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Integrating flexible state-society spaces into climate change adaptation: lessons for locally-led climate responses from Panorama, Colombia

La flexibilisación de las relaciones estado-sociales en la adaptación a los cambios climáticos : aprendizaje de Panorama, Colombia para la adaptación comunitaria

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Resumen:

Este artículo explora cómo las comunidades se involucran en las estrategias de adaptación al cambio climático en Colombia. En América Latina y el Caribe, los asentamientos humanos enfrentan importantes déficits de desarrollo, y la crisis climática lo empeora. La adaptación al cambio climático liderada localmente utiliza enfoques de planificación participativa para responder a este desafío. Pero los intereses comunitarios contradictorios y el limitado espacio para la toma de decisiones gubernamentales obstaculizan las respuestas dirigidas localmente.

Para comprender mejor cómo los urbanistas pueden apoyar la adaptación liderada localmente, este documento explora cómo los actores locales lideran las respuestas al cambio climático y otros riesgos relacionados.

El documento se basa en un estudio de caso en un barrio periurbano colombiano marginado al norte de Cali, llamado Panorama. En el estudio de caso se examinan, por un lado, las adaptaciones locales que fomentan la regularización de la tenencia de la tierra mediante negociaciones gubernamentales y la ocupación ilegal de tierras; y por otro lado la conservación de espacios verdes para prevenir la construcción de viviendas informales y los riesgos de deslizamientos de tierra e inundaciones.

Los resultados demuestran cómo los grupos sociales desarrollan soluciones no tradicionales cuando el acceso a los planes estatales es inalcanzable. Sin embargo, la diversidad de la comunidad a veces conduce a soluciones conflictivas. A medida que los grupos buscan integrarse en los procesos de legalización, se enfrentan a la competencia, y sus habilidades para navegar por el contexto político determinan quién gana y quién pierde. En última instancia, la ausencia de una facilitación efectiva crea sinergias negativas, dejando a las familias sin hogar y los espacios verdes devastados.

Los urbanistas deben mejorar las herramientas de planificación participativa para identificar la diversidad social, sus convergencias y divergencias. La mediación, la facilitación y la negociación son habilidades integrales que deben implementarse entre los actores locales y gubernamentales. Las universidades y las organizaciones locales pueden ser catalizadores en el desarrollo de relaciones productivas entre el estado y la sociedad.

Abstract:

This paper explores how communities engage in climate change adaptation strategies in Colombia. In Latin America and the Caribbean, human settlements face important development deficits, and the climate crisis makes it worse. Locally-led climate change adaptation uses participatory planning approaches to respond to the challenge. But conflicting community interests and limited bureaucratic decision-making space hinder locally-led responses.

To better understand how urban practitioners can support locally-led adaptation, this paper explores how civic actors lead responses to climate change and other related risks. The paper builds on a case study in a marginalized Colombian peri-urban neighborhood north of Cali, called Panorama. The case study looks at local adaptations fostering tenure regularization through bureaucratic negotiations and illegal land occupation; and green space conservation to prevent informal housing construction and landslide and flooding risks.

The results demonstrate how social groups develop non-bureaucratic solutions when access to state plans is unattainable. However, community diversity sometimes leads to conflicting solutions. As the groups seek to integrate into bureaucratic processes, they are

pitted into competition, and their abilities to navigate the political context determines who wins and loses. Ultimately, the absence of effective facilitation created negative synergies, leaving families homeless and green spaces devastated.
Urban practitioners must improve the participatory planning toolbox to identify social diversity, their convergences, and divergences. Mediation, facilitation, and negotiation are integral skills to be implemented between civic and bureaucratic actors. Universities and local foundations can be productive catalysts in developing productive state-society relationships.

Keyswords: Urban planning; Risk management; Community participation; Local governance; Inclusion

Palabras Claves: *Urbanismo; Gestion de riesgo; Participacion communitaria; Governancia local; Inclusion*

1. Introduction

This paper explores community perspectives and initiatives on community-led adaptation to climate change. It questions the knowledge individual practitioners bring to the table and how they articulate their contributions with local knowledges, power-dynamics, and politics. Ultimately, I propose to move beyond one-off framing and cookie-cutter technology fixes and adopt instead approaches allowing knowledges and solutions to emerge and gain traction with local, regional, and international policy.

