

Territorial Stigma: The (Un)Likable Governance by Strata in Bogota

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Stratification in Bogota is justified by social policy arguments even if this naturalized concept fosters clear segregation through the price of public services or real estate. Is Bogota's stratification a territorial stigma system? This paper argues that city stratification is a resilient territorial stigma system because its questioning from "below" reinforces this control device designed from "above". Findings from press reviews and interviews suggest that Bogota is in a "stratum trap" since governance by segregation also reinforces and legitimizes territorial stigmas. Despite all of this, it appears that all social actors have found strategies to make stratification work in their own interests.

Keywords: stigma, strata, territoriality, Bogota

Estigma territorial: a (in)desejável governança por estratos em Bogotá

A estratificação em Bogotá tem sido justificada por argumentos de política social, mesmo que esse conceito naturalizado promova uma segregação por meio do preço dos serviços públicos ou do mercado imobiliário. A estratificação de Bogotá é um sistema de estigma territorial? Este artigo argumenta que a estratificação urbana é um sistema de estigma territorial resiliente, porque seu questionamento "de baixo" reforça esse dispositivo de controle concebido "de cima". Resultados de resenhas de jornais e entrevistas sugerem que Bogotá está em uma "armadilha de estratos", visto que a governança pela segregação também reforça e legitima estigmas territoriais. Apesar de tudo isso, parece que todos os atores sociais encontraram estratégias para fazer a estratificação funcionar em seus próprios interesses.

Palavras-chave: estigma, estratos, territorialidade, Bogotá

1) Introduction

In 2010's, growing research focused on segregation and territorial stigma in the contemporary urban Global South. Discussion regarding Latin America addresses segregation from two issues. First, some debate the concept itself, because it does not forcibly have territorial dimensions, and where not all population concentrations lead to segregation. Second, some research focuses on the causes, consequences, and mechanisms of segregation. Ethnic and social exclusion have a spatial expression (THIBERT; OSORIO, 2014a) rooted in similar discriminations against indigenous people (QUIROGA, 2015), women (CHÁVEZ; RÍOS, 2014), or even religious and linguistic differences (ALESINA; ZHURAVSKAYA, 2011). The historical trajectory is reinforced when urban development follows neoliberal politics and segregation appears to be a natural output of competitive and consumerist societies (SCARPACCI, 2016). This begets highly visible urban fragmentation in the region (JAFÉ; AGUIAR, 2012; BAYÓN; SARAVÍ; ORTEGA BREÑA, 2013; MURILLO; MARTÍNEZ-GARRIDO, 2017), where convergences can help forge generalizations from comparative studies (RUIZ-RIVERA; VAN LINDERT, 2016).

Research links urban segregation to social issues such as violence (GLEBBEEK; KOONINGS, 2016), civic virtues (MERRY, 2012), gender and work (CÁRDENAS; CORREA; PRADO, 2014), immigration (BAUDER; SHARPE, 2002), lifestyles (MÁRQUEZ, 2011), interactions in public spaces (VERGARA *et al.*, 2015) countries' approaches (VERGARA *et al.*, 2015) and conflicts (VERGARA *et al.*, 2015). Other studies link segregation to public services, such as education (ASCORRA *et al.*, 2016; MURILLO, 2016; MURILLO; MARTÍNEZ-GARRIDO, 2017), health (COTLEAR *et al.*, 2015) or housing and transport infrastructure (JAITMAN, 2015).

In Colombia, segregation and territorial stigma are both linked to a tool designed in the 1980s (GUTIÉRREZ; NIETO; QUENGUAN, 2022) and implemented in all cities: a building classification according to facilities, localization, access to main roads and transportation, and even the appearance of facades. Bogota, a city in mutation during the post peace agreement period (GRANADA, 2023), has specific stratification criteria promoted by national institutions. Public administrations classify buildings from 1 to 6, labeled strata; the first are assigned to buildings usually linked to the lowest incomes, and the last to people with the highest. The main goal is to have data to focalize social spending and distribute social subsidies. Stratification is common in Colombian governance and is justified by social policy arguments. However, it is naturalized among people and fosters clear discrimination in Bogota, where it promotes urban segregation through the prices of public services or real estate.

The academic literature has already addressed many of Bogotá's urban problems. Since the 1990s, the city has experienced a growth of enclosed urbanistic projects, characterized by improper use of space with perverse effects on public space (CASTAÑEDA VEGA, 2011; SALAZAR FERRO, 2008). Bogotá's urban structure and mobility issues reinforce its inhabitants' vulnerability (ROBERT; LUNA; GOUËSET, 2023), residential segmentation and segregation (ALFONSO, 2023), confrontation around nature preservation in the hills (FRACASSO; BETANCOURT; APERADOR, 2022), avoidance of territories marked by fear (AVENDAÑO ARIAS *et al.*, 2019), gender vulnerabilities (LARRECHE; COBO QUINTERO, 2021), and ambivalent containment of its urban growth and densification (YUNDA; CUERVO BALLESTEROS, 2020). Different works agree with the need to redesign the policy of public space (GÓMEZ SERRUDO, 2007; GUZMAN; BOCAREJO, 2017), including public transportation in the city (BOCAREJO; PORTILLA; MELÉNDEZ, 2016), since it is crucial to guarantee the social rights of citizenship (BERNEY, 2011).

As for the stratification system of Bogota, many of its effects have been studied. The redistribution of subsidies to the three lower-income groups in the city seems to have generated broader access to public services. According to Pardo, Uribe and Vásquez (2006), this was possible since subsidies increased in Bogota during the first decade of the 21st

century (PARDO; VÁSQUEZ, 2007; GRANADOS HIDALGO; MOSQUERA MENDEZ; VEGA ROMERO, 2008). However, many issues have not been reversed by strata governance. Academia agrees on the need to attack current urban segregation (OVIEDO HERNANDEZ; TITHERIDGE, 2016) or the lack of public spaces, especially in the poorest neighborhoods where residents substitute for public maintenance (VERGARA *et al.*, 2015). Upward social mobility within the city has been constrained by a fragmented and segmented city (STOKENBERGA, 2017; URIBE-MALLARINO, 2005). Indeed, people prefer to live close to their extended family because of existing solidarity networks (evidence suggests stronger solidarity bonds among low-strata children; (JARAMILLO, 2013). Lower-income families' self-segregation is also induced (FUENTES DURÁN, 2010) since housing prices in the higher strata grow more and faster than in the lower strata. This is linked to dynamics within neoliberalism, characterized by unequal growth, deregulation of the land market, and development of infrastructure according to market criteria (THIBERT; OSORIO, 2014b).

