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## Spaces of disadvantage, places of hope : Women empowerment, economic emancipation and NGOs in Bogotá slums

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SPACES OF DISADVANTAGE, PLACES OF HOPE:  
WOMEN EMPOWERMENT, ECONOMIC EMANCIPATION AND NGOs IN  
BOGOTÁ SLUMS

An Abstract of a Thesis

Submitted

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

Ekaterina Korzh

University of Northern Iowa

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## ABSTRACT

This research is devoted to the gender issue in Colombian Slums with the specific focus on the social and economic place of women, challenges that women are facing within this extremely impoverished and criminalized areas and avenues to improve women empowerment and emancipation in the slums of Bogotá.

The goal of this research is to improve understanding of social and economic roles of women in the slums and identify NGO-supported coping strategies that allow improving women empowerment and emancipation in the slums of Bogotá. The first objective is to define “slums” and determine their extent, morphology and population characteristics using the most suitable definition of slums, official and non-official data, observations and interviews. The second objective is to identify economic challenges experienced by women who reside in the slums of Bogotá. The third objective is to examine the role of NGOs and other social organizations, which aim to help women in on the way to improve their life in Bogotá slums. Specifically the study examines whether slum women utilize coping strategies or acting alone in order to gain economic and social empowerment for them and their neighborhoods, and how non-governmental (NGOs) and community-based organization (CBOs) assist them in this process. This research provides new perspective on women livelihood issues in Bogotá slums and public interventions based on narratives from interviews and field observations.

The interviews displayed that there are two main ways, which help to empower women from slum areas: through labor participation and community organizing. In addition, women in slums of Bogotá have a demonstrated ability to

organize in order to create organizations, such as CBOs, and cooperate in groups through which they support other women in neighborhoods, organize community's fairs and conduct different kinds of projects to improve circumstances for women and entire neighborhoods.

The structural features of relational spaces in slums are responsible for a disadvantaged position of women, violence, abuse, etc. They stem from the clash between *women space* (virtual space of women livelihood, real and imaginary) and *men space* as well as between other spaces (home/street, formal/informal, gang/law, rural/urban, modern/patriarchal, etc.). However, the realities of Bogotá slums are such that the conditions slowly transitioning towards less patriarchal, urban societies. This transition results into aggression and effectively leads to a 'gender clash.' To respond to this clash, women engage in spatial coping strategies: consolidation (community organizations that "consolidate" women's space) and separation (seeking emancipation outside their routine environment, such as out-of-household employment).

The analysis of NGOs and CBOs work based on interviews demonstrated that not all of them create conditions for bottom-up engagement of women and thus create avenues for their emancipation. While some bottom-up CBOs appear to be successful and even become nationally important organizations, some of the 'top-down' NGOs, especially international and private may in fact exacerbate disadvantages for women in the slums by offering scanty services, practicing deception of CBOs in order to obtain information, and capturing large amount of state funds thereby leaving CBOs without necessary state support.

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BOGOTÁ SLUMS

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## INTRODUCTION

### Statement of the Problem

The issue of slums is a long term and broad question, which cut across many of social, geographical, cultural, historical, economic and political disciplines. In 1979, World Development Report reported analysis of a specific aspect of economic development, which included issues of the urban poverty agenda around the world. “In the year 2000, the United Nations thrust the urban development sector into the 21th century with a new and unprecedented global focus on conditions that international agencies chose to term ‘slums’” (World Bank, 2008). In 2008 World Bank made a daunting prospect that in the next 30 years population of slums settlements will double unless some effective projects and strategies are not taken on.

However, the term ‘slum’ is not favorable today. According to Gilbert the term slums unintentionally supports negative stereotypes about slums dwellers. He shows a concern that many researchers create dangerous stereotype that consider slums dwellers not just like a people living in poor housing conditions, but also as a “people with personal defects” (Gilbert, 2007), which creates support to commonly used negative connotation about slums and its inhabitants. But here the term ‘slum’ is useful to simplify and generalize main characteristics of these areas and use in further investigations toward the goal of my research.

Therefore, despite of many conducted researches and strategies addressed to result statements slums issues are still poorly understood and inadequately addressed around the world. The main concerns about fails to control and make positive changes in

wildly expanding urban poverty agenda in developing countries usually the world community respond to local and national governments.

In respect to Latin America, it must be mentioned that the region increased its rates of urbanization dramatically in the second part of 20<sup>th</sup> century, and experiences today great rates of urban population growth, Bogotá as the capital and biggest city in Colombia reflects most of the main problems related to this process, where the biggest challenge is slum expansion through the city. In addition, Colombia civil history combines long periods of civil violence and economic recessions, which influenced on high poverty rates. Thus, Colombia and its capital in particular, are complex but important areas where research related slums issues must be done, to improve in-deep understanding of slum phenomenon.

The challenges of slums stem from a variety of overlapping issues which must be understood in-depth before they can be addressed: the slum origin, its definition, type, socio-economic and socio-political characteristics, types of tenure within slums and etc. Since the issue of slums attracted attention of the world community in the second part of 20<sup>th</sup> century numerous studies, many projects were conducted around the world to describe the disadvantages facing individuals in their everyday live activity within slums and then to address some strategies for future improvement. The basic disadvantages of slum dwellers include lack of basic services in dwelling places (sanitation, drinking water, and electricity), violence and insecurity within slums community and social inequity and discrimination outside slums. However, less of such researches were conducted in Latin America.



Due to numerous features, which define the nature of slums, it seems it is more appropriate to have a perspective embedded in the local context. Among the many studies conducted within the slums of Latin America some are devoted to describing living conditions and struggles of all slums settlements within and outside impoverished neighborhoods. Others describe disadvantages or success of participation projects directed to improve slums spaces. However, very few studies provide specific focus on the social and economic place of women within these extremely impoverished and criminalized areas as slums and challenges, which women are facing. In addition, this focus is the one of the most neglected in studies of Bogotá slums, which are usually presented from prevalent perspective of violence and insecurity issues.

#### Research Goals and Objectives

The goal of this research was to improve understanding of social and economic place of women in the slums and identify NGO-supported coping strategies that gaining improvement conditions and gaining emancipation of poor women living in the slums of Bogotá.

The first objective is to define Bogotá's "slums" and determine their extent, morphology and population characteristics using the most suitable definition of slums, official and non-official data, observations and interviews. Comparing official maps and documents with data received from interviews with members of non-government organization working in slums of Bogotá provides vital contemporary information for better understanding of slum issues within this urban space.

The second objective is to identify economic challenges experienced by women who reside in the slums of Bogotá. By conducting interviews with members of NGOs and women from the slums, I investigate whether women experience social and economic disadvantages resulting from social, economic and institutional structures prevalent in Bogotá slums.

The third objective is to examine the role of NGOs and their projects, which aim to help women in on the way to improve their life in Bogotá slums. Specifically I examine whether slum women utilize coping strategies such as forming market cooperatives in order to gain economic and social empowerment, and how NGOs assist them in this process.

Therefore, my main foci in this research are women of slums, NGOs and their work toward improving women livelihood conditions in slums. There is much research conducted about slums around the world, including slum issues in particular Latin American countries. Some researchers address issues of participation and challenges in work with slums for different non-governmental organizations, but few deal with issues of slum women livelihoods and their economic and social empowerment.

#### Significance of the Study

Against previous background, the present study is devoted to gender issue in slums of Bogotá with the specific focus on the social and economic place of women, their struggles in their everyday life within slums community, which is so far an understudied phenomenon. The added benefit of this thesis is to use informative interviews with local

researchers, social workers, government officials and NGOs' members in idea to provide their perspectives on women issues in slums and avenue to improve their conditions through participation. Case studies are common tools in analyzing programs, projects, and organizations, which can be often used as key-information for future practices and policy.

## CHAPTER 1

### LITERATURE REVIEW

Numerous studies have observed different aspects of slums around the world and come out with diverse findings. Literature about slums, in most of the cases, shows a high complexity of issues, which overlap a great amount within different disciplines. While some studies make scoping and overviews of existing projects dealing with slums to better understanding contemporary and future issues (United Nations Human Settlements Program [UN-Habitat], 2003 & Linn, 2010 ), other indicate socio-economic challenges of the slums settlements and avenues to improve their living conditions (World Bank, 2008 & Gay, 2012). Yet other studies analyze the health and behavior of slums settlements from perspectives of their socio economic level, gender and ages (World bank, 1989, Gangadharan, 2005, Sufaira, 2013, Mathur, 2008 & Wadhwa, 2012, United Nations Development Program, 2012).

Although we find a growing field of literature on the issues concerning slums, until very recently the amount of work devoted to slums from the perspective of spatial thinking and spatial interpretation is surprisingly limited. Gilbert and Ward (1985), Grant (2009) and Nijman (2010) all indicated that geographers paid inadequate attention to slums as functioning spaces, heterogeneous but yet integrated communities (e.g., the early work of Ulack, 1978), and that the geographic understanding of slums is somewhat secondary to anthropological, sociological, and other understandings pursued by other disciplines (e.g., Clinard, 1966, Gilbert, 1996, Mangin, 1967, Fichter & Turner, 1972).

Synthesis efforts (UN-Habitat, 2003, Davis, 2006 & Nijman, 2010) have been instrumental in incorporating the spatial perspective in the studies of slums, but more needs to be done to vigorously investigate this spatial phenomenon from cross-disciplinary, geographical angle.

### Overview of Slums Problem around the World and Theory of Slums

Today many developing countries around the world experience rapid growth of the cities. Latin America's urbanization also increased dramatically in the second part of 20<sup>th</sup> century (Gilbert, 1996), and the region still experiences rapid growth of urban population. As a result, many of these fast growing cities in developing countries host slums, the areas where new citizens of the city struggle among bad housing conditions, lack of basic services and high criminal rates (UN-Habitat, 2003, Gilbert, 2007 & Salcedo, 2006). Presence of slums creates great problems for city economic and social development, which becomes a more complicated problem due to general economic, political and social problems, which many third world countries face.

To improve understanding of issues, which related to economic, political and social problems in some regions of developing countries, it is necessary to take a tour in historical background of these countries. This would extend the understanding of what the precursor of slums formation has been. That is why, Owusu (2012) discusses theoretical issues and concepts, which lead to contemporary economic and social imbalances that hinder Ghana from development, based on a historical perspective.

According to Owusu, the African region deals with such structural and economic problems as raw materials export-bias and poor interconnections within region and among the economic sectors. He argues that these imbalances are herald back to the colonial era, despite the nation's current sovereignty, causing the region's economies to continue being "colonial." During the colonial era, external economies of capitalist countries created specific ways of accumulation in Africa. Due to geographical and historical attributes, Africa was an attractive region to Europe. In the end, Africa offered a variety of opportunities to surplus capital. Hence, European countries "created capitalist relational spaces or "turfs" in the region[...]the establishment of these turfs, as exclusive spheres of influence in Africa provided the Europeans with relational spaces that enabled them to dominate and regulate the resources, labor, and markets in those spaces" (Owusu, 2012, p.9). In this respect, Owusu also argues that these spaces were created without the recognition and respect for the ethnicity and culture of the region, or to internal and external relationships. This reconstructed and in some cases eliminated the chance to admit alien economic structures. One of the important implications of this system was also that, "this integration did not mean total absorption, as part of the colonies continued to lie outside of the capitalist system, with relatively weaker state control" (Owusu, 2012, p. 12). "The process of capitalist turf creation and the associated relational spaces created beginning with the colonial process are all new to Africa because pre-capitalist African societies were different from the capitalist European societies" (Owusu, 2012, p. 12), Owusu claims. This statement opens a great discussion about relation spaces, its genesis and evolution within developing regions such as Africa, or Colombia as in case of my

study. The relation spaces in these countries or spaces where informality and formality, gender equity and inequity, rural and urban styles of life clash, consist a huge area for investigation. However, it is important to discuss relation spaces in Bogotá's slums from perspective that it's a rapidly developing and growing city in Latin American region. In contrast to Owusu's discussion, I am not going to stress on importance of the colonial past in formation of relation spaces, such as formality and informality in Bogotá. Due to that Colombia obtained independency from colonialists, in 1810, much earlier than other developing countries, the question about intercommunication between existed relation spaces and colonial past is a big problem which needs other study. In this research I will focus on discussion devoted to relation spaces which exists in slums of Bogotá, trying to improve understanding of its interaction with gender issues, and the role of relation spaces framed by organization of poor women for empowerment and women movement existing today in Bogotá.

To sum up, it would be true to say those colonial past and economic relations which were established in this period, played great role in transformation of social, economic and political structure in developing countries. In addition, it is important to mention that these legacies still create difficulties for today and future development of these countries that does not allow these countries change their peripheral and semi peripheral positions in world economy system and limit their possibilities to develop such neglected areas as slums.

Today many countries dealing with slums spend large amounts of money on urban redevelopment or seeking how to eliminate or shrink slums in their cities.

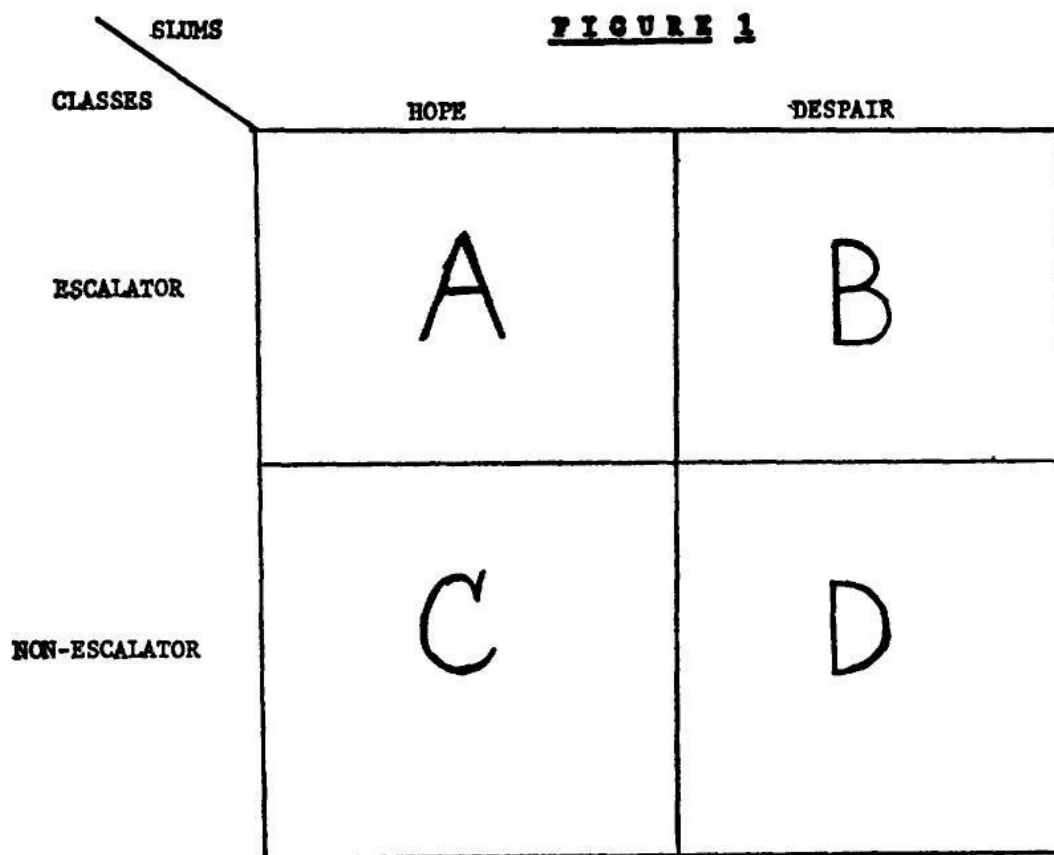
Nevertheless, Stokes suggested that “more careful attention might be paid to a complete theory of slums” (Stokes, 1962, p.187). In his article, “A Theory of Slums,” Stokes assumes there are many explanations that slums do in fact exist, but while slums in the city landscape may be of spontaneous origin, this makes the definition of slums difficult. The definition occurs to be more complicated as we go further. He argues that while the presence of slums is destructive of the city, we can define slums as “areas where housing and social arrangements develop by processes so different from those by which the general growth of the city proceeds that they will destroy the city [...] however, what kind of areas are these slums are not described, and that may cause a doubt about the analogy because slums may be real and even a helpful phase of the ecological process in the development of the city” (Stokes, 1962). This reasoning provides an interesting perspective on the definition of slums. In addition, it will be shown in an example of Bogotá how the evolution of slum areas and the whole city links with each other.

Further Stokes reasons that slums are usually a home for “poor and strangers [...] who does not participate directly in the economic and social life of the city.” This statement is possibly true for some slums but does not apply directly to the example of Bogotá where interaction of slums’ dwellers in economic and social life of the city blurs the borders between slum and non-slum areas.

Stokes also constructed a simple model, which help to illustrate the complexity of slums formation (Figure 1). This model is interesting because its divides all slum formation on four types based on the one hand on intention and wish of inhabitant of the slum to improve his condition, and from the other, “on measure of socio-economic



handicaps and barriers to such movement.” Thus, horizontally, he distinguished slums of “hope” which “indicates both intention of inhabitant to “better” himself and his estimate of the probable outcome of such an effort, and slums of “despair” which describes lack of such intention” (Stokes, 1962, p.189). Vertically, he used division on “escalator” and “non-escalator” classes, which describes “groups of people who can be expected, barring unusual circumstances, to move up through the class structure” or not, conformably. This escalator structure simply implies the concept of caste (Figure 1). In this model it is more important to have a look at type “A” slums of “hope” and “escalator” class. Stokes indicates slums of “hope” as home of the strangers, the in-migrant. These categories of slums apply to Bogotá’s case, as the city has been experiencing big migration flows, which also occurs today, filling the city with newcomers.



*Figure 1: A model of slum formation (Stokes, 1962).*

In addition, there is no particular problem with move up through the social class structure for different ethnic groups of slums dwellers. But if to assume that temporariness is a one of the characteristic for the slums of type A as was mentioned by Stokes (1962), this type do not apply perfectly to some slums of Bogotá which exists for

decades. Hence, it would be appropriate to have look at Bogotá slums from the concepts of other types of slums as C, B and D, which have also been described in this model.

The perspectives on this Bogotá case study from concepts of slums of “despair” will be also very beneficial to discuss for improving understanding of how NGO projects influence the empowerment of inhabitants of slums, and women in particular.

Stokes was writing more than fifty years ago but his ideas about theories of slums are still cited by many researchers concerned about slums problem in the world. Gilbert (2007) and Leon (2014) discuss main characteristics of slums by Stoke which claimed, “The slum and the formal city have a difficult interaction and problematic cohabitation processes” (Stokes, 1962, p. 188). Both authors agreed with Stokes that the defining factor of slums is its difficult “relationships” with the formal city and that “the inhabitants of a slum are not fully integrated in the economic and social life of the city (Stokes, 1962, p. 188).

However, Gilbert also argues that Stokes definition slums as “home of the poor and the stranger” unintentionally supports negative stereotypes about slums dwellers (a sentiment frequently present in the literature; Hijman, 2009). He shows a concern that many researchers create dangerous stereotypes that consider slums dwellers not just like a people living in poor housing conditions, but also as a “people with personal defects” (Gilbert, 2007), which creates support to commonly used negative connotation about slums and its inhabitants.

In my work, I am also going to highlight this problem in the case of Bogotá, where city administration implemented socio-economic stratification by law in the 1980's to classify urban populations and in their ideas to help poor populations to relocate in places where they can afford to pay for housing and basic services. Here I would like to discuss this issue from prospective of stigmatizations of the poor, which also related to Gilbert's concern (2007) and many local researchers in Bogotá. In addition, it will be important to discuss in relation to NGOs programs and projects, which devoted straight forward to issues and problems of the poor. I am going to discuss the questions about stigmatization and marginalization of poor dwellers of Bogotá about the shared job of NGOs, government and slums women by themselves under strategies to improve conditions of poor women in slums.