Cities in the Global South are facing rapid urbanisation, high levels of poverty, and have been struggling to provide adequate infrastructure and services to respond to the challenge. As a result, urban inhabitants have been taking on an important role in building settlements within and on the margins of the world's cities. These communities are often situated in high risk zones increasingly exposed to hazards related to climate change such as heatwaves, precipitation and rising sea-levels. The pressures of urban migration, poverty and climate risks place a heavy burden on the people living there, the planning

authorities and development professionals that support them, and the political actors who influence policy direction and decision-making (Revi et al. 2014).

In response to these challenges, there has been an increased focus on adaptation to climate change in international financing and policy priorities, national action planning and local development initiatives. Unfortunately, attempts to spark small scale action through top-down national adaptation plans have seen little impact; from another perspective, targeted community-based adaptation often fails to impact the threat at a significant scale. Dominant approaches to adaptation have focused on large scale infrastructure and single-sector projects targeting the natural threat, for example, engineering projects like retention walls and drainage plans. These, however, fail to account for the socio-political root causes of people's vulnerability to the natural hazard. This continual focus back to nature and the natural hazard is at the expense of more important underlying factors driving urban poverty, marginalisation and, as a result vulnerability to risk. Adaptation, alongside its co-concepts of vulnerability and resilience have much of their foundation in the natural sciences, it is only recently that the social sciences are being mobilized. As such, qualitative research on adaptation that builds on human perspectives, agency and everyday lives has been minimal. Not to mention, the important role local inhabitants have in constructing the urban environment, figuratively and literally. Consequently, there is an important concern over the emphasis on large-scale, top-down, single-sector normative approaches to adaptation at the expense of those people most vulnerable to risks associated with climate change (Ribot 2014; Vale 2014).

Building on research in the field of planning, community-led/based development, and political-ecology, I approach adaptation as a formal and informal, spontaneous and planned process aimed at multiple challenges and negotiated between multiple actors with diverse priorities that produce the city. A broader understanding of urban adaptation, such as that on which this paper builds, is needed to challenge normative, top-down, and natural hazard-focused initiatives and, instead, to create space for third-sector community-based adaptation (Davoudi and Porter 2012; Chu 2016; Westoby et al. 2021; Borie et al. 2019).

2. Methodology

The research looks at a case study of locally led urban adaptations in a marginalized neighborhood in Panorama, Colombia (Streb 2012; Duminy et al. 2014). My project looked to spot the adaptations in Panorama and the multiple actors involved in fostering them. I worked with an ecology not-for-profit, a local neighborhood action committee, a corporate social responsibility foundation (hereafter, CSR foundation) and a University Urban Intervention Laboratory (I will use the pseudonym Urbolab hereafter). My field research took place over three visits extending from one to two months each. The study used direct and participant observation and a mix of in-depth online and in-person interviews with students, local leaders, and practitioners to identify socio-political spheres of change in Yumbo involving local and extra-local actors (Pelling et al. 2015). The data supports an exploration of how local leaders, their priorities, projects, and styles engage with local and extra-local actors to mobilize change (Davoudi and Porter 2012). Responses often framed as climate change adaptation or climate resilience need to be understood and woven into the fabric of these complex phenomena.

3. Results and discussion

This paper will look at a case study in Panorama, – a marginalized informal neighborhood located on the edge of the city of Yumbo (Colombia) facing significant risks that include the climate crisis. The case study contributes to discussions in urban adaptation planning on diversity and micro-politics within communities; articulating formal and informal, local and extra-local knowledge and ways of working; and the pacing, synergies and expectations of locally led action (Tschakert et al. 2016; Sarzynski 2015; Wamsler and Raggers 2018).