Despite district efforts, opinions and experiences about strata are different among the six strata groups. Although for Bogliacino, Jiménez and Reyes (2015) stereotypes regarding low strata are linked to socioeconomic and security conditions, ideas about poverty depend on the images constructed around the “stratum” sign rather than material conditions (URIBE-MALLARINO; JARAMILLO MARÍN, 2016). These imaginaries have practical impacts that reinforce them, as in the case of Afro-Colombian communities in Bogota (VILLAMIZAR SANTAMARÍA, 2015a). It also has a profound impact on public goods access and the possibilities of enjoying the city, contradicting the idea of Bogota as a cosmopolitan city (VILLAMIZAR SANTAMARÍA, 2015b). Given all these problems, some public servants from the Bogota Planning Department defend the need for a new indicator to assign subsidies because current criteria are insufficient to know the real incomes of families. In that sense, alternatives have been proposed, such as a multidimensional indicator of focalization (SECRETARÍA DISTRITAL DE PLANEACIÓN, 2016, p.208) or a new synthetic indicator (PARIAS, 2021). Some works make a strong call to look for solutions to overcome stereotypes (BOGLIACINO; JIMÉNEZ; REYES, 2015; URIBE-MALLARINO, 2008) through institutional initiatives. Almost all the calls want a methodology change, not of the *raison d'être* of zoning.

Despite all this literature, it remains unclear how strata are linked to segregated territories or territorial stigma. Strata cannot be seen from a monolithic perspective: although administrative, it is not necessarily questioned and perhaps favors inequality naturalization. Is Bogota's stratification a territorial stigma system? What are the social responses to this phenomenon? This paper aims to address the outputs of the institutionalization of segregation through stratification discourses and practices in Bogota, and the responses to them.

Urbanism in Colombia has a long history; it has already been academically studied from different angles, including colonial urbanism (GARCÍA, 2015), the Plano Bogotá Futuro of the 1920s (ALBA CASTRO, 2013), the role of key figures such as the well-known urban planners Carlos Martínez Jiménez (ARANGO-LÓPEZ, 2019), and Karl Brunner (LÓPEZ, 2018), on the land market in the urban expansion of Bogotá in the XX (COLÓN LAMAS, 2019), the urban history of Bogotá (RUEDA CÁCERES; PLATA QUEZADA, 2017), and even urbanism discourses (BOTTI, 2019). However, only a few works analyze stratification as a system of territorial stigma that legitimizes territorialities of segregation.

This paper contributes by bringing some political geography insights into political science concerns, to (re)open a broader debate around the implied institutional legitimization of class segregation in big cities from the Global South. The case study shows that urban segregation in Bogotá has built a neoliberal ecosystem that goes from the regulation of informal housing to the normalization of segregation based on language and the symbolic and cultural practices of everyday life (BROWN, 2003), which are even part of the stories and myths transmitted between contemporary generations.

This paper is based on a methodological strategy inspired by process tracing (BENNETT; CHECKEL, 2014). We argue that stratification is a resilient territorial stigma system¹ since its questioning from “below” reinforces this control device designed from “above” even if it encourages the redefinition of territories within segregation. Findings from press reviews and interviews suggest that Bogotá is in a “stratum trap”: even if policymaking avoids stratification, its outcomes cannot. Governance by classification might reinforce and legitimize stigmas associated with it. Nevertheless, it appears that Bogotans have found strategies to make stratification work in their interests.

The paper has the following argumentative structure. First, we describe the theoretical framework and methodology. Then we explore stratification in three moments: 1) stratification as a resilient territorial stigma system; 2) stratification reinforced by responses from “below”; and 3) stratification as a control device from “above”. Finally, we present a discussion of our research claims and some concluding remarks.

2) Theoretical framework

This paper focuses on two main issues: territorial stigma and territoriality. Loïc Wacquant proposed territorial stigma theory in the 1990s. Building on previous work by Goffman and Bourdieu, he linked “discrediting differentness” to an authority that enunciates and perpetuates it (WACQUANT; SLATER; PEREIRA, 2014). His theoretical proposal is “an effort to synthesize and stimulate inquiries into the triadic nexus of symbolic space (mental divisions stipulating categories), social space (distributions of efficient resources among those categories), and physical space at the lower end of the urban spectrum.” (WACQUANT; SLATER; PEREIRA, 2014). The main idea is that there are

social representations of the territory produced by power instances (such as government, public administrations, private sector, media), and the population too, that mark and perpetuate the daily life of populations, generally segregated (WACQUANT; SLATER; PEREIRA, 2014). Territorial stigmatization is seen as a product of neoliberal agendas, where territory production is “naturalized and obscured by such representations”, “made to appear pregiven or innate” and does not need to “accurately represent ‘real’ conditions to have material and psychological effects” (SISSON, 2021b, p. 661).

Territorial stigma is commonly associated with more traditional concepts such as segregation (ELORZA, 2019; RODRÍGUEZ-REJAS, 2022). There are numerous case studies about the United States (CAIRNS, 2018; KORNBERG, 2016), and Europe – Scotland (KALLIN; SLATER, 2014); Denmark, (LARSEN, 2014); Holland, (PINKSTER *et al.*, 2020); Spain, (GARCIA-HERNANDEZ, 2020); Germany, (KADIOGLU, 2022). The concept has also been used to analyze cases in Latin America, including Santiago de Chile (RUIZ JABBAZ, 2005), Buenos Aires (FREIDIN *et al.*, 2020; KESSLER; DIMARCO, 2013), Quito (SANTILLÁN CORNEJO, 2017), La Dorada in Colombia (NARVÁEZ MEDINA; CASTAÑO URDINOLA, 2016).

Territorial stigmatization reflects political and economic power relations that end up being legitimized and perpetuated thanks to control devices. However, different actors, logics, and processes lead to territorial stigma. Larsen & Delica (2019) analyze 119 articles to identify how territorial stigmatization is produced. They identify 16 modalities that are defined as “the varied ways in which territorial stigmatization is produced and reproduced” (LARSEN; DELICA, 2019).

Study cases allow us to understand how stigmas are created, perpetuated, or challenged. According to Larsen and Delica (2019), territorial stigma production could be divided into 6 main areas: 1) politics, policies, and bureaucracy; 2) structural level (housing and labor market, educational system); 3) physical space (educational system, architecture, objects/materiality/praxis, history of place); 4) residents and outsiders (social categories and groups, residents with their relations and experiences, outsiders); 5) service provision and interventions; and 6) specialists in symbolic production (media, academics, policymakers). (LARSEN; DELICA, 2019)

In addition to these pathways, Rolnik, Amadeo and Rizzini Ansari (2022) draw attention to legal or regulatory support and Sisson (2021a) to quantitative practices and statistical representations as sustenance. Although control devices exist, people have agency “whether they submit to and reproduce, or seek to defy and deflect, spatial stigma” (WACQUANT; SLATER; PEREIRA, 2014). “Territorial stigmatization operates through practices and representations from above which are contested through symbolic and material appropriations of space from below, both politically organized and ‘every day.’” (SISSON, 2021a, p. 669). For Wacquant there are submission strategies (dissimulation, mutual distancing and elaboration of microdifferences, lateral denigration, retreat into the private sphere, exit) and recalcitrance to resistance strategies (studied indifference, defense of neighborhood, stigma inversion) (WACQUANT; SLATER; PEREIRA, 2014). This makes current research investigate even the possibility of territorial destigmatization (SCHULTZ LARSEN; DELICA, 2021).