A study conducted by UN-Habitat (2003), presents a global report about slums conditions, locations and other slums specifications around the world. Davis (2006) provides an in-depth conceptual perspective in the UN-Habitat findings. The UN report applied to the investigations of 29 cities with slums around the world. The report analyses several basic themes related to slums such as slum origin, tenure types in slums, slum socio-political characteristics, policy action that were applied in slums, to name a few. Based on 29 city's cases this research investigates questions about the origin of slums through summarizing different kinds of urban population expansion in four groups: rural-urban migration, natural growth, combination of natural and migratory growth, and population displacement following armed conflicts or internal strife and violence. Also report assume that problematic on slums issues is presented more severe in investigated

cities for such two common reasons which includes lack of general actions of local authorities towards increasing illegal occupation on urban lands, and general failure of housing market to provide appropriate housing requirement for growing city population. The authors of the report also address the problem that “the phenomenon of slums is generally little understood; and that public interventions - more often than not - address symptoms rather than the underlying causes” (UN-Habitat, 2003, p.195).

In general, the report of UN-Habitat is beneficial for researchers (Davis, 2006). It provides an important determination of slum definition as phenomenon based on formal definitions existing in the 21 analyzed cities (eight of other analyzed cities officials did not apply any explanation to slum formations). As a result, the report revealed the two most referred to slum issue definitions: the use of poor construction materials and legality of land occupancy. The term “basic services” (sanitation, water, etc.) appear in official definitions of 45% of analyzed cities, whereas the terms “poverty” and “low-income” occur in official definitions of just in a few analyzed cities. In the case of Bogotá, local authorities reply with two main indicators that define slums: construction and land legality.

Also, this study reveals that city’s policy makers distinguish a distance between types of slums, which make a clear separation between slums proper and shanties or spontaneous housing. The authors tell apart between the term ‘slum,’ or its local equivalent, which usually describes inner-city residential areas which were built “several decades ago in line with the then prevailing urban planning zoning and construction standards become physically dilapidated and overcrowded to the point where they

became the near exclusive residential zone for lowest income groups;” and shanty town or squatter settlements which refers to illegal or semi legal urbanization processes (UN-Habitat, 2003, p.196).

Here authors also separate out different types of tenure status in slums. They argue that “[y]et, in many cases, security of tenure is a de facto recognition of tenure despite illegality of the structure, thus blurring the distinction between legal, semi-legal and illegal” (UN-Habitat, 2003, p.197).

In relation of slum dynamics the report points that the future of slums is obviously linked to distinction in the rural and urban economy and to related poverty levels. At the same time demographic factor could be also important in relation to household formation rates, as much as public frequency and effectiveness of public interventions in this sector.

Speaking about policy impacts on slum issues and development prospects, the authors argue that to achieve degree of success authority and resources must be involved actively as beneficiaries and city managers to create participatory decision-making actions, and it also need to have community based support. In addition, they consider that “urban policies cannot be effective if isolated from their national and international contexts.” This reasoning strongly correlates to previously discussed work of Owusu (2012).

Gangadharan (2005) made a general study about socio-economic, working and living conditions in the high slum destiny area of Kerala in India. The study also analyzed the class, caste and occupational income, educational and religious composition of slums.

In studying health behavior, he found the highest rates of illness where among children below 15 years old and higher morbidity from infection among whether employed or unemployed individuals of working ages in both slums and urban areas. In addition, Gangadharan proved that with an increase in the levels of education, utilization of private health facilities goes up and the utilization of public health facilities comes down. The study also revealed that in the most extreme of them are that 30% of the heads of household (person who brings highest income to the family) are illiterate, the per capita income is extremely low in 41 % of household and that 90% of slum dwellers have access just for public tap water which has uncertain availability in the time, quantity and quality (Gangadharan, 2005, p.92).

There are many studies that were conducted about characteristics of cities which contains slums within their urban space. Part of such papers discusses influence of city size on ability of authorities to manage urban challenges, which is the experience many world's cities. Particularly, Gilbert in his work "The Mega-city in Latin America" gave an anxious perspective on problems of biggest Latin American megapolises. He argues that by the year 2000 world must contain 22 giant cities, with more than 8 million people each, in less developed countries, which would give little confidence that "such enormous conglomerations are manageable"( Gilbert, 1996, p.2). He claimed that "mega-cities" show the worst symptoms of underdevelopment in Latin American's, but argues these problems are typical for these cities because of their size. He makes a comparison among mega-cities and smaller cities about such disadvantaging characteristics as crime rates, air pollution, poverty levels, traffic congestion, land prices and etc. with some of the

advantages that give cities more services, job opportunities, education, and health facilities. Gilbert shows that relationships between sizes and the benefits and troubles which urban growth produces are not reliable and not always clear. For instance, some of the world's mega-cities like New York, Rio, and Los Angeles can be identified for their terrible crime rates but other mega-cities such as Tokyo and Shanghai do not have such big crime problems. Hence, it is not possible to generalize the critical disadvantages of mega-cities, because there are great differences even within just one category of problem. Making a comparison analysis of such variables as job opportunities, food, water and energy supply, education, health and etc., the author assumes that "urban problems are not generally worse in giant cities, except possibly with respect to traffic congestion, land prices, and crime...however, [...] size is likely to affect different variables and different groups in different ways" (Gilbert, 1996, p.4). Also he claimed that "both rich and poor are treated better rather than their cousins" in smaller cities (Gilbert, 1996, p.4).

Gilbert also assumes some recommendations for authorities of mega-cities in Latin America according to the problems described above. First, he argues that attention must be drawn in the area of public administration, especially when giant cities are spreading into neighboring areas. This particular problem will be discussed in relation to Bogotá's slums later in this research. Second, Gilbert establishes the problem of local democracy and that "it is difficult for governments to consult their populations in smaller cities but it is particularly difficult in a city of, say, 15 million people" (Gilbert, 1996, p.10). Finally, he considers that the issues of social equity are more problematic in giant cities. High-income inequality and big distances of mega-cities provides preconditions



for segregation within the population. These conditions continue to separate rich and poor to live further from one another. However, speaking about residential segregation, Gilbert claimed that “the pattern of segregation today is much more complicated than in the past” (Gilbert, 1996).

Other paper produced by members of IIED’s Human Settlements group McGranahan and Satterthwaite. Their work “Urbanization concepts and trends” provides critical perspective on understanding urbanization among international development researchers. They argue that the considerable confusion grew up over what urbanization is, which features it has in today world and which appropriate actions should to be done to reply responsibly on this process. Authors discuss common mistakes of the usage of terms *urban* and *urbanization* in the world. For instance, judged by official data and standard demographic definitions, they demolish two common mistakes; Africa is not the fastest region of urbanization, but Asia is; and that the rate of urbanization was not increasing in low-income countries, because, actually, it was decreasing for the past decades (McGranahan & Satterthwaite, 2014). In general, this knowledge reviewed what researchers know about urbanization today, and the fact that there are three main confusions about urbanization. First, varying definitions of “urban” are extremely diverse among the countries and even United Nations statistics, which lead to cases where inappropriate statistics on urban populations and population shares creates inappropriate definition of urban. Second, there are different definitions of “urbanization,” which sometimes reveal misunderstandings between researches about differences between urbanization level, or the urban population share, with urban population growth, which

means different processes. Finally, there is no stable reliance on census data and simplified urban projection techniques, which in low-income countries rely on censuses conducted once a decade. In United Nations such projections remains relatively simple and don't assume changes in, for instance, economic circumstances. Researchers also indicate that the main concern about urban growth and urbanization around the world is not about "to control an urban explosion, but to manage an urban transition" (McGranahan & Satterthwaite, 2014, p. 5). They also claim that *pari passu* importance of urbanization, steps must be made towards facing that the traditional urban/rural dichotomy is changing and revealing blurred boundaries between rural and urban. While boundaries between rural and urban lifestyles are also eroding, in-migrants from rural gaining an access for urban benefits, frequently could be found among excluded low-income populations of cities, even so urban policies should require more than just an open-door policy. Authors claim that there are many advantages that urban agglomeration offer but "some of the most important advantages require urban infrastructure, policies, and planning that support the transition to [...] sustainable city" (McGranahan & Satterthwaite, 2014, p. 5 ).

A synthesis paper by Frota (2008) gives examples of importance of social protection among other promotional policies gaining local development within low-income urban settlements. Author claims that access to social protection and local development in urban areas in combination could give good results in improving conditions of urban poor. Author argues that appropriate living standards could not be achieved just through income activities or savings, but could be maintained through

social security mechanisms. Frota explains that in general, urban poor only have access to low-income jobs, poor housing, living conditions are excluded from many social and economic rights, hence, are more influenced by social risks. For instance, women, because they frequently bounded by childcare and other informal care activities, lack the appropriate support and are not able to fully participate in the economic life of the city. Social protection could relieve women from some of her daily activities and allow her participate in more productive activities. In addition, urban poor workers are vulnerable for catastrophic “out-of-pockets-payments” which could rely to health problems. Author discusses how social protection can exclude cases when micro-entrepreneurs from poor neighborhoods are failed to pay their loans because of such “out-of-pockets-payments.” Thus, social protection can offer poor settlements possibility to improve the human, physical and cognitive capital of direct beneficiaries or relatives. Finally, the author argues that social protection reply to the main problems of vulnerability of urban poor and allows them to achieve better performance in labor market what in some case geographically bounds with local development.

Huchzermeyer (2011) illuminates the issue of conversation on slums in different regional perspectives. Speculating about genesis of term ‘slum,’ the author provides vital information about regional differences in perspectives on slum issue; “It should be noted that a ‘return’ of the term *favela* (or ‘slum,’ for that matter) does not apply to Latin America....the word ‘slum,’ universalized as it is in the Anglophone world, does not have a direct equivalent in the Latin American discourse,” (Huchzermeyer, 2011, p. 19). In addition, this paper provides wide research on theme about ‘urban competitiveness’

which this author believes is the most influential within the life of informal settlements of slums. The discussion of this paper made within the context of urban slums of Africa, but also could provide a vital example for research within the context of urban slums of Latin America. The detailed analysis of the South African situation focused on observation of approaches “to stop eradication in slums areas and challenges which these approaches meet,”(Huchzermeyer, 2011, p. 243). This paper is based on author’s experience within a local network of organized informal settlement dwellers, housing rights activists and human rights lawyers. The main scientific approach of this research is to explore campaigns and urban policy conducted within African cities and the perspectives of global forces on such campaigns. The main argument the author makes is that the case of eradicating or “cleaning” urban areas from poor communities are common amid policy makers and urban planners instead of rational understanding that it is not the avenue to improve slums areas.

Linn (2010) makes a scoping exercise to explore all slum issues: past, since World Development Report in 1979, which addressed some of them; their changes during the time, present and future. The issues are also categorized by its relevance, actuality and complexity for today and grouped by challenges, instruments, analytical and planning tools, data and benchmarks, regions and institutions. Linn also highlights the most potential, high-priority research initiatives on urban poverty as challenging, like issues about employment, women/children/youth; as comprehensiveness in conducting upgrading programs; as impact evaluation and planning-tools issues. Lastly, a

recommendation was provided, that by using different regional focus on slums issues, for instance, in case of Bogotá or other large cities use the specific city studies.

To conclude, slums are viewed as a tremendous problem in today world. Slum research is a wide field, which crosses political, economical, social and other disciplines. Nevertheless, these studies, including ones reviewed above, are still not ready to give a specific answer to the many questions related to slums. The UN-Habitat (2003) is the best prove to for this claim.

That is why this particular research about slums of Bogotá shows that this area encompasses a variety of issues, which must take more than a several studies. The discussion about urban space and slums of Bogotá includes so many spatial, political, economic, and historical peculiarities that it by the right took place in many cross-disciplinary studies. One of the key parts of slum studies is devoted to the gender question.

#### Gender Question in Slums Observations

There are many studies discussing troubles and disadvantages faced by individuals from poor communities through perspective as gender and social discrimination issues. Swanson (2007, 2010) examines the issues of hardship and disadvantages of women from poor communities in Latin America. The study is devoted to problems indigenous women and children from Ecuador poor communities based on the vast amount of fieldwork looking at women and children begging in the streets of Quito. Most of information was collected by taking interviews with indigenous women

and children, and with community members, politicians, academics, social workers, etc. The research devoted to issues surrounding indigenous women and children in Ecuador provide vital information for this particular thesis because it has a narrow view on life conditions and concerns of individuals which living “within the confines of a capitalist market economy and a racist social structure” (Swanson, 2010, p.56) are most vulnerable individuals - are women and children. During research it was revealed that not just women from poor indigenous communities which are posed at the bottom of racial and social hierarchies and regularly in danger of physically and sexual assault but also white-mestizo women, “unlike men, rarely loiter in public spaces....women are subjected to sometimes threatening sexual harassment when alone in public” (Swanson, 2010, p.59), which proves much bigger vulnerability of women within racialized, gender discriminated and hierarchic society.

Mathur (2008) conducted research of socio-cultural determinants to women's health status in Rajasthan in the light if the current policies and programs affecting women's health. The Rajasthan state in India was chosen to illustrate a clear neglect to women's health. Some emerging challenges are highlighted and the author argues for changing in state policy within this aspect. Via this research, it was found that the burden of poor reproductive health falls most heavily on the poorest women and their families, for whom it is harder to respond for its consequences. There are also clear evidences that nutritional status of women and girls in Rajasthan has positive relationship with gender inequalities cutting across different strata of society. Poor conditions of dwellers such as poor utility services, lack of nutrition of food, poor medical services and care make worse

for women reproductive health. However, it was argued that the lack of power to receive responsible behavior from their sexual partners also cause additional risks for women health. As a result, it was suggested for state's health policy focus on converging social determinants of health, such as access to primary education, provisioning of adequate safe drinking water, sanitation and nutrition, privacy while bathing, toilet facilities in rural areas (Mathur, 2008). In addition, the author claims that the achievement of the goals of women's empowerment and gender equity would go a long way in improving women's health status.

Harvesting Feminist Knowledge for Public Policy (2011) is a volume, which brings 14 works of feminist thinkers from different parts of the world, where authors discuss current patterns of social-economical and policy problems, and argue about changes, which must be made to gain equity and sustainability for different communities. These works reflect socioeconomic experiences of women in different development countries, and discuss show the achievement of gender equity could not be provided separately from the discussion to promote "equal world for all." Within Harvesting Feminist Knowledge many issues regarding labor, production and policies trends which can be changed to achieve equitable wealth and jobs around the world, are revealed. One of the feminist researchers, Beneria, highlights trends of contemporary challenges regarding labor market trends and growth of informal economy in developing countries. She argues that "the acceptance of informal economy has some challenges due to issue that it relates more for cheap labor and does not provide decent work" (Elson & Jain, 2011, p.71). She discussed that the improvement of women labor conditions in informal

economy needs build new macroeconomic policies instead just supporting women in their conditions (Elson & Jain 2011).

Jhabvala describes how gender becomes a part of divisions of labor and leads to over-representation women among poor. The author also provides some statements how to improve this situation. Jhabvala discusses a place of women in contemporary economic and labor participation via issues of gender inequity. Also this study displays how poor women can achieve empowerment and economic justice through organizing. The study proves that the feeling of powerlessness is strong in the poor because of their everyday struggle to survive fighting with big economic and social forces, and thus, it becomes more emerging among poor women who need to fight with these forces also within their households. Hence, empowerment through organizing plays important role, allowing powerless to feel that they can change their conditions and control their lives. Jhabvala also separates focus between women arguing that even there were achieved many improvements in women's position around the world and even some developing countries, "the conditions for most of the women remain bleak" (Elson & Jain, 2011, p.50), especially, when the question is about informal labor. Informal labor is the larger source of work for women than men in developing world. Hence, the majority of poor women, who still are working in the least remunerative and most physically damaging areas of the economy, remain discriminated and vulnerable. The research on this topic reveal that in India 96% of all women workers are informal, in Latin America 58% of women workers are informal in comparison to 48 % of informal men workers, 84% of women compared to 63% of men in sub-Saharan Africa and 73% of women compared to



70% of men in Asia (Elson & Jain, 2011). There is also a tendency in most sector of economy to provide lowest payment, leaving the lowest technology jobs to women and pay women less than men even for the same work. As way to improve such situation, women are found to collect in trade unions and cooperatives, which were explored all over India, during this research. Women are found organizing around wide range of issues, from environmental-related issues to microfinance. However, the author argues that despite the importance of women's organizations, which are gaining to deal with important issues, their work often stays invisible in mainstream development circles, and is not written too much about them.

To make the assumption that having money is empowering, many women were found in India to organize in microfinance movements, which allow them and their communities to develop through microfinance loans. In addition, women that are equal with men are presented in Community based organizations (CBOs), which are working under developing access to basic facilities in slums. Frequently women, especially poor women, are leaders of organizing processes, which lead to invention of new forms of organizing. Speaking about new form of organizing so-called the "people's movement," which usually has no structure, but organizing against dispossession, "women are likely to be involved in this long drawn-out protests," what author links with bigger awareness of women about lands and their homes, because they are rooted stronger to them than men (Elson & Jain, 2011, p. 125).

On their way to organizing, women face many barriers where the most powerful barrier is a fear, claims Elson and Jain (2011). It goes from the conditions where women

grow, from attitudes towards women, which result in a lack of value of women's rights; from a position of deference to male position (Graham, G.J.K., 2008). It leads to "a sense of helplessness among women" that makes it harder for them to take their lives into their own hands (Elson & Jain, 2011, p.55). One of other barriers, which occurs on the way to organizing, is women's lack of knowledge or skills. Here help comes from many NGOs who are gaining literacy developing and overcome this barrier (Elson & Jain, 2011).

Another group of researchers conducted investigation in slums of an African city. Research titled "Sexual risk-taking in the slums of Nairobi, Kenya, 1993-98" related to emerging urban developments in Africa, which include rapid urbanization amid poverty and the urban character of the HIV/AIDS epidemic (Chika-Ezeh, Dodoo & Zulu, 2002). In this paper authors argue that poor economic conditions within urban areas are "increasing the likelihood that women, especially adolescents, will engage in risky sexual behavior that encourages the spread of HIV/AIDS" (Chika-Ezeh et al., 2002, p.311), which is supported in many existing studies. Describing the situation in Africa, they point out that due to urban boom in Africa, together with marked economic stagnation, many of new citizens will be poor in-migrants from inner country and will be pushed to live on the edge of the city in slums. They argue that because of economic poverty in general, city policies are not able to manage this growth adequately which has led to the exacerbation of problems by inability to provide the new poor with jobs and access to city services, *pari passu* with health and family planning services. Hence, such situation sometimes forces slums residents to search for other ways to improve their economic conditions. Investigators also found that women living in slums are driven by poverty and

economical desperate to rely on sexual relation to earn sufficient money, which meet personal, needs. Also, the point that this is due to such conditions that “men exploit women’s desperation by offering them token sums of money (sometimes as little as 15 cents) for sexual intercourse” (Chika-Ezeh et al., 2002, p.313), what can prove women's vulnerability in slum conditions. Also from previous findings author discover that slums where economic stresses, social acceptance of prostitution and housing conditions without ability to assure privacy for sexual intercourse force children and preadolescents to enter into very early sexual intercourse. Finally, this research showed that slum dwellers are more disadvantaged than city residents are, what especially were found about female slum dwellers. The result also presented that despite equal knowledge of HIV/AIDS and condoms among slum residents and their non-slum counterparts, slum women were found more vulnerable to HIV/AIDS infection, what can be explained by reasons of general vulnerability of women within the slum, which were described above. It is important to mention that conducted analysis had one interesting limitation which was a lack of data on men. This is because fewer interviewed men are interviewed in Demographic Health Surveys (DHS), despite that fact that “it is usually a men introduce the HIV virus into marital unions,” claim authors (Chika-Ezeh et al., 2002, p.314).

Most of the studies reviewed above related to the poor women life conditions in developing countries. Some of them describe the issue within particular slum or particular urban area, but all of them point that the gender inequity influence dramatically on societies, especially within such undeveloped and poor areas as slums. The studies show how women become more vulnerable within these areas, where traditions and stiff

social institutions, lack of education, poor economic conditions, high insecurity, etc., put great pressure on women's life, their health, economic empowerment and opportunities. They describe how mostly marginalized and segregated areas of slums with lack of resources for its settlements reduce opportunities for redevelopment of these areas through gender inequity. While the great number of studies highlights the main problems of slums, others discover actions of governmental and non- governmental organizations which are gaining to improve slums conditions.