Panorama is a new neighborhood built informally over the past 25 years on the hilly perimeter of Yumbo, the industrial capital of Colombia. The folks that moved into Panorama were seeking economic opportunity in a city where some 1500 industrial companies are located. Many were also looking to get away from the violence of the civil war in rural areas or from the urban gangs in Cali (a city adjacent to Yumbo). The

founding residents I met with remember a time when there was no tap water or electricity. At first, they brought the lines in themselves and carted water up by donkey. Eventually they learned to play the political system and made deals with politicians during elections to connect most of the sectors to city infrastructure. Many houses now have electricity and water at least a few days of the week.

The face of Panorama has changed over 25 years. The original residents lament a time when their neighborhood was quiet and safer. Their children now face the threat of gangs, drugs, and violence. People keep arriving. Despite a tentative peace agreement between the state and non-state armed forces, rural violence is still predominant. Local democracy is rife with backroom deals and clientelism including an important influence of criminal syndicates. Colombia has also been accommodating a large swell of migration from Venezuela some of whom have settled in and around Panorama. When the state is unable to develop economic opportunities and housing solutions to respond to urban migration, inhabitants will create their own.

3.1 Working betwixt diversity, dissent and disagreement

I worked with several community leaders, volunteers, and social workers. The political context, was, in their estimation, the greatest challenge to local development. Despite this, they work hard to improve their communities through sports, urban agriculture, forest conservation and housing improvements. They do so by engaging in local politics and volunteering. One particular initiative to reforest uninhabited green space around a natural source and ravine had gained traction over the past few years (after close to a decade of work and advocacy). With support from the Urbolab and the CSR foundation, and the department of infrastructure they have planted over a hundred trees, removed significant amounts of garbage, cleaned out a water source and cleared the beginnings of a walking trail. They would like to see the trail become a safe area that would connect two neighborhoods and end at an eco-park, an interpretative center to help sensitize residents, especially the youth, to the importance of the natural environment, plant and animal life.

But last year, on the proposed site for the eco-park, around 100 houses appeared in the course of a week or two through an organized informal land invasion. This happened just shortly before the regional elections. In the community there are different perspectives on these "invasores"- invadors or informal land occupants. Some recognize the need of these new arrivals and see the relation to their own experience arriving in the neighborhood through similar initiatives. Others see the new arrivals as a threat to their security, bringing poverty and crime. By living in unsafe conditions and building on the unoccupied steep slopes, the new housing does increase the existing problem of water drainage in heavy rains and the risk of land and rockslides. It is controversial. These events occurred on the backdrop of local elections throughout all of Colombia. The city, busy with the change of political decision-makers and the overhaul of the entire bureaucracy post-election, did nothing.

6 months after my last field visit, I followed on social media, how my friends and colleagues have been slammed by an unseasonal rainstorm with gale force winds. They sent videos from inside their houses where the corrugated steel roofs flapped in the wind and were blown off with the rain pouring into their living rooms and hallways. I chatted with a community leader who said most had recovered from the storm now, but it is the informal or sub-normal settlements that suffered the most, referring to the "invasores" not 200 metres from her home. The storm has not been the only stress for community leaders. In July 2020, several hundred additional families began clearing trees and building homes on the banks of the stream Guabinitas and over the eco-trail. Once again, the environmental initiatives of the local foundation have been undone. They lobbied hard to the city and one week later, this new community was evicted, their homes torn down by security forces. In a public broadcast interview, the mayor sympathizes with the evicted families, but stresses that the zone is high risk and cannot be serviced by the city. That illegally organized land invasions are not the solution. The federal government, he states, is working on improving existing housing strategies. The occupying families, it is reported, were mostly Venezuelan migrants and residents of Cali looking for better housing solutions. As it stands today, the reforestation efforts, years of planting and watering and hard work have been destroyed. Hundreds of families looking for shelter

are once again homeless. The community continues to struggle under strict social distancing measures. The neighborhood finishes cleaning up the stray sheets of roofing strewn about the town during the storm. As one environmental leader states: "Thank God, we haven't had one case of Covid yet. It is hard, but we keep on working."