Territorial stigmatization “involves practices of territory (physical boundary-making and control) and representations of territory (as natural and as pathological)” (SISSON, 2021b). Territorial stigmatization can then produce, reproduce or transform territoriality. According to Sack (1983), territoriality is a strategy for influence or control, for establishing differential access to things and people in a delimited geographical area. For Raffestin (1986), territoriality is based on signs transmitted by mediators; codes are reflected in the territory, so to decipher territorial visions we need to start from the semiosphere and not material reality (RAFFESTIN, 1986). In fact, territoriality relies on a complex system of relationships between social groups and individuals with exteriority through mediators (RAFFESTIN, 1986). Therefore, territoriality is transmitted and manipulated, consciously or unconsciously, since it is determined by social norms. Colombian strata can be seen as territoriality signs defining urban territorial experiences and representations: it represents both political legitimacy and a social regulation tool. The “stratum” sign facilitates Bogotá’s territorialities of segregation by coding territorial stigmatization.

3) Methodology

Our methodological proposal is inspired by process tracing (Bennett; Checkel, 2014), which rests on the search for periodicities or regularities in empirically testable phenomena so that a descriptive theory of reality can be constructed (COLLIER, 2011, p. 824). These two steps can then lead to the proposal of an explanatory model, namely, why there is such regularity in phenomena (COLLIER, 2011, p. 824). One of the easiest ways to construct this progression is through a difference between the result (situation whose existence generates the initial questioning), the mechanism (how the cause impacts the result), and the cause itself (a phenomenon that explains the existence or absence of result).

Here, stratification is a resilient territorial stigma system (output) since stratification only faces strategic questioning from “below” (mechanism) because it has built consent for exercising control from “above” (cause). The research is staggered in three stages: 1) show that stratification is a resilient territorial stigma system (it integrates its questioning); 2) point that stratification is reinforced by responses from “below” (reactions do not reverse it); and 3) show that stratification is a control device for exercising control from “above”.

This research is based on sources linked to territorial stigma production according to Larsen and Delica (2019) classification. First, we analyzed 112 Colombian media articles covering the period 2014–2017², understanding that media operate as specialists in symbolic reproduction. Second, we consulted national and local reports or surveys, understood as policies and bureaucratic instruments. Third, we conducted 12 semi structured interviews related to the “structural level” (1 university manager), the “physical space” (2 urbanists), the “specialists in symbolic production” (1 political activist, 2 academics,), the “residents and outsiders” (2 workers and 1 Director of social

organization), and the “politics, policies and bureaucracy” (1 public administration director and 2 policymakers). These interviews cannot sustain generalizations but simply lead to analysis.

4) Stratification is a resilient territorial stigma system: it survives urban changes and its questioning

Until the 1980's, Bogota was endowed with industrial infrastructure and territories (studied by Santa Quintero (2018)), and most changes in urban territoriality arose from the economic model and its use of the territory (Urbanist 1, 2017). Two examples could be Bogota's industrialization and urbanization. First, the siting of industrial structures in the urban environment is less coherent today, which has led to competition between land uses. Regarding the second, part of Bogota's urbanization was in the hands of communal action boards. From a historical point of view, new urban territories came to reality through the initiative and management of social organizations under national and international institutional supervision, for example, through cooperation with the United States (Urbanist 1, 2017).

The disorderly growth of the city was accelerated by the arrival of thousands of Colombians displaced by the armed conflict. Bogota's experiences are shared with Latin America, with deficiencies in urbanization and urban planning policies (ANGOTTI, 2013) inducing an “urban disorder” (ROBERTS, 2011) deepened by the consequences of globalization (ROBERTS, 2005) and high inequality (SEGURA, 2014). Thus, the disparity in urban planning increased: self-construction led to the use of lower quality architectural designs and materials, increasing heterogeneity in the city within neighborhoods (height of buildings, sidewalks, roofs, colors, etc.), and establishing a visual, road and service disconnection between the already existing neighborhoods and those that were filled with workers also derived from the rural exodus (Academic 1, 2022). Bogotá experienced a highly visible urban fragmentation, common to Latin America (JAFÉ; AGUIAR, 2012; MURILLO; MARTÍNEZ-GARRIDO, 2017; BAYÓN *et al.*, 2013). With urban growth, the functions of neighborhoods in Bogota changed according to the extension of the city, with old peripheries becoming the centers of new ones (Urbanist 1, 2017). The obvious territorial segregation was a challenge for the public powers, who had to bring public services to already inhabited neighborhoods. This context justified the stratification proposal as a financing system: to classify the buildings to organize intra-urban solidarity through public services.

Bogota, like all cities in Colombia, has a specific stratification system framed by national orientations. According to a Director of the Division of Stratification of Bogota (Public director, 2017), the system began in 1981. Until 1990, it applied a qualitative methodology that changed with Law 142 of 1994, when two main distinctions were made. First, rural territories were differentiated from urban ones. Second, applications discriminate between urban center sizes (large, medium, or small). Building classification generates data to implement cross-subsidies for public

services such as drinking water, sanitation, electricity, and gas. The following table 1 shows subsidies and contributions percentages according to assigned stratum.

Table 1: Detail of subsidies and contributions by stratum and service

Stratum	Drinking Water		Electricity and Gas	
	Subsidy	Contribution	Subsidy	Contribution
1	70%		60%	
2	40%		50%	
3	15%		15%	
4				
5		50%		20%
6		60%		20%
Industrial		30%		0%
Commercial		50%		20%

Source: Laws 142/1994, 686/2001, 1450/2011 and 1753/2015. Available: Secretaría Distrital de Planeación, 2016, p. 208.

Table 1 clearly shows that stratum 4 is the only one that neither contributes nor receives, and that the other strata can only be in a unique position (you cannot receive and contribute at the same time). Since all the cross-subsidies depend on the classification, the stratum assignment method is crucial to its logic. The following table 2 shows the classification methodology applied in Bogota.

Table 2: Criteria in classification by strata

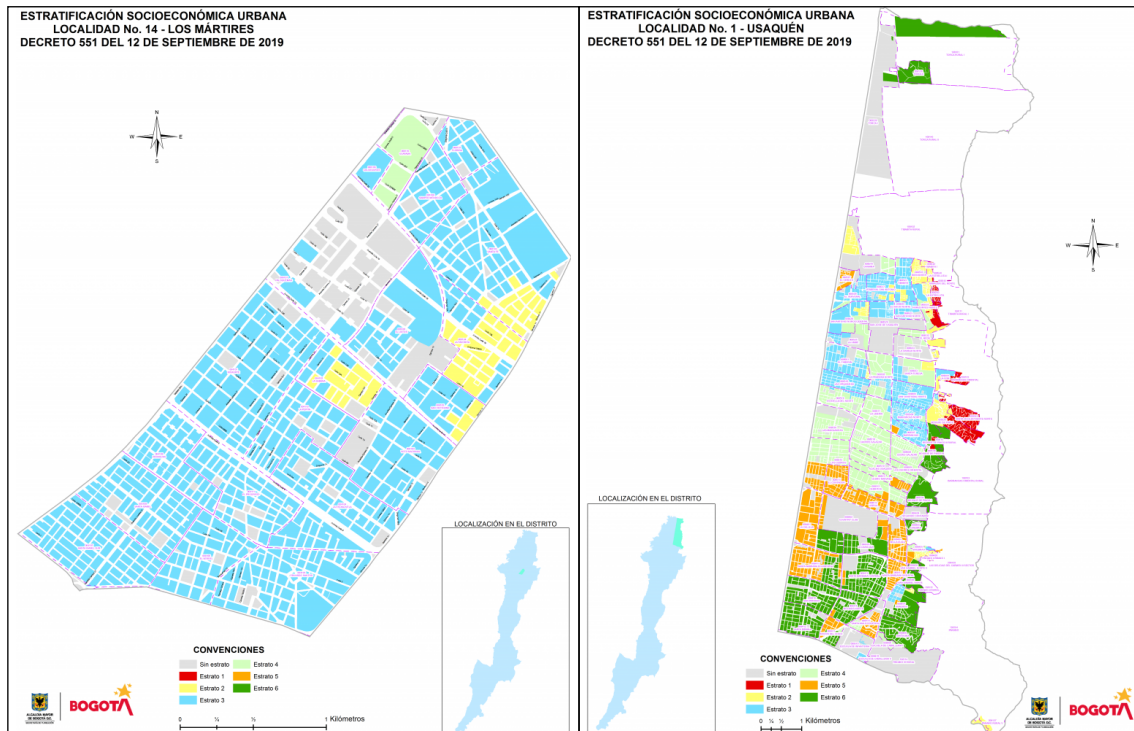
Factor	Variable	
Housing and environmental features	Main house entrance directly on street	Front yard
	Accesses to the house	Garage
	Size of façade of the house	Material of the façade
	Sidewalk	Material of the roof
Urbanistic context	Zone by habitat criteria	

