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## **Partnership and Participation under Neoliberalism Planning Large Scale Urban Projects in Santiago de Chile**

### **1 Research Background and Research Question**

In cities around the world we see a growing tension between progressive discourses of normative governance approaches for the participatory shaping of urban environments on the one hand and the de-facto rising power of profit-oriented private sector actors in city-building processes on the other. For both trends local space is the privileged medium. While on the one hand local planning is considered to be able to fulfill the aim of bringing democracy (and sustainability) to the ground, on the other local space is increasingly commoditized and brought into global circles of capital and thus under influence of powerful (international) investors (Keil and Brenner 2003). Hence, local space becomes contested between several scales of action, regulations and actors.

For most urban scholars (Harvey 1989; Theodore, Peck and Brenner 2009; Peck and Tickell 2002, Swyngedouw et al. 2003) local transformation and conflict have to be seen as inextricably linked to macro-structural processes as economic globalization and the global spread of neoliberal ideology. While processes of neoliberal globalization are working at all spatial scales, processes of institutional transformation are occurring with particular intensity at the urban scale. Here “neoliberal policy experiments” as place-marketing, public-private partnerships or urban development corporations are enacted in order “to mobilize city space as an arena both for market-oriented growth and for elite consumption practices” (Brenner and Theodore 2002b). Important tools in these strategies are large scale urban regeneration projects (Fainstein 2001; Graham and Marvin 2001; Moulaert, Swyngedouw and Rodriguez 2001; Diaz Orueta and Fainstein 2009). While neoliberal restructuring arguably is a structural trend affecting cities around the world, authors highlight the necessity of analytically taking into account the interaction of contemporary restructuring projects with inherited frameworks of urban political-economic regulation and hence the always locally specific character of conflict about city space (Brenner and Theodore 2002b).

Broadly in this context of globally connected and locally specific urban transformation under the guideline of neoliberalism I see embedded my case study research on the planning of

large scale urban projects in Santiago de Chile. Santiago is insofar interesting as it is Latin American avant-garde in neoliberal policy experiments and within practitioners throughout the region known as role model for 'effective urban governance'. The city clearly bears the legacy of two decades of authoritarian free-market urban policy under dictator Pinochet and his 'Chicago-Boys'. While in the democratization process on the one hand programs of decentralization and a "new system of participation" with competences to collaboratively shape local places were enacted, today we see a wave of top-down implemented large scale urban projects in the form of inner city redevelopment schemes or super modern highways (Zunino 2006).

The latest "innovative synthesis" of liberalization policies with Chiles' state-dominated tradition in the urban realm - as e.g. the government's housing subsidy scheme or the program of franchising highway concessions have been called (Smolka and Sabatini 2000) - is the adoption of project-based and partnership oriented principles to land use planning. Where before modernist-style comprehensive planning through regional land use zoning or urban growth boundaries were applied by public authorities, with the new regulations urban development is negotiated on a project-to-project base leading to public-private development agreements. This shift in planning philosophy - which by some Santiago-based scholars is called as one "from planning to governance" (De Mattos 2004) - prepared the legal and argumentative ground for an impressive spread of large scale residential and mixed-used projects into the outskirts of the city and beyond (Borsdorf and Hidalgo 2006). Due to the sheer dimension of the projects which are designed for up to 100.000 people and their characteristics as master-planned private cities that come with extensive service infrastructure (leisure, education, shopping) the projects deeply and in manifold ways affect the communities where they are located. Thus, it is an important question to ask why, how, by whom, for whom and with what consequences the projects are planned and implemented. Here I embed the *central research question* of my investigation:

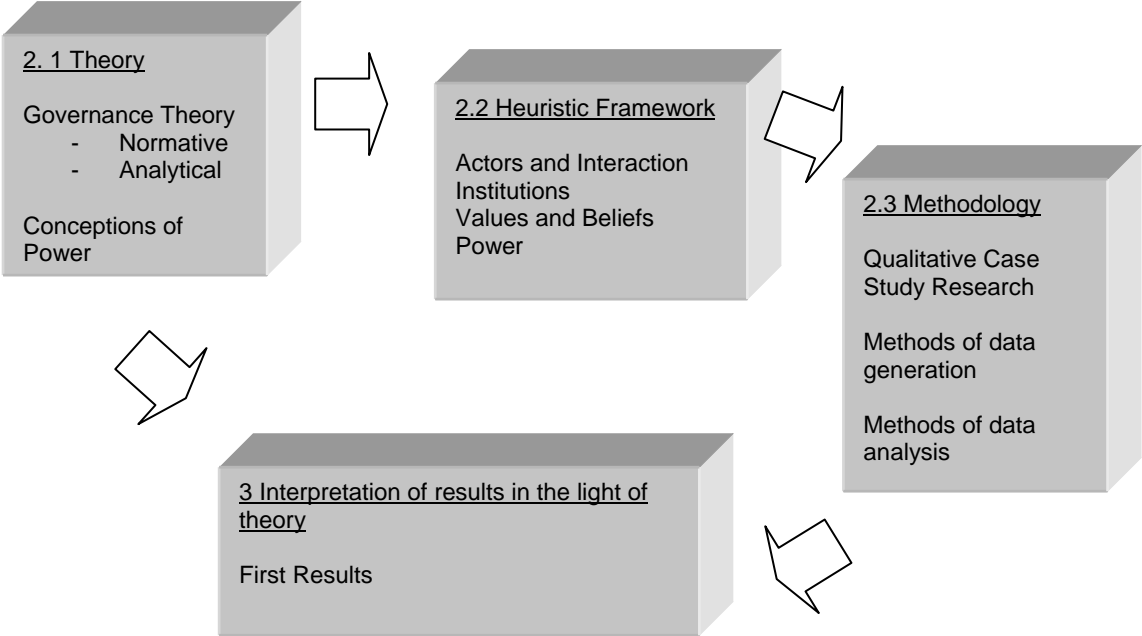
To what extent and by which means does the adoption of project and partnership oriented principles in planning in Santiago undermine the power of place-based actors to participate in shaping their living environments?

## **2 Research Design and Methodology**

In the following chapter I outline the research design and the methodological approach of my study (Figure 1). Firstly, I present the theoretical foundations; secondly the heuristic framework to which theory is leading me and which will guide my empirical work; thirdly the

methodological principles of my investigation will be presented. In the following chapter I address the issue of interpretation and first results.

Figure 1: Research Design and Methodology



**2.1 Theory**

Following Judge, Stoker und Wolman (1995) “conceptual frameworks provide a language and frame of reference through which reality can be examined and lead theorists to ask questions that might not otherwise occur. The result, if successful, is new and fresh insights that other frameworks or perspectives might not have yielded”. Stoker (1998) adds that „the value of such frameworks can be found in their identification of what is worthy of study”. Due to the complexity of the phenomenon I conduct research on – in a broader sense the socio-political production of urban space - my theoretical framework consists out of several intermeshed theoretical approaches. It is aimed to be eclectic *and* consistent.

In the social sciences the transformation of the way how public and private actors interact in the context of global restructuring has been described as a *transformation from government to governance*. In its normative content, governance characterizes the types of regulating structures and arrangements that provide the best ‘fit’ to changing political, societal and

economic conditions (Nuisl and Heinrichs 2006). The analytical concept addresses in how far (urban) “policy has become much more neoliberal in its orientation and the structure of the policy making apparatus has become increasingly complex” (Martin et. al 2003).

According to Nuisl and Heinrichs (2006) it is common to the various *normative approaches* of governance that they approve of the transformation of a strong welfare state to a low-profile state that shares power with partners from the private sector and civil society. However, while one line of normative approaches puts emphasis on strengthening competitiveness and effective governance through the involvement of the private sector in providing public goods, another line focuses on civil society and participatory approaches of decision-making. While the first is essentially neoliberal thinking and prepares the ground for entrepreneurial governance and public-private partnership, the second is embedded in debate about plural governance (and deepening democracy (Beaumont and Nicholls 2008). With regard to my research subject it is important to note that (land use) planning theory and practice have followed this debate and developed from the synoptic ideal of planning to the principle of discursive planning, as Nuisl and Heinrichs (2006) point out. In the latter category neoliberal and participatory approaches are meshed and it is a task for research to understand in how far (neoliberal) partnership and (democracy enhancing) participation relate. The analytical concepts of governance can provide tools for that endeavor.

The *analytical concept* of governance is essentially about the reshaping, rescaling and blurring boundaries between public and private actors. According to Stoker (1989) the concept of urban governance entails formal institutions of local government, changing government structures, informal institutions as well as the direct involvement of private sector interests in the managing of cities. One of the most influential urban governance approaches is urban regime theory (Stone 1989). Its basic question is who – in an increasingly complex world and under limited resources – has the power to act; to carry out governing projects: Who governs, how and with what consequences? Answers are found in the concepts of governing coalitions and urban regimes. Regimes are understood as “informal yet relatively stable group with access to institutional resources that enable it to have a sustained role in making governing decisions” (Stoker 1995: 58). Although widely applied in urban research, regime theory has two essential problems: it offers few methodological guidelines and is designed around urban development in the US (Gissendanner 2003). In order to make regime theory operational for a Latin American context I connect it with one of the many more ‘general’ approaches to urban governance (Di Gaetano and Strom 2003, Pierre 1999, Nuisl and Heinrichs 2006). Due to its integrative character the model of Kooiman (2003) seems promising to me. Looking at actors, institutions and their interplay in societal affairs,