Research in political ecology have looked to community-based adaptation (hereafter CBA) as a practical response to this critique. Researchers on CBA demonstrate that community led adaptation has opened doors for overcoming micro-conflicts and local tensions and succeeded in gaining previously reluctant state buy-in. CBA is centered on the needs, values and perspectives of local communities and holds participative, pro-poor processes as a core value. However, many CBA initiatives continue to be challenged by homogenous approaches to poor communities and a failure to engage state structures and scales of impact (Tschakert et al. 2016; Kirkby et al. 2018; Fisher and Dodman 2019).

3.2 Navigating the soft borders of formalities and multi-actor adaptation spaces

Throughout the research, I encountered different definitions of risk and it follows – how to respond to it. For example, at the very outset, I had the opportunity to go through a Yumbo census for Panorama and some of the surrounding neighborhoods wherein participants mostly identified violence and unemployment as the greatest risk in the area. After every interview with community leaders, I dropped the question of what the greatest challenge has been in their work to which they all, unhesitantly replied, "politics". One leader was much more forthcoming. She explained to me that all community leaders are pressured to declare a political allegiance. In so doing, they exchange the votes that their followers or social groups will provide for a candidate. Depending on the number of votes a leader can mobilize, the political candidate will offer the leader and their team favours like jobs and financial support for their projects. When a leader's candidate loses an election, they face many barriers in working the clientelist barriers of which they are not networked.

When speaking with one family, recent migrants from Venezuela about the risks and dangers they faced, the mother looked up the dangerously steep hill above their house and

said “We know the hillside could fall on us any day and we pray to God that it doesn’t; but it is better than squatting in the city, better than living under a bridge.” Her property is illegal according the city because it is categorized as “high-risk”. I didn’t speak with the planning department of Yumbo on the topic, but the president of the neighborhood action committee explained that the categorisation was partially because of landslide risk. But then why would the neighboring lot be legal? Her explanation was cryptic: “the city considers it high risk because it is informal and not connected to the city grid”. She smiled knowingly, “of course, now they cannot legalize it and connect it to the grid because it is high risk.” Much of her time is spent lobbying for the infrastructural resources that would lower the risk categorization defined by the city so that residents in her neighborhood can apply for a recognized land title. Complicated.

I interviewed several people and a few of them with the whole family present, parents, children, and grandchildren. The families I spoke with, by coincidence, were not leaders in the traditional sense. They did not occupy a position of responsibility in a political platform or civil society organization. My introduction to these families was through the community leaders and so they were linked to the adaptation initiatives the leaders were demonstrating for me. The Venezuelan family, for instance, were living on an informal high-risk plot and working with the president of the neighborhood action committee. They accessed the property they now live on via the president after the previous occupants had moved into a housing relocation program (they had been eligible to it because they lived in a high-risk zone). I met four families living in this area that I had the chance to sit down and talk to. Similar to the Venezuelans, they had arrived from other regions, displaced by violence linked to the conflict or the failed rural economy. The shortage of affordable “formal” housing forces these families to seek alternative extra-statal pathways and solutions to their problems. In their situation, they connected with the neighborhood committee that prioritized and empathized with their situation, and so they were able to occupy their lots, build their houses, work, and go to school. That this pathway exists is thanks to the ability of the committee and their commitment to “play” the system. The individuals on the committee had been in their position for eight years and were arriving at the end of their second term (they are elected for 2-4-year terms according to the

Colombian constitution). While the committee is a recognized platform and they connect to the municipal institutions in a consultative capacity, they use the platform to advocate for infrastructure and to try to get the land they live on reclassified into a lower-risk and thereby legal category, which then opens up a possibility to engage in a regularization process to have properties entered into the cities cadastral map and gain a legal title. All the members of the committee accessed their now legal property through this strategy, and they continue to facilitate new arrivals to do the same.

