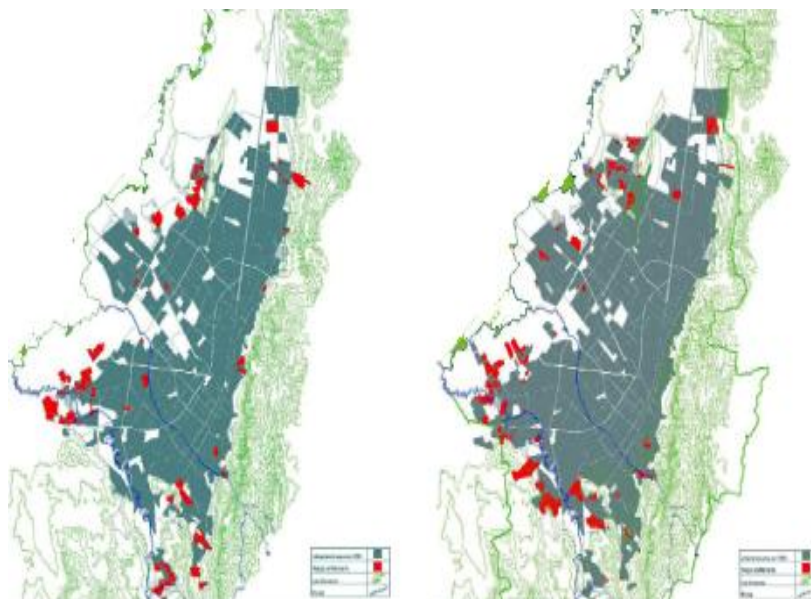


Figure 8. Historical growth of the spatial configuration of Bogotá: a.1960; b.1970; c.1980; d.1990.
 Source: Rueda-García, Nicolas (2003), *Urban slums report: the case of Bogotá, Colombia.* http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu-projects/Global_Report/pdfs/Bogota.pdf



Today, within the current territory organization of the City of Bogota, Ciudad Bolivar is the 19th locality, located on the south-western fringes of the city. It covers nearly 15% (229km²) of the Bogota's area (1587km²) of which only 10% is urban. This makes the locality the 7th biggest in the Metropolitan region, but also, the top ranked area by the rate of poor inhabitants.

Unlike the Bosa and Usme localities (the second and third biggest slums in Bogota, respectively) which, consolidated initially as towns and with the growth of the city they were absorbed and became localities in 1993, Ciudad Bolivar is primarily a product of internal and external migrations.

2.2. Social conditions reflected on processes of urbanization

Ciudad Bolivar has by most indicators (quality of housing, public services, human working capital, social security, demographics and income) the worst social conditions of Bogota. The Government has not been able to develop the necessary infrastructure in pace with the population growth. In 2002, it had the lowest level of urban amenities in Bogota, the lowest level of green space (1,94m²/inhabitants), as well as the lowest number of police stations (1 per 100,000 inhabitants). The percentage of people with unsatisfied basic needs in Ciudad Bolivar has decreased since 1993, but it still represented more than a quarter of the residents in 2001. Violence is very high too: assaults were the top cause of death for people aged between 15 and 44 and the second for people aged between 45 and 59 years old.

The social processes that took place on this locality's territory which are consequence of a strong system of actions deployed by the actors of Colombian society, created significant imprint on the process of urbanization. The so called "Pirate Urbanization" was identified by the Peñalosa administration (1998-2001) as a direct result of the shortfall of social housing for the lowest income stratus of the society and the outcome of the social -spatial production in Ciudad Bolivar; which has been usually consolidated through illegal property development channels dictated by the social status of the inhabitants rather through a sort of Rechtsstaat². More recently, "the majority of 400.000 houses of Ciudad Bolivar were built with very basic means, without plan or permits by the residents or by slumlords. The cost of a house in Ciudad Bolivar is between \$700,000 and 1 million pesos (USD \$270 - \$380)" (Echanove, 2004). Hence, spatial production is reflected on ownership status and Real-estate free market in a way that the majority of houses are owner-inhabited and only 37% of housing units are rented.

2. Rechtsstaat (german) is a concept in Continental European legal thinking, originally borrowed from German jurisprudence, which literally means State of Law. It is a «constitutional state» in which the exercise of governmental power is constrained by the law, and is often tied to the Anglo-American concept of the rule of law.