#### NGO Projects Conducted in Latin American Slums

A comprehensive analysis of NGO work in slums conditions was made by UN-Habitat Report in 2003 (see also McFarlane, 2012a, McFarlane, 2012b and Nagar & Raju, 2003). It also described policy developments, which were implemented in cities with slums. The report claimed that first policies dealing with slums were implemented in developed countries in the late 19th century (UN-Habitat, 2003). In the 1990s, many governments stated that there are going to eliminate slums and fight with inequity in whole within their cities. Thus, many countries were able to use previous European experience, when starting to develop their own low-income housing policies for expanding slums in their cities. Policies for gaining provisions of public-sector housing for slums households as first attempt to solve problem of slums, have also been emphasized. In places where public housing provisions were successful, this was because these governments were ready to separate out some capital from national income to meet housing costs. Such programs were presented through housing sales and rents, and locations of successful examples would be of Singapore, and through lobbying by private

developers in Asia and Middle East. However, in general, the practice of housing provision by government and non-governmental organizations (NGO) are not common in the developing world. “The real test of demand-side subsidies in developing countries has come with large-scale cash grant schemes in Chile and South Africa [...] and elements of the scheme later spread to Colombia, Costa Rica, Ecuador and Panama,” authors affirm (UN-Habitat, 2003, p.127).

In addition, a point was made that some clear changes in accepted ideas about more influential and sustainable approaches that can be used to deal with slums. For instance, educational and cultural issues, which before were discredited from perspective as enough influential values, are necessary for low-income household’s development. However, today, this is examined by developers afresh, even such forms as instilling hygiene knowledge among slum dwellers.

Authors also make an important remark about negligence towards slums which was prevalent in the developing countries until the early 1970s, that was based on the assumption that slums are illegal territories and are “an unavoidable but temporary phenomenon” (UN-Habitat, 2003, p.129). Hence, instead of upgrading or integrating slum territories, they were marked as blank spots of undeveloped land, while most developing countries were trying heavily subsidized low-cost housing programs as response to housing needs of poor. As result, these needs have not been met due to high cost of programs, even though most of developing countries were suffering from post-independence economic constraints. Hence, authors argue that “the accepted best

practice for housing interventions in developing countries is now participatory slum improvement” (UN-Habitat, 2003, p.132).

Among different programs and organizations, which gain slum-upgrading allocate community-based organization (CBO) and non-governmental organization (NGO). They argue that CBOs “reflect the heterogeneous nature of slum populations and their interests and needs” (UN-Habitat, 2003, p.151). CBOs can be informal or semi-official, but in most of the cases, they are not profit-making organizations. They can be presented as local development organizations, which introduce inner community or interests associations, such as women clubs. Also authors claim that such organizations were widespread in Latin America since the 1980s and mainly addressed basic family consumption needs and income requirements.

Non-governmental organization (NGO) was defined in the UN-Habitat report as “organization[s] that is the opposite of a government organization - independent from the state and state authority” (UN-Habitat, 2003, p.153). However, authors argue that this definition is too simplistic and misleading because NGOs and their diverse activities including blurred connection between governmental and non-governmental organizations, which can be too complicated. Authors also cite the commonly accepted definition of NGO which says that they are “largely or entirely autonomous from central government funding and control: emanating from civil society...or from political impulses beyond state control and direction” (UN-Habitat, 2003, p.154).

Over the last forty years Northern, Southern, transnational and international NGOs grew incredibly in numbers and their capacity to work with people and sectors. Their projects changed from rural to small groups into focusing on health, education and housing provision for millions people who are mostly dwellers of cities and slums. Today their main roles are: to improve connections between state and citizens, support micro-enterprises development and to, “promote political rights and civil liberties and provide legal aid, especially to women’s CBO” (UN-Habitat, 2003, p.156). Some of the NGOs are just specialized on particular activities. NGOs of Northern hemisphere act more as channels, which concatenated huge amount of money with their Southern counterparts. In general, authors argue that today, “NGOs have become a key player in service delivery and the process of democratization,” but “NGO[s] become more responsive to their funders than to poor men and women” (UN-Habitat, p.158). However, the relationships between NGOs and government are still comprehensive. NGOs usually imply two relationships with the state: through active opposition or through filling the gaps of state’s services to civilians. Authors claim that despite NGOs having access to many levels of influence on state, and some governments still trying “to make life difficult for NGOs,” the relationship between the institutions has become much closer in the last two decades, and at times too close, raising a number of potential problems such as NGOs autonomy from state). In addition, it must be mentioned that NGOs and CBOs are still under severe criticism, political attacks and even physical assaults to it employees. Competition amid NGOs and CBOs for the government grants are also increasing. Additional challenge comes from that NGOs and CBOs have failed to produce their

services evenly across space, “leaving some slum settlements, neighborhoods, towns or whole regions to fend themselves, depending upon self-help strategies that their inhabitants can devise and on what weak governments can provide” (UN-Habitat, p.161). Their work sometimes oriented to reach those who can be lifted from poverty easily, rather than work with the very poor.

Kamal and Pyati (2012) and Pyati (2012) describe how NGOs work in India, narrowing their projects there to library development and promoting general educational provision for the poor through it. It is argued that public libraries development is important because through literacy, it “promotes human capacity development for marginalized communities in India,” and that “NGOs can be effective delivery mechanism” in this issue (Kamal & Pyati, 2012, p. 291). They claim that NGO library project goal is to reach underserved areas that state-run public library system neglects. It is believed to be an important remark that NGO landscape in India is uneven and vary in its goals. They distinguish between NGOs devoted to elitist’s issues and concerns about transparency and citizens’ rights, and NGOs working on the needs of the poor. The case study observes how NGOs and its grassroots organizations promote “the development of reading habits in Indian children” (Kamal & Pyati, 2012, p. 293). Also authors argue that libraries as a part of development agenda can help NGOs to reach different community members such as stay-at-home mothers, children, the unemployed, and schools drop-outs, to name a few. This brings something vital for community and its future. Finally, authors claim that despite importance of role of NGOs in libraries development in India, these organizations experience problems with “sustainability, accountability and governance”



and just with enhance of government libraries programmers it can serve for the largest number of public successfully.

In addition, it is important to say that beside the importance of NGOs, the role of CBO is usually underestimated. However, this depends in what capacity the organization is providing services to the poor. CBOs usually work directly with poor members of its communities, which was mentioned in UN-Habitat report 2003, at the same time there are disadvantaged in monetary and informational resources by the sources of community, and frequently have to apply for support of NGOs or other CBOs (UN-Habitat, 2003 ). Other problems of CBOs are discussed in research conducted in the poor community in Brazil. De Vries and Koster (2012) examine community leaders' work and problems of slum politics. They argue that slum politics are "tied to the time of the slum and its needs and aspirations," while government politics is tied to the time of projects and programs (De Vries & Koster, 2012, p.96). In addition, they claim that the understanding of slum politics is urgent in today world where poverty and slums are one of the biggest concerns.

The studies reviewed above are mostly devoted to the description of actions which different organizations make to redevelop slums and help settlements gain empowerment and increase life conditions. They describe which peculiarities and problems occur on the way to develop projects by NGOs, CBOs and government officials. In addition, literature shows that among others, NGOs are relatively powerful and organized structures, which are institutions with wide network of grassroots organizations promising resources for monetary, information and labor support of its projects. In this case study I would like to pay attention of how these organizations

influence the improvement of women's prosperities within the slums of Bogotá through their development projects. To better understanding of how these projects in Bogotá, it is necessary to describe a general overview of literature about urban space, and how formal territories are interacting with informal or underdeveloped slums.

#### Overview of 'Barrios Pobres' in Bogotá

The first look at Bogotá D.C. includes its underdeveloped areas, which are important to comprehend, as these urban spaces have specific peculiarities. Gilbert (1996) highlights dramatic distinctions of Bogotá and other Latin American capitals: (1) Bogotá is not a dominant city in Colombia; (2) its population was growing rapidly during 1980 and still growing; (3) "good national management kept the level of external debt down," while attracted foreign capital "helped to maintain a thoroughly respectable rate of economic growth"(Gilbert, 1996, p.5); (4) the economy of the city did not suffer from opening up the national economy to foreign competition; being not a major center, Bogotá experienced some job lost but it was incomparable to Mexico City experience; and finally, (5) most citizens seem to improve their quality of life in recent decades, what is not typical for other metropolitan cities in Latin America (Gilbert, 1996). However, he claims that at the same time Bogotá has many problems, which are typical for other Latin American cities: challenges to provide jobs for growing population, high number of *Bogotáños* who live in poverty and overcrowded conditions, traffic conjunction and environmental problems.

In respect to population, Flinn (1970), Gilbert (1996) and Salcedo (2006) discussed that the key element of urban growth was migration from all over Colombia and the neighboring regions of Cundinamarca, Boyacá and Tolima during 1930-60s. In addition, the ratio of women to men was estimated at 100 to 77 in 1951. Today natural increase surpasses migration growth due to relatively high percent of young adults who are likely to have children. Despite this, fertility rates were declining during 1964-1985 period, when life expectancy increased, which reduced demands on education system, but created an emerging demand on jobs. In general, the gross labor participation rate rose and important changes were made by women, who rose their participation from 36 per cent in 1976 to 50 per cent in 1995 compared with a relatively small rise in the male rate” (Gilbert, 1996, p.5), and in 2012 it was recorded that women participation doubled (Gomez, 2012). Despite this, Gilbert claims that rapid growth did not reduce the capacity of labor market. The author argues that in comparison with Medellin and other major Caribbean cities, unemployment rate in Bogotá was less severe and even fell during 90s (Gilbert, 1996). Speculating about poverty levels, author notices that Bogotá “has less poverty than other Colombian cities,” and in the last three decades the quality of life has definitely improved (Gilbert, 1996, p. 7).

The shape of the city is undoubtedly important thing to investigate. Urban areas of Bogotá were gradually spilling across Bogotá’s administrative boundaries, which caused the absorption of six municipalities in the Special District gaining better governance. Nevertheless, Bogotá’s continuing spread reached Soacha by 1960 and “is now absorbing substantial parts of Cajica, Chia, Cota and Mosquera” (Gilbert 1996, p.8).

The review of maps and literature sources related to Bogotá's urban space (Gilbert 1996, Dureau 2002, DANE, 2005) shows that it has experienced rapid growth during the whole twentieth century and continues its growth today. The urban sprawl has been supported by in-migration, issues of big population displacement related to a history of violence in Colombia, and by demographic changes which allow natural population growth. However, this study is interested in development and understanding how the urban sprawl of Bogotá related to slums formation and life conditions, which these areas offer to its settlement, especially women.

#### Women in Colombia's Slums

Literature related to examining slums conditions for the dwellers around the world have shown that women are more vulnerable living in slums (Chika-Ezeh et al., 2002, Mathur, 2008 & Swanson, 2007). It also shows that today many governmental and non-governmental organizations conduct projects and create movements to protect and empower women in slums. Colombia is not excluded from this movement, as many NGOs, local CBOs and local official organizations works to support this area. Their projects are related to: establishing of gender justice, helping women-refugees and many other problems related to women conditions in the country in general and in slums. Moreover, Bogotá has high rates of violence against women, “documented sexual offenses rose roughly fifty percent between 2003 and 2012, from about fourteen thousand to twenty-one thousand incidents,” claims Weiss (2014). That is why, today in Bogotá, many organizations work in gaining women's security and women empowerment in

Bogotá such as Sisma Mujer, CINEP and others. Some of these have been created by Bogotá's administration like Secretaria Districtal de la Mujer.

Today many local and foreign researchers conduct research about women's problems in Bogotá's slums in attempt to describe and understand reasons of disadvantaged conditions in the city. Some of them are related to women health and security from perspective of gender inequity and strong presence of *machismo* in Colombia. For example, "Meanings of sexuality and reproductive health in adolescents in Bogotá" (Elias et al., 2007) is a project conducted to improve understanding of problems related to these topics. Based on interviewing adolescents between 10 and 14 years in three different areas within the city, this research proved that social environment of Bogotá, with its particular cultural construction, provide differences in the understanding of gender meaning related to sexuality and reproductive health in the studied group. They claim, "Girls relate sexuality with reproduction and they experience it as negative. For boys, the possibility of a positive and pleasant experience of sexuality exists, marked by a context that encouraged having sexual relations as a way of maintaining manhood" (Elias et al., p. 9).

Other research relates to the issue of displaced women and refugees, which migrated with their families in big cities, like Bogotá, during long periods of armed conflicts between several armed groups in Colombia (Salcedo, 2006). This work investigates new conditions faced by displaced women and how they organize in supportive groups to seek justice and protection against war crimes and crimes within poor neighborhoods. "The tragedy of having disappeared, dead, or kidnapped loved once

has led many women to organize with the purpose of disarticulating the logic of war and promote life” (Salcedo, 2006, p.231), he claims.

However, displaced women and other women citizens of Bogotá continue to experience other ways of violence within their new homes. Today many media sources claims women experience high insecurity in Bogotá (Weiss, 2014). At the same time self-organized women are struggling to address officials to take immediate actions in reducing the crimes against women, claiming that policy makers are likely to get interested in situations when somebody from a wealthy neighborhood is attacked instead of provide policy to protect all social classes (Weiss, 2014). That means that poor women are more vulnerable are facing situations of violence and disfiguring without the prospect of justice in Colombia. Gaining social empowerment through organizations could be the one of the way for poor women to claim in local and national level about incapability of today’s legislation in Colombia to protect them from violence.

Contemporary studies describe a lot of issues about violence and insecurity in slums of Bogotá, but there is not enough attention given to avenues that women choose to improve their conditions, and the mechanisms of collaboration with NGOs and responsible governmental organizations. I believe such issues should be highlighted in this research via interviews with professionals, which have had experience working under these issues in Bogotá’s slums, who could be as members of administration, as members of different NGOs and CBOs.

## CHAPTER 2

### METHODOLOGY

#### Research Design

This study is based on recent field research, which I have conducted. It provides insights into challenges women are facing within the slums of Bogotá, and NGO-supported and non-NGO coping strategies to improve women empowerment and emancipation. The qualitative research methods employed in this field research include face-to-face semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation. The data collection process was conducted around Bogotá Capital District and Soacha municipality and was divided between two research trips in July-August and November in 2014, totaling eight weeks of field research.

Phase 1 of the field study (July-August 2014) included building general familiarity with the study area, establishing local connections and conducting preliminary interviews with key gatekeepers of information. Due to little initial familiarity with the research region, it was decided to use snowball-sampling strategy to expand the sample. Hence, I started Phase 1 by having several meetings with specialists from local universities and administration office of Bogotá, which were employed as gatekeepers of information. It was planned to conduct 10 interviews of local researchers, social workers, government officials and NGOs' members, which were chosen as key-informants.

Phase 2 was occurred in November 2014 and consisted of collecting the main part of interviews. With help of established connections, I broadened my participant selection

and connected with new informants. In addition, took three field trips inside slums areas –Ciudad Bolivar, Bosa and Usme. These three trips deepened my understanding about real image of slums physical space. They also provide me with new information through interviews with my guides, who were working in these neighborhoods.

By the end of these two phases of fieldwork in Colombia, I collected vital information via 8 interviews with local researchers, social workers, government officials and NGOs' members as key-informants. It must be mentioned that the added benefit of face-to-face interviews with Colombian scholars provided the access to the existing literature related to my study. In addition, I collected several notes and photographs, which I took during trips around Bogotá's urban and metropolitan area.

### Terminology

However, the term 'slum' is not a favorable today. According to Gilbert the term slums unintentionally supports negative stereotypes about slums dwellers. He shows a concern that many researchers create dangerous stereotype that consider slums dwellers not just like a people living in poor housing conditions, but also as a "people with personal defects" (Gilbert, 2007), which creates support to commonly used negative connotation about slums and its inhabitants. But here the term 'slum' is useful to simplify and generalize main characteristics of these areas and use in further investigations toward the goal of my research.

In case of Latin America term 'slum' does not apply directly. Because of its unification in the Anglophone world, and does have equivalent as term *favela* in



Portuguese speaking countries of Latin America as Brazil and ‘barrios’ in Spanish speaking countries as Colombia (Huchzermeyer, 2011). The name of these poor urban neighborhoods mostly defines by local authorities and varies from place to place (Un-Habitat, 2003).

Therefore, I planned to begin the research from creating suitable definition of Bogotá’s slums. To reflect the contemporary knowledge about these areas I decided to attach definitions, which are in use among researchers and professionals working under improvement of slums neighborhoods in Bogotá provide. To obtain this information I have done several interviews with local researchers, social worker, government officials and NGOs’ members.

### Interviews and Participant Selection

Qualitative research is the most frequent approach used across most subfields of human geography (Warf, 2006). It requires both a series of techniques and group approaches to research. Qualitative research is an important tool of human geography, which implies combination of theoretical, methodological, and philosophical perspectives to research that together gain to answered research questions (Bradley & Harrell, 2009).

The semantics of traditional academic disciplines, which includes qualitative research methods, are wary. To consider difference in the approach to the source of data and distinguish between *informants*, *subjects*, *respondents*, and *actors*. Some researchers also distinguish between informants with subjects, respondents, and actors. In qualitative research, subjects are used to test hypotheses. The researcher builds a hypothesis and

through utilizing, the scientific theory will deny or confirm that hypothesis. Respondents answer to researcher's questions or complete questionnaire, which were built in researcher's semantics. In the process of work with actors, the researcher is unable or unwilling to involve himself. The researcher just observes actors. Concerning informants, the researcher derives his hypothesis learning from how things are defined and categorized by an informant (Bradley & Harrell, 2009). Critical distinction makes it important to distinguish the approach to the source of data for this particular research. Based on posited objectives of this study it was necessary to use both generic classes of quality research techniques: *interviewing* and *observations* (Kitchin & Tate, 2000). Hence, in this particular research I collected data based on using definitions and considerations of the informant (interviewing) and observing actors (observations).

Concerning the first technique, I chose to conduct semi-structured interviews, which would allow the researcher to collect detailed information in a style that is somewhat conversational and to explore deeply into a topic through the answers provided (Clifford, French & Valentine, 2010). In this kind of interview, the questionnaires are guiding the topics, which must be covered for research. Bradley and Harrell (2009) explain:

The interviewer has some discretion about the order and in which questions are asked but the questions are standardized, and probes may be provided to ensure that the researcher covers the correct material.

Table 1 makes an example of techniques described above which I used to construct questions for my semi-structured interviews.

Table 1. *Example of question construction.*

Initial question:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● How does your team (your specialists) determine spatial borders of slums ('barrios pobre') in Bogotá?</li> </ul>
PROBE:	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Which specific characteristics of space tell your team that it is a slum?</li> <li>● Are there any specific techniques, which your team apply?</li> <li>● Whether official data of Bogotá's administration helps you team to determine slums areas?</li> </ul>

Secondly, in my fieldwork around Bogotá's urban and metropolitan areas I used the technique so-called as *non-participant* observations. This technique is equal to *participant* observations asking a question "what else might be going on here?" This promotes questioning of subjective judgments, but recognition of multiple rather than singular realities. However, differing from participant observation, the researchers observe the study area passively and do not interact with surroundings, "although their very presence may affect participants' attitude and activities through 'the Hawthorne effect' " (Kitchin & Tate, 2000, p.123). Thus, my non-participant observation was made mainly through making notes and taking photographs of entourage.

The important part of any qualitative research based on semi-structured interviews is to determine a sample. During the Phase 1, I was using *Cluster sampling* which help to

focus on specific groups of population. For example, I decided from the beginning to conduct interviews with local geographers which concerning their specialization were able to provide me with vital information about their perspectives on slums issues in Bogotá. In addition, I used *Opportunity sampling*, which allows using information from opportunities as they arise and interviewing individuals that were not planned. However, most interviews were caused by applying the *snowball-sampling* strategy to expand the pool of participants. This would then include various researchers, employees of Bogotá administration and NGO workers, which could present vital information for the case study. *Snowball sampling* allow researchers to benefit from suggestions by participants through introducing another participant to the researcher (Bradley & Harrell, 2009).

Using semi-structured interviews, I collected data related to perspectives from different stakeholders (considered to be key informants) to improve understanding of the slum phenomenon in Bogotá. Also I was interested in information about challenges of slum dwellers, particularly women, and the role of various organizations attempting to improve conditions for women within the study area. Informants were selected considering three factors: (1) access to information about slum development projects and projects that work with slums women, (2) experiences of participation in investigation and projects related to women issues, and (3) the coordination of organizations (NGOs) aiming at increasing women security and empowerment. Table 2 provides information related to conducted interviews of key informants, their work specializations and experiences in particular slum in Bogotá.