The ecological group is made up of members who have lived in Panorama for over twenty years now. They were all beneficiaries of the regularization programme and have some form of city recognized title to their homes and properties. The urban strategies in which they engage are less covert and they publish their objectives and activities on their online social networking pages and seek out institutional (public and private) support and partnership for their adaptations. As a result, they have the support of a public university through the Urban Intervention Laboratory and the Entrepreneurial Foundation, a corporate social responsibility actor funded by locally based industries. Further, I accompanied them on one occasion as they visited the property owners of a large portion of the hillside where they live in an attempt to align their interests and support with the eco-park initiative that would develop along the periphery of their property line and potentially protect their property from future "land invasions". Because they are successfully gaining momentum with their initiatives and partner network, their project fell under the protective umbrella of the city when the eco-park conflicted with the informal and clandestine initiatives organized by other community actors, which my local contacts have claimed are part of the local gang network and criminal drug cartel.

The state that is responsible for the delivery of services and infrastructure including adaptation responses are usually key drivers of inequity and violence (Ribot 2014). Also, the disparities in accessing and influencing the state system and its non-state allies within the community are usually of source of tension if not conflict within many communities. There is another underlying difficulty linked to the fact that many of the inhabitant's access or have accessed resources like property and political connections through non-

bureaucratic pathways – in other terms, informally or illegally. Sarzynski's (2015) analysis of various climate governances looks at a series of styles of intervention that goes through a series of actors driving the planning process from the traditional government-led intervention, non-government led, partnerships, non-governmental provisions, and co-production. However, accessing these governances is not equal for everyone in the neighborhood (Ribot 2014) and this can be a driver of conflict and local micro-conflicts (Tschakert 2016).

One of the key challenges I have encountered in the academic work for this research project has been in getting around perspectives on "scale". There is often an assumption of a downward causal relationship, a gravitational verticality, with "international" at the top and "community" at the bottom (Nielsen and Sejersen 2012). This governance construct is familiar in "top-down" or policy-oriented programme delivery often critiqued by the supporters of community-led planning (Sarzynski 2015; Piggott-McKellar et al. 2019). Nevertheless, the discussion these days is far more nuanced than the old "top-down" vs "bottom-up" narrative, mostly because for CBA neither have demonstrated effective at "scale" meaning improving the lives for a large swath of people (O'Brien and Leichenko 2000; Dodman and Mitlin 2013). However, many researchers still refer to bridging the gap between community based and traditional approaches. I take issue with this, because it insinuates that both are working quite well, they just don't manage to meet up. Wamsler (2017), for instance, describes the constellations of power relations that exist in local micro-political dynamics that will be used in this paper.

My research in Panorama challenges the "verticality" as "hierarchy" construct commonly assumed in delivery-style policy development and is consistent with the "enablement" narrative of policy development. The inhabitants, activists and community leaders in Panorama were constantly working to transform their urban environment. To take an "upward causation" framing in contrast to Nielsen and Sejersen's (2012) downward causation cited above: when I consider all the local initiatives, partnerships, negotiations, advocacy, participation in political platforms like the neighborhood action committees, networking and fundraising, I must recognize that there is not only strong civic agency,

but a lot of influence stemming from community activism. Also, the continued dominance of informal urban production as found in land occupation and housing construction indicates that in the absence of any policy access, people will find alternative development pathways through clandestine and non-state actors. With this upside-down mapping, sometimes people and their cities can be leading and the policies following. I do not argue that this is always the case, nor is it as simple as an up-down interplay. In Panorama, there is a constellation of actors in the community, local state institutions, private sector philanthropy, public university as well as extra-local state and non-state actors; all of whom interact, influence and act on regional, national and state policy. In this constellation, the most vulnerable, those building their homes informally through clandestine processes and alleged criminal actors, are isolated from state and extra-local resources. Others, like the conservation group, have done better, with an advantage of time, to access political, philanthropic, university and international resources. As a result, they have had, for the moment, more momentum in pushing forward their agenda.