Figure 9. Ciudad Bolívar – density (edited)
 Source: <http://www.flickr.com/photos/alisonmckellar/2108051611/>



When it comes to other urban parameters, Ciudad Bolívar due to the uncontrolled growth in terms of population and spatial production has become phenomena in global scale. Considering the parameter of density, Ciudad Bolívar introduces the case of the densest neighborhood San Francisco (46,900 inh. /km²), which is exceeding by far even the most densely inhabited city in the world – Cairo (36,000 inh. /km²). Seen from this perspective, this locality appears not only to be the exception to the rule, but a distorted reality resulting of policies undertaken throughout time in urban planning, and a extreme product of Colombia's societal development.

2.3. The question of sustainability of the ongoing actions

The local government's response to the fast, ever-growing city transformations represented on provision of water, electricity and sewage access, transportation benefits or tolerance towards illegal housing are only partial solutions. Those can be questioned according to several premises such as: the growing social disparities among the population, the impact on geographical space, the non-scrutinized control on space production in relation to the planned land development, the sustainability of the initiatives taken by the relevant authorities, amongst others. Thus, can be assumed that the local authorities' reactions are just contingencies to the social and political tendencies which underpin the country's societal and spatial dynamics: Uncontrolled migrations, armed conflicts and the forces of globalization all together are setting a scenario where local policy is usually boosting rather than alleviating the inner conflict.

Hence, only in 2000, the government legalized 147 settlements representing 1150 hectares and 235,500 people, alone in Ciudad Bolívar, according to Echanove (2004). Even though the state encourages private residential development, only on designated land where the infrastructure is already in place (as it is very costly to provide illegal settlements with water systems, electricity and telephone lines) still illegal settlements occur frequently. Furthermore, he argues that this phenomenon is relying on the high cost of the plots for house building along with the facilities and the construction itself, as opposed to the relative low cost of water supply in this area. This can only be explained by the urge of the market corporations to gain more consumers without a detailed and sustainable program of corporate development.

Quite opposite to the will of the authorities to legalize the settlements, is their ability to provide sufficient and useful public services to the people of these areas. Ciudad Bolívar keeps presenting a deficit of access to public services characterized by a low number of telephone lines, connection failures of aqueduct and sewage systems, and the insufficient coverage of the cleaning services, which are due principally to the existence of illegal settlements and slums.



2.3.1. Correlation among the actors in Ciudad Bolívar in 1990s

Relying on the structure of geographical space and its spatial categories suggested by Milton Santos; the influence of actors, their interactivity and dependency on the social milieu of Colombia can be isolated within different groups. Their influence in majority of cases is overlapping and connected by causality. In such context, the flow of actions within Ciudad Bolívar as the place of interest of this survey can be evaluated through those correlations in a time defined frame.

The reviewed processes that are occurring in the Colombian *social space* during the last 70 years, backed by the speculative and hybrid real-estate market including the lack of state presence, introduced Ciudad Bolívar as the focal interest zone for the internally displaced people. The immense inflow of poor rural population was a fertile ground for the pirate developers to enforce a system of spatial production of their own. In legal frames this meant bypassing the planning processes and established procedures in direct response to the needs of the market. The system appeared to work as the peripheral localities grew uncontrolled. The local and central authorities, especially the Peñalosa administration developed a series of initiatives to tame the vivid and in most cases illegal social housing real-estate market.

2.4. Responses by the authorities

In 1980s and 1990s, the real estate market in Bogotá was composed of formal private housing construction, informal construction and of formal, governmental operated housing construction. Out of the last, 37% were «Viviendas de Interés Social» or «VIS» (costing less than 135 times the minimum monthly wage of about US\$135), but only 1% of which were «Viviendas de Interés social Prioritario» or «VIP» (costing less than about 64 times the minimum monthly wage). Both of the programs aimed at improvements in the housing stock primarily for the social welfare dependant citizens, articulating governmental actions by giving grants to the buyers, using programmed savings accounts as a condition for accessing them, providing the resources for the credit, and supporting the private construction firms by promoting housing projects.

Acquiring the grants was very difficult and, even though the credits were long term and with relatively affordable interest rates, the economical and social background of the lowest layers³ 1, 2 and 3, to whom this program was aimed, was unsuitable for the banks.

Consequently these projects turned to be a miscalculation and failure in taming the process of informal housing production and subsequently fast track city growth.

