

Medellin transformation: urban policy and social counter-use

by Liliana María
Sánchez Mazo
& Alberto León
Gutiérrez Tamayo

Culture
Public space
Urban policy

As the result of research and interventions carried out since 2012 with public institutions and inhabitants of Medellín, this paper has as context the urbanization of slums that, since the early 2000s, have been transformed with infrastructure and a new opportunities. Within all those opportunities, appropriation of public spaces one of the most notorious. Although advances of social urbanism policies are evident due to improvement of living conditions of the inhabitants, historically subjected to violence, poverty, inequality and exclusion; it is also necessary to point out that this transformation has generated, at the same time, disputes between different groups for benefits that comes with urbanization. Based on documentary analysis and participatory methodologies (workshops, territorial journeys, interviews), this text reveals contradictions of the daily life of urbanized neighborhoods triggered by local politics. It highlights youth peace initiatives that collectively appropriate public spaces characterized by violent and mercantilist uses, with emancipatory practices mobilized with narratives of right to life and itinerant artistic initiatives, called counter-uses, which emerge of latent conflicts, rising in rejection of any form of violence. It is a challenge to learn from these experiences of community control and surveillance of public spaces that are established as a sign of social struggle. In this scenario, the contribution of public university in the democratization of production and appropriation of socially useful knowledge is recognized, generated in participatory, contextualized processes, anchored in social needs, dialogues of knowledge, actions of solidarity that collaboratively join actors, institutions and resources.