

The Access to the City in the Medellín Urban Experience

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Abstract : According to many studies, public space in the cities of Global South is constantly morcellated and captured by a multiplicity of actors in a permanent struggle for power. This imposed public space restricts the access to services and political actions to many inhabitants. The author has conducted several focus group sessions using video in a reflective mode with low-income communities in Medellín, Colombia in order to study how people in this city are shift from a physical public space to a hybrid public space shaped by internet. Beyond the fragmented city and the violent urban context manifested by participants, these activities have highlighted how the access to the city is currently going through a dialectic movement between the physical and the digital space. The purpose of this article is to make explicit the link between this hybrid public space and the boundaries of exclusion in the city. Urban marginality is closely related with the idea of access and space. Low-income communities in Medellín assume the digital realm like a “not controlled space” of resistance, where alternative ways of expression like hip hop movement, graffiti, dance, video and virtual communities produce effective changes in the physical realm.

Keywords : access to the city, hybrid public space, low-income communities, Medellín, urban marginality

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