Despite a deconstruction of scale and impact, the adaptations taking place in Panorama seek and need extra-local resources to gain and maintain the momentum of their actions. As argued by Davoudi et al (2012), planners need to take on a greater facilitation role in mobilizing multi-actor spaces, an argument that resonates with the lessons from political-ecology and community-based adaptation. To find some lessons for the application of facilitation in urban planning, let us look to the urbanists I met acting in the adaptation spaces in Panorama: the families, the activists, the leaders, and the community-workers.

The urban risk-scape of Panorama is reminiscent of the unknowable urban contexts described by Pieterse (2011). There are networks of allegiances, visible and invisible. Cartels that work with politicians, politicians working with leaders and inhabitants connecting with those networks most open to helping them access the resources they need. This environment is not one of social justice and equality. Similar to Colombia and the planet writ large, this opaque risk-scape is made of haves and have-nots whose power allegiances will determine who wins and who loses. Climate change adaptations in their simplest form, are one-off coping mechanisms that respond to increasing or changing

natural hazards. In Panaroma, you can see improvements to rooves, rainwater collection, hillside reinforcement, drainage improvements, reforestation and stream recovery, and urban agriculture at household and community level. But these coping strategies are interwoven in complex incremental strategies to make broader community level improvements through access to running water, sewage and as a result land tenure security. Complex strategic interweaving of household needs to community interests that can be articulated with municipal, regional, and national policy interests. A reforestation programme can link up to a regional adaptation and conservation plan, attaching itself to local and regional political interests and priorities. This is where synergy is positive. Then there is the moment where desperation inspires people to occupy empty lots targeted for an eco-park. This is where we see negative synergy, and everyone loses. This is where the story stood ten months ago with police escorting people away from their torn down houses, leaving and swath of cut-down trees and a devastated greenspace. But after the devastating storms, the evictions, the deforestation, and the end of one adaptation initiative, the interviews I have speak of disappointment and frustration, but overall, then, a question for what will be next, how can they capitalize from the situation and move on. This is where the partnerships, networks and conversations are built into transformational change (Pelling et al. 2015). The relationships developed, conflictual and creative, will serve as the new building blocks for the next increment of adaptation.

The research reveals conflicting initiatives, addressing a myriad of risks, and engaging in diverse strategies. Some are explicit and mobilize multiple actors; others mix legal and extra-legal strategies; and others still, are forced into the shadows of extra-legal power dynamics and profiteering (Ribot 2014; Tschakert et al. 2016; Ziervogel 2020). By following the different “adaptation styles” of local actors, this paper illuminates ways hierarchies of vulnerability compete with each other and how established leaders can outperform others to mobilize their interests, bringing positive change for some while negating others and reinforcing inequalities. The relationships and synergies developed in collaboration with a local foundation, university urban laboratory and the local government provide insight on how urban practitioners can engage positively with local agency, micro-politics, and state institutions. Finally, the case provides insight on the

pacing and momentums of local responses to climate change and other risks, and how simple coping mechanisms can be intertwined with incremental change and implicit transformative strategies (Pelling et al 2015).

3.3 Mediating multiple actors and negotiating synergies

In Panorama, several community initiatives have received support from the Urbolab as well as others. Yumbo as a municipality benefits from the support of a private sector philanthropic foundation targeting improved development planning in target areas of heightened poverty and exclusion like Panorama. The Urbolab has been working in this part of Yumbo for several years using participatory analysis and action-research strategies focused on micro-interventions. Recently, they are supporting the ecological group in their adaptation efforts which have concentrated on urban agriculture and food security given the acute need encountered during the Covid-19 pandemic. On my first field visit, I accompanied their team on a networking mission to the city council. I drew a complex diagram of the offices and individuals they met as they were directed from department to ministry, senior to junior bureaucrats until they eventually made phone contact to an arms-length organization in charge of environmental management and got the meeting they required. As a result, two weeks later they had official permission to continue working a park renewal project with an adaptation to climate change focus. Now, three years later, this connection has formed the basis of a formal partnership that is spearheading the eco-park project that is finding new life after last year's set-back. From the municipality, the team then sets off to the neighborhood where they spend the afternoon planting trees and attending local meetings. The students and professors on the team are interdisciplinary and consist of environmental engineers, architects, urban planners, historians, social workers, and ecologists (not in order of importance!). Together they mash-up their mixed expertise to devise and develop implementation priorities and strategies with their local partners. The lab director spends remarkable amounts of time networking and building institutional relationships and credibility so that the students have the legitimacy and space to work within the communities. Over the years, there have been more setbacks due to political sabotage, manipulation, and the