The questionnaires were prepared according to participant's role (e.g., researcher, social worker or NGO member) and have repetition in Spanish to ensure that they will be understandable for participants and the answers will reflect information related to this study while still permitting the freedom and flexibility in using unexpected avenues in discussion of the relatively uncharted area (see the basic questionnaires in Appendix A, B, C).

Table 2. *Participants' specializations and area of work.*

Participant's specialization	Participant Code	Type of project and organization	Name of neighborhood, where work or study were conducted
Administration official	A1	District Institute for Risk Management and Climate Change (IDIGER) of Bogotá, Projects "Caja de Vivienda Popular-CVP"	Tocaimita (Usme), Triangle-Corinth-Manantial (San Cristobal), Caracoli and Potosi in the area of Zanjones (Ciudad Bolívar), Altos de Cazuca in Soacha, Lisbon, Verona, Tibabuyes (Suba).
Researcher, volunteer for social project	RV1	Centro de Investigación y Educación Popular (CINEP)	San Cristobal Sur and Usme
Researcher, volunteer for social project	RV2	Universidad Nacional de Colombia	Ciudad Bolívar, San Cristobal and Bosa
Researcher	R1	Universidad Nacional de Colombia	Ciudad Bolívar, Usme and Bosa
Social worker	S1	"Node of Women and Gender" and social program of Universidad Nacional de	Usme

		Colombia	
Researcher, volunteer for social project	RV3	Universidad Nacional de Colombia	Ciudad Bolívar
Volunteer for social project, psychologist	V1	NGO “Accioncolectiva de objetores y objetoras de conciencia(ACOOOC)”	Ciudad Bolívar
Social worker	S2	Secretaría de lasMujeres	Ciudad Bolívar and Bosa

The specific method of data collection during interviews and field observations depended on the accessibility, representativeness and self-descriptiveness of participants. To develop the pool of interviewees, around sixty invitations were sent through emails and twenty appointments arranged with various informants. I conducted eight full interviews, both in English and Spanish with prevalent help of a simultaneous Spanish interpreter. Each interview lasted between forty to hundred twenty minutes in length, and all interviews were recorded and later transcribed.

### Field Observations

Field observations in Bogotá and its three main slums (Ciudad Bolívar, Bosa and Usme) were vital to combine self-reported data with first-hand observations of the slums as non-participant (Figure 2). While interviews were a rich source of contextual informant data, the observation provided insight into detailed conditions of daily activities in slums. Three biggest slums of Bogotá was visited in intensive field trips, each lasting around three hours, during which the physical space and activities were documented through notes and photographs. Great part of the information related to understanding slums daily activities, conditions and challenges is drawn from these observations.

This study was conducted in line with University of Northern Iowa ethical standards of research and have been approved by Institutional Review Board (IRB). Participants, which were invited for an interview, were fully informed about the nature of the study in their right to take a part, and their freedom to refuse cooperation. As another precautionary measure, every participant received a statement of informed consent prior to the interview, ensuring that they are aware of any potential risks. The information inquired in this study was generally of a non-sensitive nature and participants were given the option to remain anonymous. In addition, all questions used in the interviews were translated to Spanish, which is the native language for most of the interviewees, to allow the interviewees to be secure about the meaning of the question, and for the interviewer to be sure about accuracy of response.



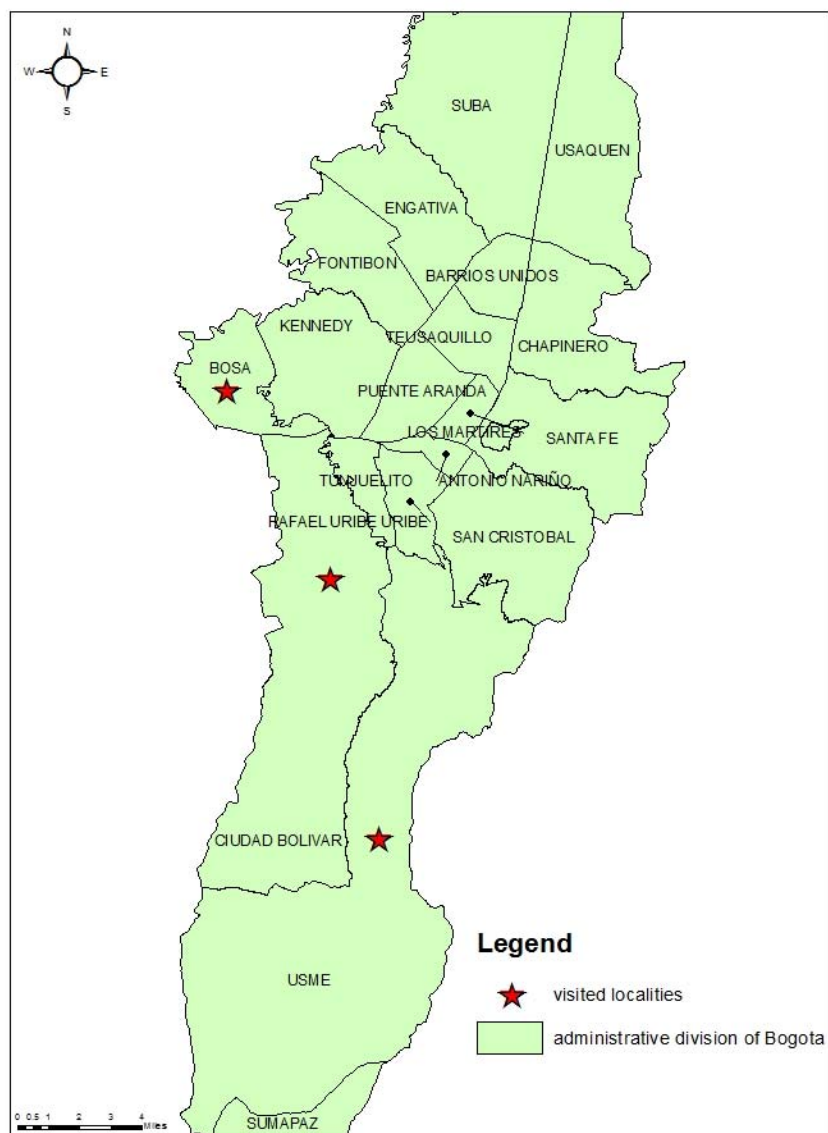
### Study Area Selection

Latin America's urbanization increased dramatically in the second part of 20<sup>th</sup> century (Gilbert, 1996), and the region still experiences rapid urban population growth. Bogotá, as the biggest city in Colombia, reflects most of the main problems related to this process such as rapid urban sprawl, where the biggest challenge is slum expansion through the city (Gilbert, 1996).

In addition, Colombia's civil history combined with long periods of civil violence and economic recessions have influenced on high poverty rates (Salcedo, 2006, UN-Habitat, 2003). Thus, Colombia and its capital in particular are critically important areas where research related to slums issues should be conducted to improve the understanding of the slum phenomenon.

The decision to undertake this particular case study was reached in the interest of developing understanding of the social and economic place of women and avenues to improve women empowerment and emancipation in the slums of Bogotá, which is so far an understudied phenomenon.

Specific areas of field observations were chosen relying on accessibility, safety and wishes of several participants to accompany author in certain slums. The separate observational trips were completed to three largest slums of Bogotá: Ciudad Bolívar, Bosa and Usme (see Figure 2).



Source: authors's own with ESRI shape files, 2015

*Figure 2.* Map of Bogotá with localities visited during non-participant field observations (by Ekaterina Korzh).

CHAPTER 3  
SPACES OF DISADVANTAGE:  
THE GEOGRAPHIES OF BOGOTÁ'S SLUMS  
Bogotá's Urban Space

First, to improve understanding of social and economic roles of women in the slums and the way through we which they gaining to improve their conditions and achieve empowerment, it is necessary to analysis of disadvantages and barriers that these urban areas create. For that, I believed that it is necessary to investigate the morphology, genesis and general characteristics of Bogotá slums, which distinguish them from other urban space and creates specific conditions for women to be able to gain and achieve empowerment.

Urban Sprawl of Bogotá in 20<sup>th</sup> Century

Once founded by Spanish in 1538 Bogotá occupied small area of green high plateau bordered to the east by the Eastern Cordillera of the Andes mountain range with plenty of water and space to expand (Gilbert, 1996). However, it became a large city just in the last sixty years. Bogotá's great and rapid expansion occurred in 1930-1960 and continues until today. In general, during 20 century Bogotá expanded through the green plateau and increased her urban space in seven times (Gilbert, 1996). In 1960, urban sprawl of Bogotá achieved boards of Soacha, and today it is absorbing Cajica, Chia, Cota and Mosquera municipalities. Figure 3 demonstrates urban expansion of Bogotá in 20<sup>th</sup> century (Dureau, 2002). Some researchers claim that growth of Bogotá in the middle of the century was primarily stimulated by in-migration, but in 1970s, it was more

contributed by natural increase of *Bogotános* (Gilbert, 1996). Other researches claim that even now Bogotá experience great flow of in-migrants from rural areas (Salcedo, 2006). UN-Habitat (2003) associates this demographic and urban growth with rural-to-urban migration, which was common for Latin American cities since the second half of the century, “in the wake of general impoverishment and violence” (UN-Habitat, 2003). However, Gilbert (1996) insists that Bogotá suffered little from economic recession and debt crisis of 1980s, and in contrast to other metropolises of Latin America *Bogotános* improved the quality of life in the period of its highest growth.

In contrast, many researchers whom I interviewed claimed that the main reason of Bogotá’s quick and uncontrolled expansion was great flow of refugees coming from all over the country and mostly from the neighboring departments of Cundinamarca, Boyaca and Tolima. These refugees were escaping from the violence of internal armed conflict in Colombia, which approximately began in 60s. According to Gilbert (1996) the women presented more among refugees in this period and “in 1951, Bogotá had 100 women to every 77 men in the 20-24 year age group.” In this respect, *Interviewee RVI* was claiming that such ratio can be explained by the fact that men usually were involved more in armed conflicts through military services, what left many of them dead, and their wives, daughters , etc., become took the role of head of the families instead. This low-intense war, which displaced millions of people since the late 1980s, today continues driving people out from their lands to such a big city as Bogotá in hope to find more secure home (Restrepo & Spagat, 2004).

Hence, Bogotá is atypical Latin American metropolis, which features economic and political development as problems related to rapid growth of urban population and its further urban sprawl through the administrative borders of neighboring municipalities. Many other factors make problem more complicated. There is a great number of refugees of Colombian armed conflict and lack of ability to offer housing for all newcomers. As a result, today expanded area of Bogotá consists of diverse urban settlements, however biggest part of it is slums. In addition, compare to slums or *favelas* of other Latin American large cities Bogotá has more complicated spatial pattern of slums.

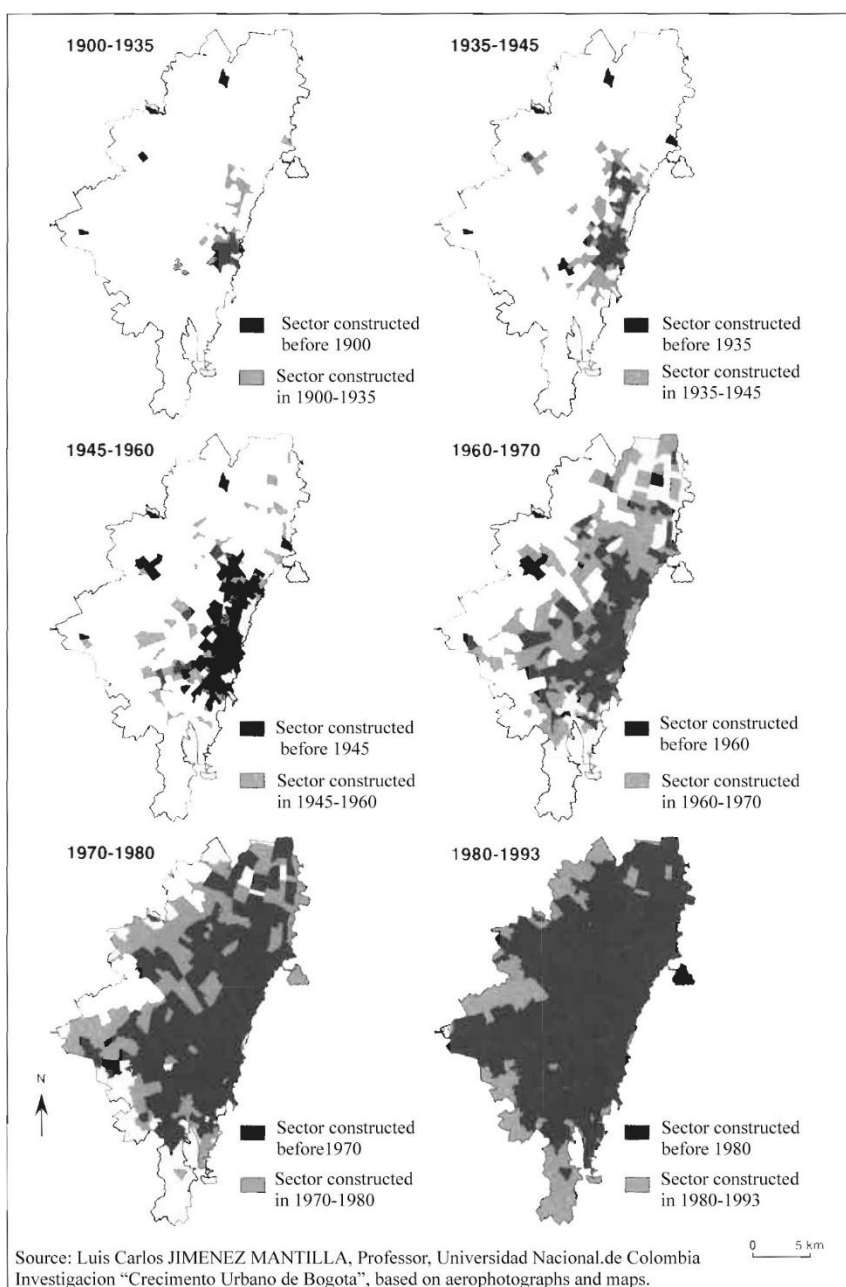


Figure 3. Urban sprawl of Bogotá during 20<sup>th</sup> century (Dureau, 2002)

### Defining Bogotá Slum Areas

Local researchers, who I interviewed in Bogotá, were confused about giving standard definition to slums, and other researchers and related literature around the world are not able to give it too. “That is the physical limitation within an urban area which attends in slums is a contended concept. You can identify the spatial border of slums but the social connection which occurs between slum area and surrounded regions make it hard to identify real slum’s borders,” noted *Interviewee R1*. In addition, *Interviewee A1* mentioned that the problem of defining slums neighborhoods and their boarders is related to weak difference between poor and middle poor slums settlements. In addition, the everyday work of neighborhoods communities, NGOs and other social groups working under improvement of slums conditions make these borders even more obscure and dynamic.

However, to my first question about how they determine spatial borders of slums in Bogotá all my interviewees reply with diverse sets of socio economical, spatial, official, nonofficial etc. indicators, which they refer to slums neighborhoods.

### Spatial Patterns of Slums

Slums conditions can be found in following Bogotá districts: Rafael Uribe Uribe, Tunjuelito, Bosa, Usaquén, Usme, Kennedy, Fontibón, Engativá, Barrios Unidos, Teusaquillo, Los Mártires, Antonio Nariño, Suba and etc; i.e. in almost all 20 localities of administrative division of Bogotá. However, *Interviewees RV1, RV2, RV3* inclined to an opinion that socio-economic characteristics of these neighborhoods are very diverse and do not allow understanding of spatial borders of slums, while historical spatial

segregation could be more helpful on this. “Initially Bogotá was growing in a bipolar fashion: the rich people are in the North, the poor – in the South” claimed one of the interviewed researchers, “Engativá, Bosa, Usaquén, Usme, Suba were small indigenous towns, but Spanish forced out the Native communities to leave the North areas and push them to the Southern parts of the plateau.” This historical movement left mark on today’s map of Bogotá: the elite groups locate more in the North, the poor - generally on the South. Bogotá was growing without planning and through conurbation from these small indigenous towns.

According to *Interviewee RV2*, today Ciudad Bolívar, Bosa and Usme are the main concentrations of poverty. Usaquén district is the most polarized where the richest and the poorest live together. The researchers continue to claim that borders of Bogotá’s slums is hard to define because of strong social, economic and spatial connections between poor districts and their much wealthier neighbors (Gilbert, 1996), but observations and maps of Bogotá’s socio economic stratification that the poorest and the poor settlements are prevalent on the South. For instance, the largest slum, Ciudad Bolívar, and its geographical sprawl on the neighboring department Soacha located to the south-south-west of Bogotá. Figure 4 displays a map of poor neighborhoods and evolution number of the poor percent, which was defined by administration of Bogotá. Darker red color displays continuous increase of the poor during 2003-2007.





*Interviewee RVI* noted that due to the lack of administrative control and the fact that Bogotá was growing mostly from old indigenous settlements, the areas between old city and other centers of polarization were mostly occupied without official planning and sometimes by invaders and squatters. Hence, today we can observe heavily dispersed pattern of slums around the city. “It can be such situation, that slightly to the west from San Cristobal (forth district of Bogotá by official spatial division) there are good planned private housing, bike paths and parks, but just across the street there are shanties,” replied *Interviewee RVI*.

In addition, at the edges of Bogotá there are areas where Capital District meets boarders of another Department, like in the case of the Soacha City, which administratively belongs to the Cundinamarca department. Mosquera, Funza or La Calera are neighborhoods related to Soacha, which have the same extensive poverty problems, and do not have any defined borders between them and Bogotá. Replying to this *Interviewee AI* pointed out, “Although, administrative limits on the maps are accurate, socially poverty is a phenomenon that transcends and transgresses the limits, which were determined by administration of both departments.” Consequently, although the maps separate urban areas of each city, social problems resulted from poverty in the city of Soacha uninterruptedly spread through the administrative border of Bogotá, and vice versa. As the result, these areas deal with poverty problems based on unilateral decisions by administration of one of the cities. “Bogotá does not intervene in the internal affairs of Soacha while in turn Soacha does not intervene in the internal affairs of Bogotá,” replied *my Interviewee AI*. However, recently officials made some steps toward solving

questions about shared social, economic and environmental problems among cities within common boundaries by proposing, designing and legalizing a concept of “metropolitan area.”

### Role of Government and Private Sectors in Defining Slums

As the above map shows (Figure 4), Bogotá’s administration understands the distribution of poverty through the city. The studies on the spatial location of poverty have been conducted regularly since the 1980s. Describing period of weak state control in urban planning of Bogotá, my *Interviewee RVI* pointed out, “It is noteworthy that in the 70s and 80s urbanization was very messy. Nevertheless, in 90s with the development of the 1991 Constitution all cities in Colombia became required to provide state control under expansion programs and urbanization, what also renewed interest to provision programs of urban planning in Bogotá.”

Therefore, detailed maps were created to display the location of the main characteristics associated to poverty, allowing determining of the precise families and neighborhoods that are eligible to be selected as “poor.” “Since 90s Bogotá’s administration obtains large geodatabases that determine exact location of families and neighborhoods in poverty,” replied *Interviewee AI*, “despite this, not enough actions were undertaken to provide necessary services and investment for these areas.” Moreover, many private organizations working under defining the most emerging areas and development of poverty within the city. Since the 80s many professors, universities, NGOs, analysts, contractors and foundations were working with determining of spatial limits to where “poverty” extends.