Kooiman et al. (2008) identifies three “Orders of Governance”: „These can be imagined as three concentric circles nested as in the peels of an onion. The outer ring deals with day-to-day affairs, and is termed first order governance. The second ring- second order governance - deals with institutions, whereas the third – meta-governance – involves debate on the underlying values and principles. The three orders are closely related and always – even when they are not made explicit – available” (Kooiman et. al 2008). First Order Governance is about “the world of action” and implementation of policy, the space, where public administration meets those actors affected by its actions and in my framework will have actual decision-making processes as focus. Second Order Governance is about the institutional arrangements within which first order governance takes place (Kooiman et al. 2008). Institutions refer to the rules, both formal and informal, that shape and constrain the behaviour of actors as well as their expectation about the behaviour of others. Meta-Governance refers to debate over underlying values and norms and feeds, binds, and evaluates the governing exercise on the other levels (Kooiman et al. 2008).

With regard to my central research question the integration of urban regime theory and the governance orders can help to understand how and by whom and with what consequences (for the participation of place-based actors in shaping their living environments) partnership approaches are applied. However, what is missing in order to fully achieve the task is a more sophisticated view of *power*. Here I will rely on the work of Michel Foucault and his conception of the capillarity of power (Sarasin 2008, Huxley 2007). This point has to be further elaborated.

## **2.2 Heuristic framework**

In the sense of Judge, Stoker and Wolman (1995) the different theories provide me with a language and also suggest what is worth study. This is what is reflected in my heuristic framework which itself leads me to ‘operational’ questions that guide my empirical research. A brief explication: I understand the political economy of global neoliberalism as the structural background in front of which governance processes unfold. These I decompose into three Orders of Governance: Actors and Interaction, Institutions and the meta-level of values and beliefs. With regard to the relation of the orders governance I apply the concept of power: power to act as in urban regime theory and power as societal ubiquity as in the conceptualization of Foucault. In my framework power thus works as a transversal category. To address all the questions regime theory is posing (who, how and with what consequences) my last category is the ‘outcome’ of the governance processes. The elements of my heuristic framework are as follows:

First Order Governance: Actors, Interaction, decision-making processes

Who are the actors that are involved in the governance of large projects and who is not involved? How can the interplay between different actor groups be described? Which coalitions of actors do emerge or play out? Which strategies are implemented by the various actor groups? What were the steps in implementing the projects? To what extent are the interests of different stakeholders represented in the planning process?

Second Order Governance: Institutions

Which are the central formal institutions that are guiding the governance process of large urban projects? How the new institutional framework of conditional planning is connected to already existent institutions on various levels? In particular, how is the new institutional framework connected to institutions that aim at fostering citizen participation? Is it enacted and legitimized? Which role do informal institutions play?

Meta-Governance: Values, Beliefs, Paradigms

What are the underlying values and beliefs of the actors involved in the governance of large projects? What are the underlying principles of the new institutional framework?

Outcome:

Which interests and needs have finally been considered in the planning of projects and thus the communes' future? In how far do the projects affect the daily life of local communities?

### **2.3 Methodology**

In order to grasp the complexity of the socio-political processes I focus on an in-depth inquiry is needed. I therefore adopt qualitative case study research. A central step in case study research is the selection of samples and cases. I adopted the information-oriented selection. According to Flyvbjerg (2004) the purpose here is to maximize the utility from small samples of cases and thus cases are selected on the expectations about their information content. In my study of the governance and planning processes of large scale projects in Santiago I choose to focus on two suburban communities where most of the projects are clustered, Colina and Pudahuel. While in Colina the new partnership planning principle of conditional planning for the first time was adopted and several projects have been realized, Pudahuel belongs to the second generation and projects are in their final planning stage. Thus, while in Colina I have to reconstruct the planning process entirely, in Pudahuel it is to a certain extent observable in action.

In my study I adopt primordially qualitative methods. “Research as a process requires constant reconsideration of the best possible action for the next step. Because qualitative research lacks the unambiguous results of statistical tests, it requires the examination of the research topic from different viewpoints with a variety of instruments as an opportunity to discover contradictions, to level them off and thus increase the validity” (Pohl 1998, cited in and translated by Heinrichs 2005). What gets clear from this statement is that methods in qualitative research have to be open and diversified (see also Flick 2007). Accordingly, I apply a systematic mix of methods.