resulting conflicting interests than tangible results. But this is where the difference is between looking at risk reduction from the natural hazards perspective and that of transformational adaptation. While the tangible interventions are few, there has been significant socio-political change. Relationships have been developed; partnerships have been formalized. Otherwise, uninterested actors like the municipal environmental management institution are engaged. This is not a best-case scenario or a utopian planning outcome. It is reality. In the words of one community leader: "everything has gone wrong; but we keep working." They do so because in the thirty years of Panorama's existence, they have leveraged local influence on access to municipal infrastructure like water, electricity, and land tenure for many of the houses.

The development of healthy governance relations is central to the CSR foundation's integral territorial development strategy. Given their prestigious position and connection to major industrial private actors in the municipality, the foundation has some leverage within the machinations of the municipal political game. Last year, during my most recent visit, they were excited to be entering the second phase of the territorial plan, now with a different political representation in office. Behind the strategy is the constant effort to foster better working relations between the public, community, and private sector actors. By mobilizing and supporting community groups like the ecological groups and the neighborhood action committees, they mobilize community actions and efforts to connect with public and private resources. The plan also targets the institutions and businesses that have the power to mobilize these resources – physical, financial, and political resources. Commitment to the territorial plan is also where the city's adaptation plan connects with the activities of the ecological group. Like the Urbolab, the foundation coordinators spend as much time in the offices and halls of the municipal institutions and businesses as they do in the streets of Panorama.

4. Conclusions: Adapting and the suppleness of equitable planning: the pacing, synergies and expectations of locally led action

Pelling et al's (2015) transformational adaptation framing nuances between adaptation efforts that were aimed at resistance, coping, incremental improvements, and/or

transformations. To do so they make reference to creative spheres of adaptation. Socio-political spaces where multiple actors engage in decision making activities. Adaptation spheres can focus on any given urban theme, such as water management, drainage and erosion, for example, which may target a series of climate related risks relevant to Panorama if we take the two examples focused on land use – tenure security, housing, on the one hand, and ecological conservation and urban agriculture on the other. Pelling et al's (2015) framing that is opens space for understanding the socio-political process of adaptation planning. Adaptation spheres come and go, actors enter them, engage with a variety of strategies, create synergies – positive and negative-, stay or leave. The adaptations strategies that are implemented may target specific reactive initiatives to curb immediate risk, often called coping mechanisms, like a retention wall, rainwater capture or hillside reinforcement with trees or shrubbery. When one off strategies such as these – that don't address the long-term or underlying drivers of vulnerability – begin to build on emerging synergies, or plan multi-phased implementation, such as urban agriculture or an eventual eco-trail that will create the spine for a conservation eco-park – these are then considered incremental adaptation. However, it is the relationships – creative and conflictual – that develop within these spaces that are of interest for transformational adaptation which target improvements in inclusion, equity, and social justice. Synergies, however, do not happen spontaneously, they are the results of human relationships. In the case of Panorama, they are often unregulated and non-transparent and the results of a governance culture that is targeting self-interest and political agendas over the quality of life of all inhabitants. In this context, synergies are easily manipulated and confused, leading to a high density of local competition, conflicts, and negative synergies.