Source: Bonilla, López and Sepúlveda (2014, p. 28-29).

Since the application of stratification, Bogota has experienced enormous transformations that the criteria listed in table 2 are not always able to integrate. Changes in city experience were accelerated by two types of factors: structural and cultural. Structural dynamics (as defined by Larsen and Delica, 2019) in the labor market have been diverse: 1) automotive and *Transmilenio* (bus rapid transit) transportation axes have reinforced the installation of office buildings and condominiums along the main ways, maintaining eclectic neighborhoods behind (close housing areas offer services on their basements and further houses are for accommodation); 2) workers linked to low-paid services live in sectors far from the workplace where access to accommodation is hampered by housing prices and services; and 3) the richest population has migrated to condominiums

in the North or neighborhoods with social homogeneity facilitated by stratification (Academic 2, 2022; Worker 1, 2022). Since stratification is done by buildings and not neighborhoods, the result is that Bogota has both homogeneous (Los Mártires) and heterogeneous neighborhoods (Usaquén). Figure 1 below show both.

Figure 1: Los Mártires (left) and Usaquén (right) stratification as updated in September 2019

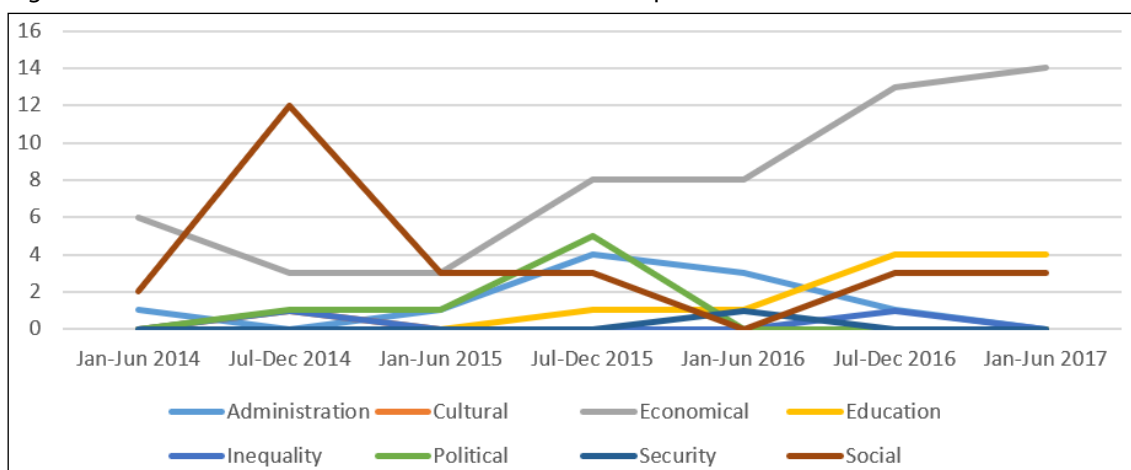


Source: District Planning Secretariat 2023.

Constant changes in the city mean that the district constantly inspects and controls the evolution of the city (Public Director, 2017). Despite urban territorialities progress in their functions, most of the buildings retain the same stratum (change is often a consequence of gentrification) (Academic 1, 2022). However key cultural trends, such as mass public events, *Transmilenio* uses (CESAFSKY, 2017), or rising motorcycle use have also blurred strict spatial segregation (Urbanist 1, 2017; Worker 2, 2022). Furthermore, violence indicators in urban territories seem more linked to transformations in the economic vocation of the territories (Urbanist 1, 2017) than strata.

The analysis of press contents allowed us to identify 11 central actors in the strata debate³. It is important to highlight that there are no social organizations registered in these discussions (which could be understood as critical popular voices silencing or a lack of questioning among social organizations). Although stratification is mostly done on physical criteria, press review shows that the “stratum” sign is strongly understood as an economic, educational, and social factor; the press rarely associates strata with cultural factors and scarcely with political debates (detail in figure 2).

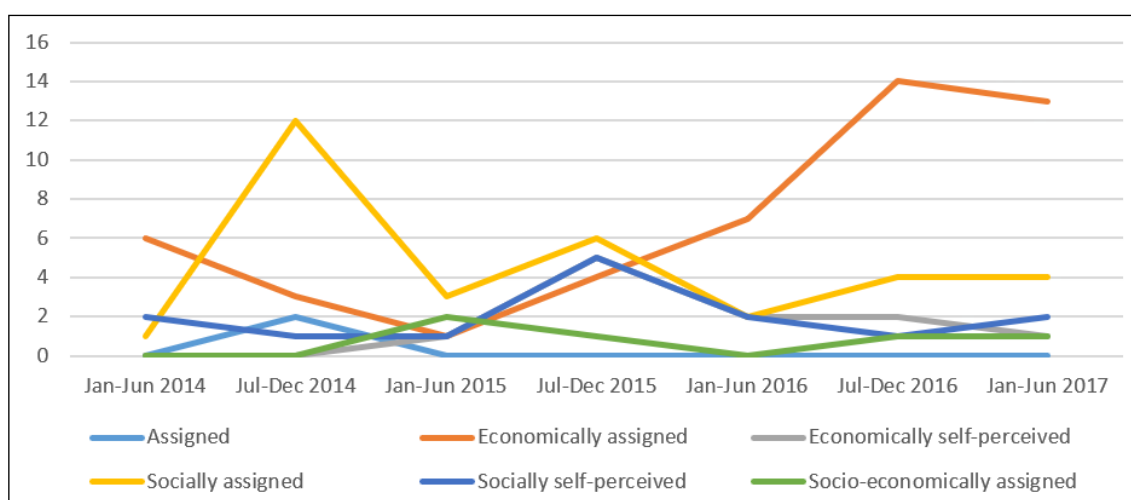
Figure 2: Issues related to strata debates in the Colombian press



Source: Data collected by the authors.