In order to cut the cost of retrofitting the informal settlements, the city has enforced variety of acts and measures. Some of them in the past included the reform of the bureaucratic structures and the legal frames for handling the urban issues. This has permitted the elaboration of more social-focused policies, along with a strong level of pragmatism in their execution.

3. According to the General Manager of Metrovivienda (2001) and based on the provisional calculations from DANE, Encuesta Nacional de Hogares from June 2000, the social stratification of the population in Colombia based on financial income is structured as following:

Income	Income	Informal Sector	Formal Sector
1-1	0 - \$ 133.000	43.000	150.227
2-1	\$ 133.000 - \$ 266.000	19.100	220.100
2-2	\$ 266.000 - \$ 532.000	18.400	120.237
2-3	\$ 532.000 - \$ 866.000	13.200	41.347

*** Ranges of Minimum Legal Income per Month. In 2002, 1 Minimum Legal Income per Month in Colombia was col\$309.000 (US\$133); Source: Rueda-García, Nicolás (2003), Urban Slums Report: The case of Bogotá, Colombia**



(a)



(b)

Figure 10. a. Metrovivienda, b. Transmilenio; Source: www.metrovivienda.gov.co Source: www.metrovivienda.gov.co



As a proof of this, is the execution of 4 macro projects in the city following the same political pattern:

- MetroVivienda (a district enterprise of social interest housing development) (*fig. 10.a*);
- Transmilenio (a project of construction and optimization of the city's transportation system) (*fig. 10.b*);
- Public Schools Grant (a project that aimed at amplifying the coverage and improve the quality of education);
- The Third Millennium Park urban renovation project (a project that aimed at attaining urban and social recuperation in the central zone of the city).

With these projects and especially with the MetroVivienda, for the first time, the authorities developed a tool for an integral rather than fragmented planning. Finally, a legal frame for developing solutions rather than proposing unilateral one was proposed. This was the first and main objective; however implementation in reality of such multi-leveled social measure would appear to be something more complex and dependent on a variety of actors within the very fragmented Colombian society and without a clear vision of the final outcome.

2.5. MetroVivienda: the legal fight against pirate developers

Today, MetroVivienda is Bogotá's city hall main mechanism for the development of affordable housing. The self-defined mission of the five-year old government agency is land-banking. The agency operates one program, which is designed to be an economically viable, self-sustaining operation. The initial public investment is to be recycled into the production of future mega-projects, each creating 5,000 to 10,000 units in new residential districts at the edge of the expanding city.

Instead of the government managing all stages of the projects, the basic strategy of MetroVivienda is efficiency: to acquire, through negotiated purchase or use of eminent domain, privately-owned open space at the urban periphery, creating large assemblages to be improved upon with infrastructure, planned and parceled, and afterwards sold to experienced developers for construction of «market rate» housing, which has to be affordable to varying levels of low-income families. The sale of parcels makes funds more readily available for investment in subsequent rounds of acquisition and development.

After the MetroVivienda project was introduced, the number of social housing has risen significantly, but more important, the city has shown capacity of giving solution to the problem of informal settlements. However, the local government has failed on spreading the MetroVivienda over the lowest social strata's and as a result MetroVivienda itself has proven to be of little or no use in meeting the housing needs of the millions living in slums. Instead, Bogota authorities have committed themselves to slum legitimization and infrastructure improvements, focusing notably on public health piping potable water throughout the City and improving sewage dissemination and treatment rather than fundamental and thorough planning in spatial production.

3. CONCLUSION

The geographical space of Colombia, as a social product through time, is dependent on the actions that numbers of actors undertake including the relations they engage among each other. Etymologically, the relationships are rooted in the vibrant history of the country, but also defined over the time by the actors themselves. The unilateralism within these processes produced a variety of social structures which adopted distinctive forms through the geographical space. Starting from the fragile and highly polarized political system, influenced financially and ideologically by the long term armed conflict, the parallel system of power of the Drug Lords and the Pirate Developers, all the way to the population. Hence, the *social space* appears very dense, in actions and actors. Exactly this density produces social disparities and ultimately urban mutations such

as Ciudad Bolívar; an evidence of this fragmented, rather than integral planning in every domain of the society. Thus, the intense migrations and urbanization cannot be seen only as historical occurrence in an instance of time, but direct response to the lack of cohesive politics within the Colombian society.