In Panorama, I observed that when there wasn't enough buy-in from diverse actors in specific adaptation spheres like the informal land occupation strategies for tenure security or the eco-park from one or several actors – alternative or counter spaces emerged to develop new strategies or to resist or sabotage planned adaptations they either opposed or saw as inaccessible or not advantageous. The result is the chopping down of trees and shrubs and building much needed housing and then the eventual eviction of the people living there. The community leaders and workers at the Urbolad and the CSR foundation

understand the importance of these social decision-making spaces and focus a large amount of their time fostering them through networking and relationship building. Staff at the CSR foundation were the most explicit around this topic. The regional coordinator, Henri, has been working on Integral Territorial Planning for over two decades. In his words: “the more we can build connections and relationships between the public, private sector and the community, the more we will be able to see projects and improvements.” However, as multiple actors interact in Panorama, there is a power disequilibrium, an uneven playing field, and some actors are not engaged with “good will”, but rather as self-interested saboteurs, criminal actors, or corrupt politicians and their networks. This places an increased strain on the diversified or divergent interest of sincere inhabitants and their desire to improve their own lives, and perhaps after, that of their community. Panorama is a development context that has been heavily manipulated by post-colonial authoritarian capitalism coupled with a complex national criminal network playing over the backdrop of over 50 years of civil war. Left to itself, the development paradigm will likely further increase inequities and conflict. Colombian communities, planners and some politicians have been experimenting with socially just, inclusive processes like territorial planning precisely to overcome the socio-political barriers to a socially just planning. For the adaptation initiatives in Panorama, the eco-park is gaining traction with the city and regional policies because they have been able to partner up with third-sector actors like the Urbolab and the Business Foundation because these groups have trained staff able to integrate within the local context, network between local actors and facilitate technical know-how and target micro-financing and project support. To do so, they have developed a multi-disciplinary approach to community-based planning and adaptation that includes social-workers, psychologists, sociologists, and historians to the more traditional group of ecologists, engineers, planners, architects, and designers.

In a “best practices” scenario, I would have painted the picture of an adaptation project gone right. The ecological foundation, five months ago, was a great example of local adaptation initiatives improving green space, air quality, rainwater drainage and reducing soil erosion. They were (and still are) building social capital, influencing policy, and mobilizing multiple actors to incorporate natural resource protection and its value-added

into the lives of the younger generation in Panorama. This was the story last year. Today, it is the real face of climate resilience and adaptation. They have not failed; they are still working. Westoby et al (2021) argued recently for re-think of what success means in resilience and adaptation paradigms. Given the monumental deficit in poor Southern contexts, it is unlikely that "adaptation projects" have the necessary civic contexts and capacities to provide appropriate planning foundations for quick-fix projects (Sarzynski 2015; Fisher and Dodman 2019). They argue for a failing-forward approach that allows for errors and creativity. The project design process takes time, needs room for error, brainstorming and disagreement. I will take this a step further: because of international funding timelines, policies, and external NGO delivery models, it is unlikely that locally led adaptation can integrate into the creative process.

Struggles, informal and state-led, to respond to a massive housing deficit are paramount and insufficient to deal with the demand driven by rural poverty and violence and poor urban development. Colombia is often lauded, and deservingly so, for innovative and inclusive projects throughout the country often targeting the multiple risks linked to the consequences of a post-colonialism, 50-year civil war, significant development deficit, powerful criminal interests and clientelist governance. It is most often the successful end-result of a peri-urban greenbelt, bike route or cable-car that is celebrated as a successful pro-poor climate adaptation (Chu et al. 2017). They are. But they are outcomes. The reality of adaptation is one of hard-work, loss, and negotiation. It is a struggle of politics and power and it is happening in a global context that is facing increasing and rapid change (Nightingale 2017). Panorama was built with the hands of its residents. They were adapting to global economic and political forces 25 years ago just as they are today.

The work necessary to move towards a just and equitable planning needs a strong local presence of experts and technical support (Nightingale 2016). First, to support an inclusive local mobilization and to then to connect it to state actors and programs (Runhaar et al. 2018; Kirkby et al. 2018; Chu 2018). Next to search out and mediate positive local relationships and synergies and with these build momentums that can lead

to action. To do so, several re-conceptualizations are necessary in relation to community, scale, risk, and adaptation: to ways of knowing and how this is translated into action.

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