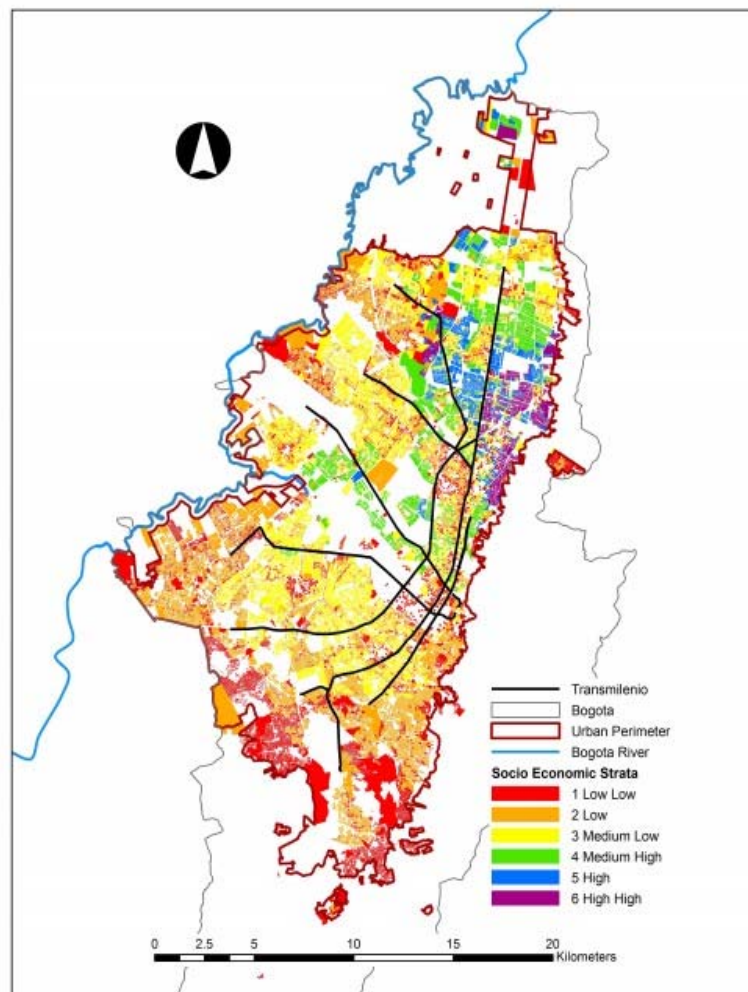
### “Estratos” in Bogotá

The most common way to define locations of “poor” families and neighborhoods is to use socio economic stratification of Bogotá. Social stratification in Bogotá was implemented in 80s and made into law in 1994 (Esbiorn & Perez, 2012). This classification was created to differentiate urban populations with different wages and allow subsidies for the poor and the poorest. The systems classifies areas on the scale from 1 to 6 where 6 is the richest. Thus, the people living in upper strata 5 and 6 pay more for utilities and housing, while groups from the lower strata pay less. In general, Bogotá consists more areas with strata 2, 3 and 4, which live mostly in the city’s periphery (see Figure 5). These areas could be defined as Bogotá’s slums.

### Socio-Economic Conditions of Slums

*Interviewees RV1, RV2 and RV3* were speaking about clear socio economic indicators, which help to define slum’s neighborhoods. Primarily they characterized by absence of basic services such as sewage, public space, social infrastructure as schools, hospitals, transportation etc. Moreover, the slums are strongly associated with presence of social problems such as high rates of criminal activity, insecurity and violence in the districts. Usually slums are main points of drug market in the city called *ollas*. “The main providers, sellers and consumers of drugs as marijuana, *basuca* or cocaine, occur there,” *Interviewee RV1* replied. Also such social problems as teenage pregnancy and sexual abuse have high rates in slums neighborhoods (Elias et al., 2007).

Hence, *Interviewee RV2* suggested the division of slums in Bogotá on several groups, using common characteristics related to socio economic conditions, transportation problems and criminal activity.



*Figure 5.* Map of socio economic stratification in Bogotá  
(Esbiorn & Perez, 2012)

For example, the slums on the periphery of Bogotá and in historical center as downtown Santa Fe (in particular neighborhood Ramirez) are the areas with common problems associated with poor public transport, and absence or lack of basic services. Lourdes, El Dorado and Egipto Verde are neighborhoods with bad criminal reputation, which continuously host drugs market dealers and *ollas*. This classification is another prove that it is hard to define the clear borders of slum neighborhoods. In some neighborhoods, there are no problems with social infrastructure or other public services, but they are characterizing with high crime rates and extensive drug markets. Another example mentioned in the interviews is about historical center of Bogotá, Lourdes UPZ (Unidades de Planeamiento Zonal), “Here people from different social groups live together: students, middle class, office and service workers, poor and rich; and at the same time this district is ‘tunnel of drugs,’ or so called ‘Bronx’ ” (see Figure 6, 7). In the south of Bogotá, there is a different situation. The diversity of features, which differentiate slums, one from another is higher. For example, in San Cristobal (Aguas Claras and El Ramajal UPZ) there are problems with high-density of population and especially within household, also it slums have problems with social infrastructure. There are small houses in bad conditions occupied by disproportionately big families. Nevertheless, as it was already mentioned, not all San Cristobal is like this. On the West, there are nice facilities, parks, bicycle lanes etc.

According to *Interviewees RV1, RV2 and S1* another district Usaquen is the most polarized where the richest and the poorest live side by side, but criminal situation is emerging there because of control of illegal paramilitaries groups.



*Figure 6. The Bronx Street (Peláez, 2012)*



*Figure 7. Police persistently watches by situation down on the Bronx Street (El Huffington Post, 2013).*

*Interviewee R1* rejected the idea of using socio economic characteristics, such as income, housing and access to basic services to understand differentiation of slums. He claimed that income in poor neighborhoods is very low, so people have to take several jobs to survive. He argued:

Investigations by the District Department of Social Integration have found that there are families in Bogotá who live on less than 1500 Colombian pesos per day (1500 pesos were equal to 80 US cents on the moment of the interview). Usually these people pressured by hunger work in all types of informal economies, such as selling candies, gums, cigarettes, etc. Others sell and traffic drugs, such as marijuana or *basuco* or seek to commit various crimes. These criminal activities took place in specific areas in the center of the city, in so-called 'The Bronx' and 'Five Holes.'

Here the interviewee speaks about areas, which many researchers define as “inner-city slums of Bogotá” (UN-Habitat, 2003, p.205). These neighborhoods are extremely insecure areas especially at night conform.

#### Social Infrastructure in Slums

Other important feature of slums is a weak public transport connection or its absence. It plays an important role for slum dwellers because many shanties and poor neighborhoods locate in remote areas near the borders of the city and on the mountain slope, while residents work in the city. *Interviewee RV2* shared that sometimes people from such distant towns as Usme have to commute two or three hours before get to their work place in Bogotá. This situation stimulates occurrence of private *taxies* which serve as unique public transportation in such big slum as Ciudad Bolivar. In general, the



situation with public transportation became better in the last 15 years, but it is still a big problem.

Bogotá's slums could also be defined by considering access of households to basic services. Some families, which are not able to pay for utilities, act as hackers and illegally connect to water tubes and power lines. My respondent pointed out that government established penalties for such households but these sanctions are not effective, because many families simply unable to pay the fines.

Access to schools and education are also a big problem in slums. Hence, many slums dwellers do not obtain enough education to be to apply for formal employment. In Bogotá, primary education is free for *Estratos 1* and 2. Therefore, “people who were born after the 80s and 90s are usually literate, but in poor neighborhoods there are some people over 40 might be illiterate, because before 80s the educational system in Colombia had a very low coverage,” claimed my *Interviewee A1*. However, while many more citizens obtain primary education, the percentages of people in slums who have graduated from secondary school are medium to low. Even lower the number of slums residents who have completed a college degree or pursued a Master degree.

Health issues are also specific for poor neighborhoods. The health security is hardly accessible for the slum dwellers due to distance location of most of the Hospitals and Health Care Centers, and lack of them on the places. In addition, my interviews claimed that health care is not easily available for many slum dwellers due to high level of bureaucracy and costs.

According to *Interviewee RV3* other common slums problems are related to underdevelopment of basic services which normally city should provide to its populations. Bogotá's slums usually have serious problems with roads, absence of asphalt and concrete roads and pavements. Due to strong housing shortage and no government planning in these neighborhoods communities usually, do not have an access to such public services as recreation and sports facilities, parks and green areas.

#### Informal Housing vs. Private Construction Companies

Informal settlements in Bogotá are the most obvious result of a fast urban sprawl. This is mainly caused by previously discussed large flows of migrants from surrounding departments who were not able to purchase houses or land due to high prices (Doebele, 1977). The inability of city administration to provide formal housing for all residents pushed the new *Bogotános* to the edge of the city and where they had to deal with local swindlers who offered land for low prices. Many swindler firms sell or rent the part of lands around Bogotá for the poor who were not able to buy land inside the city from official seller. This process provided new in-migrants with informal land mostly disconnected from any city infrastructure or connected illegally. The new owner could pay the payment plan until the swindler company disappears for some reasons.

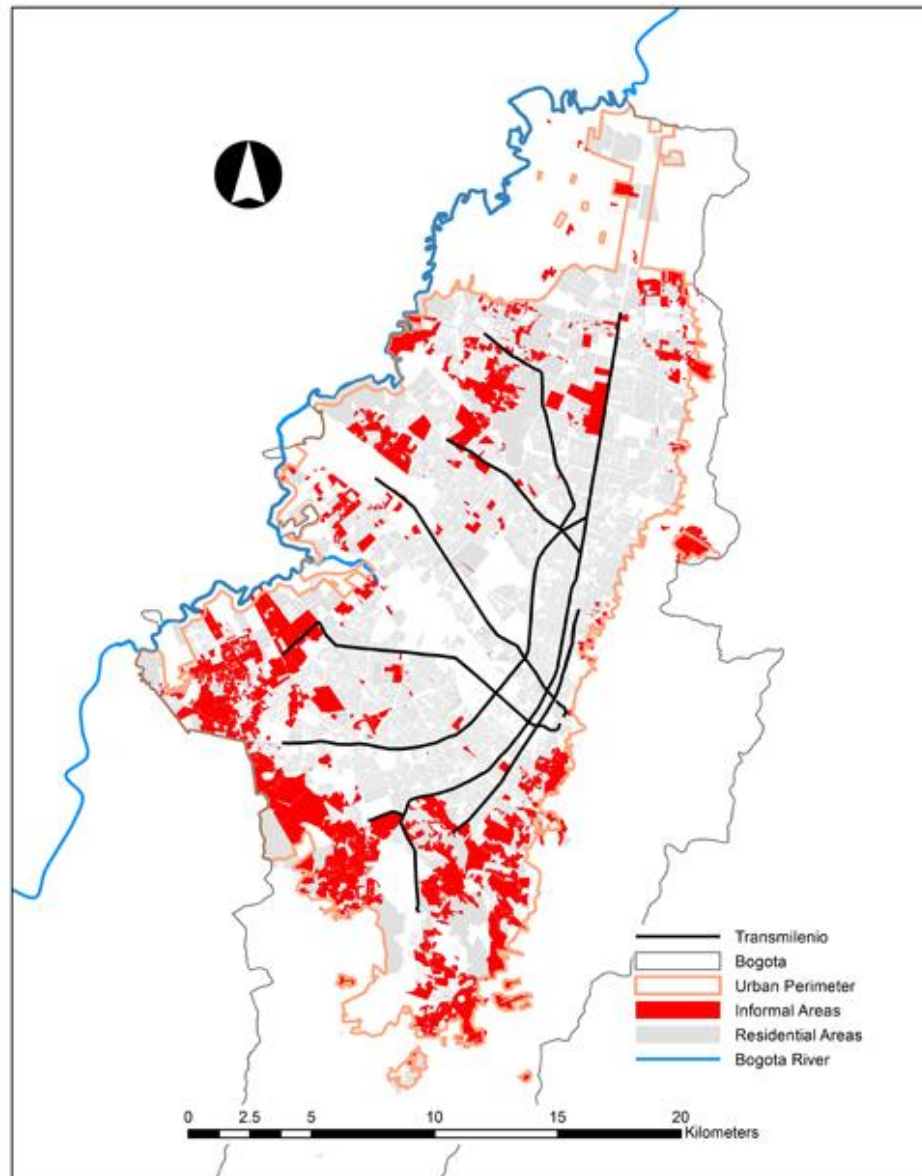
Today the informal settlements of Bogotá constitute 20.9% of the total urban area (Esbiorn & Perez, 2012). Nevertheless, the informal area was declining in the last decade because of increased control on illegal urbanization. In addition many of the informal areas have been legalized which resulted on general improvement of infrastructure and public services. Furthermore, quality of life and social indicators are increased as the

number of children in school rise and teenage pregnancies and homicides are declining.

Figure 8 display locality of informal settlements in Bogotá.

Previously the state was in charge of providing houses for citizens. Nevertheless, after Colombian constitution of 1991 and several neo-liberal reforms in mid 90s, it no longer provides housing. Instead “the government gives the loans, which cause a debt for the poor who received a house,” my *Interviewee A1* argues. The system is called ‘Subsidia la demanda’ and provides housing through such companies as Metrovivienda.

Other large construction companies primarily serve to *Bogotáños* of higher than *Estrata 4*. These companies build expensive apartments and expand city further to the North in idea to offer their customers more private and more high quality housing. The prices on such apartments can reach 6 billion Colombian pesos (3 million dollars). That is why the whole area on the North of Bogotá displays great contrast with other parts of Bogotá (see Figure 9, 10).



*Figure 8.* Residential area of informal origin (Esbiorn & Perez, 2012)



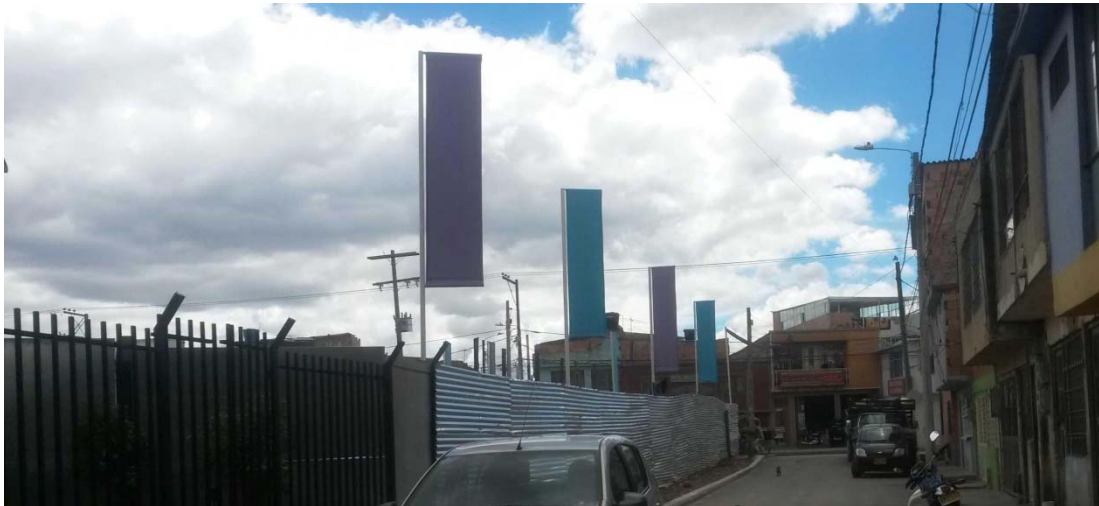
*Figure 9.* The 93<sup>rd</sup> Street. North of Bogotá (Wikipedia la Enciclopedia Libre, 2015).



*Figure 10.* The 100 Street. North of Bogotá (Wikipedia la Enciclopedia Libre, 2015).

Moreover private companies tend to begin construction and offer housing to middle income population in areas which before were informal slums neighborhoods. Today some of these areas show great achievement in quality of houses and roads, which were build and organized mostly by residents themselves. Such situation I observed in

Bosa, where some of the neighborhoods constructed by two-three floors housing made mostly from blocks. Organizing neighbors also found possibility to finish in some streets in neighborhood by placing concrete panels. However, usually it is an achievement of neighbors living in one street and does not include many blocks in neighborhood. When the street was finished, a construction companies also moved their office in this neighborhood (see Figure 11).



*Figure 11.* New office of Construction Company in developed neighborhood in Bosa  
(photo by Ekaterina Korzh).

### Construction in Poor Neighborhoods

The conditions of housing by itself are an indicator of poor neighborhoods. It is believed around the world that houses in slums usually made from poor materials such as plastic, cardboards, cans, etc. (UN-Habitat, 2003). Nevertheless, in Bogotá there are wide range of materials and sizes of houses in poor neighborhoods. “If you have more than two floors of construction in concrete, brick, block and steel, you still can be considered as a *poor*, although not living in conditions of *extreme poverty*, ” explained one of the *Interviewee RV3*. In slums of Bogotá, it is possible to meet shanties built from carton, paper, cans, plastic bottles, metal scrap etc., as much as two-three floors houses build from bricks and blocks. Shanty neighborhoods could be found even in the north of the city, but most of them located in the South, South West borders of Bogotá. What is more as moving further on the mountain slope, as more neighborhoods built on the manner of shantytowns occurs.

### Housing in Hazard Areas

Some of the Bogotá’s neighborhoods are located in natural hazard areas. Bogotá mostly situated on the green high plateau bordered from the east by the Andes mountain range. However, the urban area of Bogotá began to spread up to the mountain such as neighborhoods of Ciudad Bolívar Locality and Usme (see Figure 12). These slopes are where most slums are situated. High price on land, construction and rent push poor people to become squatters or to buy a land from swindlers, which do not care about the quality of land that they sell for many economic and business reasons (Lampis, 2011).



And sometimes it leads to tragic cases. *Interviewee A1* told about a case when the whole shanty neighborhoods were flushed away by a mudflow.



*Figure 12.* Construction in Ciudad Bolívar (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).

However, today government of Bogotá tries to address this problem through such institutions as the District Institute of Risk Management and Climate IDIGER. This

institution is responsible for suiting of threat mitigation and relocation and resettlement of families, which live in hazard areas (Lampis, 2013). It makes possible for many families to change their carton, tin, zinc and wooden shanties for a new apartment the costs around 40 million pesos. Bogotá also has institutions such as High Council for Victims, which specifically help with housing refugees and displaced populations, and withhold them from areas of risk.

*Interviewee A1* claimed that this program improves the lives of families and generates enormous changes in their lifestyle. They receive better access to job opportunities in compare with remote areas, where risky shanties usually locate. They start to pay taxes, utilities, among other costs that before were not the part of their duties; they begin interact more with city life.

However, these actions of officials do not always receive positive feedbacks. Some families insist to stay in their shanties, because government's apartments are tiny and do not meet requirements of the families. This conflict reveals interesting social phenomena, which were explained by *Interviewee RV2*:

I observed it in San Cristobal Sur, during my work there. The interesting social phenomenon is that Colombian people prefer to have their own house and this is like a pivot of life. Usually people took the construction of their homes personally; they save money and build it gradually. Their homes are always in process of improving. The state project give you a credit to just a small apartment in building complexes. The apartments are very small, that is why many people just do not want to live there. So, yeah, there is two way for people to possess their own home, first, to buy a plot of land from swindler and construct their project for decades, or second, to have a credit from the state and buy a small apartment usually from MetroVivienda agency through which state provide credits.

Another great problem of housing in Bogotá slums is a phenomenon of “extended households.” This means that one house can shelter up to seven households. There can be a one family consisted several generations living together or different families, friends, distant relatives. *Interviewee RV3* argued that the reason is not in Colombian tradition to have a big family or cultural factors but in high cost of new housing. This is how poor families trying to avoid spending for new land or house while their income is lower than two minimum wages.

#### Criminal Activity and Armed Groups in Slums

One of the most critical characteristics of Bogotá’s slums is high crime rates. The slums are highly insecure especially in the evening hours. The prolonged civil conflict in Colombia and especially processes of shifting control under slum territories between paramilitaries and guerrillas have been hardly influential on formation of several slums in Bogotá in the past and continue influence on the atmosphere within these poor areas up today. From the reply of one *Interviewee RV2*:

Some of slums were founded with support of guerrilla forces in the 70s and 80s. In the 90s urban paramilitary forces occupied these areas under criminal phenomena called “social cleansing” that led to death of many young people there; in this period many gang leaders from the era of the 90s who occupied these neighborhoods were also eliminated. Paramilitary forces occupied these neighborhoods to control the illegal sale of land, small businesses, all informal trade including sale of drugs.

Other researchers speak about this process of occupying lands by armed groups as periods of invasions. One of the biggest invasion of The Guerrilla M-19 group founded whole neighborhoods in San Cristobal Sur under their social project, which attempted to “provide lands for the poor” or for the new in-migrants who came from adjacent to Bogotá territories.

Despite of long state programs for elimination of these arm groups, some of them still control neighborhoods within slums. They produce their own rules and rights on withholding territories which are more effective there than any official forces and state's laws. "For example, arm group can denote the territories with invisible borders. The crossing of these borders means death for people who perpetrate them. It is the way to control the flow of people and the area in general," pointed out *Interviewee VI*.