Firstly, I conduct participatory observation. In the thirteen months that I have already spent in Santiago I attended a range of conferences and public discussion rounds related to my field of study. The aim was to get a ‘sense for the field’ and grasp the political culture and main discourses in the realm of urban planning in general and the new partnership approaches more specifically.

Secondly, I conduct semi-structured interviews. In my first field work period I realized around 30 interviews with different stakeholders that were more or less involved in the remaking of Colina and Pudahuel. In the beginning my sampling strategy again was focused towards the gathering of information and ‘getting into the field’. Following the “snowball-principle” I then aimed to talk to representatives from all involved actor groups (state, private sector, civil society, experts) and levels of action (local, regional, national) in order to gather information about events and, more important, the actors’ perceptions about these events and actions. The form of interview I therefore applied was the problem-centered interview which implicates at the same time a certain structuring through the interviewer in line of his research interests (following a set of guiding questions) and openness for the interviewee to delve into aspects he/she sees as important.

As an auxiliary tool I use a Geographic Information System (GIS). This is fed with geographic and quantitative data about characteristics of the projects (e.g. location, size, investment sums) and the communities of Colina and Pudahuel (e.g. location of settlements, municipal budget). It is both useful in analyzing and visualizing the impact of projects on the communities. The data used are provided by *Observatorio de Ciudades* of the Catholic University of Chile in Santiago. In some cases generated maps were used in interviews to backup the communication and validate information.

As relates to the analysis of data I base my work on a mix of classical methods of text interpretation on the one hand and hermeneutic discourse analysis on the other. While the

first method of analysis is well established and documented (Flick 2007), the latter, following the work of Sigfried Jäger who draws on Foucault, only recently is gaining importance in social and spatial sciences (Reuber and Pfaffenbach 2005). It can be described as being in between qualitative content analysis and a full poststructuralist discourse analysis. Very generally speaking, similar to the latter it addresses the interface of society, language and power and is aimed at identifying the structure of societal belief-systems as they crystallize in spoken (in my case interviews) or written (in my case documents and media reporting) text. My aim in applying hermeneutic discourse analysis is identifying how power captured in language is shaping actors and interaction, institutions and beliefs and ultimately partnership and participation.

### **3 First Results**

The following considerations are some first reflections based on my ongoing fieldwork. Until now neither have all interviews been transcribed nor have they been systematically analyzed. In the remainder I follow the three governance orders that are the core of my heuristic framework.

#### *The Governance Process: Large Scale Urban Projects in Colina and Pudahuel*

In both cases, Colina and Pudahuel, real estate interest in developing large projects ranges back into the early 1990s and it was then when developers started to buy large tracts of land. In Colina by now three large projects have been constructed, in Pudahuel three large projects are in their final planning stage. In both communities the projects are developed on greenfields, in both cases surrounded by numerous smaller settlements and affecting the entire community.

#### *Actors, interaction, and the decision-making process*

In Colina the projects clearly rest on the interest of real estate developers to capitalize the communities' proximity to the traditional upper class cone in the north-east of Santiago. It has been confirmed in various interviews that a coalition of high rank public and private sector actors with a stake in urbanism looked for possibilities to make development feasible which finally was achieved through modifications of the regional land use plan for Santiago in 1997. Here the principle of conditional planning was introduced. Round tables were enacted in order to figure out how exactly to proceed in the planning of the projects and how to get to contractual development agreements. These negotiations kept on the level of national ministries, external experts and the heads of some big real estate firms. The projects in Colina thus were implemented top-down. Local public authorities have neither been part of these negotiation processes of how to implement projects nor in their specific location or



design nor in the final approval. Neither did the affected citizens, those that live in the immediate surrounding of projects, have had the possibility to participate in the negotiation and planning process. First interviews with this actor group suggest that some 'neighbors', actually the most marginalized; do not feel to have the right to participate. Others see themselves clearly affected and blame local authorities of not taking care what is going on in this remote part of the municipality. They blame that none of the participatory elements that came with democratization ever have been implemented in the community. They are "disappointed and angry" but not surprised about how the projects were put forward. While all of the neighbor-groups do articulate the fear of eradication in the future, the local planning authority complains about the neglect of local consideration.