A press review between 2014 and 2017 shows that stratification could be associated with an economic stigmatization device. Stratification seems mostly experienced as an economically and socially assigned concept (confirmed through interviews such as University Manager, 2023). Although stratification is part of everyday conversations (Academic 1, 2022), it is known to be an external assignation legitimized with arguments of social solidarity and technicality (Academic 2, 2022); it also ends up reflecting cultural differences that involve discrimination in public, work and educational spaces (Worker 1, 2022; University manager, 2022). Press review shows that media are probably helping to mark the stratification in these terms. The following figure shows the strata experience as reflected in the Colombian press.

Figure 3: Stratification as an experience over time in the Colombian press



Source: Data collected by the authors

Since stratification is commonly associated with an economic management system (Academic 1, 2022), its territorial stigma passes itself as a necessary urban categorization whose questioning is technical rather than cultural. Stratification is insufficient for redistribution goals but remains untouched due to the political costs that a genuine transformation could generate (Public Administrator, Urbanist 1, Director of social organization, 2017). Those potential costs are the outcome of the stratification appropriation by individuals who learned how economic and material benefits are linked to subsidies in public services, education, and housing. In other words, citizens are willing to tolerate stigmatization (Worker 1, 2023) because it is perceived as an acceptable cost relative to the benefits of the system.

Technical perspectives suggest that while it seems the best available option for the distribution of subsidies, it should be better (Urbanist 1, Public Director, 2017). Press reviews and interviews show that questioning of the “stratum” sign comes from institutional actors instead of social organizations, even though low-wage workers criticize it (Worker 1, 2023). Questioning is dominated by academics and local-level officials, with little room for real transformative effects (Urbanist 1, 2017). First, the diffusion and extension of critics are limited by multilevel governance, media framings, and the amount of human and material resources implied in a real change (Policymaker, 2017). Second, the strata system is promoted and supported by the national administration and some international organizations (Urbanist 1, 2017).

Synthesizing, the stratification system is not only capable of incorporating urban transformations without necessarily modifying the stratification but is also capable of surviving its questioning. Stratification remains stable despite urban changes that could seem to go against exclusion or segregation: it also seems socially normalized thanks to a “culture of privilege” (CEPAL, 2018).

5) Stratification is reinforced by responses from “below”

Stratification resilience is also amplified by the type of reaction from “below”. As far as citizens are concerned, many find the system of subsidies comfortable for their interests, but there are no unmistakably defended tendencies. Returning to the classification of Wacquant *et al.* (2014), there are indeed strategies of submission, recalcitrance, and resistance to strata as a form of territorial stigma. Usually, citizens do not want to move to a lower stratum than the one they already have (Public Administrator 2, 2017), although it can be a strategy to buy real estate (Worker 1, 2023). This could be explained by the stigmatization of lower strata, which holds more weight than the possible economic benefits in terms of public service payments derived from urban mobility.

Although social movements have generally been assimilated into alternative territorialities, divergent results have been found on this point. For some interviewees, social movements have not played a protagonist role, while for others, changes in the territories are more linked to the interaction

between actors according to formal institutional rules. Nevertheless, it seems that mobilization against the district administration is motivated by territorial group interests instead of conceptual claims. One of the exceptions could be social organizations against urban sprawl (Policymaker, 2017). Few organized social groups have fought to transform urban territorialities (stigma inversion in Wacquant terms), and the most demanding actors have been recyclers, indigenous people, conflict victims, and ecologists (Policymaker, 2017). We could also add the case of sportsmen and sportswomen, among whom the city should be more fluid (Director of social organization, 2017).

There appear to be competing visions regarding stratification from social movements, but without strong influence in political realms (Policymaker, 2017). There seems to be a common denominator between demanding social groups: they are the ones who see the city as a unified and continuous territory, while individuals probably do not (Workers 1 & 2, 2023). Given the size of the city and the difficulties of transportation, it is not unusual to find people who are unaware of the spaces dominated by opposite strata to theirs (Academic 1, 2022; Worker 1, 2023).

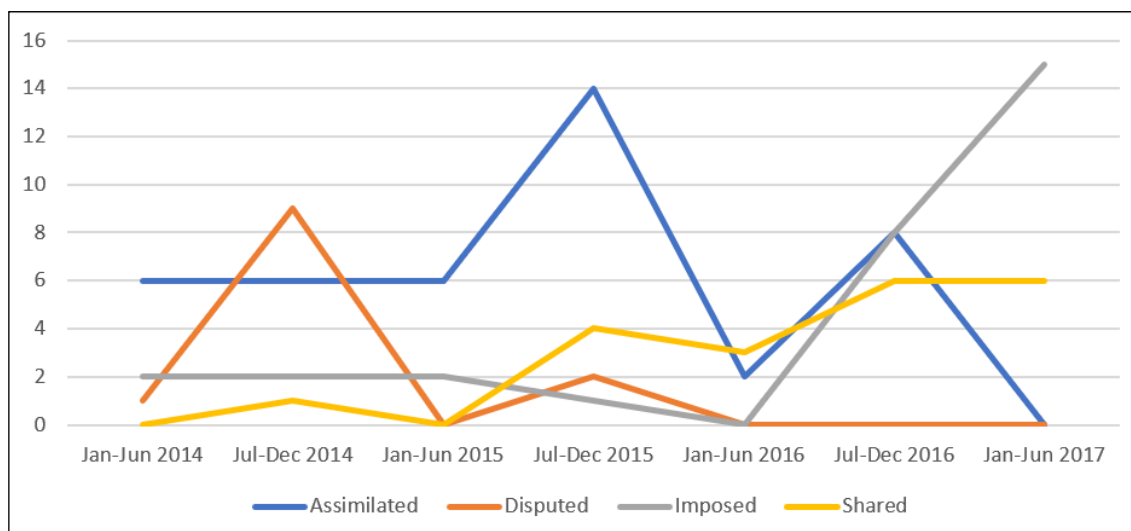
Indeed, it seems that the role of individuals in the transformation of territorialities is limited since citizens tend to be pragmatic and the poorest people have historically depended on constructing their own houses (Urbanist, 2017), creating new urban territories by themselves. As for social actors, the first to act have been those pressing for recognition of housing rights, requiring their legalization, and access to public services (Policymaker, 2017). This is a completely different perspective than the one used by construction companies which use stratification as a planning criterion in urban development (Urbanist, 2017). In some way, it could be said that both individuals and building companies obstruct territorial destigmatization because it is functional and lucrative not to do so, understanding that stratification is an incentive not to be outside the system.

New territorial practices in Bogota do not necessarily modify stratification, leading to some paradoxical evolutions. First, urban transformations have been valued even when they were sustained by segregation (Policymaker, 2017). Indeed, massive improvement programs and urban road corridors have integrated “segregated neighborhoods”, transforming disadvantaged urban areas into an integrated part of overall urban dynamics (Policymaker, 2017). Second, the advocacy movement for popular habitat valued the identity of urban environments produced by segregation, understanding that the latter could be considered a source of cultural value (Policymaker, 2017). Stratification seems to have reinforced a cultural differentiation between strata through segregation (Worker 1, 2023).