Since 2004, the current administration of Bogotá have been working toward decreasing criminal activity of gangs and armed groups in slums under program Bogotá Humana (El Tiempo, 2014). Government implemented several programs to increase security in poor neighborhoods through building new local police stations and supplying them with better transport. Moreover, state conducted various social programs through creating of new art centers, sports centers, schools and improving basic services in neighborhoods, building electric facilities, paving, and developing public transport. However, the slums are still very insecure.

#### Field Observation of Three Bogotá's Slums

Field observations were vital to combine self-reported data with first-hand observations of the slums as non-participant. While interviews were a rich source of contextual informant data, the observation provided insight into detailed conditions of daily activities in slums. During my fieldwork, I visited three big slums, Ciudad Bolivar, Bosa and Usme that consist the most famous and biggest slums formation in Bogotá. Ciudad Bolivar, Bosa and Usme are the 19<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> localities correspondingly in accordance with administrative division of Bogotá. Most common *Estratos* for these

areas are 1 and 2. It was significant to visit these big slums to observe everyday living conditions of slums dwellers.

### Neighborhoods of Ciudad Bolivar

First, I was able to visit the largest slum of Bogotá, Ciudad Bolivar, and Soacha municipality. Ciudad Bolivar is the 19<sup>th</sup> locality in Colombian capital district according to administrative division and includes 360 neighborhoods on the general territory of 229.14 square kilometers (Secretaría de Cultura. Recreación y Deporte, 2010). The population of this area began to grow rapidly since 60s and in 80s achieved number of 250 thousand people (Secretaría de Cultura. Recreación y Deporte, 2010). Today the approximate population is 713,764 habitants (Secretaría de Cultura. Recreación y Deporte, 2010). The locality situates in the southwestern part of Bogotá's urban area and predominantly occupies the mountain slope. That is why Ciudad Bolivar can be seen from far distance of its border (see Figure 13).



*Figure 13.* View on the mountain hosting Ciudad Bolívar locality from Avenida Norte-Quito-Sur (NQS) (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).

The neighborhoods in Ciudad Bolívar distinguish themselves with high density of construction, which spread through the mountain slope and embrace each available piece of land. That is why it creates big impression for the viewer who looks on the neighborhoods from the heart of Ciudad Bolívar, what shows how much land it occupies (see Figures 14, 15).



*Figure 14.* View on the Tunjuelito River's valley that divides Ciudad Bolívar neighborhoods (left bank) (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).



*Figure 15.* View on Ciudad Bolívar from the right bank of Tunjuelito River  
(photo by Ekaterina Korzh).

The constructions of Ciudad Bolívar's and Soacha's neighborhoods do not divide by any physical borders, which could represent their administrative division. The administrative border between two municipalities is invisible. However, officially, it has great impact on the policies of both Bogotá and Soacha, where each do not spread their responsibilities across the borders (Figure 16).





*Figure 16.* Calle 13E, which divides Ciudad Bolívar and Soacha municipalities  
(Google maps, 2014).

From the first glance it becomes clear that construction in Ciudad Bolívar ranges from several floors houses build in block and brick to shanties build from all possible materials. Nevertheless, the character and materials of construction tends to depend on spatial stratification. More developed and finished houses from bricks, two or three-floors, situated mostly on the central streets and getaways, and continuously spread up and down through the mountain slopes. At the same time small shanties predominantly pushed on the edges of mountain slopes and remote areas (Figure 17). Sometimes small shanties from metal scrap or other materials or unfinished brick houses could dilute the durable buildings (Figure 18). However, most of the shanties and shacks, some of them

literally organized from paper, carton, plastic and wooden pallets, situated mostly in the most geologically risky and hazardous areas at the bottom of mountain slopes (Figure 19).



*Figure 17. Shanties and unfinished houses in Ciudad Bolívar (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).*



*Figure 18.* Bricks and blocks houses mixed with one-floor shanties build on the edges of mountain slope (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).



*Figure 19.* Ciudad Bolivar neighborhood build on the edge of canyon between mountain slopes (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).

Equally to poor housing conditions in Ciudad Bolivar, the conditions of public services are also tend to be extremely inadequate. There were no asphalt roads almost in all neighborhoods, which I visited. That is why not all transport can reach these neighborhoods. Concerning absence of public transportation and bad quality of roads,

dwellers of Ciudad Bolivar have to commute to work at first by foot to get to the closest bus stop or using local type of public transport, which displayed on Figure 19. Bogotá's bus system STIP that covers biggest part of the city do not have routs on the biggest part of Ciudad Bolivar from the South and do not continue on the west due to border with Soacha. Dwellers from this municipality also commute to work to Bogotá, but for that, they need at first to cross neighborhoods of Ciudad Bolivar and just after that, they can reach bus station.



*Figure 20.* Local “public transport” in Ciudad Bolivar. (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).

Ciudad Bolivar children experience deficit in school services, leisure and sport facilities (Figure 21). According to my *Interviewee A1*, there are a few schools in Ciudad Bolivar, which were built by administration of Bogotá or organized by local community. To allow their children receive some education parents need to allow them to take a long way to schools in Bogotá through unsecure neighborhoods. That is why many parents leave their children at home.

The remoteness of the neighborhoods plays a disadvantaging role in live of all settlements of the neighborhoods, what creates long time commitment to work, additional expenses, and lack of possibilities to obtain services which the city can offer. In a sum with lack or absence of social infrastructure this creates additional disadvantages for women who have lack of communication to the job possibilities of the city and do not have possibility to remove childcare duties on respective social institutions as kindergarten and schools. In addition, remote neighborhoods have less security, lack or absence of basic services and social infrastructure, which are also barriers for poor women on the way to empowerment (Rincon, Torres & Vargas, 2009).



*Figure 21.* Football field organized on the empty place between shanties in Ciudad Bolivar (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).

In addition, there is no proper sewage and waste collection services in the most of the parts of Ciudad Bolivar. Garbage or stays on the streets or tend to be thrown into canyons between mountains (Figure 22). Wastewater goes directly to the river Tunjuelito, which valley today is a big swamped area between the Ciudad Bolivar neighborhoods (Figure 23).



*Figure 22.* Garbage on the streets of Ciudad Bolivar (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).





*Figure 23.* Tunjuelito River (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).

However, not all neighborhoods in Ciudad Bolívar are the same. Some of them are more likely to look as small towns, with busy market places, mainly brick houses and organized public space (Figure 24, 25).



*Figure 24.* Football field in Ciudad Boilvar (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).



*Figure 25.* Street market in Ciudad Boilvar (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).

### Neighborhoods of Bosa and Usme

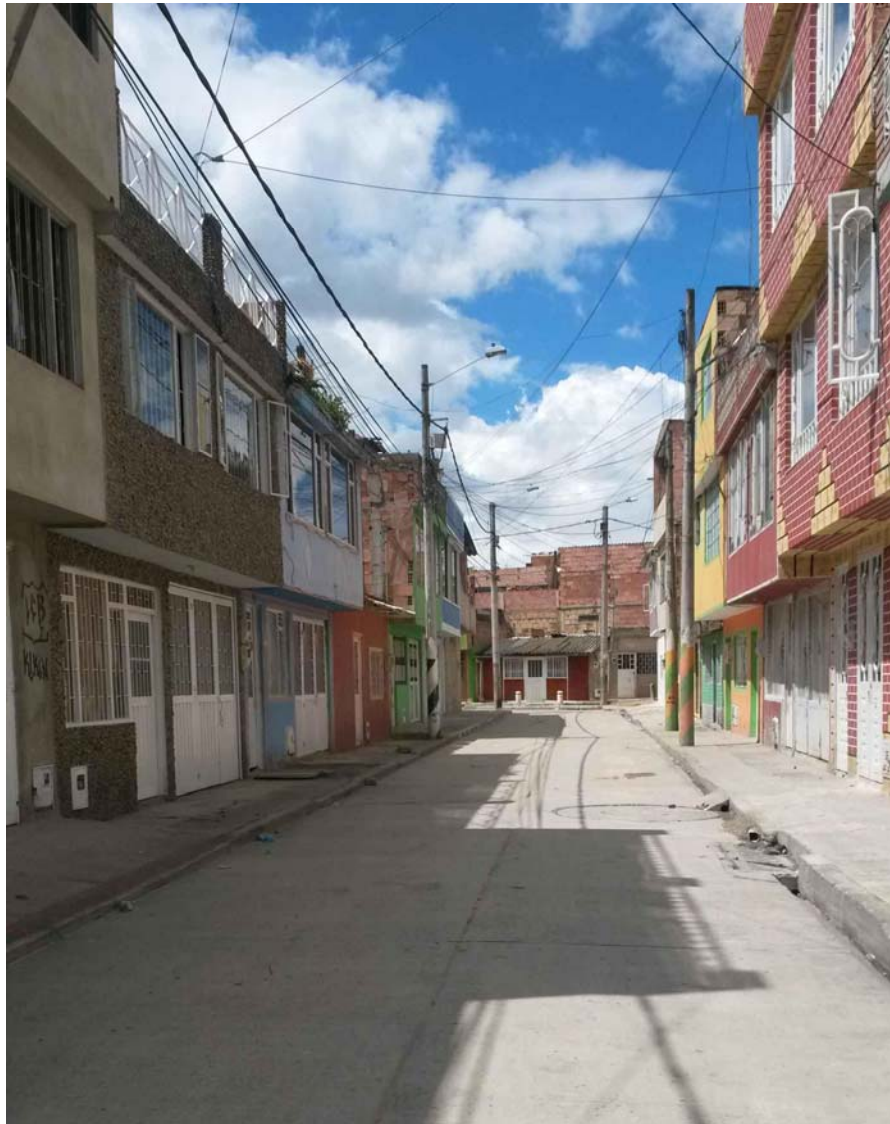
As I mentioned before, Bosa and Usme are localities, which began to form from small towns occupied by indigenous populations. Eventually, these territories merged into Bogotá Capital District due to expansion of the city. These two localities were assigned to Bogotá's districts in 1954 (Gilbert, 1996). However, the neighborhoods where people bought lands from swindlers still experience problems with informality. That is why some of the neighborhoods do not qualified for some basic services, which the city have to offer. Local researchers distinguish these localities as big slums with common characteristic of poverty: bad housing conditions, lack of social infrastructure and transportation; lack or absence of proper roads on main streets and within inner neighborhoods; lack of organized garbage and wastewater collection, etc. (Figure 26).

Good asphalt roads present partly in Bosa. Usually this is a result of efforts and consciousness of neighbors living on the same street. Figure 27 displays concrete-covered street, which was constructed by local residents.

Nevertheless, as in other slums of Bogotá these areas represent diversity in socio-economic conditions of neighborhoods. It can be distinguished on poor and the poorest neighborhoods through diversification of housing in these areas. For example, in Bosa I observed generally better housing than in Ciudad Bolivar. However, some neighborhoods consist as two to four floors houses as much as shanties and shacks, which dispersed among first (Figure 28).



*Figure 26.* One of the main avenues in Bosa (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).



*Figure 27.* Asphalt road and walking path constructed by neighbors living on the same street in Bosa (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).

The diversity of housing in Bosa could be explained by different ages of houses. People in this area build houses for generations and trying to improve them by adding new floors and walls. Families, which constructed these houses, are able to afford just one or several bricks per month for continuing the construction. It makes some houses look unfinished even if the construction has been lasting for decades. That is why elevation of buildings is so diverse in this area, as it shown on Figure 29.



*Figure 28.* Small shanty from wood and metal scrap squeezes between houses from bricks (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).



*Figure 29.* Brick houses in Bosa (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).

Bosa has also environmental problems, which occurred due to absence of proper sewage and waste control in locality. Tunjuelito River goes through this locality and brings already contaminated water to Bogotá River, receiving more pollution here. However, the dwellers of Bosa still use water and the Valley of Tunjuelito River for their gardens and cattle (see Figure 30).



*Figure 30.* Tunjuelito River in Bosa (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).

Usme locality represents a mix of rural and urban construction, due to that, this area historically serves as food supply for Bogotá. Today Usme still have large green area, which local activists trying to protect from further expansion. Construction on the mountain slopes and diversity of houses' materials look similar to that in Ciudad Bolívar (see Figure 31). However, my *Interviewee S1* were arguing that the rural neighborhoods tent to preserve more conservative traditions. Hence, more *urban* and more *rural* populations in these neighborhoods consist different traditional bonds on the mobility of women. In addition, it creates different relationships between women from different



neighborhoods by themselves what effect on their ability to organize for gaining empowerment, what will be discuss more in the next chapter.



*Figure 31.* Street in Usme (Esbiorn, A. and Perez, E.L., November 2012).

### Summary

The analysis of evolution of metropolitan area of Bogotá based on literature and interviews revealed that the indigent and undeveloped areas disperse within this geographical space. Despite this the poor neighborhoods still preserve historical location and accumulate more in the south and southwest borders of the city.

The analysis of Bogotá's slums based on interviews, literature and field observation determined number of transitional space within neighborhoods, which distinguish slums of Bogotá. The diversity of transitional spaces has influence on the characteristics of the poor neighborhoods which in turn have a direct impact on the possibilities and disadvantages of poor women.

First, neighborhoods in slums can be defined as central and remote. Central slums neighborhoods tend to situate on the main streets, squares and transportation arteries, which can be finished with concrete or asphalt cover, or unfinished and incomplete. Still these areas give the sense of the central areas, which attracts market and social activities. The housing in center areas is present by two-three floors building from brick and blocks. The remote neighborhoods are tend to situate far from main streets and roads, some public transportation which are available to central neighborhoods, do not serve there. Such neighborhoods are tending to situate on the high slopes of the mountains, or in contrast, deeper in the valleys between mountains. The main characteristics of remote neighborhoods are extremely poor housing from poor materials, situation in hazard areas, and high presence of informal housing and invasions.

The remoteness of the neighborhoods plays a disadvantaging role in live of women who have lack of communication to the job possibilities of the city. In addition, the remote neighborhoods have less security, lack or absence of basic services and social infrastructure, which are also barriers for poor women on the way to empowerment.

Second type, which I observed in slums of Bogotá, is a transition between the poorest and the poor. This transition tightly links with spatial characteristics of the first. As further neighborhood from main streets and squares as poorer the settlements. However, there is some exclusion from this spatial diversification. It is also possible to observe the situation of two distant *Estratos* on the same street, as it show examples in San Cristobal, Usme, Bosa, and Ciudad Bolivar. Spatial segregation and poverty consist less opportunities for all settlements. However, women from the poor neighborhood have more opportunities for economic empowerment then women from the poorest.

Third type distinguishes transition between formal and informal settlements. Due to large trade of lands by swindlers and activities of Guerillas, many slums neighborhoods are still informal and not able to obtain some basic services. Nevertheless, many of informal neighborhoods in Usme, Bosa and Ciudad Bolivar were declared as formal for the past three decades. Transition between formal and informal neighborhoods consist features of transition areas between central/remote and poor/the poorest neighborhoods which creates additional barriers for women on the way to obtain many services which city can offer. Hence, women from different transitional areas have different opportunities and relations with Bogotá's urban space.

Forth type of transaction occurs on the administrative border of Bogotá with neighboring municipalities. The transaction areas are not distinguished with any specific characteristics despite administrative division, and hence division of responsibilities for these areas. Such transition neighborhoods I observed on the border between Bogotá and city of Soacha.

Fifth type occurs between rural and urban areas. For example, Usme locality was historically rural appendage of Bogotá and today it still contains the main features of rural settlements. However, due to large urban sprawl of Bogotá, many neighborhoods in Usme obtain urban features. In the same way, there are many transitional areas in remote neighborhoods of Ciudad Bolívar and Bosa. The transition between more *urban* and more *rural* neighborhoods creates as different traditional bonds on the mobility of women. In addition, it creates different relationships between women from different neighborhoods by themselves what effect on their ability to organize for gaining empowerment, what will be discuss more in the next chapter.

To sum up, Bogotá's slums are hardly heterogeneous spatial structures, which consist many transitional areas (see a global overview in Zappulla, Suau, & Fikfak, 2014). These areas erode borders of the administrative division and make it complicated to determine extend of slum in Bogotá. In the same way it creates diverse relationship between poor women and the city, and their possibilities to obtain empowerment.

## CHAPTER 4.

## WOMEN'S LIVELIHOODS IN THE SLUMS:

## BETWEEN DISPAIR AND HOPE

Domestic Violence, Abuse and Gender Inequality in Slums of Bogotá

High prices on urban land and continuous flows of displaced populations create areas on the edge of Bogotá and in devastating downtown area, which I generalize as slums in this particular research. All these areas unify the same characteristics: physical insecurity due to high criminal activity and absence of basic services in the areas, social insecurity due to social exclusion and segregation from wealth and services of the city; and in the end it is general disempowerment of slum dwellers to change these conditions. These problems become more devastating within gender discussion.

As I mentioned before, amid displaced populations, which in-migrate to Bogotá, women were dominating in number. According to Gilbert (1996) in 1951, there were 100 women to every 77 men in the 20-24 year age group. At the same time, prevalence of women among in-migrants is partially explained by the low-intense civil war in Colombia were stably taking more men's lives. To support this argument *Interviewees RV2 and S1* were claiming that there were many poor women with children among displaced migrants. They were heading their families without husband or partner.

To summarize everything above, women in Colombia experienced before and continue experiencing up today two main disadvantages: the effects of continuous

violence due to arm conflicts, which includes disempowerment through displacement, abuse and loss of relatives; and insecurity related to the disadvantaging conditions of life in slums.

### Violence of Colombian Civil War

*Interviewee S2* from NGO organization claimed, “Homicide, displacement and sexual assault are "serious" and "systematic" practices against women in the midst of internal conflict in Colombia. In addition, women are not likely to report these cases due to lack of concomitant circumstances.” According to him, citing the data from the Prosecutor General from 2005 to September in 2008, amid other 150000 different crimes committed by illegal armed groups, at least 25,000 were conducted against women: 12,142 women were forcedly displacement, 1,400 were reported missing, 8,147 were killed and 133 were sexually assaulted.

The NGOs which working on these issues show their concerns about real number of sexual assaults conducted by armed groups and their officers. They argue that this figure must be much higher. The underestimating number of such crimes occurs because several reasons. First, many cases of assault remain unreported by victims due to fear get under new punitive actions from criminal groups. Second, the women-victims avoid to report about sexual assault or abuse feeling ashamed and guilty. The actual ignorance of women rights still takes place in many communities in Colombia. The last one, but not least, is the lack of interest to these cases of crime from state prosecutors. According to my *Interviewee S2*, “there is no guarantee for the complainant to receive support and

protection after report because state authorities do not make a clear distinction of violent acts as intentional acts which not an isolated proceeds of prostitution.” That is lead to general ignorance of a problem by state and within communities. Just in 2006, the state created offices of Legal Medicine, which initiated a creation of detailed statistic of alleged perpetrators of sexual attacks on women (source: *Interviewee S2*).

Another terrific fact about violence against women is written in the long history of violence in Colombia and related to crimes conducted by paramilitary forces (Gray, (2008). It is shocking, but some sadistic practices which were utilized by these armed groups during their “social cleansing” campaigns in other regions of the country, sometimes occur in Bogotá, as it happened in case of the brutal murder, torture and rape of Rosa Elvira Cely, in the middle of Bogotá’s National Park in 2012 (Gutiérrez, 2012). According to the source, the sexual violence against women and homosexuals conducted by paramilitaries “was not tolerated as a perverse individual act, but it was allowed as a systematic practice of war, applicable only to a specific population” (Gutiérrez, 2012).

Colombian inner conflict had a great impact on lives of many people within the country. But the wellbeing of Colombian women in particular was threatened due to many factors related to social role of women and specific conditions of communities who experienced intervention of armed groups in their lives.

First, women usually are not recruited to armed groups, what means that they are disarmed and not able to protect themselves in time when community and institutional security have been disintegrated while weapons have proliferated. Second, working in the

woods or fields women become a victims of landmines. Third, women also become objects of deliberate terror when armed groups attempt to intimidate somebody who is in a close relation to these women. Fourth, sometimes women are forced to shelter and feed armed groups who occupied their community. Occasionally this practice places women under risk to experience abuse as from the very people they host, as well as draw retaliation from antagonists, who may erroneously perceive them as combatants or collaborators. Finally, the fact of feeding and housing military groups can deplete the scarce available resources. This puts women in additional problematic situations related to shortage of resources, problems to obtain them in area affected by war. Women's conditions are affected by generally lower than men social and economic position, lack of mobility due to childbearing and childcare, and occasionally by fear of reprisals from their own community for transgressing cultural constraints on mobility (like going alone to the point of distribution).