In Pudahuel it was also early private real estate interest due the communist locational assets (national airport, connecting infrastructure) that was the catalyst of putting projects forward. However, from an early stage the municipality, and in particular the mayor, was involved in planning. He and his circle of confidence in the municipality felt deeply disadvantaged by regional land use planning that for many years for Pudahuel foresaw social housing and garbage dumps but no "development vision". In order to change this, in 1996 a formal public-private partnership was established and commissioned to elaborate a local land use plan that would make the development of projects viable. However, since the elaboration of the plan was financed by the interested developers the first draft of the plan reflected their needs and interests, not those of the community. In a second phase then the local community was involved in some form of collaborative elaboration of the plan. Local social leaders were capacitated in "programs of urbanistic alphabetization" in order to participate. While in interviews with social leaders this phase was described as a highlight in the collaborative planning of the communities' future, the finished plan never was approved what for some was a deeply disillusioning experience. Finally, as in the case of Colina, the projects are implemented via the regional level with the regional land use plan (PRMS) in 2003 and a second generation of principles of conditional planning. Although the proceeding was refined and made more transparent than in Colina, the local public authorities since is struggling to keep some grip on the projects and thus the community's future. Furthermore, once switched to the regional level, there is no possibility for any kind of formal citizen participation. While some of the real estate firms made own attempts to arrange participation around particular projects, by participants these meetings were described as "unworthy" and a kind of manipulation in the terms of Arnstein (1967).

### *Institutions*

The formal institution at the centre of the various large projects is conditional planning which for the first time was enacted through the modification of the regional land use plan (PRMS) in 1997 and modified in 2003. Its core principles are the following: firstly, projects do have to have a certain minimum size (300ha) and be mixed-used in order to guarantee the development of 'self-sufficient new towns'. Secondly, projects have to be socially mixed and fulfill quota of social housing in order to foster social integration. Thirdly, the developers have to compensate for negative externalities of their projects, especially the newly generated transport infrastructure demand. The first time introduction of conditional planning in several interviews has been described as a "fast-track mechanism" in order to implement projects that in advance have been agreed upon. No local or citizen participation of any kind has been legally required in order to implement the mechanism itself nor in the following planning and negotiation process. With the second generation of conditional planning there was some betterment, e.g. projects do have to be in accordance with the *Plan de Desarrollo Comunal*, a mechanism of participatory land use planning on the local level. Furthermore, projects must not negatively effect surrounding settlements. Still an open question in my research is in how far the consideration of the existing institutional framework has had any impact on the planning process and its outcome.

#### *Values, Beliefs, Paradigms*

Very preliminary insights into the underlying values, beliefs and paradigms suggest that in Santiago there is a powerful discourse of "value-free development" (Logan and Molotch 1987): (urban) growth is generating jobs and in general serves societal development purposes. A central figure in Chilean urbanism, involved in the making of the local land use plan in Pudahuel in the 1990s, stated that "slowing down the expansion of Santiago would put at risk national development" and "affect negatively its population" (Echenique 1995). Another important discursive mechanism behind the emergence of private cities in Santiago is the naturalization of urban development through the notion that "cities just grow". This is some kind of common sense in the real estate and urbanism scene in Santiago. Urban Growth is inevitable, it is something that happens. If urban growth is desirable (for national development and the people) and inevitable (because it happens) than the state should at least try to get some grip on that development. This is how the planning by conditioning seems to be justified; it is about *responsible growth*.

#### *Reflection on the results*

There can be identified a small group of public (the National Ministries for Housing and Public Works respectively) and private actors (real estate developers and planners) that have been involved in the planning of large scale projects both in Colina and Pudahuel. They are

tied through long standing personal relationships, mutual trust and shared interests in urban development. During the years of planning and negotiation of the projects some persons have changed side the private to the public sector and back again. This group of actors that might be described as a pro-growth regime does have a strong capacity to act and shape institutions and discourses in accordance with their interests. Local participation in the decision-making only seems to be considered to a minimum degree where it is really struggled for, as in the case of Pudahuel.

#### **4 Next Steps and Open Questions**

The next step in my work will be the systematic analysis of the gathered empirical material. However, parallel I will refine my theoretical framework and especially work on clearer working definitions of partnership, participation and power. For the end of 2009 a last phase (4-6 weeks) of empirical field research in Santiago is envisioned. There I intend to focus on interviews with local level actors in order to better understand the processes that underlie and distinguish the governance of large projects in Colina and Pudahuel.

The main open questions towards my project I see in the following aspects:

- How far my central research question, the research design and the methodological outline are consistent?
- Is my project still too broad in scope and aim? If so, should first results suggest where to focus?
- Is it helpful to translate the question of 'participation in partnership arrangements' more explicitly into a question of power?
- In how far should my analytical framework more explicitly address the relationships between different scales and the issue of multi-level governance?

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