We classified in our press review how strata were experienced by actors participating in the debate (assimilated, disputed, imposed, and shared); most actors tend to see the concept as assimilated and shared. There was an important peak in 2014, coinciding with several unsuccessful initiatives of the district government to promote a different system. In the same way, in 2016, the press reflected that most actors experienced strata as imposed. This tendency could be explained by the change to a more right-wing government in the city and the learned institutional questioning of the system promoted by the previous administration. However, citizens still operate

according to the system: to see it as imposed does not mean that one wants to abolish it. In the following figure 4, we display how Colombian press debates showed strata experience.

Figure 4: Experience of the concept of strata from 2014 to 2017 in Colombian press debates



Source: Data collected by the authors.

Following the arguments of 6 interviewees, stratification conditions do not determine the main urban experience given the different mechanisms of accessing locations in the city. Nevertheless, it appears to be a tendency among citizens from the lower strata to limit and resist stratum ascension to avoid paying more (Policymaker 2, 2017) and to avoid leisure activities in higher strata areas due to inaccessible prices (Worker 1, 2023). Many urban environments remain aesthetically unchanged despite the income increases of their inhabitants (who avoid making improvements strategically linked to strata criteria) (Academic 2, 2022). Stratification is therefore a system that allows citizen strategies for its subversion; this might be tolerated since political and economic elites see it helps perpetuate segregation through cultural habits linked to socio-economic origins.

Institutional workers recognize the existence of divergent “strata” significations. On the one hand, the administrative and political reality is stratified but not in an exhaustive way (Director of social organization, 2017), since one can read the urban reality without using it. However, since there are no competing visions on stratification, strata are a common and known repertoire among the population whose heuristic utility hides the naturalization it entails. On the other hand, citizens sometimes act by avoiding stratification (such as not revealing it in professional contexts) without truly questioning it (Director of social organization, 2017; Worker 1, 2023). Thus, ignoring strata does not offer an alternative competitive system (studied indifference in Wacquant terms).

6) Stratification is a control device from “above”

Stratification resilience, comforted by reactions from “below”, is a control device designed from “above”. On the one hand, it made it possible to limit residential socio-territorial mobility in the city despite its strong demographic growth. On the other hand, for a long time, it has encouraged urban expansion instead of urban planning and densification (Academic 2, 2022). Since Bogotá was built in an accelerated way and through rural parcellation, the urban territory was extended at the expense of the rural territory (Urbanist, 2017). At some point, competitive territorialities preceded stratification, with this system being a codification and simplification for management purposes.

Bureaucrats recognize the existence of competitive territorialities; the interviewees converged. One of the main problems is that stratification works as long as there is segregation in the territory (Policymaker 1, 2017). This means that stratification dysfunctions are in fact due to the transformation of segregation in urban territorialities, which was even promoted by city governments such as the Petro administration (2011-2015). Simply put, segregation justifies the strata but also perpetuates them. Furthermore, construction companies also reinforce this cycle by encouraging differentiated quality and style of their constructions (Policymaker 2, 2017).

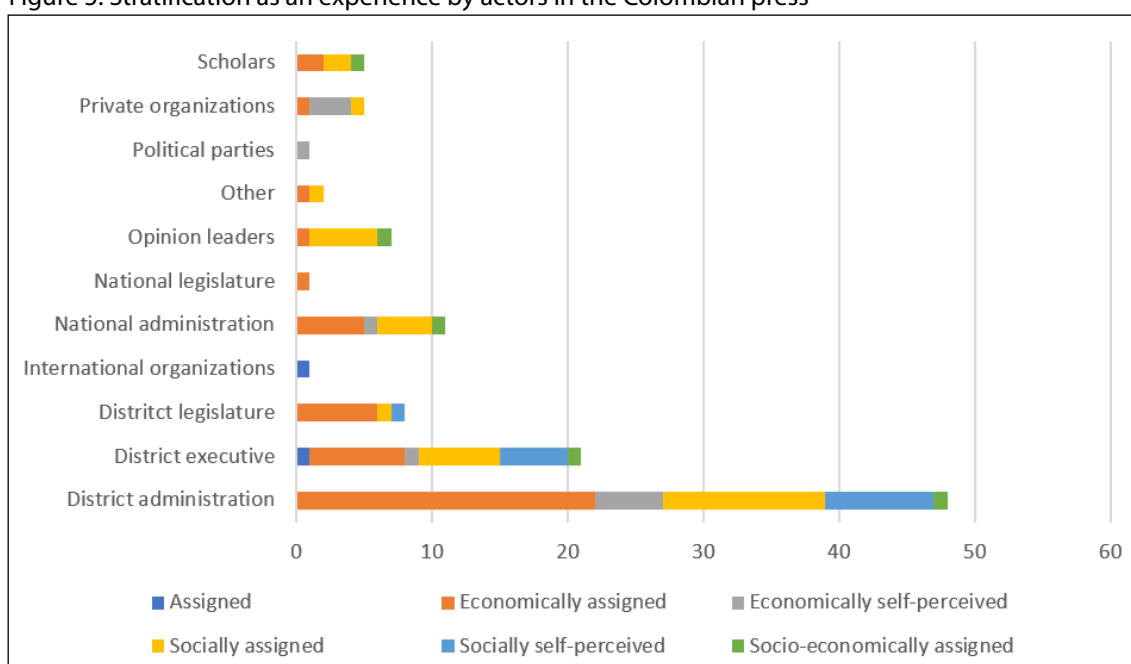
Bureaucracy and policymakers use stratification for more uses than public services through cross-subsidies (Urbanist, 2017). In reality, district institutions are creating and transforming urban territorialities through their interventions, in more direct and decisive ways than social organizations. One example was offered by a Public director (2017), who designed the “*Al colegio en bici*” (To school by bike) and “40x40” programs. At first, citizens accepted bicycle use as school transportation. Second, the district sought to extend the time spent by young people on extra-curricular sports activities (Public Director, 2017), thereby reducing interactions between young people and delinquents in public spaces. In both cases, the shift in the social use of urban territory was encouraged by the district administration itself.

Given the limitations to overcoming territorial stigma at the local level⁴, some members of the district administration implemented social programs without considering strata indicators, creating internal confrontations between bureaucrats and policymakers. That is the case of the former director of the District Institute of Recreation and Sports, who explains the criteria of his programs as technical and based on objective data about central issues, such as access to public spaces, mobility, and transportation, instead of a precondition associated with strata. While some social leaders involved in politics try to overcome stratification as a policy formulation criterion⁵ (Policymaker 2, 2017), others consider it to be a good criterion to focalize subsidies, even if it is insufficient (Policymaker 1, 2017). However, even if there is a will to formulate policies, plans, or projects without stratification, the truth is that programs such as “to school by bike,” were concentrated in lower strata neighborhoods, in a dynamic identified here as the “stratum trap”.