#### Law and Women Insecurity in Colombia

Violence against women in slums mostly occurs due to high general insecurity in slums, especially in the evening and nighttime. Control of paramilitaries and gangs' groups shapes security space in slums, makes it more dangerous for neighborhoods from antagonist criminal groups. They are able to create rules and laws insulated from the state power, which makes easier and more efficient control the territory. These conditions have great impact on security of life all slum dwellers, not just women. However, there is actual tendency of different kind of violence directed towards female populations in slums and in Colombia in general.



According to sources of governmental group *Secretaria Districtal de La Mujer* there are different crimes specifically conducted against women, which represent in Colombia. For instance, from the beginning of 2012 to January 2013 the 83.3% of the victims of human trafficking in the country were women. The purposes of trafficking were sexual exploitation in 68.6%, followed by labor exploitation in 10.7%, the forced labor in domestic service in 3% and forced marriage in 2%, 15.70% were left without defining the purpose (Secretaria De Mujer, 2015).

According to my *Interviewee S2*, women especially from distant neighborhoods are exposed to multiple forms of abuse and sexual harassment. Moreover, Bogotá presents a phenomenon of acid attacks on women, where victims most of the time left disfigured. During 2014, 15 such cases were recorded. In both forms of violence, only a few offenders are punished by the Office of Public Prosecutor.

The article published in official site *Secretaria Districtal de Mujer* (2015) made a comparison between number of acid attacks in Pakistan and Colombia. For recorded 250 attacks per year in Pakistan where 70% of victims were women, in Colombia the number of cases is much higher, while it is important taking into account that the population is much smaller. Jaf Shah, chief executive of Acid Survivors Trust International, whose presentation took place in Bogotá in September 2015 claimed, “In Bangladesh, Pakistan and Cambodia, there are laws established for the cases of attacks with chemical agents, these laws had an effect in the decrease of cases, but laws alone are not sufficient to obtain effective results, we need to give a clear message of zero tolerance against this violence and against gender discrimination” (Secretaria De Mujer, 2015).

Hence, the most severe problem, which affects Bogotá's women, in general is that the Colombian law and the legal basis for punishing such crimes is almost nonexistent. The sentences do not really equate to psychological, social and economic effects of injuries from acid attacks, which mark the faces of women-victims. My *Interviewee A1* also argued that government programs, which address this phenomenon, have not been sufficient.

Meanwhile the absence of strict and immediate actions from Office of Public Prosecutor and other governmental authorities do not stop offenders from conducting new crimes and violent actions against women.

#### Domestic Violence in Bogotá

Bogotá present generally high rates of crimes against women. However, specifically in slums the number of such crimes tends to be higher due to lack of power of law within these areas. Another kind of violence, which affects the safety and security women and other slums dwellers, occurs within families and households. One of *Interviewee RV1* argued:

It is a hard question to say who is more vulnerable in the slums. The routine of poor neighborhoods shows that all presented ages and both genders are vulnerable. For example, women, who traditionally spend more time at home, are most likely to receive the help from different social organization and NGOs in her routine life. Meanwhile men who usually are out of home could experience violence from their fellows and sometimes stay without any ability to receive help at the scene of violence. The cruelty of woman to the man take enough big part among slums dwellers and maybe in Bogotá in general too. However, such kind of violence against males are registered poorly because of absence of such tradition and social stereotypes. Nevertheless, if to add the heritage of machismo, women and children are more vulnerable in the slums.

Many researchers who I interviewed claimed that in general the heritage of domestic violence presents elsewhere in Bogotá and especially in slums. The citizens who live in formal or informal neighborhoods suffer from domestic violence in general. To change this situation government offers programs for children in schools which show children the idea of home without violence. “It is also a problem that children here take domestic violence as normal relationship in family,” replied *Interviewee RVI*.

#### Other Disadvantages of Women Living in Slums

According to all my interviewees, the reasons for the general vulnerability are framed in several ways, one of which is insecurity, but another and more difficult to control is the high level of birth and of early pregnancies. *Interviewee AI* reported:

In my work, I have found women that have about 9 and 11 children. In one case, the woman was bringing up seven daughters, among whom two oldest have been already pregnant.

This situation becomes more severe in conditions of poverty in the families, especially if woman is the only head of a household with many children. In such cases women experience incredible difficulties in providing her children with food and other basic needs. It makes almost impossible for her to enter the education system and improve somehow her economic status, or to provide education to all her children.

Another my interview raised up another problem related to the topic:

Between the communities, there is a strong emphasis on that the woman have more difficulties to obtain a job, which creates situation when the man is a supplier of a family. Meanwhile, according to multiple gender studies, women have more criteria to develop savings because they rarely spend everything that they earn. However living in slums in very acute poverty, all huge female skills

and ways of understanding life and society are suppressed or are subsidiaries of patriarchal society.

To sum up, among all people who were displaced and in-migrated to Colombian big urban areas as Bogotá, some women have already experienced different kind of violence. Bogotá could attract refugees with new opportunities for social and economic empowerment; possibilities to begin a new live in safer place. Nevertheless, the slums areas, where land and housing were more accessible for in-migrants, created for women new disadvantages and security threats, which are still related to their gender.

#### Women Lives in the Context of Intersected, Contested and Transitional Spaces

Slum – intersection of various spaces (formal/informal, central/remote, rural/urban, gang/law, etc.). These spaces are contested but at the same time are in transition as neighborhoods themselves (Blunt & Rose, 1994). In addition, the relation spaces firmly constrain with “social relations and structural issues such as power – economic, political, military – in terms of dominance, exploitation, etc., sociocultural institutions, etc., that facilitate, enhance or constraint development” in region (Owusu, 2012, p. 5). These structural features of relation spaces as part of the described conditions including disadvantaged position of women, violence, abuse, etc. stem from the clash between *women space* (virtual space of women livelihood, real and imaginary) and *men space* as well as between other spaces (home/street, formal/informal, gang/law, rural/urban, modern/patriarchal, etc.). It must be noted here that the interviewees also showed the conditions described above create possibilities for confrontation just within women space. For instance, the clash between women from *rural spaces* and women

from *urban spaces* constraints general improvement of women conditions within several neighborhoods. However, the realities of Colombia today and slums of Bogotá in particular are such that the conditions slowly transitioning towards less patriarchal, urban societies, where slum women are not only equal, but possibly more prepared to be successful, e.g., find a an informal job (Peña, 2014). This transition results into aggression and effectively leads to “gender clash” (manifested by ‘retaliatory’ actions such as acid attacks). To respond to this clash, women engage to spatial strategies: consolidation (community organizations that “consolidate” women’s space) and separation (seeking emancipation outside their routine environment, such as out-of-household employment). The results of investigation received through interviewing and observations display the range of spatial strategies engaging by women in slums of Bogotá.

#### Women Gaining Social and Economic Empowerment in Bogotá Slums

The inquiry and analysis of the ways of social and economic empowerment of women in slums were the main part of my study. During the analysis of information, which my interviewees provided, and my field observations, I distinguished two ways of women's empowerment in Bogotá. First, to improve their social and economic conditions, and the conditions of all community, to gain public justice and legal security for themselves and their families, and find supporters, women tend to create small organizations within their communities, which latter could rise in nation level large organizations, e.g. *Madres Comunitarias*. Second way relates to empowerment of women through economic independence from their partners and families.

### Field Observations: Different Ways of Economic Empowerment of Women in Slums

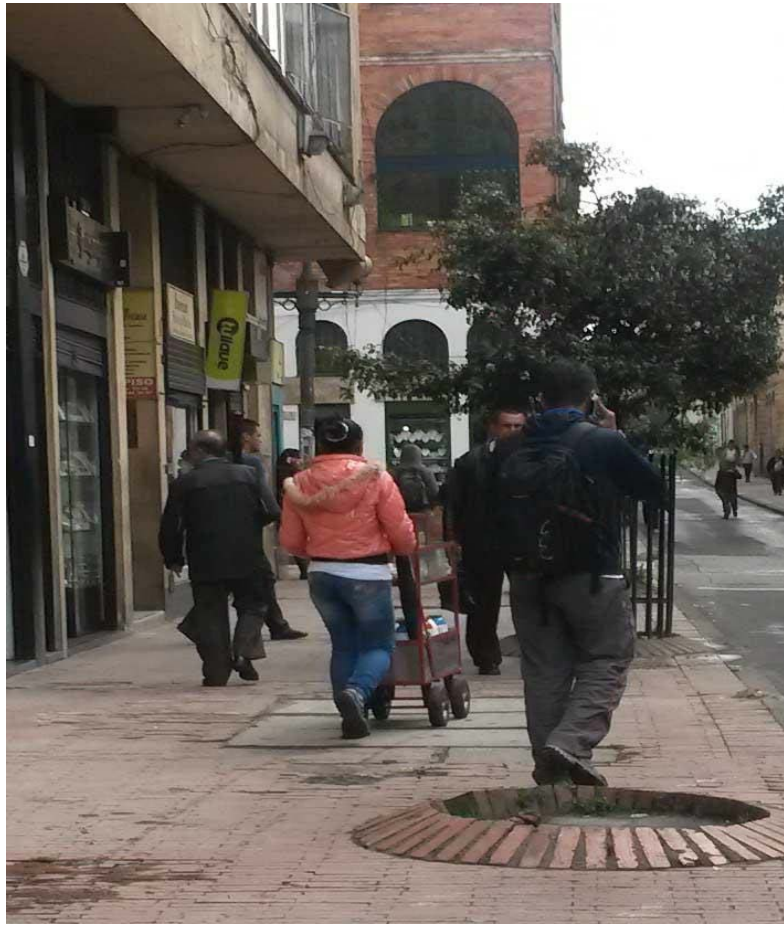
One way of empowerment that women from poor settlements gaining is the economic independence through labor participation. Colombia has been experiencing an increase in female labor participation since 1984, which passed from nearly 47% to 65% in 2006 (Amador, Bernal & Peña, 2011).

During my interviews, my informants also made a strong point on the higher women participation in labor market of Bogotá and its reasons. *The IntervieweeRVI* argued that displaced women and women migrants who reside in slum area have tendency to find more job opportunities in Bogotá than their male counterparts do, what he observed during the project with families in Usme and San Cristobal:

Women always were presented a lot in street vending [...]. In the city, they are usually the persons who find jobs easier than men do, because of many services presented in city. In addition, they get in power in this sense more than men do. Usually man, who was a farmer or owner of some small shops in their native areas feel lost in the city and can find themselves just as security guards or in construction industry.

Hence, during my non-participant observations inside poor neighborhoods and around inner city of Bogotá I found many examples of women working as street vendors or offering different services. In general, street market in Bogotá, as formal and informal, distinguish infinite number of goods and services offering by vendors of both genders. To the outside viewer the biggest part of labor market in Bogotá is represented by a wide range of different informal vendors. I distinguished several groups of women-vendors related to kind of work they do.

First group are women who sell snacks, gums, flowers, waste bags, homemade sweets, etc. from the mobile hawker's trays on the “stop” signs and traffic lights, and other places in the city where cars usually stops on a few minutes or so. Their work is to walk among stopped cars and watch for some drivers who will buy their items. Sometimes these women bring their children who are waiting by the side of the road while their mothers are working. In addition, I included into the same category of street vendors women who sell snacks in the bus stations and bases of *Transmilenio* transportation system. In the same way, some women earn money by moving their carriages along streets in the business center of Bogotá and sell hot coffee to everyone who wishes. Usually, this kind of service is essential for local offices and other street vendors (Figure 32). Of course, the earning from such vending is not big but this kind of work is one of the most common on the streets of Bogotá (see Figure 33).



*Figure 32.* Woman carries the thermoses with coffee through Bogotá's business district (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).





*Figure 33.* Woman sells flowers at the outskirts of Bogotá (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).

Second group of women-workers earn money as streets artists, who make an artistic or circus-like performances on the central squares of Bogotá or at traffic lights. In

most of the cases women conducting performance in the group of other women and men, or with a partner. They earn money from handouts of passing by people and car drivers while the latter stop on traffic lights.

The third and the most widely presented group of women-workers in Bogotá is kind of vendors who sell goods from hawker's stands. Women could sell fruits, snacks, serve homemade meals and beverages, or even sell cloth (Figures 34, 35).



*Figure 34.* Woman sells snacks at the streets of Bogotá (photo by Nodier Fajardo).



*Figure 35.* Woman sells homemade meals at one of the street in Bosa (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).

Hence, women work in different kinds of informal street markets in Bogotá. Some of these vending activities distinguish oneself with creativity and quick wit of women-workers. For example, in Bosa locality, I observed woman who offered service, which could be described as “laundry for an hour.” This woman was carrying a full size laundry washing machine on her handcart through the neighborhoods and offering it for a rent for an hour or so to anyone who does not possess his or her own machine. On another street, also in Bosa, women were working as actuator of a handmade mechanical carousel for children (see Figure 36).



*Figure 36.* Woman works as a carousel-turner in the Bogotá city center (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).

In addition, many women work as formal labor on the streets of Bogotá. Women work as street orderlies, vendors, etc. (see Figures 37, 38).



*Figure 37.* Women garbage collectors in the Bogotá center (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).



*Figure 38.* Woman is selling beverages on the busy avenue (photo by Ekaterina Korzh).

To sum up everything that I was able to observe in Bogotá and surrounding slum areas, women are doing lot informal and formal jobs and vending. However, it is necessary to mention that, in equal to women, there are many men participating in informal labor market in Bogotá.



It is important to distinguish among the areas that I observed, that the most of the vendor activity locates in the inner Bogotá, in neighborhoods of Bosa and most urbanized parts of Ciudad Bolívar. In contrast, there were almost no vendor activity in remote slums of Ciudad Bolívar and in rural neighborhoods of Usme. The reason for this can be as lack of demand of such services in these areas, which are also very insecure.

As an evidence of this, the *Interviewee R1* argued, that a few years ago, the participation of women among informal street vendors in Bosa was higher in comparison to the men. However, today the number of men working as formal and informal vendors is equal to number of women-vendors.

#### Institutions of Empowerment: Women Organizations (CBOs) and NGOs

According to *Interviewee RV1, RV2, RV3, A1* and *S1* women in slums of Bogotá have history of creating community-based organizations, CBOs, and cooperate in groups through which supporting other women in neighborhoods, organizing community's fairies and conducting different kinds of projects gaining improvement of women and neighborhoods in general.

One of the most famous is organization of *Madres Comunitarias* or *Community Mothers*. This organization was born as an initiative of several mothers in Ciudad Bolívar, who were gaining to work but could not leave their children alone in the slum neighborhoods. As a result, they began to organize small kindergartens where they were staying with children by turn, while others were working in the city. According to *Interviewee RV3* this organization raised up to the nation level, and today the government

pays for women who work there. In addition, today in Bogotá's slums many other small advanced school and kindergartens created by local communities and mothers. They give their children education where government still does not able to provide it.

According to the *Interviewee R1*, the women in poor neighborhoods organize groups, which work with wide range of issues and are in emerging conditions there. For example, their work sometimes relate to health issues, and especially community health through providing alternative medicine. They also work under developing community gardens and lands providing food for communities and families, building gardens for the children, etc. This interviewee also claimed that exist another women organizations, which involved in production of goods for communities and for sale such as textile production, apparel, jewelry, etc. These organizations could appear as small family enterprises or *maquilas*, which provide sometimes up to 90% of employment for the community. Hence, women become an influential economic power in their neighborhoods. They find time and straight to work and produce economic value for communities besides their domestic responsibilities.

The reasons for these activities are many. They relate to the general underdeveloped conditions in slum neighborhoods, which creates emerging necessity for dwellers to provide basic services, social infrastructure to the neighborhoods, to develop security and justice for women; sometimes create general security control in neighborhoods, etc. *Interviewee RV2* also supported the idea that women began to organize because, in contrast to men, they were staying at home in neighborhoods due to

childcare and domestic responsibilities. In relation to this topic, the *Interviewee R1* claimed:

Staying at home and struggling to arrange their houses, which sometimes were in embryo conditions due to expensive process of construction. Women began inquire how and from where supply their homes with drinking water, electricity, sewage, etc., in the neighborhoods which were also in embryo stages. The women were usually the people who were beginning and arranging this process, because their partners or husbands frequently were absent in neighborhoods due to work, or were killed during the conflict. That is why many women become a heads of their households and assumed full responsibilities for the resources to their families.

There are many examples of how women were organizing and gaining redevelopment of their poor neighborhoods I learned from my interviewees who shared their personal experience of work with women organizations in Bogotá's slums. For example, the *Interviewee RVI* was witness to how women in Usme were struggling to supply their houses with drinking water, while the administration of the locality denied their requests:

When I was working in Usme, some neighborhoods there were still without proper water facilities, the streets were without pavement, fortunately, they had electricity, but the houses were in process of construction [...]. At that time five women, who bought their lands from swindlers, where were no water supply, took leadership in their hands and tried to connect the water to their neighborhood from the central pipes. They met a great rejection from formal part of Usme. People were trying to poison the water to not allowed illegal neighborhoods to use it. Eventually, these women were arrested. They were released just after a year under the pressure of supporters in their communities. They stayed as leaders in the neighborhood called Ciudadela El Oasis and continue their work there through organizing different fairs, bazaars, building a church and a capital room. However, the negotiations for water supply were lasting until the moment when the district was legalized and received full set of basic facilities.

Another kind of women organizations in Bogotá's slums are devoted to problems of displaced women, women-victims of violence of Colombian conflict, those who were

experienced violence in the poor neighborhoods or within family. One of the example of such organizations is *Node de Mujeres y Genero*, with situated in Centro de Usme. The leader of this group is a woman, who experienced displacement and lost her husband during the conflict between armed groups in the slums. From the words of my *Interviewee RV2* this women arranged community to build local education center for children and women, and organize those who was influenced by domestic violence and the conflict for work which redeveloping their neighborhoods. According to *Interviewee S1* the main idea of this woman to show other women how to protect themselves from the violence which sometimes is socially accepted in the neighborhood, how to achieve social and economic empowerment through making things together. My interviewee delivers me the answer of these women on the question about what pushed her to create *Node de Mujeres y Genero*:

I did not created it but we did it all together. I just asked them to join and do the things together. We are all tired of violence, of injustice and inequality and the armed conflict in Colombia is a burden on our shoulders. This has affected many women, but I always say that it made us stronger. Men died or left, but we are stay to build our families and develop our neighborhoods.

In addition to such organizations, women also create groups, which concern about environmental problems in neighborhoods. The *Interviewee RV1* shared his experience of work with these women:

I have been working with women who experienced domestic violence and sexual abuse. In addition, from their words I know that they feel in charge to protect natural environment where they feel calm and which they see as vulnerable object due to what was happening with them in life.

According to my *Interviewee RV2* in the 2000s, the women from Usme were creating a movement against occupation of green areas of rural Usme by urban sprawl of Bogotá's constructions.

To sum up, it must be mentioned that such women organizations are not frequently met the governmental support due to lack of interest of Bogotá's administration to such small self-organized groups, which interests usually differ from interests of the latter. In case of *Node de Mujeres y Genero*, they do not receive sustainable support from state or some administration projects. According to *Interviewee SI* it is hard for them to apply to any official funds which are likely to be spend on the higher level of bureaucratic system or among organizations which approved by state. Hence, the money which government intentionally spend on redevelopment projects of slums and for gender programmers are not likely the reach the people who really needed.

Usually, the CBOs I described above earn monetary sources for their use through the community work and fairies. In addition, some universities can apply their funds of development projects, as it happened in case of *Node de Mujeres*, which were supported by the Universidad Nacional de Colombia. However, in both ways these funds are small and do not enough for sustainable development of these small women organizations; University's projects finishes and CBO stay supported by scarce funds from the pockets of its members.

Some of the state's funds are divided between affiliated large NGOs. Since then these money become responsibility of the NGOs who supposed to help to slums

communities and CBOs as *Node de Mujeres y Genero*. That is why the effective work of the NGOs could be vital for the poor neighborhoods and its CBOs.

### NGOs and CBOs: Cooperation and Conflict between Top-Down and Bottom-Up

#### Institutions

Today Bogotá is a hub for many international, national and small local NGOs. I suppose that due to the prolongation of Colombian war and its great impact on population makes the country so attractive for different kind of organization offering help in redevelopment of the region.