The recent actions from the authorities have traced directions in dealing with problems like lack of social housing and improvement of living conditions in «illegal settlements». However, the processes of globalization and neo-liberal management of the real-estate market have exposed new challenges to the society. As now aside from the internal social, political and military conflicts, Colombia has to deal with the global market as well (as it has been dealing with the application of foreign economical and social models before according to historical evidence). In consequence, the *social space* will densify even more in terms of actors and consequently in structures and forms those will produce.

Therefore, designing a sustainable legal frame of actions and consistent implementation, rather than concrete measures and proposals is something to be aimed for, in the future. Hence, authorities' response will be addressed to all of the spheres of social life as opposed to few.

REFERENCES

- CODHES, 1998. Colombia: Desplazados, Éxodo, Miedo y Pobreza, En: [http:// www.hrw.org/reports98/colombia/Colom989-07.htm](http://www.hrw.org/reports98/colombia/Colom989-07.htm). Consultado en: 20/02/2008
- Chiappe, M. L., 1999. La política de vivienda de interés social en Colombia en los noventa. CEPAL- ECLAC, Naciones Unidas, Santiago de Chile, Chile.
- Cullen- Cheung, J., 2002. MetroVivienda: New Urban Renewal in Bogota, En: [http:// www.bogotalab.com/articles/metrovivienda.htm](http://www.bogotalab.com/articles/metrovivienda.htm), Consultado en: 20/02/2008
- Echanove, M. S., 2004. Bogota at the edge; Planning the barrios. En: http://www.bogotalab.com/articles/bogota_edge.html, Consultado en: 20/02/2008
- Everett, M., 2001. Evictions and human rights: land disputes in Bogotá, Colombia, *Habitat international* 25, En: www.elsevier.com/locate/habitatint, Consultado en: 20/02/2008. pp. 453 - 471,
- Gilbert, A., 1990. The Provision of Public Services and the Debt Crisis in Latin America: The Case of Bogota, *Economic Geography*, Vol. 66, No. 4, Production and Reproduction in Latin American Cities: Concepts, Linkages, and Empirical Trends, pp. 349 - 361
- Gilbert, A., 1981. Pirates and Invaders: Land Acquisition in Urban Colombia and Venezuela, *World Development*, Vol. 9, No. 1, pp. 657-678.
- Griffin, E. and Ford, L., 1980. A Model of Latin American City Structure, *Geographical Review* Vol. 70, No. 4, pp. 397 - 422
- Harvey, D., 1990. *The Condition of Postmodernity; An enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change*, Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA
- Lefebvre, H., 1991. *The Production of Space*; Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge, Massachusetts, USA
- Martínez Gómez, C., 2001. Las migraciones internas en Colombia; Analisis territorial y demográfico segun los censos de 1973 y 1993. Phd Thesis available at http://www.tdx.cbuc.es/ TESIS_UAB/AVAILABLE/TDX-1107102-122452//cmg3de6.pdf, consultado en: 18.02.2008.
- Rueda- García, N., 2003. Urban Slums Report: The case of Bogota, Colombia, http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu-projects/Global_Report/pdfs/Bogota.pdf, consultado en: 20.02.2008.
- Santos, M., 1997. *Espaço e Método*, Nobel (Coleção Espaços), São Paulo, Brasil.
- Skinner, R., 2004. City Profile: Bogota, *Cities*, Vol.21, Issue 1, pp.73-81



U.S. Committee for Refugees, 1997. World Refugee Survey (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Committee for Refugees), 6 P.

Valderrama Chaparro, J., 1999. Colombia Urbana: Una Aproximación cultural. Santafé de Bogotá, Universidad Nacional Abierta y a Distancia, Bogotá, Colombia.

Vélez G., A., 2002. Urban Agriculture and Poverty: The Latin America Case, En: <http://www.cohélet.org/Documents/Slums.PDF>, consultado en: 20/02/2008

<http://www.demographia.com>

<http://www.bogota.gov.co>

<http://www-wds.worldbank.org>, consultado en: 20.02.2008

http://www.bogotalab.com/articles/bogota_edge.html

http://www.ucl.ac.uk/dpu-projects/Global_Report/cities/bogota.htm

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/americas/country_profiles/1212827.stm, consultado en: 20.02.08

<http://www.bogota.gov.co/portel/libreria/pdf/ficha-ciudad-bolivar-5-agosto-08.pdf>, consultado en: 02.04.09