This trap is reflected in national press discussions where we tried to identify strata dimensions. As shown in the figure below, there is a predominance toward understanding the concept from an economic

dimension, which is “assigned” for most actors except the opinion leaders who privilege a social point of view. First, academics do not see it as a simple bureaucratic assignment (unlike the public sector), reflecting that they are aware of the stigmatizing consequences of the instrument (Academic 2, 2022). Second, political parties and private organizations seem to portray the strata as economically self-perceived. This could be because they try to downplay the role of public bodies in the establishment of this control apparatus, masquerading it as something individually internalized. It is evident that by number and relevance, the press dominantly links stratification with the local administration. The figure 5 below shows the details of how stratification seems to be shown in the press depending on the actors.

Figure 5: Stratification as an experience by actors in the Colombian press

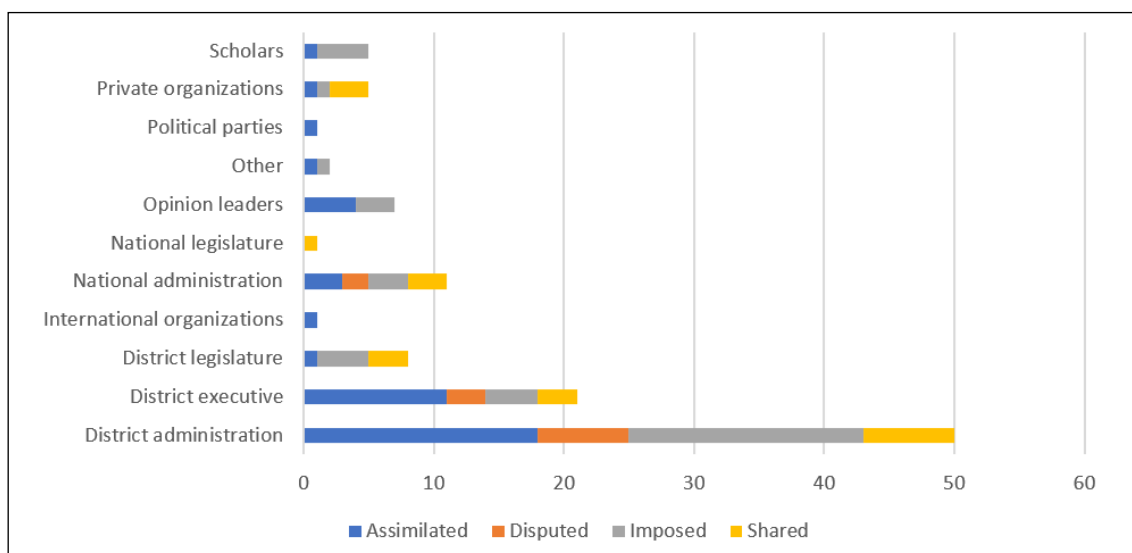


Source: Data collected by the authors.

Furthermore, the press review shows that both national and district administrations are focused on promoting stratification. Interviews show that middle-range public administrators have challenged stratification since the 1990s, while senior administrative positions (with a political profile) tend to avoid it: stratification change or finalization could be electorally costly. The upper strata do not seem willing to promote a socioeconomic mix in residential neighborhoods, while the lower strata cannot pay more for public services (Academic 1, 2022; Worker 1, 2023). Several district reports justify stratification change and propose alternatives but avoid proposing the end of stratification (Urbanist, 2017): its validity is accepted, and challenges are about its technical features. One of the reasons that middle-class local bureaucracies seem more inclined to question is that it is common to have hidden wealth (high-income people in low-strata buildings) or hidden poverty (low-income people in high-strata buildings) generated by stratification (Public director 2, 2027).

Press review shows that media tend to make popular social actors' opinions invisible while it makes policymakers' and bureaucrats' judgments highly visible. It would seem, then, that the media end up reinforcing stratification by problematizing it in technical terms and ignoring the territorial stigma. The figure 6 below shows the detailed classification.

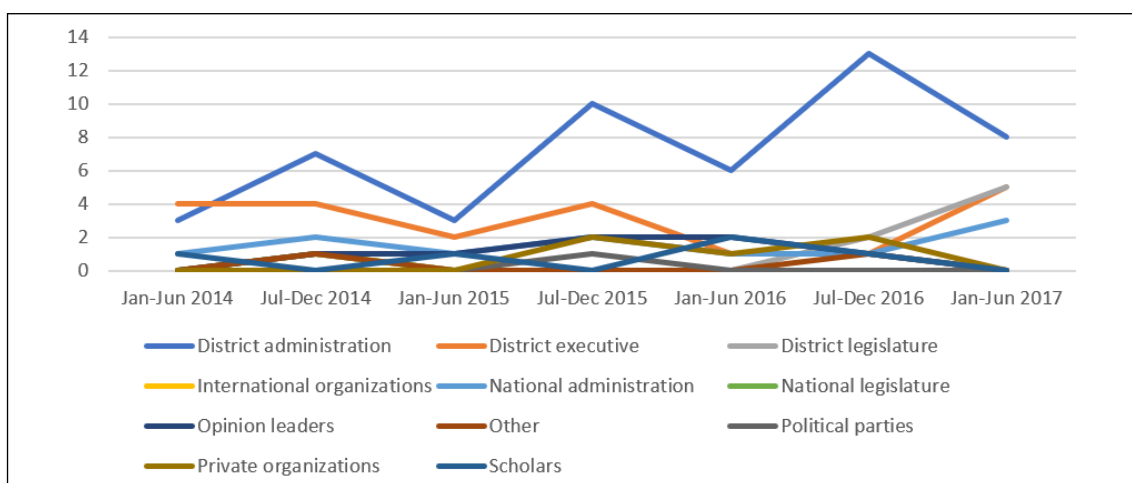
Figure 6: Actor's experience of the concept of strata within Colombian press debates



Source: Data collected by the authors.

From the press review, the trends described are confirmed by two criteria. First, the main actors intervening in stratification debates are district bureaucrats, district legislators, and district executives, with little room for opinion leaders, especially from popular organizations. The figure 7 below shows actors intervening in stratification debates in the Colombian press.