During my work in Bogotá, using information provided by my interviewees, I distinguish several groups from these thousands of NGOs. First, there are many international NGOs, which work in Bogotá. They usually work under the affiliation of global development projects and supplied by funds of international organizations and such and some countries as France, Germany, Spain, USA, etc. Second, there is national level NGOs. However, these NGOs frequently supplied with state funds, what counteract with the main of idea state independency of NGOs. Many small NGOs working at the local and neighborhood level could also belong to this group. Finally, there are some private NGOs with working on funds of private companies.

In general, the scale and number of projects, which NGOs conduct in Bogotá, play enormous role in redevelopment of the slums. They are working with issues of poverty, women security problems, and children. According to *Interviewee RV3* the work of NGOs with women and children are helpful on the places. In addition, they provide

different educational services for the CBOs leaders and members, gaining increase their participation among local and state decisions. The *Interviewee VI* shared his experience of work under NGO projects:

We were working with poor families in Ciudad Bolivar whose relatives were unlawfully required to give compulsory military service. The poor families of these areas are vulnerable and state and other interested groups easily violate their rights. During these projects, we were mostly working with young men and their mothers, who were gaining to prevent their children to be taken by military groups. We were providing legal protection and shelter for these people.

However, according to my other interviewees the help of national and local NGOs is not always clear due to the tight link of some NGOs with governmental resources or other external actors.

In regard of the group of private NGOs, *Interviewees A1, RV1, RV2, RV3, V2* and *S1* had a critical view on their work with poor families and children. Due to main profit gaining idea, these NGOs are not able to reply to the real needs of the people from slums of Bogotá. Private companies' NGOs if conduct some charitable and philanthropic work rely primarily to the profit or advising needs of the company which frame the extent of their service to the poor.

In addition, the *Interviewee RV3* shared a negative experience of a CBO, which were working with international NGO:

The NGO came claiming that they are ready to help to the CBO with building new houses and other work. But when they received all interested information they left without any help in return. Latter we found an article published by this NGO, which contained all information that CBO members provided to them.

To sum up, NGO have great impact on redeveloping processes as in slums of Bogotá. However, their increasing dependency on the state funds and some negative experiences of people who were working with them do not allow understanding of the benefits that they bring to poor and vulnerable population of Bogotá.

### Summary

Slum – interception of various spaces (formal/informal, central/remote, rural/urban, gang/law, etc.). These spaces are contested but at the same time are in transition as neighborhoods themselves. The structural features of relation spaces as part of the described conditions including disadvantaged position of women, violence, abuse, etc. stem from the clash between *women space* (virtual space of women livelihood, real and imaginary) and *men space* as well as between other spaces (home/street, formal/informal, gang/law, rural/urban, modern/patriarchal, etc.). However, the realities of Colombia today and slums of Bogotá in particular are such that the conditions slowly transitioning towards less patriarchal, urban societies, where slum women are not only equal, but possibly more prepared to be successful (e.g., find a an informal job). This transition results into aggression and effectively leads to “gender clash” (manifested by ‘retaliatory’ actions such as acid attacks). To respond to this clash, women engage to spatial strategies: consolidation (community organizations that “consolidate” women’s space) and separation (seeking emancipation outside their routine environment, such as out-of-household employment).



The results of investigation received through interviewing and observations displayed two main ways of spatial strategies, which help to empower women from slums areas: through labor participation or organizing.

Women tend to achieve economic independency through participating in formal and informal labor market of Bogotá. The interviews showed that women participate more in labor market of Bogotá than men due to several reasons. Women obtain more flexibility in adjusting to conditions and requirements of Bogotá's labor market. In addition, women become presenting more in heading of their families, due to absence of reliable partner or being widowed by the war, which made women responsible for earning economic resources to supply their families.

In addition, women in slums of Bogotá have tendency to create organizations, such as CBOs, and cooperate in groups through which supporting other women in neighborhoods, organizing community's fairies and conducting different kinds of projects gaining improvement of women and neighborhoods in general.

The analysis of NGOs and CBOs work based on interviews showed that not all of them create conditions for bottom-up transaction of women and their emancipation. While some CBOs become nationwide important organizations through development, some of the NGO such as international ones may exacerbate situation of the poor in slums through offering scanty services, practicing deception on CBOs in idea to obtain necessary information, and capturing large amount of state funds thereby leaving CBOs without necessary state support.

## CHAPTER 5

### CONCLUSIONS

#### Discussion and Conclusion

The goal of this research was to improve understanding of social and economic roles of women in the slums and identify CBO/NGO-supported coping strategies that gaining improvement conditions and gaining emancipation of poor women living in the slums of Bogotá, Columbia.

The first objective was to define “slums” and determine their extent, morphology and population characteristics using the most suitable definition of slums, official and non-official data, observations and interviews. Based on interviews with researchers, members of CBOs and NGOs who were working in slums of Bogotá provided vital contemporary information.

The analysis of evolution of metropolitan area of Bogotá based on literature and interviews revealed that the indigent and undeveloped areas disperse within this geographical space. However, poor neighborhoods still maintain historical location and tend to concentrate near south and southwestern borders of the city.

The analysis of Bogotá’s slums based on interviews and field observation identified them as transitional spaces with peculiarly intertwined social, economic, physical and political landscapes number of transitional space within neighborhoods, which distinguish slums of Bogotá. The diversity of transitional spaces has influence on the characteristics of the poor neighborhoods which in turn have a direct impact on the possibilities and disadvantages of poor women. Below I can suggest a classification of

Bogotá neighborhood along several transition vectors (central/remote, poor/wealthier, informal/formal, urban/rural, etc.)

First, neighborhoods in slums can be defined as central and remote. Central slums neighborhoods tend to situate on the main streets, squares and transportation arteries, which can be finished with concrete or asphalt cover, or unfinished and incomplete. Still these areas give the sense of the central areas, which attracts market and social activities. The housing in center areas is present by two-three floors building from brick and blocks. The remote neighborhoods are tend to situate far from main streets and roads, some public transportation which are available to central neighborhoods, do not serve there. Such neighborhoods are tending to situate on the high slopes of the mountains, or in contrast, deeper in the valleys between mountains. The main characteristics of remote neighborhoods are extremely poor housing from poor materials, situation in hazard areas, and high presence of informal housing and invasions.

The remoteness of the neighborhoods plays a disadvantaging role in live of women who have lack of communication to the job possibilities of the city. In addition, the remote neighborhoods have less security, lack or absence of basic services and social infrastructure, which are also barriers for poor women on the way to empowerment.

Second type, which I observed in slums of Bogotá, is a transaction between the poorest and the poor. This transition tightly links with spatial characteristics of the first. As further neighborhood from main streets and squares as poorer the settlements. However, there is some exclusion from this spatial diversification. It is also possible to observe the situation of two distant *Estratos* on the same street, as it show examples in

San Cristobal, Usme, Bosa, and Ciudad Bolivar. Spatial segregation and poverty consist less opportunities for all settlements. Hence, women from the poor neighborhood have more opportunities for economic empowerment than women from the poorest.

Third type distinguishes transition between formal and informal settlements. Due to large trade of lands by swindlers and activities of Guerillas, many slums neighborhoods are still informal and not able to obtain some basic services. Nevertheless, many of informal neighborhoods in Usme, Bosa and Ciudad Bolivar were declared as formal for the past three decades. Transition between formal and informal neighborhoods consist features of transition areas between central/remote and poor/the poorest neighborhoods which creates additional barriers for women on the way to obtain many services which city can offer. Hence, women from different transitional areas have different opportunities and relations with Bogotá's urban space.

Forth type of transaction occurs on the administrative border of Bogotá with neighboring municipalities. The transaction areas are not distinguished with any specific characteristics despite administrative division, and hence division of responsibilities for these areas. Such transition neighborhoods I observed on the border between Bogotá and city of Soacha.

Fifth type occurs between rural and urban areas. For example, Usme locality was historically rural appendage of Bogotá and today it still contains the main features of rural settlements. However, due to large urban sprawl of Bogotá, many neighborhoods in Usme obtain urban features. In the same way, there are many transitional areas in remote

neighborhoods of Ciudad Bolívar and Bosa. The transition between more *urban* and more *rural* neighborhoods creates as different traditional bonds on the mobility of women. In addition, it creates different relationships between women from different neighborhoods by themselves what effect on their ability to organize for gaining empowerment, what will be discuss more in the next chapter.

As a result, Bogotá's slums are highly heterogeneous spatial structures, which consist many transitions areas. These areas erode borders of the administrative division and make it comprehensive to determine extend of slum in Bogotá. In the same way it creates diverse relationship between poor women and the city, and their possibilities to obtain empowerment.

The second objective was to identify economic challenges experienced by women who reside in the slums of Bogotá. In respect to objectives of this study, I analyzed how these factors of vulnerability interact with processes of social and economic empowerment of female slum residents, which generates through participation of women in labor force of Bogotá and self-organizing of women in slum communities. In addition slums being interception of various spaces creates different possibilities and disadvantages for women. These spaces are contested but at the same time are in transition as neighborhoods themselves.

The results showed that women in Colombia continue experiencing the effects of protracted violence due to arm conflicts, which includes disempowerment through displacement, abuse and loss of relatives; and insecurity related to the disadvantaging conditions of life in slums. According to my analysis of interviews, women in slums of

Bogotá experience high vulnerability and insecurity in slums of Bogotá and in Colombia in general. Insecurity for women occurs from two main sources. First is the prolonged armed conflict, which left many women without home, relatives, and loved ones. This uncontrolled criminal activity harmed many of them through offence and sexual abuse that marked their lives.

The second source of vulnerability occurs in present day condition of slums. These areas demonstrate high rates of criminal activities, presence of gangs and armed groups. The slum areas, where land and housing were more accessible for in-migrants, created new gender-related disadvantages and security threats for women. In addition, women experience other gender-based unfavorable circumstances deeply embedded into the patriarchal societies of Columbia slums. According to *Interviewee A1*, one of the common reasons of vulnerability of women in slums is difficult to control and related to the high level of birth and of early pregnancies. Another kind of violence, which affects the safety and security women and other slums dwellers, occurs within families and households.

The structural features of relational spaces as part of the described conditions including disadvantaged position of women, violence, abuse, etc. stem from the clash between *women space* (virtual space of women livelihood, real and imaginary) and *men space* as well as between other spaces (home/street, formal/informal, gang/law, rural/urban, modern/patriarchal, etc.). However, the realities of Colombia today and slums of Bogotá in particular are such that the conditions slowly transitioning towards less patriarchal, urban societies, where slum women are not only equal, but possibly more

prepared to be successful (e.g., find a an informal job). This transition results into aggression and effectively leads to “gender clash” (manifested by ‘retaliatory’ actions such as acid attacks). To respond to this clash, women engage to spatial strategies: consolidation (community organizations that “consolidate” women’s space) and separation (seeking emancipation outside their routine environment, such as out-of-household employment).

The third objective was to examine the role of NGOs, and especially community-based organizations, and their projects, which aim to help women in on the way to improve their life in the Bogotá slums. Specifically I was examining whether slum women utilize coping strategies such as forming market cooperatives in order to gain economic and social empowerment, and how NGOs assist them in this process.

Women tend to achieve economic independence through participating in formal and informal labor market of Bogotá. I described and analyzed a variety of earning strategies employed by women mostly informal in nature and involving various activities and spaces. In fact, the interviews and observations showed that women participate more in labor market of Bogotá than men due to several reasons. One is that women obtain more flexibility in adjusting to conditions and requirements of Bogotá’s labor market. In addition, women become presenting more in heading of their families, due to absence of reliable partner or being widowed by the war, which made women responsible for earning economic resources to supply their families.

In addition, women in slums of Bogotá have a demonstrated ability to organize in order to create organizations, such as CBOs, and cooperate in groups through which they

support other women in neighborhoods, organize community's fairs and conduct different kinds of projects to improve circumstances for women and entire neighborhoods.

The analysis of NGOs and CBOs work based on interviews demonstrated that not all of them create conditions for bottom-up engagement of women and thus create avenues for their emancipation. While some bottom-up CBOs appear to be successful and even become nationally important organizations, some of the 'top-down' NGOs, especially international and state-related may in fact exacerbate disadvantages for women in the slums by offering scanty services, practicing deception of CBOs in order to obtain information, and capturing large amount of state funds thereby leaving CBOs without necessary state support.

#### Limitations

There are several limitations of this study: (1) due to limited knowledge of Spanish, my ability to conduct full interview was constrained. In addition, more detailed analysis of Spanish literature could add beneficial information to this study, exist just in Spanish. (2) The interviewing women-slum residents could provide deeper perspective on their avenues to empowerment. (3) Dangerous criminal conditions of slums limited my ability to observe the places for longer time. Also due to high risk of robbery, I was unable to obtain more visual materials. (4) More people would be preferable for interview but short time of the fieldwork narrowed my pool of informants.



### Further Directions

The further investigation in this sphere needs deeper understanding of existing literature in Spanish. In addition, the focus must be directed on community-based organizations (CBOs) concerning their higher importance in community-based movements in slums of Bogotá. In regard to develop better understanding of NGO strategies and direction must be used larger pool of interviewees. For an in-depth inquiry of women's avenues to empowerment must be conducted interviews directly with women living in slums. This continued work can also have policy implications by providing more accurate information about conditions of women and preferred strategies to support their social and economic emancipation in Colombian slums.

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APPENDIX A:  
QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWING OF NGOS' MEMBERS

1. How does NGOs determine spatial borders of slums in Bogotá? How does your team determines 'barrios pobre'?

Como las ONGs determinan los límites espaciales de los barrios pobres en Bogotá? Como su equipo de trabajo determina este fenómeno?

2. What are the main socio-economical or other characteristics can assure that this particular neighborhood is slums?

Cuales son las principales características socio-economicas o de otro tipo que pueden asegurar que un barrio es un "Barrio Pobre"?

3. What are the main idea of NGOs working in Bogotá?

Cuáles son los intereses primordiales de las ONGs para trabajar en Bogotá?

4. How does your team choose particular neighborhood where the redevelopment project will be conducted?

Como su equipo especifica el barrio donde se llevará a cabo los proyectos de reurbanización?

5. Which socio-economic characteristics are common their settlements?

Cuáles son las características socio-económicas más comunes en los barrios?

6. In which slums did you work under NGO project?

Cuales han sido los "Barrios Pobres" donde usted trabajó bajo algún proyecto de una ONG?

7. What are the main disadvantages of poor settlements that you observed during your work there?

Cuáles fueron las principales problemáticas de los asentamientos pobres que usted observó durante su trabajo ?

8. How did the project of your team help to slums residents?

Como los proyectos que se realizan ayudan a los residentes?

9. Do you think that children and women are more vulnerable facing slums experiences than men

Usted cree que los Niños y las Mujeres son más vulnerables frente a las situaciones de los barrios pobres que los hombres?

10. Which kind of challenges and disadvantages of female settlements did you observe during you work in slums?

Cuales posibilidades o desventajas usted observó en los grupos de mujeres durante su trabajo?

11. With which kinds of women challenges in slums does your team work right now?

How has your team's work already helped to improve women's conditions there?

En los grupos de mujeres de los asentamientos pobres, Cuales son las desventajas en las que usted está trabajando? Como su grupo de trabajo ha colaborado en el mejoramiento de las condiciones en las mujeres, en particular en estos lugares?

12. Which kind of women empowerment did you observed during you work in slums?

Qué procesos de empoderamiento en las mujeres usted ha observado durante su trabajo en los barrios pobres?

13. What do you think are the other ways for women to gain empowerment?

Cual cree usted que es otra manera en que la mujer adquiere empoderamiento?

## APPENDIX B:

## QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWING OF OTHER SOCIAL WORKERS

1. How does your team (your specialists) determine spatial borders of slums ('barrios pobre') in Bogotá?

Como suequipo de trabajodeterminaloslimitesespaciales de los barrios pobresenBogotá?

2. What are the main socio-economical or other characteristics can assure that this particular neighborhood is slums ('barrios pobre')?

Cuales son las principalescaracterísticas socio-economicas o de otro tipo que determinan que un barrio es un barrio pobre?

3. What are the main idea of your team working (your specialists) working under issues of 'barrios pobre' in Bogotá?

Cúales son losintereses de suequipo para trabajar bajo las problemáticas de los "Barrios Pobres" en Bogotá?

4. How does your team choose particular slums ('barrios pobre') where the redevelopment project will be conducted?

Como suequipo especifica lo barrios pobres donde se llevara a cabo los proyectos de reurbanización.

5. Which socio-economic characteristics are common among slums settlements?

Cuales son las características socio-economicas comunes entre los "Barrios Pobres"?

6. In which slums did you work under your team project?

Cuales son los barrios pobres donde usted ha realizado algun proyecto?

7. What are the main challenges of slums' settlements you observed during your work there?

Cuales son las principales desventajas que usted a observado durante su trabajo en los "Barrios Pobres"?

8. Which living conditions of slums dwellers did you observed in this slums during your work under project?

Cuales son las condiciones de vida que usted observo en los barrios pobres durante la realización de los proyectos?

9. How did the project of your team help to slums residents in particular 'barrios pobre'?

Como los proyectos realizados por su equipo de trabajo beneficia a los habitantes de los barrios pobres?

10. Do you think that children and women are more vulnerable facing slums experiences than men?

Usted cree que los niños y las mujeres son más vulnerables frente a las dificultades de los "Barrios Pobres" que los hombres.

11. Which kind of challenges and disadvantages of female settlements did you observe during you work in slums?

Cuales son las posibilidades y las desventajas de las mujeres que usted pudo observar durante su trabajo en los "Barrios Pobres."

12. With which kinds of women challenges in slums does your team work right now?

How has your teams work already helped to improve women's conditions in particular slums?

En los grupos de mujeres de los asentamientos pobres, ¿cuáles son las desventajas en las que ustedes están trabajando?

Como su grupo de trabajo ha colaborado en el mejoramiento de las condiciones en las mujeres, en particular de los barrios pobres?

13. Which kind of women empowerment did you observed during you work in slums?

¿Qué modo de organización en las mujeres usted ha observado durante su trabajo en los barrios pobres?

14. What do you think are the other ways for women to gain empowerment in slums?

¿Cuáles cree usted que pueden ser la manera para que las mujeres puedan obtener posibilidades de organización en los barrios pobres?

## APPENDIX C:

## QUESTIONS FOR INTERVIEWING OF LOCAL GEOGRAPHERS

1. How does you or your colleagues determine spatial borders of slums ('barrios pobre') in Bogotá?

Como usted o sus colegas determinan los límites espaciales de los barrios pobres

2. What are the main socio-economical or other characteristics can assure that this particular neighborhood is slums ('barrios pobre')?

Cuales son las principales características socio-economicas o de otro tipo que pueden determinar que un barrio es un barrio pobre?

3. Have you ever had any field works in barrios pobre' in Bogotá for improve your knowledge about these specific socio economical regions?

Usted ha tenido algún trabajo de campo en los "Barrios Pobres" en Bogotá para mejorar el conocimiento acerca de las situaciones socioeconómicas de estas regiones?

4. Which socio-economic characteristics are common among slums settlements?

Cuales son las características socio-economicas comunes entre los "Barrios Pobres"?

5. In which slums have you worked under your field work?

En cuales barrios usted ha realizado trabajo de campo?

6. What are the main challenges of slums' settlements you observed during your work there?

Cuales son las principales desventajas que usted observó durante sus trabajos de campo?

7. Which living conditions of slums dwellers did you observed?

Cuales son las condiciones de los habitantes de los barrios pobres que usted observó?

8. Do you think that children and women are more vulnerable facing slums experiences than men?

Usted cree que los niños y las mujeres son más vulnerables frente a las dificultades de los “Barrios Pobres” que los hombres.

9. Which kind of challenges and disadvantages of female settlements did you observe during your field work in slums?

Cuales son las posibilidades y las desventajas de las mujeres que usted pudo observar durante su trabajo en los “Barrios Pobres.”

10. Which kind of women empowerment did you observed during you work in slums?

Que modo de organización en las mujeres usted ha observado durante su trabajo en los barrios pobres?

11. What do you think are the other ways for women to gain empowerment in slums?

Cuales cree usted que pueden ser la manera para que las mujeres puedan obtener posibilidades de organización en los barrios pobres?