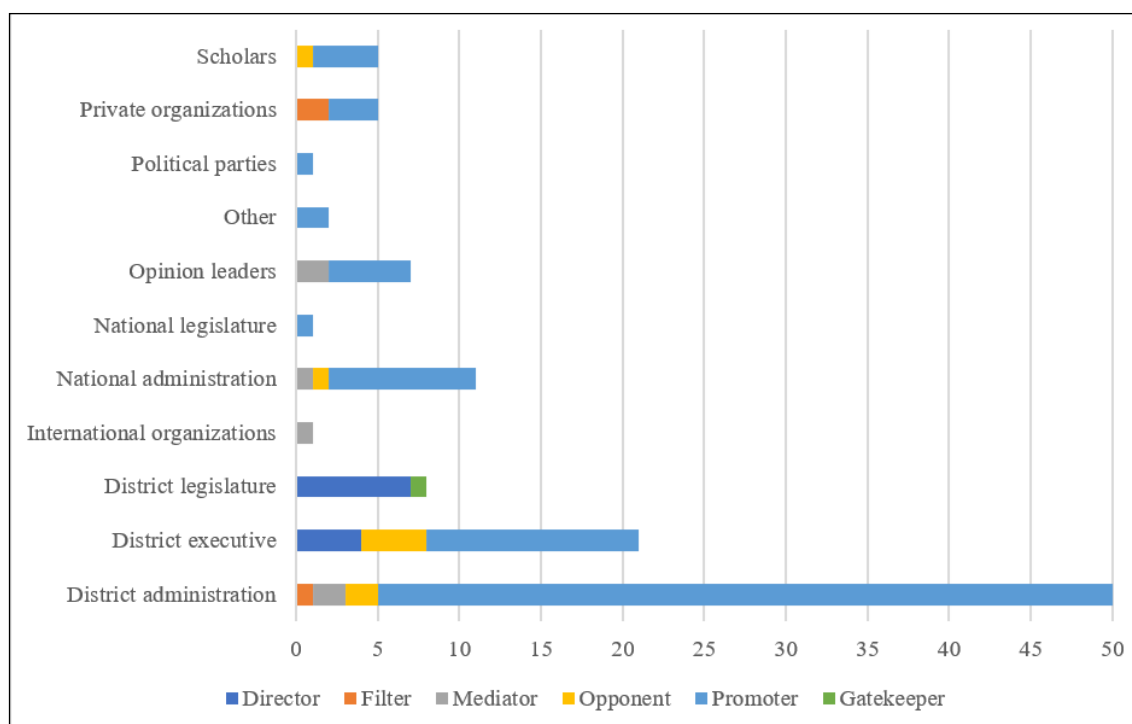
Figure 7: Actors intervening in stratification debates between 2014 and 2017 in the Colombian press



Source: Data collected by the authors.

Second, described or perceived actors' roles (using the classification proposed by Dente and Subirats (2014)) confirms that bureaucrats promote the questioning, but the debates are directed first by the district legislators (also gatekeepers) and second by district executives. Not surprisingly, strata questioning does not seem to come from social sectors but local institutional and academic sectors. This is in line with academic literature; as Rodríguez-Acosta and Rosenbaum (2005) argue part of the Latin American problem stems from the weakness of sub-national governments and their dependence on national bodies. In this case, local administrators seem willing to redefine stratification while local politics and the national bureaucracy hold it back. A given reason is that there are no better instruments, and other cities around the world, with different systems, also have fragmentation and segregation (Policymaker, 2017). The figure 8 below shows the detailed roles.

Figure 8: Actor's role in debates about stratification in the Colombian press



Source: Data collected by the authors.

The change in the district government clearly appears in the press review. During the Petro administration (2012-2016), strata debates were focused, above all, on socio-economic issues. During the Peñalosa administration (2016-2019), the main issues were economic and educative. This shows that the debates on stratification follow political tendencies: it is both the cause and consequence of debates on other issues of government and, at the same time, it is a debate on itself.

7) Discussion

Stratification is a very powerful, multidimensional technical criterion (Policymaker, 2017): it is a resilient territorial stigma system given that reactions from “below” reinforce this control device designed from “above”. Resilience “can be rather considered a process than a result” since it is also about how a system copes with shocks to create or keep an equilibrium that “preserves its core functions” (Profiroiu; Nastacă, 2021). The resilience of Bogotá’s stratification system could be explained by three main features proposed by Resilience Alliance (2010): stability, “self-recovery”, and “innovation”. The system can maintain its functions and structures because shocks (criticisms) do not have enough force to change it (dispersion of critical actors with low agency for change, diversity in arguments, absence of credible alternatives). Stratification has self-recovery mechanisms because it constantly reviews building classification, and deals with citizen dissatisfaction through the stratification result or public services tariffs, but not its criteria or process. The system is also resilient because it induces citizen adaptation rather than adaptation of the system itself (i.e., citizens are the ones who establish strategies to benefit from the system rather than proposing or waiting for its modification).

It is necessary to differentiate stratification as a technical instrument from its socio-cultural concept. Here, then, we can find one of the main points that give rise to contradictions: the concepts’ critics are not uniform, and concerns about some of its dimensions are not necessarily concerns about the entire concept. This would explain the affirmations of the interviewees. First, some left-wing politicians have tried to cast doubt on the concept while others defend it (Urbanist 1, 2017). Second, the media misinterpret urban policies by ideologizing non-strata justifications (Policymaker 2, 2017) perceiving competing territorialities from ideological readings when policies are supposed to go beyond that. All this information tends to align with other research insights, as Cifuentes Arcila (2015) exposes: symbolic structure, through the provision of dominant meanings to specific places and human groups, is a factor influencing the configuration of urban segregation.

Press reviews and interviews suggest that Bogotá is in a “stratum trap” since even if policy-making avoids stratification, outcomes are interpreted and classified according to it. The relationship between stratification and sociospatial segregation seems quite strong, but the relationship between stratification and territorial stigmas is far more complex. Although urban territories certainly carry socio-economic stigmas in Bogotá (both ways), the truth is that stratification seems more like the bureaucratic crystallization of segregations that are then naturalized: stratification is based on street labeling among the ones that “need help” vs the ones “that do not need it”. At this level, it works differently from the territorial stigmas studied in Europe and the US: they are not “problem” neighborhoods. Stratification operates and reinforces territorial stigma by reinforcing socio-territorial segregation, although it does not necessarily operate per se as a stigma.

8) Concluding remarks

Most of the literature tends to assume resilience as a positive characteristic when it helps “transforming the assets into outcomes of well-being for future generations” (European Commission (2018) in Profiroiu and Nastacă (2021). In the case of Bogotá, the “adaptive capacity”, which is considered “a feature of resilience by many authors” (Profiroiu; Nastacă, 2021), cannot be seen as inherently positive, because institutional stability comes at the expense of maintaining or worsening urban segregation. In other words, territorial segregation is perpetuated because changes in the stratification system (reclassification of buildings) do not question its logic but rather citizen’s validation of the assigned stratum.

Some conclusions can be reached. First, stratification appears to be a social control system operated by bureaucrats who question it. Second, stratification has determined individual and collective strategies whose change entails political opportunity costs that elected officials avoid. Third, stratification is not a stable and homogeneous system of territorial stigmatization; it is precisely the complexity of realities generated by its simplicity that makes it resilient. Fourth, Bogotá lives in a “stratum trap”: regardless of which criteria are used to design and implement policies in the city, outputs and outcomes are always crossed by the stratification system.

Notes

¹We understand that the notion of resilience has been criticized for its conceptual expansion. In this work we adopt the definition proposed by Profiroiu and Nastacă (2021, p.103) based on Cai et al. (2012) and Wojtowicz (2020): “capacity of a system to cope with the shocks from the external environment and reserve its core functions.”

²82 are informational articles (73,21%), 18 are reportages (16,07%), 9 are opinion articles (8,04%) and 2 are interviews (1,79%). The period was selected for different reasons: 1) it covers two mayoralties with different ideological tendencies; 2) it was the 2010 period with more political debate on the subject; 3) this political debate responded to a greater production and academic questioning of strata.

³The district administration, district executive, district legislature, international organizations, national administration, national legislature, opinion leaders, political parties, private organizations, scholars, and others.

⁴Such as proposing certain sports in some underprivileged neighborhoods, taking low-income youth to cultural activities in upper-income neighborhoods, etc.

⁵Like urban land for sports purposes or cycling mobility.

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